

Written evidence submitted by the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies (EVP0019)

Zero emission vehicles and Road pricing: Response of the London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies

The London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies is an umbrella group for over 120 such Societies across London. Most strongly support measures to improve air quality, including the swift ban on new diesel and petrol vehicles. This response has been prepared by our Planning Environment and Transport Committee, initially meeting by “Zoom” and subsequently by exchange of e-mails.

We recognise that electric vehicles are not a total panacea. The electricity has to be generated somewhere, and more importantly particulates from pneumatic tyres will continue to have an adverse effect on air quality. It is essential that charging electric vehicles should not involve unnecessary mileage.

The removal of older petrol and diesel vehicles may prove more problematic than the early end to availability of new vehicles. As they become fewer in number, the number of outlets selling fuel will diminish and there is a danger that unnecessary mileage will result in search of fuel.

There will also be a case for rallies of older buses and cars. It is important that our heritage should not be lost.

We see the case for road pricing as far more clear cut. The Congestion Charge introduced into London at the start of the century proved a great boon for bus travel and for air quality when it was first introduced. Gradually however the benefits have been eroded. Congestion has returned, and while support for cycling and walking would be welcome too little has been done to encourage walking and some of the measures to encourage cycling have been at the expense of bus lanes. Many of our members feel they have reached the age when cycling is no longer a realistic option. They rely on buses and convenience is of greater concern than cost (which for many is zero). Amenity Societies attract long standing members of the community more easily than future generations.

The Congestion Charge Zone scheme has been described as clunky and we share that view. It fails to discriminate between areas of high or low demand for road space, or quiet times of day against busy times. A comprehensive road pricing scheme would free road space for buses when they are most needed, and would also enable TfL to tailor fares to availability of space without compromising the objective of achieving modal shift towards sustainable modes of transport.

Any fundamental change such as the introduction of road pricing is bound to meet resistance from the minority who have been used to the convenience of a private car and are reluctant to lose or pay more for its convenience. The principle of paying more to travel at popular times is though well established on the railways. For those with certain disabilities, the car may be the only means of getting out and about. However, public transport has made great strides towards welcoming people of limited mobility and the priority it is afforded should reflect the growing extent to which the bus in particular lives up to the Latin word that gave it its name. A reduction in traffic would reduce congestion for those who genuinely need a private car.

The Congestion Charge Zone (CGZ) was successful when first introduced because it was preceded by improvements to bus services. Following a similar formula in outer London, if road pricing were to extend there, would be more demanding because bus services are less frequent and less direct, resulting in greater use of the private car than in inner London and the consequent congestion that further undermines the bus service. Nottingham has demonstrated that it is possible to offer an attractive public transport service beyond central and inner London.

We are not qualified to comment on the detail of an effective scheme beyond saying that it should be workable and difficult to defraud. The experience of the CGZ showed that provision of alternatives to the private car are necessary: there is now a need to provide alternatives to the white van including vibrant high streets. It matters hugely *how* low traffic neighbourhoods and road pricing are introduced.

Appendix

The Transport Select Committee invites written evidence on the following terms of reference by 17 February, 2021.

Accelerating the shift to zero emission vehicles

- The feasibility, opportunities, and challenges presented by the acceleration of the ban of the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles to 2030;
- The actions required by Government and private operators to encourage greater uptake of electric vehicles and the infrastructure required to support them;
- The particular challenges around decarbonising buses and how these should be addressed;
- The Government's ambition to phase out the sale of new diesel heavy goods vehicles, including the scope to use hydrogen as an alternative fuel.

Road pricing

- The case for introducing some form of road pricing and the economic, fiscal, environmental and social impacts of doing so;
- Which particular road pricing or pay-as-you-drive schemes would be most appropriate for the UK context and the practicalities of implementing such schemes;
- The level of public support for road pricing and how the views of the public need to be considered in the development of any road pricing scheme;
- The lessons to be learned from other countries who are seeking to decarbonise road transport and/or utilise forms of road pricing.

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