

# FFDF News

Freedom for Drivers Foundation Newsletter

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## Editorial

It's only two months since the last edition of this newsletter was issued, but two very major damaging events that have impacted our transport network have since happened.

The activities of Insulate Britain that have closed roads are covered at some length on pages 2 and 3. We should not let a few fanatics who could be classed as a terrorist organisation (see legal definition here: <https://tinyurl.com/w3mvau4x>) disrupt our lives.

The other big problem has been the shortage of petrol/diesel fuel due to panic buying combined with a shortage of delivery drivers. The latter is also affecting food and other deliveries. The causes of the driver shortage seem to be several—including poor working conditions, low pay, renewal of licences being delayed, new licence applications and driving tests being delayed, some drivers from the EU departing after Brexit and other factors. But most of these problems should be easily fixed.

But it is certainly the case that working conditions for HGV drivers are poor with inadequate facilities. It's basically a rotten job with low pay. The facilities problem will take time to fix but the low pay for such jobs was partly caused by uncontrolled immigration as the Prime Minister has pointed out. A temporary relaxation for HGV drivers may help but many other things need to be done.

As regards HGV driver training and licencing, a relaxation of the rules temporarily would instantly solve that issue. My uncle worked as a lorry driver for most of his life and I doubt he ever took a driving test. It's not a highly skilled job—experience is more important than qualifications.

All of the above problems are fixable if we remove the obstructive bureaucracy that has crept into so many aspects of our lives. Whether it is the police or the civil service, we need to remove the barriers that prevent actions being taken to solve urgent problems.

Roger Lawson  
(Editor)



## Quotes of the Month

*"Coronavirus has caused a global shortage in HGV drivers globally. Here are the 24 interventions delivered to tackle the lorry driver shortage and improve fuel supply with more petrol delivered than dispensed yesterday....." .....Grant Shapps, Transport Minister on his Facebook page.*

*"Investigations have identified a serious breach of good faith by Southeastern. To protect taxpayers' interests and passengers I have ordered the Operator of Last Resort to urgently take over the running of rail services in the South East." .....Grant Shapps.*

See the last page for publisher and contact information.





## Roads Blocked By Protestors

On 13/9/2021 the M25 was blocked in several places by protestors claiming to be from a group called “Insulate Britain”. This is a new group wanting to persuade the Government to pay to insulate all Britain’s homes but

they look very much like a front for Extinction Rebellion (XR).

For example they are not doing it to save residents money by cutting heating bills. Their web site says it is “part of a just transition to full decarbonisation of all parts of society and the economy”. In other words it’s an organisation that is focussed on CO2 emissions and alleged global warming.

They presumably think it is more palatable to the general public, particularly those who live in social housing, to promote this rather than the normal XR agenda.

This demonstration was well organised in advance with media representatives in attendance. It closed several sections of the M25 for several hours before the police managed to remove them. Over 90 arrests were made but will they be charged and significant penalties imposed?

Similar demonstrations were organised on subsequent days and it is very clear that despite some of the demonstrators being repeatedly arrested they were not charged. So they simply returned to do the same thing over and over again. The M25 takes as many as 200,000 vehicles per day and Monday morning is one of the busiest times.



So this hold up could have delayed 100,000 people as well as having a wider impact on the road network as drivers diverted. At a cost of £10 per hour that could mean a cost of over £1 million imposed on innocent people. Plus of course the cost of the police time involved in the events. Surely the culprits should be made to pay that and more?

See References 2 and 3 below for Daily Mail coverage of the demonstrations.

Some people stuck in the traffic queues attempted to remove the protestors but were stopped by the police from interfering. Yet again the police are shown to be toothless in preventing obstruction of the highway which is against the law.

See Reference 1 below for previous comments on why the police do nothing.

There is currently a Bill passing through Parliament (see Reference 4) which will make it easier for police to take action to prevent similar demonstrations. It is surely long overdue.

But will it solve the problem? Not if the penalties for causing such disruption are so trivial. As financial penalties are no deterrent to the type of people involved in these events, a lengthy spell in prison (and not suspended sentences) are surely the only answer.

After an injunction to stop the demonstrations on motorways was obtained by the Government the demonstrators simply moved to main roads in London such as the Blackwall Tunnel Approach and Wandsworth Bridge. But vehicle drivers finally took matters into their own hands as you can see in the photo above at Wandsworth.

### How to Stop the Protestors

After the M25 was repeatedly disrupted by eco fanatic protestors, the Home Secretary Priti Patel ordered the police to get tougher but there was not much sign of that happening except that they do now seem to be moving quickly to remove the demonstrators.

But they could do a lot more.

One Mail article suggested that “senior officers from Hertfordshire, Surrey, Kent, Essex and the Met are considering charging the activists with more serious crimes to ensure they are deterred from further protests. Conspiracy to cause a public nuisance, which carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison, is thought to be one of the punishments considered”.

*Continued on next page.*



## Roads Blocked By Protestors (Cont.)

So far although the protestors have been removed, they have not been remanded in custody or even charged, i.e. they have not appeared in court. So they can effectively carry on regardless.

Their activity is a danger to life as was covered in another part of the Mail article where they reported on a person probably having a stroke being held in the jams for several hours. A stroke or similar medical incident needs medical attention in minutes not hours if long-term effects or death are to be avoided.

London Police Commissioner Cressida Dick has led the weak

response to demonstrators in London and now it has spread wider. She should never have been appointed to the post after her involvement in the death of Jean Charles de Menezes – an innocent person shot by the police in 2005. Cressida Dick has recently been reappointed to her post thus extending her job for another two years.

The Home Secretary, Priti Patel, needs to consider some emergency legislation to stop these demonstrations, particularly the closures of the major road network such as all motorways. That has now become essential.

On 4/10/2021 it finally seemed she was going to take decisive action with new legislation to introduce criminal disruption protection orders (like ASBOs), plus a new offence of criminal interference in critical national infrastruc-

ture including roads. These might include unlimited fines and up to six months in prison and enable protestors to be remanded into custody immediately.

These new offences could be introduced into the Bill currently passing through Parliament (the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill). It's currently in the Lords but surely needs to be made a high priority to be expedited.

Reference 1: <https://tinyurl.com/3yp8xrkw>

Reference 2: <https://tinyurl.com/4yfyzt93>

Reference 3: <https://tinyurl.com/2s2sz5b4>

Reference 4: <https://tinyurl.com/cfyzsmz7>

## Latest Road Casualty Data

The Government has published the latest annual road casualty data for Great Britain. This does include of course periods (April to June and November in 2020) when the country was in lockdown from the coronavirus pandemic and when travel of all kinds was reduced. So the figures may not be typical – they do include a separate analysis of the impact of lockdown.

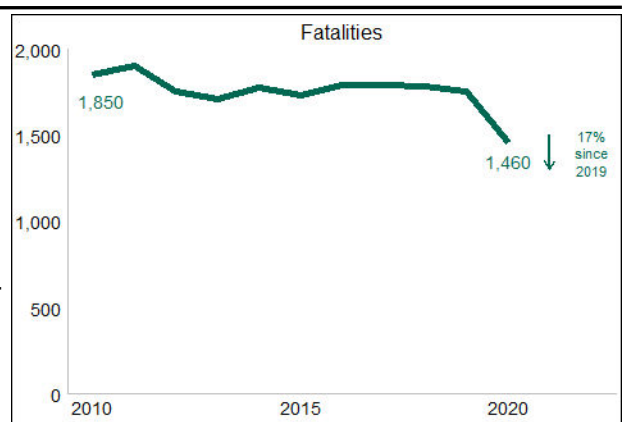
There were 1,460 reported road deaths and 23,529 KSI (Killed and Seriously Injured) which are substantial reductions on prior years – see chart above of fatal trends. Fatalities reduced by 17% over the prior year and KSIs by 22% when road traffic reduced by 21%, i.e. there was no significant difference assuming accidents directly relate to traffic volumes although anecdotally

increases in traffic speed were reported during lockdowns.

Total casualties, including slight ones, were down by 25% although that might be due to less reporting and changes to the way data was collected by the police using Stats19 forms. Although adjustments were made to allow for the latter, people may have been less willing to visit police stations to report slight injuries during the pandemic.

### Cycling casualties rise

One anomaly in the data is that there was a substantial increase in the number of cyclist deaths – up by 41% to 141 from 2019. Presumably this might be because of encouragement to cycle during the pandemic or from more inexperienced cyclists being on the roads.



Other data suggests there was some increase in cycling in 2020 particularly during the summer months although whether that continued into 2021 is not clear.

Politicians and civil servants should be aware that encouraging cycling does lead to more deaths and injuries to cyclists, i.e. it's not a risk free move.

Cycling is still very much a minority interest for most journeys.

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## Latest Road Casualty Data (Cont.)

But as more people worked from home and had more leisure time for cycling this may account for the change in numbers.

### Bus casualties fall

Another significant change during 2020 was the reduction in bus casualties by 51%. Many such accidents are caused by the elderly or disabled falling over in buses and as they were probably wary of using public transport during the pandemic that may account for this change.

For similar reasons there were greater reductions in casualties in those aged up to 16 and over 60 as they travelled less.

In summary, there was a welcome reduction in overall casualties last year but that was almost certainly down simply to reductions in travel on our roads. See <https://tinyurl.com/j3wr9ccr> for more details.

It is disappointing that the expenditure on road safety measures does not seem to be having much impact.

## Air Quality in Lewisham

One of the big topical issues in London is air quality, particularly as there is an allegation that the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) that have been introduced have made air pollution worse.

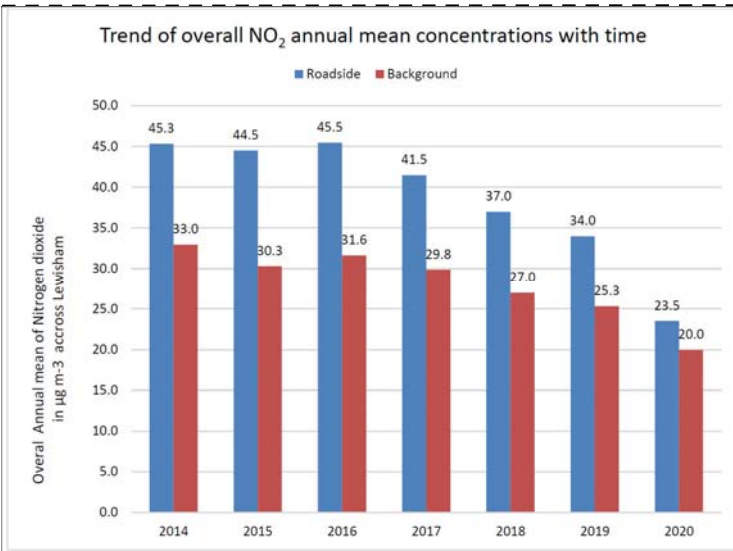
One of the justifications for introducing LTNs including road closures in boroughs such as

Lewisham was the need to improve air quality. However it is alleged that the diversion of traffic onto main roads has actually made matters worse in some locations.

Lewisham has now published a Draft Air Quality Action Plan which was open to public consultation (see link below).

It gives some more data on the air pollution issue and what the council plans to do on this subject in 2022-2027. It's well worth reading and commenting on by Lewisham residents and is probably typical of many other London boroughs.

Some comments on this consultation: This report and the associated consultation contain a mass of data and a few recommendations, but the information is hardly presented in a clear way.



That's opposed to those such as Ella Kissi-Debrah who was the subject of a recent inquest (i.e. the particularly vulnerable or suffering from other medical

The report repeatedly refers to WHO guidelines which are not the legal limits set by EU and UK regulations (see link below). The WHO limits are much lower and are not necessarily those justifiable by scientific data on health impacts.

The report emphasises the health effects of exposure to nitrous oxides (NO<sub>2</sub>) despite the fact that there is no clear consensus on the long-term impacts of NO<sub>2</sub> – see the latest COMEAP report from the Government Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution (see link below). However it does say that “On average, annual mean NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations at both roadside and urban background monitoring locations have decreased between 2014 and 2020 by an average of 42% and 37% respectively”. You can see the trend in NO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Lewisham in the chart above. *Continued on next page.*



It is not the kind of document that an uninformed general member of the public will find digestible. I will try to pick out some of the salient points.

Firstly is there an air quality problem in Lewisham that is affecting the health of the general population?

conditions).

The report says: “An assessment of air quality in Lewisham has shown a decreasing trend in the levels of two pollutants, nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulate matter (PM) in recent years. However more needs to be done to meet the guidelines set out by the World Health Organisation”.

## Air Quality in Lewisham (Cont.)

Particulates (PM2.5 and PM10, particularly the former) are probably more of concern although here again Lewisham is within UK legal limits where the air quality is measured. Similarly here also the trend has been falling.

It is difficult to see from the report that air quality is a substantial problem in Lewisham so far as health impacts are concerned. The data is not there to show that.

The air quality has clearly been improving in the last few years, but this is not obviously down to any actions by the local council but from changes to the vehicle fleet, central government regulations, improved heating systems, etc.

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8. Reducing emissions from Council fleets.

Some of these measures may be beneficial but how much so is unclear.

In summary this report from Lewisham Council is a typical one. Policies are proposed with no clear cost/benefit justification and no obvious measures of success. Just as with the Lee Green LTN, there is no clear outcome that will indicate whether the scheme is a success and justify the expenditure on implementation.

Neither will it satisfy Lewisham residents who are being affected by worse air pollution because there are no specific actions proposed to tackle their complaints (for example air pollution near the South Circular).

However the Council has clearly taken up the public clamour by attempts to reduce car use, making walking and cycling the preferred choice of travel, reducing children's exposure by such measures as School Streets, and of course the LTNs.

Page 3 of the council's report attempts to provide further justification by mixing up air quality and the council's response to the alleged "climate emergency" as if improving NO2 or PM will have any impact on climate, when the latter is allegedly more related to CO2 emissions. There is no such link.

The council is adopting targets to reduce PM2.5 despite the fact that much of those pollutants come from outside the borough – indeed outside of London, even outside of the UK altogether, over which the council has no control.

The council's proposals for action include an expansion in monitoring activities (more diffusion

Even the proposed actions are unspecific and the on-line consultation form asks wishy-washy questions rather than specific ones. Do Lewisham residents, or their visitors, actually support "car-free" days for example?

UK and EU Air Quality Limits:  
<https://tinyurl.com/r2zdz8ye>

COMEAP  
<https://tinyurl.com/n2n5wbrn>

Air Quality and Vehicles: FFDF Report:  
<https://tinyurl.com/32e4e3dj>

Lewisham Air Quality Consultation:  
<https://tinyurl.com/3t4cjwdr>

There was very limited time to respond to the above consultation which closed on the 5th October.

tubes to monitor NO2 and new PM2.5 monitors) and raising public awareness by more social media activity. They also propose:

1. Reducing pollution in and around schools and extending school audits to other schools in polluted areas.
2. Enforcing the Non-Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM) Low Emission Zone.
3. Promoting and enforcing Smoke Control Zones.
4. Promoting and delivering energy efficiency retrofitting projects in workplaces and homes.
5. Installing Ultra-Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) infrastructure.
6. Improving walking and cycling infrastructure.
7. Regular Car Free days/temporary road closures in high footfall areas.



But the Freedom for Drivers Foundaton certainly did so, as we do with all public consultations that come to our notice.

<END>

### Follow us on Twitter

To get the latest news and comment on traffic and transport issues in London and the UK, you can follow us on Twitter.

Our Twitter handle is **@Drivers\_London**

Any new FFDF blog posts are notified by Twitter and you can of course respond with your own comments.

## Possible Diesel Emission Legal Claims

Solicitors Leigh Day are recruiting claimants for potential legal claims over the use of “cheat” devices in diesel cars to fool testing of emissions. From 2014, software which manipulated air pollution tests was discovered in vehicles from some car makers.

It particularly affected German makes such as VW and Mercedes but it is likely that other manufacturers were also involved.

The software recognized when the standardized emissions test was being done, and adjusted the engine to emit less during the test. The cars emitted much higher levels of pollution under real-world driving conditions.

Leigh Day, one of the larger UK legal firms, are now working on claims for BMW, Citroen, Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), Ford, Mercedes-Benz, MINI, Peugeot, Vauxhall, Volvo, Nissan/Renault, Porsche, Audi, Seat, Skoda and Volkswagen vehicle owners.

They believe that there may have been ‘defeat devices’ used in the vehicles which were unlawful under UK law and consequently, there are potentially hundreds of thousands of unlawfully polluting vehicles on the roads in the UK.

They believe that owners of the affected vehicles should be compensated because they were mis-sold these vehicles, which were advertised as being more environmentally friendly with lower NOx emissions. Increased levels of NOx emissions are possibly harmful to the environment and to the health of children and adults.

Leigh Day would represent claimants on a ‘No Win-No Fee’ basis under a Damages-Based Agreement (DBA).

The costs of pursuing such a claim would be covered by litigation funding agreements with third parties and with insurance to cover the risks of adverse costs if the case was lost. Costs might consume up to 36% of any successful claim.

You do of course need to make your own decision about whether to join the claims which would be pursued as Group Litigation cases as we cannot provide legal advice, but a quick review of what they say suggests it is worthy of further consideration.

However you need to read the proposed contract of 30 pages carefully before you sign it and there are a number of limitations on vehicles covered.



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As with all litigation, the outcome is likely to be uncertain and any successful claim is likely to take several years to conclude.

For more information see: <https://tinyurl.com/57v9bvww>

## IPCC Report – The Implications for Drivers

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have published a report that predicts in stark terms both the historic and predicted changes to the earth’s climate from human activities. This is what they say in the accompanying press release: “Scientists are observing changes in the Earth’s climate in every region and across the whole

climate system, according to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report, released today. Many of the changes observed in the climate are unprecedented in thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of years, and some of the changes already set in motion—such as continued sea level rise—are irreversible over hundreds to thousands of years”.

However they also say that “strong and sustained reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) and other greenhouse gases would limit climate change. While benefits for air quality would come quickly, it could take 20-30 years to see global temperatures stabilize”.

Although there are a few people who do not accept the scientific consensus in the IPCC report, Governments are likely to accept the findings and implement

## Follow the Blog

The FFDF has a blog where many of the articles herein first appeared. It is present here: <https://freedomfordrivers.blog/>  
To get the latest news as it appears, follow the blog.

policies accordingly. This is already happening with the UK being at the forefront of measures to reduce carbon emissions which are seen as the main cause of global warming.

With the UK Government’s “net zero by 2050” policy we are already seeing major impacts and the imposition of enormous costs on many aspects of our life. All of this is reinforced by media coverage of floods and wild fires that are typically blamed on climate change.  
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## IPCC Report (Cont.)

Many such reports are anecdotal in nature – they may simply be random events that occur for non-specific reasons, while reporting of such events is now more common in the modern connected world. But the IPCC report does say “It is virtually certain that hot extremes (including heatwaves) have become more frequent and more intense across most land regions since the 1950s, while cold extremes (including cold waves) have become less frequent and less severe, with high confidence that human-induced climate change is the main driver of these changes”.

They also say that heavy precipitation events have increased since the 1950s over most land areas and it is likely that human-induced climate change is the

This could mean a rise of 2 to 3 metres in sea levels if warming is limited to 1.5 °C or 19 to 22 metres with 5 °C of warming!

With so many of the world’s cities on seaboard you can see that flood defences may be totally inadequate to cope with such rises and incapable of being built to resist them. Investments in City of London property would be one casualty. The current Thames flood barrier may be overwhelmed in future years even if GHG emissions stop growing. London is already very vulnerable to road flooding due to a Victorian drainage system while people numbers and buildings have grown apace.

The changes will likely affect the Northern Hemisphere more than the Southern, and there is some good news. For example, the reports says that the growing season has lengthened by two

cause. It has also contributed to increases in agricultural and ecological droughts.

The IPCC report is effectively a call for action and that will no doubt be reinforced by the upcoming COP26 summit in Glasgow in November where politicians will be promoting their virtuous visions no doubt. Whether they turn into actions remains to be seen – the past experience suggests they may only turn into token gestures. Economic decisions often thwart the best policies.

What happens if we don’t cut CO<sub>2</sub>, and methane and other carbon emissions? The IPCC report gives a number of scenarios based on scientific models of differing levels of emissions. Under the high and very high GHG emissions scenarios, global warming of 2°C (relative to 1850–1900) would be exceeded during the 21st century. Global warming of 2°C would be extremely likely

days per decade since the 1950s in the Northern Hemisphere. Farming might extend further north and unproductive land brought into use, but droughts might also remove a lot of marginal land from farming activity. These impacts will be greatly affected by the increase in GRH emissions.

Who can really affect the emissions? Only the big emitters such as the USA, China and Russia can have much impact. The UK produces less than 2% of world emissions.

Does the decarbonisation of transport, particularly in the UK, help at all? In reality not. For example, converting users to electric cars is likely to have minimal impact because the energy requirement and associated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to construct the batteries and make the steel for the car bodies offsets most of

to be exceeded in the intermediate scenario and under the very low and low GHG emissions scenarios, global warming of 2°C is unlikely to be exceeded.

That might seem to be good news, but because of the time lag of the impact of changes in emissions, under the high emissions scenario their best estimate is of a temperature rise of 2.4 °C by 2041-2060 and 4.4 °C by 2081-2100.

The latter would be disastrous for many parts of the world with increases in the intensity and frequency of hot extremes (heatwaves and heavy precipitation).

The Arctic might become ice free in summer under all the scenarios and sea levels will rise “for centuries to millennia due to continuing deep ocean warming and ice sheet melt”.



the likely benefit. The cost of building a network of charging points and enhancing the electric grid to cope will also be high. Investing in electric car makers or buying electric cars is not going to save the planet.

The big problem which the IPCC report does not cover is that GRH emissions are directly related to the size of the human population and their activities. Particularly what they consume, where they live and how they earn an income.

Unless there is a concerted effort to halt the growth in population and to restrict urbanisation, I doubt that the growth in GRH emissions will be halted. More population means more farming to feed the people and that is a big contributor to methane emissions which is a significant GRH factor.

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## IPCC Report (Cont.)

This is highlighted in the IPCC report. Similarly construction of homes and offices is a big contributor. Nobody has yet figured out how to produce cement without generating carbon. Hence the suggestion that we should revert to constructing houses out of wood. Investing in growing trees for timber might help. but that is a 20+ years project and it can take 50 years to grow to harvestable size for timber, or longer in northern latitudes.

In conclusion, it's worth reading the IPCC report (see link below) and pondering how you think the Government should deal with these issues.

Please don't fall into the trap of encouraging your local council to declare a "climate change emergency" as some have already done.

Their initiatives such as closing roads to restrict traffic and persuading everyone to cycle will have no impact whatsoever. Gesture politics is what we do not need.

Even the UK Government alone will have no impact unless they can persuade other major countries to take suitable steps. But will they is the key question?

If they don't all we can do is to try to mitigate the impacts by weather proofing our properties and the transport network while purchasing air conditioning to cope with the heatwaves.

I am sure some readers of this article will consider that I am being too defeatist and that we can all contribute to reducing the problem by eating less meat, looking at the food miles of what we consume, cutting out long holiday flights, changing your central heating boiler, reducing investments in oil/gas/coal producers and other peripheral affectations.

But only Governments can really tackle the problem which we should all encourage them to do.

The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report is here: <https://tinyurl.com/e262xd34>

Roger Lawson



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## Making Electric Vehicles Practical

Two of the reasons why people do not buy electric cars are:

- 1) The limited range before a battery recharge is required; and
- 2) The time it takes to recharge the battery when required. Who wants to break a long journey for an hour or even 30 minutes while waiting for a recharge?

But the Government has just announced £91 million of funding for low carbon auto tech including hydrogen engines and ultra-fast charging batteries.

Electric vehicle (EV) batteries with a range similar to internal combustion engines and which can charge in as little as 12 minutes are among projects awarded £91 million of government and industry funding.

Let us hope these projects come to fruition successfully before all new internal combustion engine cars are banned.

For more details see: <https://tinyurl.com/3jdxpc42>

## Electric Cars – Government Encouragement and User Experience

The Transport Secretary has issued an announcement encouraging drivers to go electric. It includes the release of a new app that helps UK drivers see which electric vehicles would best suit their lifestyle. In addition there will be additional support to small businesses and renters to install EV charging points. See Reference 1 below for more details.

The free app is named EV8 Switch and I downloaded and tried it out. It is not exactly clear how to install it and after ten days usage and driving several hundred miles in total there was no apparent data to analyse even though it was clearly recording data. But it was obvious that it was consuming a lot of cpu cycles and running down the phone battery so I deleted it. If anyone else tries it with success, please let me know whether you found it useful.

Coincidentally I happened to meet up with a couple of people who I used to work with but had not met for 20 years. One had bought an electric bike plus a Jaguar XKR recently. The other had bought a Tesla Model S five years ago. He was exceedingly happy with it.

As a company car user he saves on tax and charging is very low cost.

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### Electric Cars (Cont.)

In fact although he can charge at home he does not do so because he can charge it for free at a Tesla Supercharger facility (free charging seems to be something only on offer for limited periods of time). He has never run out of power while driving it.

No doubt some readers will say that they cannot afford a Tesla - current list price of a Long Range Model S is £73,990 and a Model 3 is from £42,500. But prices have been falling and there are of course cheaper electric cars on the market (but new ones might be on long lead times).

You do save on running costs even if the capital cost is high. It is very clear that electric cars are perfectly practical for most car users and with shortages of petrol/diesel at filling stations because of the recent panic over

fuel deliveries, they can have distinct advantages!

I will certainly be considering an electric vehicle when my current diesel car is due for replacement. I don't switch vehicles very often because depreciation is the major cost of any car so it is best to only replace them when they become unreliable or expensive to maintain.

Incidentally, Former Top Gear presenter Quentin Willson has quit the motoring lobby group he co-founded in 2010, accusing the organisation of peddling "urban myths" about electric vehicles. Mr Willson said he cut ties with FairFuelUK because he was "unhappy with the direction the lobby group was going and their lack of environmental sensibilities". That is of course similar to my concerns about the stance of the ABD from which I departed recently.

Roger Lawson  
Reference 1:  
<https://tinyurl.com/44nuxdad>

### Would Micro Cars and Cargo Bikes Help?

Two initiatives that might help to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution in big cities are the promotion of "micro" cars and cargo bikes. The former take up less space on the road and the latter might remove a lot of trips by LGVs to deliver goods.

Micro cars such as the BMW/Isetta or Messerschmitt KR200, otherwise known as "bubble cars" at the time, were popular in the 1950s as they provided very cheap transport with a lower tax rate.

From my personal experience of a ride in one they were uncomfortable and very noisy – like sitting in a metal can with a motorcycle engine next to you.



western economies with a few exceptions. One such exception was the Suzuki Cappuccino (see photo above) which my wife owned for a while. It might look like a full size car but in fact was less than 11 feet long. Leg

room was OK but otherwise the cockpit was cramped for those of even average size.

Japan encouraged the production of very small vehicles by lower taxation on "kei" cars that had limits on engine capacity – more latterly 660 cc. These proved very popular in Japan and a few other countries but not in

There are now some new vehicles being sold that attempt to meet the need for very small transport.

These include the Citroen AMI which is available in France but

not the UK. With a battery under its floor (it's a BEV electric vehicle), the Ami weighs 485kg, has a range of 43 miles and a regulated top speed of 28mph. But it looks like a brick.



A similar vehicle but somewhat more stylish and which is available in the UK is the electric Renault Twizy (see photo above). It has a range of up to 56 miles but typically somewhat less.

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### Micro Cars and Cargo Bikes (Cont.)

It does not get great reviews in the motoring press and is rated as expensive.

There are competitive vehicles such as the petrol-engined Kia Picanto, Hyundai i10 and Volkswagen up! plus the battery-powered VW e-up! (range up to 159 miles) and SEAT Mii Electric.

My oldest grandson just bought a Picanto as his first car having recently passed his driving test and it's very impressive in terms of facilities. It looks like a conventional small car.

Another possible contender in the market is the Microlino (not yet available in the UK). This is an electric vehicle which is similar in styling to the old BMW/Isetta and with a good range.

The pricing of extremely small vehicles tends not to be much less than more conventional vehicles which may be one reason why they have never taken off in the UK. They may be seen as good for driving short distances in big cities but in reality they can be tricky to pilot in heavy traffic where there are much larger vehicles such as buses and HGVs who may not see you.

The countries where they have taken off have been those where there are substantial tax benefits or other fiscal encouragements. In the UK these have been missing. For example, vehicles such as the Renault Twizy qualify as a "light quadricycle". Such vehicles have to weigh less than 350kg (not including batteries if they are electric) and have a top speed of less than 28mph. But there's no plug-in grant money available from the government for the Twizy because a) it doesn't travel the required distance on electric power alone and b) in official terms, it's a

quadricycle, not a car; however there's no road tax to pay. They will not be exempt from the London Congestion Charge after 2025 though.

There could certainly be more incentives to drive very small vehicles in the UK particularly in big cities where they would be environmentally better and ease the parking problems. But in London Sadiq Khan seems keener to discourage all vehicles and to raise the maximum in taxes from them.

#### Cargo Bikes

Another way to reduce traffic congestion and cut emissions is to promote the use of E-Cargo bikes. The Government has provided £400,000 via the Department for Transport in 2021/22 for the purchase of e-cargo bikes. Funding covers up to 40% of the total cost of an e-cargo bike, up to a maximum of £2,500 for two-wheel models and £4,500 for three-wheel models.



See <https://tinyurl.com/472huvv6> for details.

Photo right is from the Energy Savings Trust's document "Electrifying Last Mile Deliveries" which covers the benefits and applications of cargo bikes, electric vans and micro vehicles. There are certainly many options now available if people wish to dispense with the conventional "white van".

Whether they are easy to maintain and cost effective to run I think will only become clear after more user experience.

Roger Lawson



This was a false allegation which clearly damaged my reputation and the campaign I have been running against the road closures in Lewisham. All that I did was to ask our contacts to give their views on the matter directly to her as she had alleged that she had received many emails

backing her support for the LTN in Lee Green.

It is surely proper to encourage members of the public to give their views to their elected councillors. That is how local democracy is supposed to work.

After numerous reminders the Council's Monitoring Officer has finally issued a judgement on the matter. *Continued on next page.*



### Justice Denied, Twice in One Week

In October 2020 your editor made an "Ethics Complaint" about Councillor Octavia Holland in Lewisham after she issued a tweet which said I had organised for our contacts to "...bombard me with abusive emails....".

## Justice (Cont.)

She has rejected my complaint on the basis that “It was not an unforeseen consequence of such encouragement.... that Councillor Holland should in fact receive emails where such objections are raised, including in vehement tones, given the apparently heated public views around the issue”.

It would seem that encouraging members of the public to give their views to their local Councillors on topical issues is not to be encouraged in case they express their views too forcibly and that Councillors can make false allegations without proper grounds.

### Councillor Octavia Holland Departing

But on the same day I received the above judgement Councillor Holland issued this tweet: “@OctaviaLewisham

My news to add to the pot: I have confirmed this week I will not be restanding in 2022. Being a Cllr is a privilege and I am very grateful for the chance & support I have had. But as a single, working parent with a child about to enter his teens I need to be around more. Over the next 4 years and despite many understanding colleagues I can't get away from the fact I want to be here to make dinner, help with homework, be a listening ear. I'll be working hard until April, & looking forward to supporting the many brill candidates coming through”.

At least we have got rid of an incompetent and dishonest Councillor. She is lucky I did not pursue a legal case for defamation.

Next time I will. Let us hope that any new Councillors proposed by the Labour Party in Lee Green are less divisive and will actually listen to all their electorate, not just a minority of car haters.

### Councillors Not Responding

I have seen numerous complaints about Lewisham Councillors not responding to comments received from their electorate, and not just about Councillor Holland. For example this was an email I received recently: “FYI, I live in Lewisham's Blackheath ward and can vouch for the fact that none of our 3 councillors - Bonavia, De Ryk and Campbell all Labour - will answer emails from any of their constituents on any subject and haven't done so since pre-Covid days. Between them they rake in £50K's worth of allowances for attendance at meetings and their places on Mayor Egan's cabinet. What exactly are they for!!”

Many councillors in Lewisham do not seem to understand that they have a responsibility to listen to their electorate and represent their views. For example the Local Government Association says this in one of their publications



about how to be an effective councillor: “Representing local voices – being a channel of communication between the communities you serve and the council, representing the views of others and speaking up for the unheard, e.g. younger, older or disabled people...”. See <https://tinyurl.com/6tdxarn3> for details.

How can they do that if they are unwilling to participate in any dialogue with members of the public? The role of councillors is onerous and requires many hours of work but they should not be taking on the role if they cannot handle it properly.

### Hackney Judicial Review over LTN Rejected

A judgement in the High Court by Mr Justice Dove rejected a judicial review claim brought by

Horrendous Hackney Road Closures (HHRC) against the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) brought in by Hackney Council.

There were several grounds for the claim including the failure to comply with the Traffic Management Act 2004, a failure to have regard to the impact of the road closures on air quality, a failure to comply with the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 and a failure to undertake proper public consultation. All the grounds were rejected. Experimental Traffic Orders (ETOs) were used to introduce the measures and the judge said that the Covid-19 guidance to introduce such measures urgently by the Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps) justified the ETOs and also justified the lack of consultation.

For the full details of this judgement see: <https://tinyurl.com/u67n7vp8>

This is a disappointing judgement but it was always going to be a difficult case and it does not mean that other similar legal challenges to LTNs may not succeed.

The main promoter of the LTNs in Hackney was Councillor Jon Burke. In January he announced he was resigning with the intention to move to the North of England. There seem to be a number of councillors in London who have been stepping down after promoting LTNs. They seem to be following the old proverb “If you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen”. Perhaps if they took a more consensual approach to local politics they would not need to quit. Roger Lawson



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### Address Changes

Don't forget to notify us of any change of email address. You may otherwise miss out on future copies of this newsletter without noticing that they are no longer being delivered.

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