

Bromley Road Pricing

The following motion was passed at the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee of the London Borough of Bromley on the 19th March 2007:

Congestion charge extension and road pricing

This Council would oppose any proposal to extend congestion charging across London and particularly in Bromley, the Council also opposes the concept of road pricing as motorists already make a major contribution to general taxation.

**Proposed by Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP
Seconded by Cllr Neil Reddin**

The speech given in support of the resolution by Councillor Bennett was as follows (the report mentioned in the speech is present on the council's web site at: <http://sharepoint.bromley.gov.uk/Public%20Docs/05%20EL%20PDS%202202.doc>):

"This motion has been prompted by a report which went to the Environment and Leisure PDS on Traffic Congestion in Bromley on Feb 22nd 2007.

Buried deep in the report on Page 10 is the statement *'there is a very significant body of opinion in favour of introducing some kind of road charging, both across the UK and specifically in London, some time in the next ten to twenty years'*.

No proof for this statement or quantification as to who or what the *'significant body of opinion'* constitutes has been adduced. We know that the most recent *'significant body of opinion'* was the 1.8million who signed the petition against road pricing on the Number 10 website.

The report on page 15 at paragraph 3.72 asks members to *'consider the Council's approach to the use of charging policies in the longer term should congestion continue to worsen'*.

The report says that traffic in Bromley grew 10% in Bromley between 1994-2004 yet then notes that in Bromley Town Centre it dropped 5% between 2001-2005.

This motion makes it clear that adding more charges on to motorists who already pay large sums in the form of road fund tax, fuel duties and insurance tax is not something which this Council wishes to support.

No doubt we shall be told that CO2 emissions are creating global warming and that oil is a finite resource.

Of course, it is true that the internal combustion engine does produce pollution, however rapid improvements have been made in engine vehicle efficiency and reductions in pollution have been made. Oil is a finite resource, but again, forecasts of when it will run out have been constantly overtaken as new reserves are discovered, add to this the development of alternative forms of fuel the situation is not anywhere near as bad as some lobby groups would have us believe.

Behind many of these campaigns are the self satisfied faces of the New Left. Having lost the battle of ideas between Communism and the free society they now seek to shackle the individual by the introduction of puritan laws, which if some of them had their way, would result in none of us travelling further than we could walk.

The motor car has been a great boon to the individual citizen. Our lives have been immeasurably improved and friendship and lifestyle patterns have developed in ways which were not possible a 100 years ago.

The car cannot be uninvented and any policy which attempts to ignore this fact goes against the grain of human nature.

Of course, we should all consider carefully when and how we use our cars but with petrol over £4 a gallon most people are careful already. Where appropriate most of us use public transport. Thousands of Bromley residents - who own cars - commute by train and bus to work. However there are many journeys which would take 4-5 times as long if one was to use the bus and there are many which are simply impossible.

The motorist already pays considerable sums towards the general taxation.

Vehicle excise duty in 2004-5 for cars, light vans, taxis and motorbikes amounted to £4.4bn. Fuel duty raised £23.3 bn (more than the total raised by council taxes). In total the British road user contributed nearly £29Bn

Spending on roads in England was £6bn so even with the rest of the UK the road user contributes three times as much to the budget as is spent.

What should we be doing?

Firstly we should learn the lesson of other environmental improvements - for instance; the introduction of smokeless zones after 1956 and unleaded fuel after 1988. Reward good behaviour by tax reductions rather than tax increases.

Secondly improve public transport. The massive increases in public transport fares in London without any improvement in service drives people into their cars. Proposals to abolish the saver ticket on the national rail system and the recent 74% increase in off peak fares from many Bromley stations are hypocritical impositions by ministers who travel for nothing in their ministerial cars.

Thirdly encourage by tax incentives more home working. New technology makes this possible. I'd be more prepared to listen to the Mayor of London's exhortations if he wasn't busy increasing the number of staff commuting to City Hall.

A Green Council is one which starts by practising what it preaches. Let's set a target for reducing the need for our staff to travel to work by giving a lead in increasing distance working."

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