



London opts for a new measure of distance - time!

AUTHORITIES in the Capital have come up with a new way to sidestep the Imperial v Metric issue by doing away with normal distance measurements on new tourist signs. Instead of metres or yards, pedestrians are now being shown how many minutes it should take to reach a destination.

The Legible London project which was launched last year by the now defunct Central London Partnership (CLP), aimed to provide illustrated maps across the capital to help pedestrians, especially tourists get around. The scheme would eventually see maps installed across a large part of the city, tying in with the run-up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

At the launch of the project, CLP referred to the measurement issue on its website saying: "Distance information: Minutes, miles, metres or yards? Across the systems there are inconsistencies which can be confusing for a pedestrian." UKMA submitted a response arguing for Metres saying that Minutes failed to take into account a person's ability and walking speed and that yards would not be understood by most visitors to London.

But the CLP - possibly aware of the controversy when perfectly good metric signs in the Royal Parks were vandalised by opponents - decided to opt for the Minutes option which has also been adopted in a similar scheme in Belfast.

Commenting on the new signs, which are now appearing across central London, UKMA Chairman Robin Paice criticised their style as well as units of measurements. He said: "They have drawn crude 'as the crow flies' circles which do not reflect

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Ulster politician calls for Metric road change in Northern Ireland

A Northern Ireland Assemblyman has called for the province to adopt metric road signs to help highway safety in border areas.



Pat Ramsey (pictured right), an SDLP member from Derry, made the call during a meeting of the North-South Ministerial Transport Committee.

Expressing concerns about poor road safety in the north of Ireland, he asked the Transport Minister, Conor Murphy (Sinn Féin), whether there were any plans to introduce metric signage in Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland made such a move in 2005.

Mr Murphy, who has already been lobbied by UKMA on this issue, said an examination of each and every area in which road safety can be improved will take place.

He said: "The objective is to try to reduce the number of deaths on our roads. Particular problems exist in border areas, but whether accidents occur because of road signs or because of driver behaviour, which, unfortunately, most deaths on the road are as a result of, is another matter".

• Road safety - Is the message finally getting through on the dangers of Imperial-only height signs?

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New calls for Metric signage after yet another low bridge strike



The latest bridge strike in the Midlands - picture from www.expressandstar.com

POLICE and rail authorities have called for metric height restrictions to be shown on low bridges to help counter a growing number of bridge strikes.

It follows an incident near Cannock in Staffordshire, in which a Slovenian lorry driver slammed his vehicle into a low railway bridge. The height restriction warning signs were in Imperial only, a system of measurements that most foreign drivers are not familiar with.

The accident comes three months after a Hungarian lorry driver also crashed into the bridge, which carries the major West Coast rail line between London and Glasgow.

Pc Michael Percival, of Staffordshire Police told the local Express and Star newspaper: "We are making recommendations, as are Network Rail, to have metric signs put up in the area. This will hopefully alleviate the problems."

UKMA continues to call for metric signs. We currently have a request under Freedom of Information legislation for costing information on the new Low Emission Zone signs that have been erected in London.

This information should help us to gain a more accurate idea of the costs involved in making such a change, and also counter the high figures quoted by the Department for Transport in their previous arguments against change - figures which UKMA believe are completely exaggerated.

Legible London signs

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distance walked on the ground by human beings.

"The OS grid is not indicated as an aid to navigation and the maps do not correspond to any published maps - e.g. Ordnance Survey or A-Z"

He also questioned the colour scheme arguing that it was possibly contrary to guidelines given by the Royal National Institute of the Blind.

Details of the new signs can be found at http://www.legiblelondon.info/wp01/?page_id=2

Annual Meeting approaches

UKMA's Annual Meeting is fast approaching. Details of the event, which is being held in London on Saturday 5 July, are being sent out with this newsletter. The committee looks forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the day.

Sainsbury's criticised in milk trial

BRITAIN's third largest supermarket chain Sainsbury's has been criticised by UKMA after launching a trial on a new way of selling milk which keeps to Imperial sizes. A number of stores across South East England are trialling milk sold in plastic pouches which can then be placed into a plastic jug for pouring. The idea is to cut down on waste but by deciding to stick to 2-pint measures, the company is making it more costly should it decide to extend the idea to other products sold in metric packs, such as orange juice.

A (very) small success

AT the Report stage of the Planning Bill currently going through Parliament, the Commons approved a Government amendment substituting 209.03 m² (250 square yards) with 200 m² in the clauses relating to Compulsory Purchase Orders of common land.

And finally... OTHER commitments, primarily at work, means that I am standing down from the committee at the AGM so this shorter edition of the newsletter will be the last one I produce. I'd like to wish UKMA all the best for the future.

Keith Hodgkin