

[Capricious Ken](#) [1]

Written by [Philip Salter](#) [2] | Sunday 17 February 2008



In this last week I have been stuck in an underground tunnel for half an hour, had my local tube station shut down for flooding and been trapped behind a ticket barrier in Canary Wharf station for forty minutes with a group of other desperate valentines day commuters. It is at such times that one considers the prospect of purchasing a car to avoid the nightmare that is the daily nightmare on London's underground system.

In the past it was relatively simple to decide which car to buy, now one has to factor in the latest whim of the mayor of London, Ken Livingstone. The latest caprice of Ken is that owners of vehicles emitting more than 225g of carbon dioxide per kilometre will be charged £25 every day. This means an increase for residents of a cost from 80p, an increase of 3000%. As I live and work within the congestion zone, these are clearly not the cars for me. Sadly for the people who have already bought such a car, they have invested in something that will cost them a small fortune to use.

Perhaps a smaller car? From October the smaller band A and B cars will be exempt from charges. Sales rose in response to this upcoming exemption. However, Ken Livingstone may cancel it for band B cars (which emit between 101g and 120g of carbon dioxide per kilometre) because in response to his decision to allow them to travel free of the congestion charge people went out and bought these cars en masse. According to TfL official band B car owners may have to start paying the congestion charge in less than two years.

What is all this uncertainty worth? A recent report by TfL has predicted that emissions charging will reduce CO2 by just 100 tonnes next year, equivalent to 0.001 per cent of total annual emissions from surface transport in London. So the environmental arguments are not even credible by their own CO2 obsessed terms. For my part I will have wait until we have a new mayor before I risk the expense of buying a car.

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