



The Association of British Drivers

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Press Release – ABD London Region

For immediate release

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CONGESTION CHARGE DEFINITELY SCRAPPED

The Association of British Drivers (ABD) welcomes the announcement by Mayor Boris Johnson that the Western Extension of the London Congestion Charge will definitely be terminated on Christmas Eve (24 Dec 2010). The ABD ran an active campaign in support of scrapping the Western Extension in conjunction with the West London Residents Association and others - see this page of our web site for details:

www.freedomfordrivers.org/WesternCon.htm

Roger Lawson, ABD London Region Co-Ordinator had this to say: *"The Western Extension was truly a Congestion 'Con'. It did not reduce traffic congestion, did not improve the environment, and was simply a way to divert cash from road users into the hands of Transport for London". It was also a very expensive and inefficient way of taxing road users – after two years and three separate consultations, it was certainly time for Mr Johnson to follow through on his election promise".*

To quote from Mr Johnson's announcement: *"The Western Extension to the Congestion Charge Scheme was unpopular when it was introduced, has remained unpopular, does not fully achieve what it set out to do, and is perceived to be a disincentive to businesses in the WEZ which deserve encouragement, particularly in the current difficult economic climate".*

The ABD would like to see the same logic applied to the main Congestion Charge which has not been a success. Traffic congestion has returned to what it was before the Charge (really a "tax") was introduced. Indeed it's got so bad that TfL have even stopped publishing annual reports on the scheme so we can see the latest trends – the last report was published in 2008.

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We suggest the main Congestion Charge should be scrapped and it is unfortunate that the previous Mayor entered into a multi-year contract that would make doing so particularly expensive. The Congestion Charge is going to be £10 from the new year, when it was argued that the initial charge of £5 would suffice. And still it contributes only a very small proportion of the amount needed by TfL to support public transport. Even central Government has realised that London's profligacy, based on massive sums provided by taxpayers across the whole country to run London's buses and underground, cannot continue. They have cut the funding to London in the spending review announced on the same day as the above announcement so that TfL's budget will be slashed by £2.2 billion. Bus and tube fares will go up, while services will be reduced, and that is the inevitable outcome of a transport strategy that was totally misconceived and contrary to what Londoners wanted.

But scrapping the Congestion Charge would at least be one way of removing the needless bureaucracy and the inconvenience to road users in having to pay the charge.

Contact

For more information contact Roger Lawson on 020-8295-0378.

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.freedomfordrivers.org