



The Association of British Drivers

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Press Release – ABD London Region

For immediate release
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Mayor Livingstone Again Ignores the Views of the Public

Mayor Livingstone yesterday announced that he is to go ahead with charging £25 for vehicles that emit more than 225gm/km of CO₂ and which enter the London Congestion Charge zone. In addition vehicles in Bands A and B will get a 100% discount. In essence he has not made any changes to the original proposals as a result of the public consultation, despite widespread criticism.

What did the public consultation actually say? In summary there was a clear majority opposed to the proposal on the basis that they did not think it would be effective in encouraging people to change their vehicles.

An Unexpected Result from a Biased Consultation

As usual with recent consultations from Transport for London they attempted to rig the result of the public consultation by issuing a consultation questionnaire that was designed deliberately to get the right answers. They didn't simply ask people whether they were in favour of the proposals or not, but asked them such questions as "*Do you think the proposed higher charge would be an effective incentive to use a lower CO₂ emitting car?*". This was preceded by questions about the importance of climate change, and what respondents were doing to show their concern for the environment – undoubtedly "leading questions" to stimulate appropriate responses.

But did it work? No. They got almost 5,000 responses and 57% said it would not be effective as an incentive versus 39% who said it would.

No Serious Attempt to Analyse Other Comments

An even more revealing aspect of the Consultation Report is that it makes no attempt to analyse people's comments on whether the scheme will actually reduce CO₂ emissions.

As the ABD pointed out in our own submissions, even if people do change their vehicles it is unlikely to have any noticeable impact on overall CO2 emissions in London. This was even admitted in the TfL report on the proposal. But no attempt is made in the report by IPSOS/MORI to summarise the submissions made by the various "stakeholders" and the public. All we get is a few random quotations.

In addition there was widespread criticism of the proposal to allow Band A and B vehicles into the zone for free in that clearly this would increase emissions and traffic. But no notice has been taken of objections to that either.

In essence the Consultation Report is a whitewash which has clearly been filleted of any meaningful information in the last few months during which its publication has been needlessly delayed.

Unfortunately the Mayor's style of public consultation is now well known – if it produces answers that are contrary to his wishes, he ignores them. Exactly the same happened with the western extension of the Congestion Charge zone. This seems to be yet another example of where the public consultation was seriously defective and an affront to democracy.

More Misleading Statements Made in Support

To support these proposals, Peter Hendy, London Transport Commissioner, was quoted in the Mayor's press release as saying "*The Congestion Charge has been successful in cutting both traffic and congestion and vehicle emissions in central London*". Unfortunately this statement is not supported by the facts as congestion is almost back to where it was before the charge was introduced, and air pollution as actually measured within the congestion zone has not improved.

This surely demonstrates that these policies are not justified by any rational argument or on scientific merit, but by declamation based on their green credentials. It's surely "gesture politics" as Boris Johnson has said. Or simply more irrational persecution of motorists on spurious environmental grounds that we see more and more these days.

For further information, please contact:

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The Mayor's Press Release announcing the Emissions Related Congestion Charge is at: http://www.london.gov.uk/view_press_release.jsp?releaseid=15632

The TfL Consultation Report and its various Annexes can be accessed from this web page: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/congestioncharging/6722.aspx#4>

The submission to the public consultation by the ABD can be accessed from this web page: <http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/Consultations.htm>

About The Association of British Drivers (ABD)

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 Association 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

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