

ADAM HARRISON

- Councillor of Bloomsbury Ward since 2010 [12 years]
- Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden. Leading on cleaner air, greener streets, promoting sustainability, increasing recycling and making our communities accessible for all (including parks, recycling, waste services, transport, sustainability esp. air pollution, cycling and walking).
- On Planning Committee

Lives: Highgate Ward

Link to Camden Council's Register of Interests

<https://democracy.camden.gov.uk/mgDeclarationSubmission.aspx?UID=164&HID=3097&FID=0&HPID=52529325>

Education: University of Cambridge – French and Russian [2001-2005]

College of Europe in Bruges [2008 -9] - Master's Degree in European Union International Relations and Diplomacy

Languages: English, French, Russian

Appointment to outside bodies

- Fitzrovia Partnership Board
- London Councils – Transport and Environment Committee

Non-pecuniary interests:

- Member of British Humanist Association
- Member of the Fabian Society
- Member of the GMB
- Member of Jewish Labour Movement
- Member of Labour Humanists
- Member of the Labour Party
- Member of LGBT Labour
- Member of Progress
- Member of SERA – Labour's Environment Campaign
- Member of USDAW

Employment: Editor, European Council on Foreign Relations (2016 - date)

Areas of Expertise: Russia, Ukraine and British domestic politics

Biography: https://ecfr.eu/profile/adam_harrison/

Previous employment: Deputy editor of Progress magazine and manager of www.progressonline.org.uk [Jan 2010 - Oct 2016]

Worked in the European parliament, an opinion polling company and a legal publishing house.

Linked in: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/adam-harrison-a7220815/?originalSubdomain=uk>

Interviews / articles on-line include:

<https://camdencleanair.org/blog/in-conversation-with-councillor-adam-harrison/>

<https://savebloomsbury.co.uk/2020/11/24/adam-harrison-camdens-chris-grayling/>

Supporter / promoter of the West End Project from its inception From [Minutes of Cabinet meeting: 21.01.15](#) Cabinet Councillors: Sarah Hayward (Chair), Theo Blackwell, Patricia Callaghan, Julian Fulbrook, Abdul Hai, Angela Mason, Phil Jones, Sally Gimson and Jonathan Simpson. **Councillors Harrison, Madlani and Francis**, Bloomsbury ward councillors were present at the meeting and expressed their support for the proposals. Councillor Jones thanked the ward councillors for their work and involvement in this project.

From Medium.com (web platform for writing & ideas)



[Adam Harrison](#)

Sep 15, 2019

RECLAIMING THE STREETS: A BOLD APPROACH TO CAR USE

From the Fabian Society's [Capital Gains: A global city in a changing world](#).

Streets make our cities tick, but for too long we have paid too little attention to how they might be transformed for the better. In London, we need to see streets as an equalities issue. That means giving our residents the unpolluted and safe public spaces they deserve.

Local leaders are deeply preoccupied with how to make their boroughs better places. But some things capture more of our attention than others. We spend a lot of time thinking about services and buildings and finances. But — although our casework is often to do with what happens on our streets — we rarely consider overhauling them at a fundamental level. We may reorganise a library service to meet changing demand or financial pressures; we may build new council homes to house those in need. But we are too often unable to conceptualise a street in a new way.

This is a 360-degree blind spot. Our streets are the bloodstream of a borough, connecting everything up with everything else. They are also the places where people live, work and spend time. Yet for all their perpetual motion and activity, streets tend to be regarded as immutable things — by the public and councillors alike.

Of course, our streets were not always how they are today. But post-war planners embraced the car above all, aiming to shuttle as many of them as they could around the city as quickly as possible. They built one-way systems and flyovers that remain with us today. As in many cities, over the years we drifted into a situation where public space was largely given over to cars.

From our standpoint on the centre-left, this is odd. We are galvanised by our shared mission to do away with inequality in income, health and education: Labour councils pledge equal access to warm, spacious and safe homes, for instance. But we too rarely really answer the question of how we ensure equal access to unpolluted, spacious and safe streets. Just as we battle for universalism — an excellent service for all comers, regardless of background — so we should demand the same for our public places. But to make streets, which constitute 80 per cent of public places in London, truly public we now need to do some serious rebalancing between the public and private interest. This effort can capitalise on the recent focus on reducing emissions, while also helping to tackle some of our city's other significant issues.

After so many decades of the car being king, we now know all about the problems car use causes.

Londoners who own cars are less likely to do the physical activity they need to stay healthy — increasing the risk of a range of illnesses, and of early death. Congestion costs London's economy around £6bn a year — money that could go towards new jobs or better training. People who drive to the shops spend less over the course of a month than people who cycle there. Half of London's main pollutants are caused by road transport. Almost 4,000 people were killed or seriously injured in traffic collisions in London in 2017. Many of these problems affect the worst off disproportionately — this alone should set the alarm bells ringing for Labour. Poorer people are more likely to live on roads where air quality is worse and road danger is higher, while being less likely to own cars themselves — so they are not responsible for the problems afflicting them. A factory pouring pollution out onto its neighbours is not something we would stand for; shouldn't we treat the linear pollution factories that some of our roads have become in the same way?

As we saw with smoking, attitudes can change. But we need to start talking about what sort of change we would like to see, and how we can go about accelerating that change. Things may already be starting to shift. Many councillors will be aware of the common complaint about engine-idling, and boroughs have acquired the power to issue fines to address this. It is only a short, logical step from realising you should not let your engine idle to thinking perhaps you shouldn't drive the half-mile to the shops. As with the cheeky cigarette you know you shouldn't be having, we need to start talking about the journeys people know they shouldn't really be taking because of the space they occupy on the road, the CO2 they emit and the pollution they create.

“Ah, but, car users pay for the roads — so they've earned the right”, is a deeply embedded refrain. But no form of taxation is linked to the building and upkeep of London's roads, which are instead subsidised by the revenue collected from public transport fare-payers and funds from the boroughs.

The truth is that reclaiming London's streets for public use over private domination will make London a better city. Boroughs like my own, Camden, are already pressing ahead in ways that start to do this. In 2020 the major thoroughfares of Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street will reopen with space shifted over to public transport, cycling, and walking. At two places we will turn roads into new parks — a simple but transformative change.

At a strategic level, London has taken bold steps in the right direction. When Transport for London introduced the congestion charge in 2003, it faced massive opposition. Capital gains Westminster City Council challenged TfL in the High Court, and the plans faced heavy criticism in the press. But it went ahead, it worked — congestion fell 30 per cent — and now it's part of London life. On the day it began, an extra 300 buses were introduced to help people get around central London without using cars. Thanks to a decision, life in London improved, and people moved on.

We can replicate these changes across the city, in ways that tilt our public space back in favour of the public at large — but also in favour of those who do not have the means to own and run cars. As other European cities have done, we could change our approach to car parking — rather than giving over most of our streets to it, we could limit it to certain sections and replace the remainder with cycle parking or planters. We could have bus lanes operate 24 hours a day, so buses and cycles always have right of way. Camden is considering introducing a workplace parking levy; why not do this London-wide to reduce single-occupancy car journeys, and maybe free up some room for open space or to build new homes?

All of these things could add up to something good. But sometimes big is best, and if we want to make our streets more truly equal then big is what we need.

Road user charging is by no means a new idea: for decades, practical economic arguments have been made for its introduction. Just as we ask public transport users to pay for the journeys they take on our roads, and rail users pay to use track maintained from their fares, shouldn't we ask people who drive on a road to pay for use of a public asset?

This could change our capital city in fundamental ways.

First, it could transform attitudes, by requiring people to think about every journey. Right now, nearly half of car trips made by Londoners could be cycled in around 10 minutes. This is probably through a sense of convenience — again, conceptualising travel differently is a hard ask. It could also come out of a sense of identity — driving is just what some people do. But this could all change. People would no longer be 'drivers' — they would become people who drive when they need to, but who don't when they don't. We could break the domination of private interest over the public good.

Second, road user charging could reduce congestion and improve air quality. Congestion could fall significantly overnight, making it easier for those who have to use a car to get around and helping deliveries arrive on time. Camden's new transport strategy aims to reduce motor traffic by up to a quarter over the next 20 years, and we also want to achieve the healthier World Health Organization air quality standards by 2030. Only with big measures like this will boroughs be able to achieve significantly lower levels of traffic and air pollution. It is time for the 'polluter pays' principle to find expression in how we govern our streets. Finally, this big move could help us fund the streets we know London needs and deserves. With less traffic, we could start to devote more space to truly public uses — streets could be given over to people to enjoy. Parts of London that have been dominated by traffic for years would become more liveable, providing the opportunity, over time, to re-plan them around people, rather than cars. Streets across the city would become more pleasant places to spend time. People travelling on foot or enjoying sitting at a new bench in a

place freed of traffic are more likely to bump into people they know, or talk to people they don't — helping to combat isolation and build a sense of community.

The innate power of road user charging is that it is not an end in itself, but a means that will help local leaders achieve these ends. London road user charging could raise hundreds of millions of pounds each year, which could go straight into delivering decent public transport links in parts of London Capital gains that have been deprived of them for decades. Imagine how many roads we could turn into parks, as we have in Camden. Imagine the new bus routes we could provide, and the tube, tram and rail connections we could develop over time. This could be nothing short of transformative for outer London in particular, where many people now drive only because the alternatives on offer remain too few.

With technology advancing rapidly, and with the devolution of the right powers, this needn't be a change anyone should fear. A nuanced charging system could be variable by time of day, the type of journey being made, the vehicle used and the alternatives available. The journey in a clean vehicle with no reasonable walking, cycling or public transport alternatives could be charged at a low rate, or not at all, while the needless drive down to the local shops could be charged more. The system could be integrated with a comprehensive transport app, so people can see very clearly the options they have and how much they will cost (hint: walking and cycling are free). As with the congestion charge, new public transport alternatives could be provided from day one to make things easier. As with the ultra low emission zone, concessions could be made available for small businesses, charities and some residents as they transition to the new system. If vehicle excise duty — the London proceeds of which currently prop up road building or other spending in different parts of the country — were devolved, road user charging could replace it, with some Londoners paying less overall than they are now.

For years, planners have known that this is the right way forward, but political leaders have shied away from acting on their advice. But London now has some serious momentum. In his transport strategy and London plan, Sadiq Khan envisages a better city — one that grows more equal as it grows in population. London has the congestion charge and has introduced the ultra low emission zone — both big-impact schemes that in time should be rolled up into a road charge.

The technology is now available, and the principle of equality in our streets is clear and convincing. Now is the moment to take this big step to rebalance London's streets back in favour of the public good. We must invoke the spirit that underpinned fundamental changes to public services in the past, whether it is Labour's foundation of the NHS, the raising of the school leaving age and the smoking ban. It will be difficult, but it will be worth it. And, eventually, life will move on and it will feel as if it has always been this way.

CAPITAL GAINS

A GLOBAL CITY IN A CHANGING WORLD

