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## Editorial

Could I remind readers that the ABD has recently changed its name from the Association of British Drivers to the Alliance of British Drivers, following our merger with the Drivers Alliance. The acronym of ABD remains unchanged of course but our logo has been revised accordingly (new version in the heading of this newsletter). This is otherwise a bumper New Year edition for our readers covering many topical transport issues in London (and elsewhere to some extent). Don't forget to respond directly to some of the consultations mentioned herein, or contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Roger Lawson, Editor

## New Thames River Crossings

We mentioned the consultation on new Thames River Crossings in our last newsletter (see here for details with a map below):

<https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/rivercrossings/consultation> .

We have now submitted a response on behalf of ABD members which you can read here:

[www.freedomfordrivers.org/ABD\\_River\\_Crossings\\_Consultation.pdf](http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/ABD_River_Crossings_Consultation.pdf)

In essence we support the proposals for a new tunnel at Silvertown to release pressure on the Blackwall Tunnel, and a new bridge or tunnel at Gallions Reach (rather than another ferry). But we strongly oppose tolls being charged for any of these crossings, for reasons spelled out in our response. The more responses from individuals to this consultation the better so if you have not yet responded to it (which you can do by simply replying to the on-line questions), then please do so. You need to respond before the end of January 2013, so PLEASE DO RESPOND NOW!

Our recommended answers to the questions are as follows:

Question 3: Strongly support.

Question 4: Strongly support.

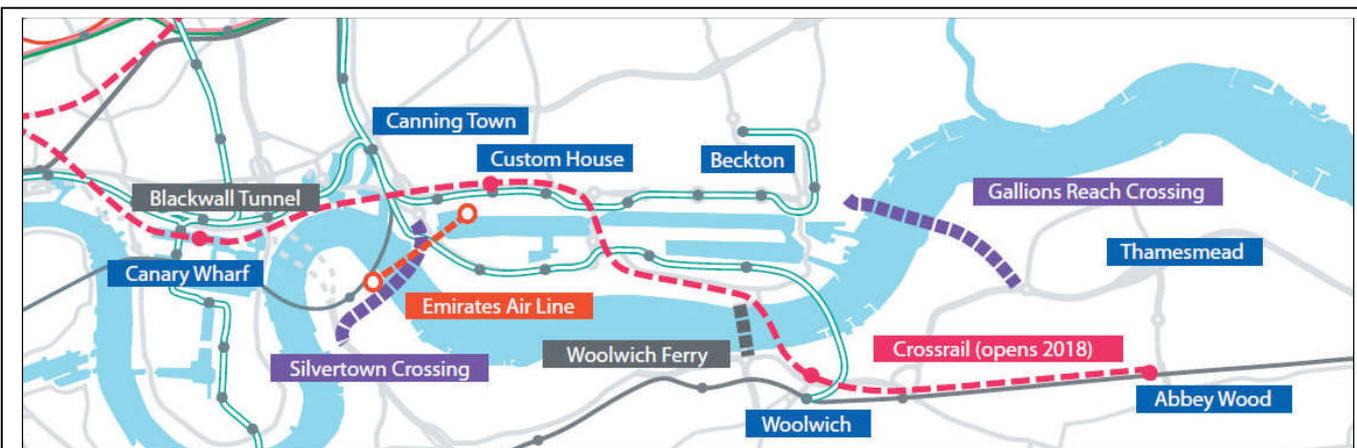
Question 5: Neither support nor oppose.

Question 6: Strongly oppose.

Question 7: Strongly support.

Question 8: Strongly oppose.

Question 9: Be sure to be vociferous against tolls which are an anathema to all sensible people.



## Dartford Crossing Free-Flow Charging



Also mentioned in our last newsletter were the plans for “free-flow” charging at the Dartford Crossing. A public consultation on this and the supporting “Enforcement Regulations” have been issued which you can find here:

[www.highways.gov.uk/consultations/dartford-charging-scheme-order-consultation](http://www.highways.gov.uk/consultations/dartford-charging-scheme-order-consultation) and here: [www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-18](http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-18)

We have now submitted a response which strongly opposes this proposal, which you can read here:

[www.freedomfordrivers.org/ABD\\_Dartford\\_Crossing\\_Freelock\\_Charging.pdf](http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/ABD_Dartford_Crossing_Freelock_Charging.pdf)

The proposals appear to be based on number plate recognition technology as used for the London Congestion Charge System. You will need to pay in advance, or pay soon afterwards (if you remember) whenever you use the crossing (both ways). Charges for cars will rise to at least £2.50 (currently £2.00) to pay for this wonderful new system. The Dart-Tag system for regular users would still be offered at the same current price (effectively increasing the discount). But as most users are infrequent ones, most will have to phone up or use the internet to pay.

As with the London Congestion Charge system, there will no doubt be enormous amounts of revenue collected from people who forget to pay – a fine of £35 a time and rising if you don't pay on demand. Indeed the estimate is for 10% to 20% of people failing to pay and hence getting issued with a penalty notice.

The following is a summary of our response to the consultation:

## Government to Raise £7bn from the Dartford Crossing

The Highways Agency is likely to raise a net £7 billion for Government coffers from road users over 25 years by the introduction of “free-flow” charging at the Dartford Crossing. Even after the reduction in journey times which is a potential benefit to road users, the net cost to them is at least £5.5 billion over the same period.

That ignores the inconvenience that will be caused to road users by having to pay the charge, the high risk of unknowingly incurring a £35 penalty charge by forgetting to pay and the general hassle involved in using such a system (the consultation document suggests over 15,000 per day of “non-compliance” events, i.e. penalty charges issued). If the toll booths were simply removed, to reduce the congestion they cause, then the benefits to road users would be real instead of imaginary.

This proposal is backed up by a consultation document which is grossly misleading in the financial analysis and implications of the proposals. It also suggests that the tolls are required to pay for more river crossings when the net revenue being raised would pay for a new crossing in as little as two years.

The Alliance of British Drivers (ABD) suggests that this proposal is simply another tax raising measure from the Government and has nothing to do with improving the road system or reducing congestion as claimed.

We encourage all road users to oppose this measure which may set a precedent for other road charging schemes (which the Government clearly has in mind). Users should go to the web site below to register their objections as soon as possible.

**We urge all readers of this newsletter to respond directly via the on-line survey forms to the consultations on the Dartford Crossing Free-Flow Charging and on the new Thames River Crossings.**

## Editor's Comments

The Dartford Crossing proposals show how enormous amounts of money can be raised from road users by charging, using "congestion" as an excuse. The Government already raises about £50bn per year from road users, but spends less than £10bn per year on the roads.

But the economics of the Dartford Crossing proposals show exactly how expensive that will be for road users in terms of time and money.

While enormous amounts of money are spent on public transport in the name of easing congestion and making travelling easier, we get road schemes that simply obstruct drivers. You can see that if similar schemes were imposed on the A14 (as already proposed) and on other major roads, it would mean road users would have to plan their journeys in advance, pay the "ticket price" and generally suffer inconvenience that simply does not exist at present. In effect one of the benefits of using cars versus public transport would be seriously eroded. So this is an "anti-car" agenda in essence, devised no doubt by those in Government (both politicians and civil servants) who probably don't use the roads much as they are mostly based in central London and often get subsidised public transport.

We need to oppose this creeping degradation of the public road network promoted by those who support road pricing when most road users oppose that idea. The hidden agenda is clear, more taxation of road users and the introduction of an enormously expensive bureaucracy to control, track and charge us.

Note that with the technology and legislation in place to enable road pricing, as implemented for the Dartford Crossing, it is simply a matter of time before road pricing becomes widespread in the UK. **YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!**

I shall be writing to my Member of Parliament on this subject and I suggest readers do the same. One of the easiest ways to do this is to use this web site: [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com). A few simple sentences in your own words is the ideal but feel free to use a few phrases from the above.

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## Location of New Average Speed Cameras in London Confirmed



Transport for London (TfL) have now confirmed where it is proposed to install new average speed cameras in London. The Association of British Drivers (ABD)

objects very strongly to the installation of more speed cameras in London, particularly average speed ones. The proposed locations are:

- A406 North Circular Road between Hanger Lane and Finchley Road.
- A40 between Swakeleys roundabout and Paddington Green slip road.
- A2 between Black Prince Interchange and the Blackwall Tunnel.
- A316 between Hospital Bridge Roundabout and Hogarth Roundabout.

TfL has gone out to tender for the installation and operation of these cameras on London's road network, and they plan to spend up to £15m on such devices. These cameras would replace some existing fixed "spot" cameras and allegedly might tackle significant numbers of accidents on these roads but average speed cameras are very expensive and are simply not cost effective devices to improve road safety. There are already 780 speed cameras in use in London, but the evidence for their effectiveness is very weak (See later for the latest independent research on them).

As we pointed out in a previous Newsletter, this expenditure has also been concealed in TfL budgets and not properly disclosed to the public. No scrutiny has therefore taken place on this expenditure.

The ABD suggests that the 'war on the motorist' still seems to be alive and well in the heart of TfL. More fines will no doubt be imposed on motorists as a result when they may have been driving at a safe speed for the road conditions.

Those readers of this newsletter who live in London should complain to their London Assembly Member about this waste of money and the apparent deliberate concealment of these proposals from Assembly Members.

You can identify your GLA Assembly Member and write to them using the web site [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com) mentioned above (click on to access).

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## New Bridge Opened in Bromley



A major event recently in the London Borough of Bromley was the re-opening of the railway bridge on the Chislehurst - Petts Wood road. This had been closed for a year for reconstruction causing lengthy diversions for traffic and longer queues on the diversion routes (although generally traffic adjusted reasonably well).

Photo above shows Mayor Michael Turner cutting the tape to reopen the bridge, with Councillor Colin Smith to his rear and local M.P. Bob Neill on the right.

One of the changes made to accommodate traffic while the bridge was out of use was closure of the bus lane on Sevenoaks Way and some other changes to traffic signs and routing. Those changes are apparently to remain in place as it was obvious that they had actually improved traffic flows on this notoriously congested road.

We are advised Councillors had made this decision even though it will cost £100,000 per year in lost fines on errant motorists for infringing the bus lane. *(Editor: thanks for finally seeing sense on this when most of the infringements were simple accidents from people believing they could turn left through the bus lane when there was clearly no obstruction caused by doing so. It is of course a good example of why bus lanes are never a good idea if alternative traffic engineering arrangements can be introduced to solve congestion problems. In politics, sometimes one waits years for enlightenment to prevail, only to have it crystallised by unforeseen circumstance).*

Bus routes will generally revert to their original route although one will remain on the diverted path so that people can access the Nugents shopping centre.

Photos of the bridge, before and after, are shown below. What a difference!



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## Flying to Excel via Cable Car



As your editor needed to visit the Excel Exhibition Centre, he decided to go via the Emirates Cable Car which runs from near the O2 across the Thames to near the Excel building north of the river. Here is a brief report with some photographs.

Media reports suggest that the cable car is typically running at only 10% capacity with few regular rush hour travellers. Indeed it was clear that most of the people using it on the day I tried it were there for the experience rather than regular users.

It actually takes longer to use it than it would have done to drive to the venue via the Blackwall Tunnel (that's ignoring the slight delay from a minor breakdown on my trip). Likewise the cost at £8.60 for a round-trip is hardly cheap, although there is a small discount for any Oyster Card or Freedom Pass holder. But with expensive parking on the south side, it's hardly a viable option to encourage people to take this route rather than drive through the adjacent tunnel, or use other public transport routes.

**My conclusions:** an interesting view on the ride (as you can see from the photos, it does rise quite high), and your kids might find it amusing, but not a serious alternative means of transport across the Thames. You may want to take a trip before it goes out of business, which surely won't be long bearing in mind the likely economics. That's £60m wasted (the cost of construction) that could have been spent more usefully on other tunnel, bridge or ferry crossings.



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## Drive Recorders

There were a couple of interesting car related devices at the Excel show visited on the above trip (at the "Gadget Show"). These were both cameras that you fit within the car to record accidents, etc. See RoadScan at [www.roadscan.co.uk](http://www.roadscan.co.uk) who appear to have been around for a while and say they have about 15,000 installed in the UK, and Road Pixel at [www.roadpixel.com](http://www.roadpixel.com) who are new to the UK (just launched). Pricing seems to be comparable - £300 for the better options.

These might become very popular for high mileage drivers in a few years time, or for those running fleets of vans (already similar technology is used a lot in buses). There are apparently some mobile phone apps which have similar functionality – for example the "Dailyroads" app.

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## Speed Camera Effectiveness – The Latest Research



Engineer David Finney has published a final report on his analysis of speed camera statistics in the Thames Valley – for more information see [www.speedcamerareport.co.uk](http://www.speedcamerareport.co.uk) .

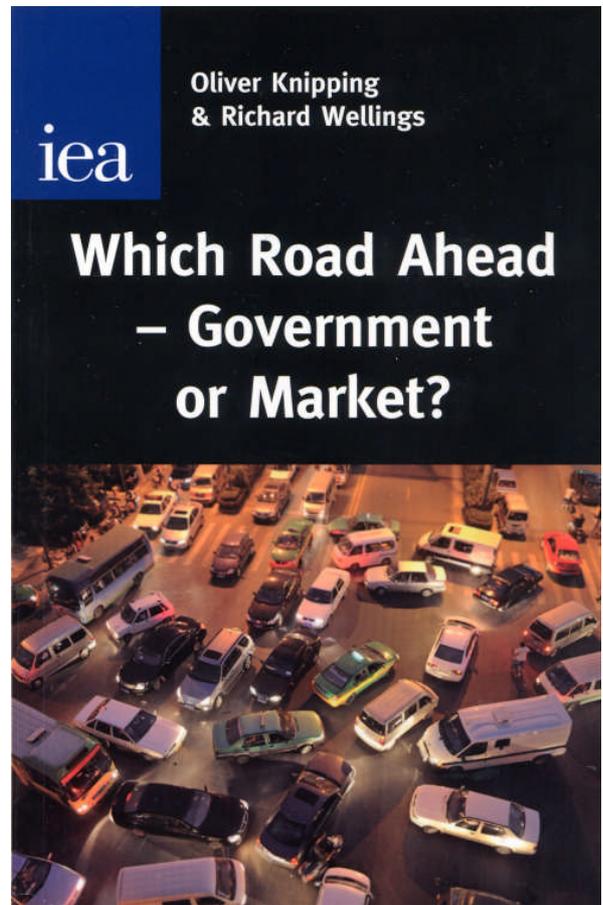
He has shown that the claims for benefits from speed cameras have arisen solely from statistical “reversion to the mean” on accident frequency at a particular location. He deduces this from a detail analysis of the accident data over a period of time before, during and after speed camera installation.

Mr Finney is calling for “independently organised and independently supervised rigorous Randomised Controlled Trials”. The ABD fully supports that suggestion, and if you don’t know why scientists use “randomised controlled trials”, you ought surely to find out. But in summary, without that scientific approach, any claims made by promoters of the efficacy of any technique or problem treatment are likely to be misleading both themselves and others.

In an article in Local Transport Today (LTT), Professor Richard Allsop, one of the main promoters of speed cameras in the last few years, called Mr Finney’s report “basically sound” in terms of estimating regression to the mean although he disagreed with some of the inferences drawn.

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## Which Road Ahead ? – Road Privatisation



The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) have recently published a short book entitled “Which Road Ahead” – cover photo above. Written by Oliver Knippings and Richard Wellings, it basically proposes complete privatisation of the road system allowing the new owners to negotiate routes, set rolls rates, control access and determine the rules for use.

Before you jump to conclusions, it is worth saying that it does contain in its initial chapters a very good analysis of the defects of existing transport policies in the UK. It points out that while there are high costs from road congestion, most new transport funding goes into public transport schemes despite the fact that they typically give a lower return on investment. For example a benefit cost ratio of 1.2 for HS2 versus 4.7 on strategic roads (according to the Eddington Report, and since that report in 2006, road building in the UK has declined further despite the recommendations made therein).

As they point out, the big problem is that transport investment policy is driven by political considerations, and special interest groups, not by rational economic decisions irrespective of the flavour of the current Government.

So what they are proposing is a revolution, where the road network is simply handed over to one or more bodies to run, much as the gas, electricity and rail networks have been. Indeed they suggest even doing without the regulation imposed on organisations in those sectors so the new “owners”, could charge what they wanted, scrap speed limits (are they serious you may ask?) and generally do what they want.

They do point out that in Sweden about two-thirds of the road network is owned by private road associations, although these are mainly minor roads.

Editor’s Comments: My experience of private roads where I live (and there are quite a large number), is that residents either don’t want to maintain them – because potholes deter people from driving down them and disturbing their peace – or they are well maintained, have gates obstructing public access and very high speed humps to again discourage drivers. This is of course the result of no regulation of such roads and is hardly a good model to follow surely.

It thinks the authors have taken a leap too far. From wanting a revolution, they have proposed anarchy. A more intermediate solution where a “not for profit” body took over operation of the road network and was given all the associated tax revenue (from fuel charges, road tax, etc) would be more viable. This body could be democratically controlled by the votes of financial contributors, but would surely still need to be subject to independent regulation.

Anyway the book (or booklet) is definitely worth reading simply for the data it contains and the thoughts it prompts.

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## News Snapshots

Sundry news in the last few weeks that is worth a mention is as follows:

+ The Government is proposing to reduce the number of Judicial Reviews by introducing tougher rules – for example by reducing the file time to less than the current 3 months, or increasing court fees. (Editor: this is something that will surely undermine democracy, and here is an extract from a letter I wrote to my M.P. on the subject: “*Having been involved personally in two judicial reviews – one very large one and one very small, in my view they are often the only opportunity one has to challenge judicial or Government wrongdoing. Even so the costs faced by litigants are enormous if they lose (with a few very limited exceptions) so I don’t see that anyone currently pursues them unless they have a very good case. In addition the time needed to prepare such cases and raise supporters to fight them makes even the three month time limit very onerous. Shortening the time limit would severely prejudice justice.*”

*It has been mentioned that there might be some abuse in the planning area where developers repeatedly challenge planning decisions and that might be an area to specifically examine. But I suspect the problem there arises simply from the past complexity (and commonly ambiguity) in planning laws and associated guidance.*

*It would be a pity if any attack on the abuse of the judicial review system by property developers led to a general attack on this most useful provision in the judicial system. I hope you, as a lawyer by training I believe, understand this.”*

+ Former Bromley Councillor Rod Reed has launched a campaign to oppose extension of the Croydon Tramlink to Bromley Town Centre. It seems this is in the Councils “Local Implementation Plan”, might cost £100m, but the fact that the date might be after 2022 surely suggests this is merely “aspirational” rather than a serious proposition. (Editor’s Comments: *the economic realities of trams have been covered in past newsletters and on our web site, which is why no new tram schemes have got off the ground in London in the last few years. Rod Reed’s campaign may be walkover as a result. It was interesting to visit Nottingham recently where enormous amounts of money are being spent on a new tram scheme. But the local council now seem so bereft of funds that they can’t even fix potholes in the roads).*

+ An AOL Cars investigation reported that nobody has been prosecuted as a result of infringement of the M25 overhead gantry speed cameras in the last year. It seems the police may simply be too busy to process the paperwork in Surrey, but ones elsewhere such as in Essex may just not have been switched on. *(Editor's Comments: it will no doubt not be long before claims are made about the effectiveness of these cameras in reducing accidents!)*

+ A report in the British Medical Journal suggests that anyone who suffers excessive pain from driving over a speed hump may be suffering from appendicitis. It seems those suffering from the condition reported more pain when driving over humps. *(Editor's Comment: the moral is don't drive over a speed hump on your way to hospital, or tell the ambulance driver to avoid them, but wouldn't it be better to remove them altogether because it is well known that this is not the only medical condition that shows this effect).*

+ A new "Cycle Superhighway" is being proposed that will run between New Cross Gate and Victoria via Peckham, Camberwell, Kennington and Vauxhall. This involves reducing road space for other users and allocating it to cyclists as it runs on one of the main A routes from South East London into the centre, plus adding additional bus lanes. For more details, see <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/cycling/cs5> where you can respond to the consultation (but you need to do so before the 11<sup>th</sup> January). The ABD has opposed it as this seems a very expensive scheme that prejudices other road users in favour of cyclists for no good reasons (and note that we have not objected to other such schemes).

+ Changes to the London Congestion Charge, sorry we mean "Tax" of course, are being proposed. Green and Electric vehicle discounts are being scrapped and penalty charges are to be increased from £120 to £130. The latter are of course a very large source of the revenue obtained from such schemes as is evident from the information provided on the proposed Dartford scheme so you can understand why an above-inflation increase is being proposed.

In addition options to pay at retail outlets are being scrapped (odd they are in the Dartford proposals even so). More information is at: <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/roads/congestioncharging>  
The ABD has submitted our comments.

We did say that for any "Congestion Tax" scheme, which was designed to reduce congestion and not have any environmental impact, it is simply illogical to have a discount for low emission vehicles. This was of course one of Mr Livingstone's bright ideas and as a sop to the green lobby who would have liked cars banned altogether. You may care to send in your own comments.

+ Some insurers are hiking car insurance premiums to those drivers who have taken a "Speed Awareness Course". This has dismayed promoters of those courses who previously suggested it was not only the "easy option" but would also save drivers from higher insurance premiums. *(Editor's Comments: as I have said before, you should not be conspiring with the police to get them to waive prosecution by paying a fee - in essence a "bribe" to the course operators which they divert partly to the police - as you are surely guilty of "aiding and abetting" a serious offence. Better to plead not guilty to begin with. As with anything in life, you have to stand up for what is right, not take the easy way out. Only suckers do the latter).*

### **About the Alliance of British Drivers (ABD)**

The Alliance of British Drivers was formed from a merger of the Association of British Drivers and the Drivers Alliance. The ABD is the leading independent organisation which represents the interests of private motorists in the United Kingdom. We campaign to protect the rights of individual road users and believe that road transport is a beneficial and essential element in the UK transport infrastructure. We oppose excessive taxation of motorists and are against tolls and road usage charging. We also campaign for more enlightened road safety policies. The Alliance is a "not for profit" voluntary organisation which is financially supported primarily by its individual members. More information on the ABD is available from our web site at [www.abd.org.uk](http://www.abd.org.uk)

Note that the ABD maintains a list of members who are familiar with individual London boroughs and may be able to help with information on local issues in those boroughs. The current list is below. If any other members would like to keep an eye on local news and advise on local transport issues then please let me know. Roger Lawson

Contact person	Borough	Email
Les Alden	Southwark	<a href="mailto:LHA@looksouth.net">LHA@looksouth.net</a>
Paul Hemsley	Ealing	<a href="mailto:ph@hemsleyassociates.com">ph@hemsleyassociates.com</a>
Hillier Simmons	Hounslow	<a href="mailto:hilliersimmons@compuserve.com">hilliersimmons@compuserve.com</a>
Brian Mooney	Hammersmith & Fulham	<a href="mailto:fairdeal@abd.org.uk">fairdeal@abd.org.uk</a>
Roger Lawson	Bromley, Barking & Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Havering, Islington, Lewisham, City of London, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest	<a href="mailto:roger.lawson@abd.org.uk">roger.lawson@abd.org.uk</a>
Peter Morgan	Croydon, Camden, Enfield, Harrow, Hillingdon, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston, Lambeth, Merton, Richmond, Sutton, Wandsworth, Westminster	<a href="mailto:southlondon@abd.org.uk">southlondon@abd.org.uk</a>

### Contact Information

This Newsletter is published by the London Region of the Alliance of British (A.B.D.), PO Box 62, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 5YB and is distributed free of charge to ABD Members in the London area and to those Members of BBAG who formerly received the Bromley Borough Roads Action Group newsletter. All material contained herein is Copyright of the A.B.D. or of the authors and may only be reproduced with permission. Any opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author of the article or that of the Editor which do not necessarily represent the official policies of the A.B.D.

A.B.D. London Region Co-ordinator and Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, Email: [roger.lawson@abd.org.uk](mailto:roger.lawson@abd.org.uk)). Contact the above for information on the aims and objectives of the A.B.D. or for membership information (membership costs £25.00 per annum). The A.B.D. would be happy to advise or assist anyone who is concerned about any traffic, transport or road safety issues in London. Complimentary subscriptions to this newsletter are available on request to elected politicians or those with a professional interest in transport matters.

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