

## Charge gets London moving

17 Feb 2003



The world's largest congestion charge scheme ever to be implemented in a capital city began on 17th February with up to 30,000 drivers leaving their cars at home.

Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone said that he was relieved that none of the nightmare scenarios voiced by critics of the scheme had arisen. These included potential traffic chaos around the zone boundary which would seize the capital in gridlock, and, that there would be major problems on overcrowded public transport. However, after the first operational hours of

the scheme, the RAC reported: "There was not the anticipated early rush of motorists attempting to get across the zone before the 7am start. Neither is there increased traffic around the periphery of the zone." London Underground told BBC News Online that it had noticed "no significant difference" in passenger numbers during the rush hour.

Many commentators suspected that the relatively trouble-free start to the scheme was due to fewer cars during the half-term school holiday.

There were small demonstrations against the scheme. Opposition groups say that the scheme is unfair on lower paid workers who have to drive into London.

More than 35 other local authorities are watching to see whether the scheme works:

### **Bath**

More than two million tourists a year are putting the city's transport infrastructure under strain. Tolls would finance the introduction of circular bus services, the development of taxi tokens linked to bus/rail tickets and the proposed construction of a new trolleybus or Light Rapid Transit rail system.

### **Bristol**

The council has called for the introduction of a basic £1 a day rush-hour charge imposed by an electronic cordon around the city, with 14 entry gates. In recognition of public resistance, the council has said it won't bring in the tolls until 2007 by which time they hope to see a big improvement in public transport with the construction of a new light railway system.

### **Edinburgh**

Plans to bring in a £2 charge to enter the city by 2006 are well under way despite public disquiet. The scheme coincides with plans for £1.5bn worth of transport improvements including a new multimillion-pound tram system within 15 years.

### **Durham**

Durham County Council charges £2 for vehicle access to the historic city centre and the approach to Durham's cathedral and castle - Saddler Street and Market Place.

Charging started 1 October 2002. It has reduced the average traffic flow from over 2000 to approximately 200 vehicles a day - a reduction of around 90%

### **Leeds**

The council's proposals will require motorists to buy a permit to travel inside the inner ring road. There are plans for a new Supertram scheme and improved bus and rail services

## **Nottingham**

City planners want to introduce a workplace parking levy, under which employees who now park free at work would be forced to buy a permit. Under the scheme, motorists would pay £150 a year, raising £10m a year towards public transport projects including a £300m tram system and a £100m redevelopment of the railway station.

## **York**

The council plans three new park-and-ride sites, four new commuter railway stations, ring road improvements and congestion charging, as part of a £50m scheme.

## **Birmingham**

Investigating congestion charging in preference to workplace parking tax which has been widely condemned by local businesses.