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85% of Londoners back £20 c-charge for gas-guzzlers

The Alliance Against Urban 4x4s is calling today for the London Congestion Charge to be raised to £20 for gas-guzzling cars to reflect the damage they do to the environment and their contribution to poor air quality and congestion.

The Alliance formally submitted the proposal below to the Transport for London consultation on increasing the basic Congestion Charge. We called for all cars that emit more than 250 g/km of carbon dioxide to pay a daily charge of £20 to enter central London. Remarkably, only one or two models out of the dozens of urban 4x4s available emits less than this amount of carbon dioxide emissions.

The Alliance's submission to the consultation included the results of their survey last weekend of more than 5,400 members of the public, which are being announced today.

The poll was carried out in collaboration with Greenpeace and involved hundreds of volunteers from both groups hitting the streets on Saturday March 26th to ask Londoners what they thought of the proposal. **A staggering 85% of people who responded supported the idea of higher charges for gas-guzzlers like urban 4x4s.**

Spokesperson for the Alliance, Suzy Edwards, comments, "We are delighted with the overwhelmingly positive response from the public to our proposal to increase the Congestion Charge for the top polluters. There has been a 19% drop in climate change gas emissions in the Congestion Charge zone since the scheme started, but now the fashion for bigger and dirtier cars is threatening to undermine that achievement.

"We hope that Transport for London will now listen to what people are asking for in this consultation and do more to protect the environment and our air quality."

The Alliance hit the headlines last year when its members slapped fake parking tickets on 4x4s and picketed school runs in the capital. The tickets - which many drivers thought were genuine - accused urban 4x4 owners of making a poor vehicle choice.

Full text of the Alliance Against Urban 4x4s' submission to Transport for London's consultation on increasing the Congestion Charge (Variation No.5 Order 2004):

The Alliance Against Urban 4x4s supports the increase in the Congestion Charge proposed in part 1 of Variation Order No. 5: "To raise the charge from £5 per charging day to £8 per charging day". However, we also propose that further increases are introduced for the most polluting cars.

We believe that highly polluting vehicles, including big 4x4 vehicles and others, should pay a higher Congestion Charge commensurate with the amount of damage they do in

terms of the extra carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and unburnt hydrocarbons they emit.

Because the biggest 4x4s emit more than 2.5 times the carbon dioxide of the most efficient vehicles on the market, **we propose that any car that emits more than 250 g/km of carbon dioxide (according to DVLA ratings) should pay a daily Congestion Charge of £20** - i.e. 2.5 times the proposed increased amount.

We believe that fiscal measures like this will provide a strong motivation for people in London to choose cleaner and less polluting vehicles, and we know that there is huge public support for our proposal. On Saturday 26th February 2005, more than 100 members of the Alliance Against Urban 4x4s and Greenpeace were in London polling members of the public for their opinion. **Of 5,494 people polled, 85.3 percent agreed with the statement, "4x4s and other gas-guzzlers should pay a higher Congestion Charge than cars with smaller engines."**

The Alliance believes that action on this issue is urgent. Increasing numbers of families in the UK are switching from ordinary cars to large 4x4 vehicles with much less efficient engines; sales of 4x4s increased 13% in 2004. If this trend continues, the excellent achievements of the Congestion Charge scheme - reducing carbon dioxide emissions in the zone by 19% so far - will be threatened, and emissions will increase once again as the cars remaining in the zone become more polluting.

A powerful incentive is needed to encourage people to think twice before following the fashion for bigger and bigger cars, and we believe that Transport for London is uniquely placed to take timely and effective action to provide this. The information needed to implement our proposal is already within 'the system' and stored by DVLA (it is used to set GVED rates) so any practical difficulties should be easy to overcome and the costs involved we would consider worth it.