

Your shout!

Got something you want to get off your chest? Email: jchallen@findlay.co.uk

The Green Bus Fund is a great idea, and has been welcomed by bus operators and manufacturers alike. But are the resources being distributed wisely and equitably?

I read with interest, in the May 2012 issue of Transport Engineer, that the Department for Transport (DfT) has allocated £5 million from the fund to Transport for London (TfL).

This money will be used to grow the capital's fleet of hybrid buses by around 70 units, meaning that, by the end of March 2013, there will be at least 400 'cleaner hybrid buses' operating on the streets of London.

According to London Buses' operations director Mike Weston, the funding will "enable us to keep improving London's air quality". But could such an initiative be supported through other channels, allowing other authorities and operators throughout the land to benefit more?

Every day, around one million cars and commercial vehicles enter London, passing through not only the LEZ (Low Emission Zone), but also the congestion zone. The latter zone, subject to a charge of at least £10 per vehicle, generates some £10 million every day for the capital's coffers. Spread that over the year, excluding weekends, and the annual influx of money equates to around £260 million.

Why is it then that the DfT considers it worthwhile to spend taxpayers' money on improving the fleet of buses in London when, every year, it is already collecting around £260 million in charges that are also designed to combat emissions?

What happens to all the money collected from congestion charging? What is it invested in? And what benefits are realised for hard-pressed taxpayers – and, for that matter, commercial vehicle operators' businesses?

All of this money will have attracted a considerable amount of interest on top, so surely TfL could afford to buy a whole fleet of clean air buses, without the taxpayer footing any of the bill?

Answers on a postcard, please...



IRTE

Transport Engineer's regular 'IRTE to IRTE' members' column: focusing on the issues, challenges and concerns that matter to transport engineers and fleet managers