

Future Transport London campaigns for sustainable solutions to London's transport problems favouring public transport, walking and cycling over private cars. Membership £15 a year. Please join us. Contact Chris Barker. 46 Redston Road, N8 7HJ. chrisbarker46@gmail.com phone: 020 8347 7684.

The newsletter is edited by Chris Barker. Contributions are welcomed. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of Future Transport London.

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TfL finances - what next?



It always seemed short sighted that the second bail-out agreement should end on March 31st when purdah would be in process, and so it proved. After failing to respond to the Transport Commissioner's attempts to reach an earlier agreement, the DfT offered a further extension of the existing scheme to May 17th.

At least Sadiq will now be able to go into the next round of talks with a fresh mandate – for a year he has been on borrowed time. Now he has been elected for a new term a new team of ministers at DfT is likely. Partly Sadiq owes his popularity to the fact that his critics attack him for the wrong reasons.

The fare freeze, which was limited to TfL controlled fares causing some anomalies, is repeatedly cited as costing £640m. This figure takes no account of the passengers that

would have been lost because fares had become unaffordable. There was no logical basis for the fares Khan inherited, in fact to my mind, the weakness of the fare freeze was that it enshrined in place the previous Mayor's ludicrous loading of fare increases on those least able to pay and reducing fares for those travelling furthest. What matters is that fares should dissuade those with the choice from choosing their private car and should not dissuade the least well off from taking employment on the grounds that the costs outweighed the pay.

The true cost of driving, and the availability of public transport for all journeys without a serious time penalty have to be addressed ahead of fares policy. Many commentators have expressed dismay at the return to the '+1' in the fare increase formula, particularly as the Retail

Price Index was at a peak in the relevant month, at a time when public transport needs to win back custom.

The problems with Crossrail were, as Christian Wolmar has written, not really down to the Mayor either. How we laughed when the Director of Northern Powerhouse Rail told a House of Lords Select committee that having two masters was a strength, particularly as HS2 Limited was one of them. Fortunately that weakness in accountability of Crossrail has been rectified, but there is unlikely to be any significant income from the scheme until 2022/23. Despite the Commissioner's confidence, it is still far from certain that Crossrail can be completed within its revised budget. The most likely scenario is for something less than the full scheme when the central section opens. This could mean some stations like Whitechapel

and Bond Street not open on day 1, some points of access/egress not open, and other economies.

The remaining issues include the concessionary schemes, either reinstatement of the 'temporary' morning peak restriction or the imposition of further restrictions. Of significance to more people is the possibility of service cuts: buses in central London, tubes and underground services at the extremities, and the continued absence of the night tube/Overground. During the pandemic, it has been noticeable that while many buses and underground trains have been transporting air rather than people, others have failed to achieve social distancing, even outside the peak hours identified in regular TfL bulletins. Whereas bus drivers can decline to open the access door, there is absolutely no control of numbers on underground trains. If there is to be a concerted effort to restore faith in public transport before the social distancing rules are lifted there would need to be more trains rather than fewer, more than the signaling system can accommodate. Up to now we have had mixed messages. The financial settlement may well rely on a continued mix which is remote from reality, otherwise known as "fudge".

Andrew Bosi





What's happening to Oxford Street?

Oxford Street. Two words that used to conjure up images of one of the finest shopping streets in the world. No longer unfortunately. A combination of our adoption of online shopping and alternative destinations has left this famous street a shadow of its former self.

So why haven't the authorities actually come up with any radical solutions to the problem? It's mainly to do with the lack of political leadership and the strong convictions needed to get real change. You would have thought that this staunchly Conservative borough would not worry about elections every four years but they do. Each of the three wards abutting Oxford Street have always been firmly Tory controlled but over the last decade much less so and the majority party is always worried about the ramification of any decisions that might bring its control of the Council into

doubt's over 10 years now since I first became involved in the Oxford Street debate and we've had a whole succession of different leaders and committee chairs who talk the talk but do not walk the walk. Everyone knows what needs to happen to rejuvenate the street but all we have had is a succession of woolly statements and reports that have quietly gathered dust on a shelf in some Westminster Council office somewhere.

The latest of these is OSD - the Oxford Street District. Trailed as a radical overhaul of Oxford Street itself and the surrounding areas it's full of good intentions but has ended up, in the words of the launch, as a 'refreshing' exercise. So we are getting a lot of greenery and some wider pavements which are great but don't even scratch the surface of the fundamental problems which have to be dealt with before Oxford Street returns to something like its former glory.

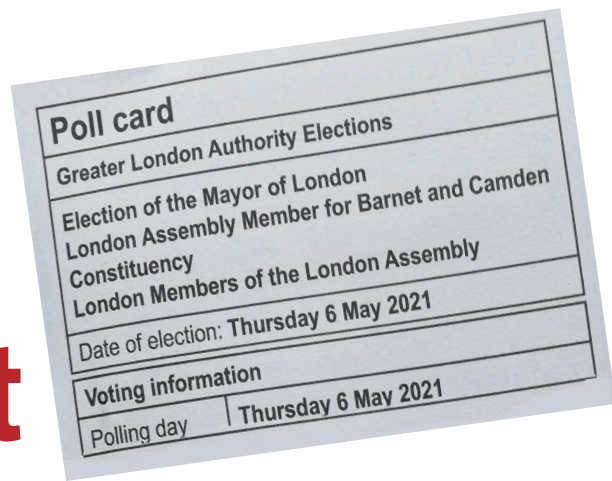
The principal issue which terrifies the politicians is the traffic domination of the centre of our capital city. Until we have a really restrictive approach to the motor car the area will simply continue to be a congested, polluted and particularly dangerous succession of streets which a decreasing number of people will want to visit. Why should they when they can go to their local Westfield or sit at home and order what they want from the comfort of their armchair?

So there is little or no modal filtering and no special treatment for our beautiful and adjacent garden squares which could become the lungs we need to escape from Oxford Street itself; no removal of the excess of parking spaces; no banning of diesel cars completely; no comprehensive pedestrianisation plans; no progressive traffic reduction programme over future years. And the list goes on and on.

From years of dealing with Westminster and its politicians I've learnt that the only way forward on our agenda is to take two and a bit steps forward closely followed by two steps back! So things are better than they were and they understand the issues which for years they couldn't contemplate. They've committed a minimum of £150 million to the project so the money is there even if the political conviction is not. Our job is to continue to try and persuade the powers that be that the active travel philosophy in all its wide parameters is where we should be. Hopefully in years to come we will wake up to quieter, less polluted, greener and traffic free streets but it will need a new generation of environmentally committed politicians to step into the firing line to get the really major improvements in Oxford Street that London wants and needs.

Peter Hartley

Mayoral candidates on transport



Now we know that Sadiq Khan's reign as Mayor of London is continuing for another three years it might be interesting to see what he and the principle other candidates had to say about transport issues.

Here are some nuggets from Sadiq Khan for Labour, Shaun Bailey for the Conservatives, Luisa Porritt for the Lib Dems and Sian Berry for the Greens.

Sadiq Khan. His main priority is to put TfL on a sound, sustainable financial footing and continue to invest in public transport to ensure it is safe, affordable and reliable, keeping fares as low as possible. Beyond that air quality and combatting climate change are priorities. His aim is for 80 per cent of all trips in London to be made on foot, by cycle or using public transport by 2041.

He will investigate proposals next generation of road user charging systems and extending the ultra low emission zone to the North and South Circular roads. He is still in favour of building the Silvertown Tunnel. He is in favour of building more low traffic neighbourhoods. He will continue to press the government to allow him to take over more of London's rail system.

Shaun Bailey. Says London's transport network has to be managed properly but would scrap proposals for the ULEZ charge to be extended, would not charge for driving in London and would fund 30 minutes free parking in outer London high streets. To clean the air he would establish a zero-emission bus fleet and interest-free loans for taxi drivers to buy zero-emission taxis. He would scrap low traffic neighbourhoods which were 'imposed on communities without their support'.

He pledged to create a new City Hall-owned infrastructure bank to help fund transport projects in the capital including free travel for under 16s and over 60s. His manifesto says that his plan would 'attract private sector finance into large scale, costly infrastructure projects' in order to get projects like Crossrail 2, the Hammersmith Bridge repairs and the Bakerloo extension funded.

Luisa Porritt. She says she supports prioritising pedestrians and cyclists over private cars and supports Sadiq Khan's Transport Strategy but appeals for interim targets to

monitor progress. She believes that a road pricing scheme must be introduced and is opposed to the building of the Silvertown Tunnel. She favours transferring more of the suburban rail system to TfL. She pledged her support for yet to be approved infrastructure projects such as Crossrail 2 and the extension of the Bakerloo line, while also pledged to spend more on the repair of the closed Hammersmith Bridge.

Sian Berry. Sian would improve public transport and would want to help people walk and cycle on safe streets to nearby shops and services and to reduce all traffic miles by 40 per cent by 2026 and 60 per cent by 2030. She supports the extension of low traffic neighbourhoods and opposes the building of the Silvertown Tunnel.

She would immediately exclude the most polluting cars, vans and lorries from central London, cancel road-building plans and oppose all airport expansion. She would close London's City airport and use the site for housing. She would speed up the replacement of London's bus fleet with hybrid or electric vehicles.

She is in favour of a road pricing scheme eventually replacing ULEZ and the Congestion Charge and would narrow the differential on tube fares so that people who have to make long commuting journeys are not penalised. Ultimately she is in favour of a flat fare system. She favours the takeover of London's commuter rail system by TfL.

COME BACK TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Throughout the lockdown passengers have been warned against using public transport and urged to only travel when absolutely necessary and then preferably on foot or cycle. People have even been urged to use their car rather than public transport. The result has been a catastrophic fall in the number of passengers. In London numbers fell by 97 per cent on the tube and 86 percent on buses during the first lockdown. Passenger numbers are recovering and in April bus usage reached 62 per cent of pre-Covid numbers although only 34 per cent for the tube.

Recent research has suggested that the danger of picking up an infection on a train or bus is minimal providing passengers wear masks and keep away from each other, particularly that there is no sign of infection lingering on surfaces such as grab handles or bell pushes, but official announcements have yet to recognise the fact.

TfL are now initiating a campaign to reverse this boycott and encourage people once more to use their trains and buses.

New tube lines

Could there be better ways of linking North London with the City and West End and relieving pressure on Euston? I think there could and suggest changes to the routing of Crossrail 2 and a new tube line to divert many travellers to the west.

The new tube line would:

- By going through Camden Town relieve pressure on Euston and Euston Square so they could cope with Euston's additional arrivals wanting to travel toward Great Portland Street, the West End or Victoria
- Make a direct connection between Victoria and Bond

Street to relieve Victoria and better connect it to Paddington and to all lines that serve Baker Street.

- Relieve congestion on roads because of the better public transport connections.

Diverting Crossrail 2 further east would:

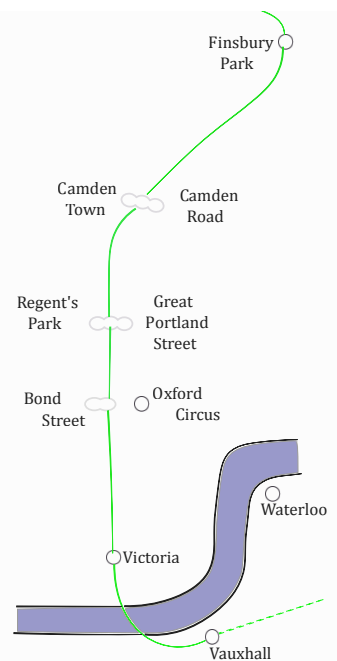
- By going east-north-east to Farringdon instead of serving Euston, better serve the City. North East London would have better access to Thameslink. The route through Farringdon would enable CR2 to serve Old Street, relieving the Great Northern and connecting Waterloo and Farringdon would be invaluable and support modal shift of long distance journeys
- By serving Hackney Downs & Central and Homerton, reduce pressure south of Highbury & Islington on the Victoria and Great Northern lines
- By serving the Enfield Town line would expand the number of destinations and interchanges accessible for these

passengers. The CR2 service through Tottenham Hale would be as planned in the published route

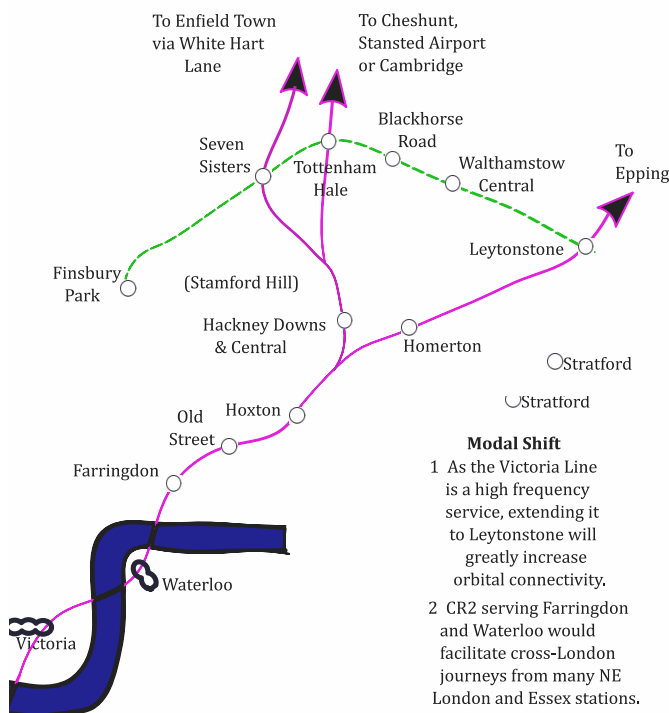
- By serving Leytonstone and taking over the existing line to Epping (already of a gauge for CR2) would relieve the Central Line southwest of Leytonstone.
- Extending the Victoria Line to Leytonstone would make Walthamstow Central to Stratford a quicker journey and facilitate orbital journeys to or from any of the twenty stations currently served by the Central Line north of Stratford. The extension would not result in overloading of the Victoria Line as CR2 would provide a much quicker service to Victoria or to the West End via Farringdon.

Rob Adamson

A new tube line



An updated Crossrail 2 - better connecting SW London to the City, and giving many stations in NE London access to more interchanges



Modal Shift

- 1 As the Victoria Line is a high frequency service, extending it to Leytonstone will greatly increase orbital connectivity.
- 2 CR2 serving Farringdon and Waterloo would facilitate cross-London journeys from many NE London and Essex stations.

To Clapham Junction & existing southern branches (perhaps directly instead of via Balham)

LTNs UNDER ATTACK

There has always been vociferous opposition to the installation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, chiefly from car drivers who object to finding that their journeys take a little bit more time.

Using emergency powers local authorities, with the enthusiastic support of Transport Minister Grant Shapps, have installed temporary LTNs and other traffic calming measures to create more space for people to walk, cycle, scoot or wheel safely as a way to help manage the coronavirus pandemic.

The whole Streetspace scheme has now been cast into doubt by a High Court ruling. The case was brought by the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association (LTDA) and the cab drivers' United Trade Action Group specifically over the banning of taxis for a stretch of Bishopsgate in the City. This was found not only to be an irrational restriction

on the rights of taxi drivers but also to discriminate against disabled people who are more likely to need to use taxis. But the judgment went further than the narrow case of taxis in Bishopsgate. The judge said 'the proposals to prevent or restrict vehicular access widely across London's streets plainly had potential adverse impacts upon people with protected characteristics, namely, the elderly and disabled, who rely on taxis and private cars to make door-to-door journeys, and could not reasonably be expected to cycle, walk or use public transport'. On these grounds the judge ruled that the whole of the Streetspace scheme needs to be substantially amended. TfL are appealing against this decision but meanwhile the case has prompted legal challenges against schemes introduced by a number of London boroughs.



'Erith - on the Elizabeth Line'

Extending Elizabeth Line into Kent

Should the Elizabeth Line be extended from its initial SE London terminus at Abbey Wood into Kent?

If so, how far? Major housing and leisure developments, planned between Bexley Riverside and Ebbsfleet Garden City, could put enormous strain on the road network unless public transport capacity and quality are increased sufficiently and in time. So, local authorities are trying to find all the answers with a government-funded study.

The current Thameslink service is scheduled to take about 40 minutes from Farringdon direct to Abbey Wood. The same journey will take only about 20 minutes via the Elizabeth Line when it opens. Not only much faster but, with 12 trains per hour (tph) in the peak, this Elizabeth Line branch will also be more frequent than current North Kent line services.

Ten miles from Abbey Wood at Northfleet, a new bridge for pedestrians and cyclists could give much improved interchange with Ebbsfleet International, only a quarter of a mile away as the crow flies. Eurostar and 140 mph Javelin trains, serving many destinations around Kent, call there on route to and from St Pancras International.

The Elizabeth line will open

with 25 kV AC electrification throughout, but its 70 trains have passive provision to become dual voltage (like Thameslink and Javelin trains) and expand operations onto third rail 750V DC lines such as North Kents. However, Transport for London is reported to be reluctant for Elizabeth Line trains to share tracks with complex North Kent line services. So, one of the options being studied would extend the Elizabeth Line from Abbey Wood along a new, dedicated pair of third rail tracks six miles to Dartford, with all 12 tph terminating there.

The Crossrail project was modified in late 2004 to reduce costs and risks by terminating the initial operation and overhead line at Abbey Wood but safeguarding directions still apply alongside sixteen miles of third rail track from there via Northfleet and Gravesend to Hoo Junction, where some Elizabeth Line trains could be stabled.

Another option would leave the Elizabeth line terminating at Abbey Wood but have direct Southeastern and Thameslink services between there and Northfleet augmented to 10 x 12-car trains per hour. Abbey Wood station was rebuilt without cross-platform interchange

to separate Elizabeth Line operations from North Kent's. It now has four platforms, arranged both sides of two 'islands' (one for the Elizabeth line, another for North Kent) linked by three footbridges, as well as lifts.

The rail options would variously require new service patterns, trains or tracks, longer, straighter platforms, better interchanges and/or stations rebuilt to the latest standards of accessibility.

The North Kent line is paralleled by the A102 and the A2

which provide a fast route for drivers to and from Central London and Canary Wharf and contribute to Blackwall tunnel congestion, which is routinely so bad that the Silvertown road tunnel is planned to relieve it.

Significantly improved rail services between Abbey Wood and Northfleet/Ebbsfleet could reduce or remove any case for the Silvertown tunnel: the money saved could help pay for the (currently unfunded) rail improvements.

Neil Roth

Silvertown Tunnel

The Silvertown Tunnel contracts are all signed and sealed but protesters are hoping that, even at this late hour, the project can be stopped. It is quite clear that any new road attracts traffic and Silvertown Tunnel can be no exception.

A group of 25 GPs, nurses and specialists – including experts in child health and respiratory disease – say the £2bn Silvertown tunnel project will funnel more traffic through some of the most deprived and polluted boroughs in the country – with a devastating impact on people's health. Ella Kissi-Debrah's mother (Ella is the eight year old little girl who, according to the coroner, died from the effects of air pollution outside her home) joined the protest citing the potentially devastating impact on young people's health. South East London Labour for a Green New Deal are pursuing a campaign to pass resolutions in the Labour Party, at ward and constituency level, opposing the tunnel project. The Unite community branch for East London has also passed a resolution opposing the project.



Safety standards for HGVs

HGVs are responsible for 15 per cent of fatal collisions in London whilst only making up three percent of vehicles. Part of the problem is the poor visibility which drivers of older HGVs have to contend with. In response to this issue TfL have established a Direct Vision Standard which will assign a star system to vehicles. From 1st March all HGVs operating in Greater London have had to achieve at least a one-star rating. To qualify vehicles have to have blind spot vision aids that provide the driver with a full view of the near-side vehicle, an audible warning system that alerts other road users of left-turn and reversing manoeuvres. Vehicles over 7.5 tonnes need to be fitted with a camera system that monitors blind spots and side panels to prevent cyclists and pedestrians from being dragged under the vehicle.

Further improvements which would earn more stars include a low level driving position and full-length glass doors as are becoming common on refuse vehicles.

Brent Cross

A new station at 'Brent Cross West' is now being constructed on the Midland Main Line in north London. It will have four 12-car platforms and be used by Thameslink trains. The station is being built by the London Borough of Barnet, which has agreed to provide open-ended subsidies if passenger numbers from expected development of the b expansion of the 1976 shopping centre by owner Hammerson has been abandoned, but a new plan is to rely on the developer Argent-Related to provide housing and offices.

A million pounds or so has also been found at the last minute to include passive provision for 'West London Orbital Railway' platforms at the station. That will mean two additional 8-car platforms if and when the WLO from Hendon Thameslink to Hounslow/Kew Bridge via Old Oak Common is opened. Any delay of that passive provision would have eventually cost

about ten times as much and needed extra line closures in the years ahead.

The London Overground WLO project is still proceeding, financed by the west London boroughs, plus continued but limited planning support from Transport for London.

EV charging

13 London boroughs have received funds to install electric vehicle charging points on lampposts. There is a huge cost advantage in making use of lampposts for charging. The infrastructure is already there and equipped with an electricity supply. The expectation is that most homes will be within easy reach of a charging point. In some cases the parking bay near the lamppost is a dedicated electric vehicle charging bay but, as numbers increase, it will become increasingly difficult to dedicate so much space for this particular activity. In most cases, therefore, there is no parking restriction but drivers looking for a spot near an equipped lamppost should be able to find one within a reasonable distance.

The roll out of electric vehicles is something to be welcomed if it encourages people to buy electric rather than fossil fuelled cars but it needs constantly saying that increasing numbers of cars are a problem for the environment and are no substitute for an increase in public transport, walking and cycling.

Uber

Uber lauds itself as a disruptive innovation. Well, it disrupts public transport, contributes to air pollution and congestion and exploits loopholes in employment law, enabling it to pay minimal wages and offer fares which, with more than one or two passengers, make rides cheaper than public transport. Its licence to operate in London was revoked in 2017 although it continued to operate whilst this was appealed. It subsequently got its licence back.

The law is now beginning to catch up with Uber. The fiction that drivers are independent contractors for which Uber has

no responsibility has been exposed. They are now to receive holiday pay and pension contributions and will be guaranteed the minimum wage whilst they are working. There is still a long way to go. 'Working' is interpreted by Uber to mean actually going to a job and carrying passengers and will not include periods when they are logged on to the app but are waiting for a call. Minimum wage is unlikely to mean much in this situation as drivers are almost bound to reach that rate when they are actually carrying passengers. The battle must now be to ensure drivers are paid for the entire time they are available for work.

If Uber workers are successful in their fight for proper employment protection one of the main planks of their business model will collapse. Low fares are dependent on cheap labour. Higher fares would reduce Uber's competitive position and encourage people to forsake it in favour of public transport. For the sake of the environment this would only be good news.

Hammersmith Bridge again

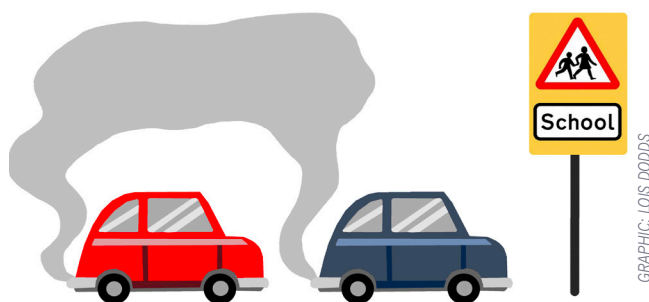
A temporary fix to Hammersmith Bridge might make it possible for it to be reopened during the coming summer, making the proposed ferry unnecessary. The proposal is to slot a double-decker structure on top of the present foundations which, it has been ascertained, are strong enough to support it. The top level would be for vehicles and the lower level for pedestrians and cyclists. It would first be opened to pedestrians and cyclists and the upper structure for vehicles would follow a couple of months later. It is expected that a £3 toll would be levied on vehicles.

Meanwhile a contract has been won by Thames Clipper to run a ferry service between two points near to the bridge. The proposed fare is the same as a bus fare. Concessionary passes will be accepted and the Hopper system means that passengers can continue on a bus without further payment.

Engines off, every stop

The Mayor has funded a scheme to clean up toxic air at schools in the worst polluted areas of the capital. He has launched a London Schools Pollution Helpdesk to support schools across the capital to deliver air quality audits, prioritising schools in areas still exceeding or nearly exceeding legal pollution levels. Audit recommendations for cutting pollution could include closing surrounding roads to traffic at school pick-up and drop-off times, walking and scooting campaigns, adding green infrastructure like green screens and tackling engine idling. It is claimed that the number of state schools with illegal levels of pollution has already been cut by 97 per cent.

The campaign is led by Idling Action London, set up by the City of London and Camden Council in 2016. In March they launched a four week advertising campaign to cut air pollution called 'Engine Off, Every Stop'. The campaign shows drivers that switching off their engine when pulled over is the easiest way to protect public health and make an immediate improvement to local air quality. They believe that if drivers were aware of the pollution created by idling and the dangers of that pollution, they would switch off.



GRAPHIC: LOIS DODDS