

Pizza and perspectives: temporary congestion charge proposal Collated Report 6 August 2025

Context

On Wednesday 6 August we held an in-person event called Pizza and Perspectives. This event, held at in County Hall, Oxford brought together a small group of secondary school aged young people to share their perspectives. The event was part of a package of consultation activity on the proposed temporary congestion charge for cars in Oxford.

Attendees and incentives

Invitations went out to young people who met the criteria of living in or near Oxford and who travel around/into Oxford at least once a week. Fifteen young people were recruited to attend, and a total of 10 young people attended who were between the ages of 11 to 17. All but two of the group lived in Oxford city; one lived in Cumnor and one lived near Abingdon.

Attendees received a certificate for their participation in the workshop and were offered a £20 PayPoint voucher for their involvement along with travel expenses.

Plan of the day

The attendees were invited to a 3.5-hour event. The first hour consisted of introductions, a warmup activity to understand the nature of how the group felt about their current travel arrangements. The second hour was the presentation of the temporary congestion charge proposal and what could be done with the money generated. The last hour and a half they considered their perspectives of 'should the proposal happen, what would their hopes and worries be'. Then they moved on to create communication concepts that could be shared with the public in respect of congestion and to promote different modes of travel. After presenting their ideas they evaluated their experience of the event before leaving. Please see appendix 1 for the event agenda.

Methodology

Individuals were invited to take part in a 3.5-hour workshop at county hall during the school holidays. The event was based on a workshop held with a group of citizens' assembly member earlier in the consultation process. A similar style of workshop was designed for the group of young people, so that they could share their perspective of the proposals.

The first hour was to include arrival time, introductions and a warm-up activity. This hour was delivered to the group of 10 who participated. The plan for 3 groups was adapted to two because of numbers and groups were based on where they lived.

The warm-up activity asked several questions to understand how the individuals felt about their journey experience in and to Oxford. The circumstances were based on their typical day and whether they thought their journey was easy, ok, or hard, using their usual method of transportation. Staff recorded their responses to understand their feelings and behaviours to travel.

The next activity we wanted to find out which of the travel and transport expenditure ideas they liked and if they had any ideas of their own. To allow for this, the group had some time to discuss their ideas and from their conversations create new ideas to share. The whole group identified their most important/relevant investment priority by voting. Each person had a ballot paper so they could individually vote up to three ideas, thus showing what the group felt the money should be spent on.

We wanted to understand what their hopes and worries were about the proposed temporary congestion charges. Keeping this simple we asked groups to discuss their thoughts on each in group conversation and asked either the facilitator or a participant to list them down.

The objective for communications experts' activity was to gain an understanding of two key areas:

- Approaches to effectively communicate transport changes
- Methods to promote travel options that mattered to the group

The groups could split up if they wished, to create their messages using some basic resources. After the groups spend some time on their creative activity, they were able to share it with the group.

The day was closed with the evaluation, certificate giving and thanks for their hard work.

Activities

Warm up activity: Moving Scale

The group was asked a series of statements. They were to move to one of the 3 answers which they felt best suited them. They then had a few minutes to discuss their answers so we could understand their travelling experience. The answers were, Easy, OK, Hard. The group were asked the following:

We want to know what it's like to travel around Oxford when you are...

- Going to school in the morning
- Travelling straight after school
- Going to appointments after school – doctors/regular clubs
- Out socialising after school, before 7pm

Going to school in the morning

How do you travel? Active travel, Bus, Taxi, Lift in a car, Other	Where do you travel from?	How is the journey usually? Ask for comments
EASY		
Bus	Headington	There is traffic in the afternoon outside Oxford
Bus	Botley	It's a school bus so is easy
Cycling	Abingdon	Easy, only a 10-minute bike ride
Walk	Cumnor	Nice, easy distance, some crossings close to the school now and new lights on the route help
Walk	Headington	Really easy
Walk	Home-school	Easy
OK		
Cycle	New Hinksey	Calm journey but up a steep hill
Bus	Oxford to Eynsham	Usually fine, except once I waited for the for an hour. If I have an exam or something important, there's pressure to make it on time.
Walk	Summertown	Easy walk just one crossing
Cycle	Rose Hill	OK on the whole. One road is busy and with parked cars feels dangerous to cycle.
HARD		
No responses		

Travelling straight after school

How do you travel? Active travel, Bus, Taxi, Lift in a car, Other	Where do you travel from?	How is the journey usually? Ask for comments
EASY		
cycle	Abingdon, across town	Easy apart from occasional poor road surface, broken glass
walk	Cumnor, 20 mins walk	Short walk with new improved crossings
bus	Eynsham	Buses run on time in the afternoons
Cycle	Cumnor	Easier as it's downhill on the way back. Takes a route that is about 30% roads, and rest is cycle paths. There are two main routes and tend to choose the quieter route, which goes partly through the industrial estate
Walk	Summertown	Lots of people walk the same way going back
Bus and walk	Headington	Same route, there is an alternative route but that's longer and more busy
Bus	Botley	Always the same route
OK		
School bus	Culham to Oxford	It can be very congested, especially when there were road closures in Abingdon. Mornings are quicker.
Cycle	From Templar Sq. to Rose Hill	A steep uphill. Cars overtake close on the busy road. A proper cycle path would be better.
HARD		
No responses		

Going to appointments after school – doctors/regular clubs

How do you travel? Active travel, Bus, Taxi, Lift in a car, Other	Where do you travel from?	How is the journey usually? Ask for comments
EASY		
Cycle often, but drive occasionally	Headington to city centre	Ok
Bus occasionally, but usually walk	Botley – often to north Oxford	If it's up to a 30-minute walk, usually walk instead of bus. Walk to/between bus stops

Bus or walk	Bus to go to activities, and usually walk to doctor's appointments	It is harder to get to things which are outside the city.
OK		
Mum would take me	Marston to town (Oxford)	Rush hour is a problem
Dad would take me	Templar Sq. to town (Oxford)	Traffic can make it difficult to make it on time [to appointments]
Parent would take me	Culham to Cowley	School is kind of stranded; there's only one bus per hour. If I have an appointment, I would need to check out of school early to make it.
Car	Cumnor/city	With Botley Road closure you have to go the long way around
Cycle	South Oxford/city	Travelling through town cycling is harder as there are more cars and people
Car	To hospital from city	There's often traffic in the afternoon
School bus	Doctors in Oxford	Road closures (Botley Road) cause slower bus journeys and mean you have to walk part of the way.
HARD		
No responses		

Out socialising after school, before 7pm

How do you travel? Active travel, Bus, Taxi, Lift in a car, Other	Where do you travel from?	How is the journey usually? Ask for comments
EASY		
Bus	Rose Hill to city centre	Bus is the easiest travel option
Cycle	South Hinksey to skatepark	Usual route, similar to school route. It's familiar and enjoyable
Bus	Headington to Cowley Road, and Headington to the Westgate	Buses are more delayed when it is the weekend
Bus	Botley to city centre, to Eynsham and to Witney	Sometimes walks and gets the bus [depending on destination/distance]. Bus can take a while, and the roads are busy on the way to Eynsham
Walk	[doesn't go out often but walks when does]	[Usually walks if needs to get somewhere]
OK		
Bus	Abingdon to Oxford	Buses are not frequent enough
Cycle	In Abingdon	Streets are pretty quiet
Bus	From Oxford to outer areas	Buses are unreliable

Bus	From Headington to town	Travel is not a problem, but the price of bus tickets is. I can't travel freely as often as I'd like as it's too expensive.
HARD		
Car or bus	Cumnor	You can only go as far as Botley Road with the closure in place so you need to walk a distance as well which isn't convenient.

Activity 1: Grant making

The groups discussed the proposed investment ideas that were listed for the temporary congestion charge, and from that shared their additional ideas for spending. After discussions the groups shared five additional ideas. In no particular order these were:

- Widen cycle lanes
- Fix pot holes
- More cycle parking in quiet areas
- New cycle paths/lanes in busy areas and on busy roads
- Simpler bus ticket e.g. oyster cards

The group took the new ideas into account along with the existing list and voted for their preferred options. They were able to vote up to 3 each. There were 27 votes cast out of a potential 30.

Below is a full list of ideas with the total number of votes and ranking is as follows:

Idea	Total number of votes	Ranking
Add new bus routes	1	
Add public cycle parking	2	
Extend hours of operation for buses	1	
Make bus services more frequent	6	First place
Make buses cheaper for all	3	
Make buses cheaper for young people	5	Joint second place
Make Park and Ride buses cheaper	0	
Make Park and Ride parking cheaper	0	
Widen cycle lanes	1	
Fix potholes	1	
More cycle parking in quiet areas	0	
New cycle paths/lanes in busy areas and on busy roads	2	

Simpler bus ticket e.g. oyster cards	5	Joint second place
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Activity 2: Hopes and worries

The two groups discussed two questions about their thoughts on the proposed temporary congestion charge. Below are questions and the comments from the two teams.

What positive things do you hope to see because of the proposed changes?

Hopes: Team Trains

- Lead to improved buses – cheaper fares
- Travelling being more easy and faster for cars especially buses
- Better for the environment
- People might appreciate improvements as benefits seen
- Buses might be improved to help other people who usually drive
- Safer – more considerate driving, more considerate cycling
- Hopefully it may change some lifestyle choices
- Money has to go into transport/AZ
- Feels nicer environment – less noisy and busy when walking or cycling
- Improved bus services to rural areas
- Long term – hope people experience more of a bus focused city
- This might make people wonder if they'll need a drivers license
- Better car clubs – people don't know much about them, not always easily accessible and car condition not always great.

Hopes: Team Bikes:

- More funding for the buses, more regular buses and routes
- Less busy during rush hours
- People might cycle more because they feel safer with fewer cars
- Making it safer where there's pedestrians
- Less cars = less need for extra lanes, so could turn them into wider cycle lanes

If these proposed changes happened, what worries would you have?

Worries: Team Trains

- There are hotspots some people will still need to get to
- There are divisive splits between the 100 & 25 – expand boundaries more to less divided
- While many might understand the aim, people feel they need to get places, and don't feel positive about paying. Inequality – wealthier can pay more easy.
- People more likely to drive would be less keen
- More people might take a longer route instead of a different mode of transport
- Displaces traffic congestion
- People further away having fewer alternative choices
- People who can't use public transport – not a choice - may find it harder – worrying about paying
- If it worked too well – would buses get more crowded? This might impact getting to places on time e.g. school

- More infrequent buses and some more high traffic areas means needing to drive and to collect/drop off people – tricky if near a cc point
- Digital access is different for some people – normally older people – harder to pay or get permits

Worries: Teams Bikes:

- It won't actually reduce traffic – people who need to drive will still drive
- Can't get to places on time because of different route
- Other roads getting busy might slow down emergency services
- Longer journeys taking routes to avoid the charge
- Cause congestion in other/diversion routes which could impact on car-based businesses in that area

Activity 3: Communication Experts

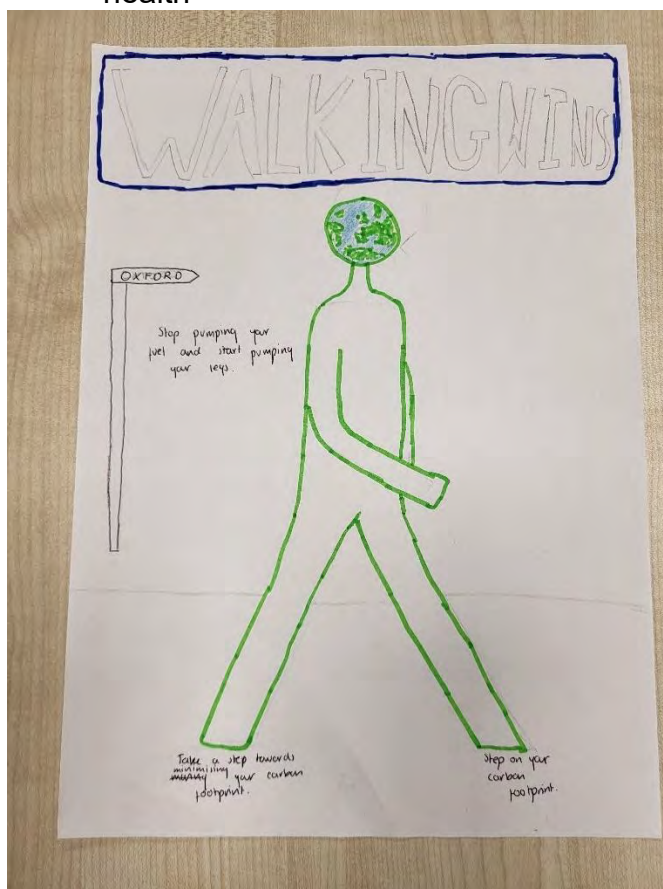
Most of the young people presented their work to the group. A description of their presentation is below.

Team Trains

This group split into two and came up with 2 pieces of work.

Walking wins

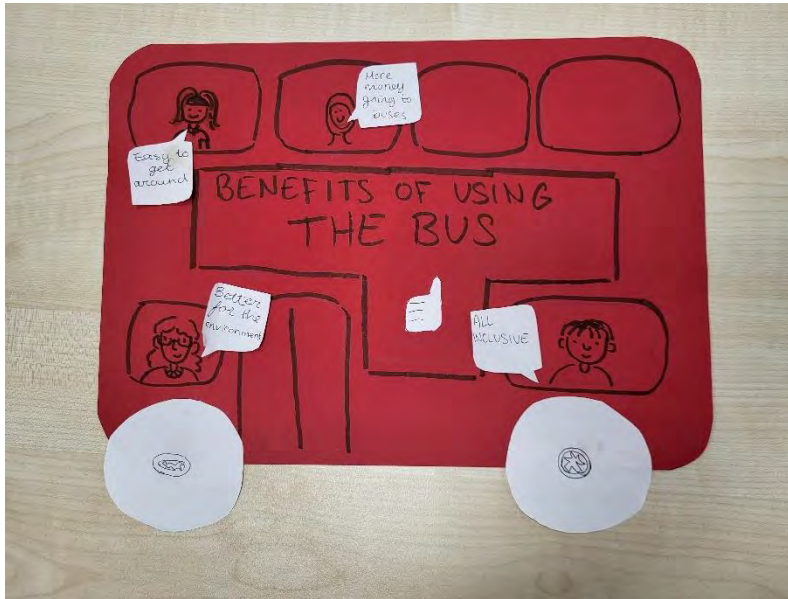
- Promote walking as it's free, lots of good places around Oxford to walk in
- Stepping on carbon footprint
- Take a step towards minimising carbon footprint
- Congestion charge would help walking; don't want to walk with lots of cars about
- Stop pumping your fuel, start pumping your legs – walking is beneficial for health



Benefits of using bus to travel

- There'd be more money going to travel which can be used for buses, maybe buses could change their prices
- Anyone can use buses; wheelchair users (there are ramps), spaces inside for disabled/elderly
- Easier to get around on a bus, congestion charge could encourage people to get around, it's easier as you don't have to wait for other people or traffic
- Can just hop on a bus

- Better for environment, lots of cars build pollution, more people can sit on one bus



Team Bikes

This team split into 2 and came up with 2 pieces of work.

Bikes don't stop for traffic

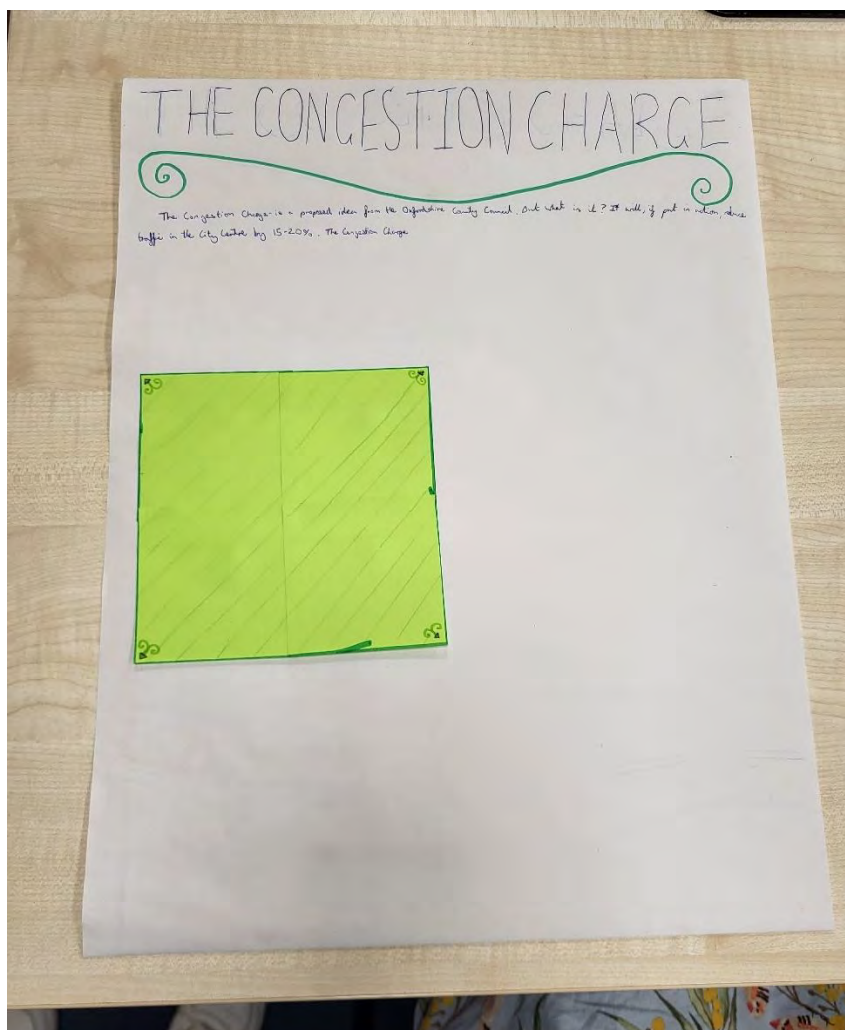
- To help cut congestion that's going on, we can start going on bikes
- One of the cleanest ways to travel through cities/big areas
- It can get people who haven't cycled before to start cycling due to less cars on the road
- Safer and more peaceful to cycle
- Can be beneficial for the newer generations/future



Poster on congestion charge

- Benefits outweigh problems - less cars in city centre would make bus services faster
- Less scary for cycles as less people are on the road

- Less pollution in city centre and more greenery as council can take out car parking spaces
- Can get rid of road lanes to make space for bigger cycle lanes



Evaluation and Quotes

The young people were asked to complete a evaluation form to understand their thoughts of the day. Most of the group rated the day a 9 out of 10 and no one gave a rating of 5 or below. Eight of the group said they would recommend a similar event to a friend and two said 'maybe'.

There was a wide variety of comments shared on why they enjoyed the day from meeting other people to eating pizza and hearing about the congestion charge proposal. There was also a mix of learning outcomes for the individuals too, from understanding why the council proposed the congestion charge to experiencing voting.

Appendix 1 Agenda

12:30pm Welcome and Warm up

1:15pm	Session 1: The congestion charge – understanding the proposal#
1:40pm	Activity 1: Grant Making
2:30pm	Activity 2: Hopes and worries
2:50pm	Activity 3: Communication Experts
3:15pm	Next Steps and evaluation
3:30pm	Close