

London mayor scraps increased congestion charge for high emission vehicles

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London's new Mayor Boris Johnson has abolished a plan to enforce a GBP 25 congestion charge on cars that emit the highest levels of carbon dioxide.

No surprise

It is a move which was half-expected, given the car-friendly stance of the Conservative Party to which Mr. Johnson belongs. Even so, it has been the cause of much dismay in the sustainable transport community.

The plan, which was scheduled to be implemented in October 2008, was formulated by Johnson's predecessor Ken Livingstone. It would have meant that cars registered before March 2001 which emitted more than 225 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometre, as well as cars with engines larger than 3,000cc, were liable to a £25 charge for entering the city, an increase from the current £8 charge.

Victory for Porsche

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The decision comes on the back of an Administrative Court judicial review instigated by car manufacturer Porsche. Porsche challenged the plans after it discovered research from King's College London which suggested the new charge would actually increase CO2 emissions in Greater London because drivers would drive further to avoid entering the city's congestion charge zone.

"The charge was clearly unfair and was actually going to increase emissions in London," said Porsche's UK Managing Director Andy Goff.

Mixed response

The decision to abandon the controversial plan has received a mixed reaction. Some claim that it would have led to an influx of small cars – which were exempt from the charge – thereby effectively increasing congestion and carbon emissions.

But some, such as London Assembly Green Party member Jenny Jones, commented that in this case the interests of the few – that is, businesses – had been placed above "the needs of the planet."