

Environmental activists barricade Transport for London offices in Blackfriars protest

Written by Karl

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At 8 o'clock on Thursday morning, eco-activist group Climate Rush will join influential bike bloggers and local pedestrian and cycle groups to stage a go-slow on Blackfriars Bridge and barricade Transport for London offices to protest against TfL's car-centric policies. Liberal Democrat MP for Bermondsey and Old Southwark, Simon Hughes, will speak at the rally, as will Green London Assembly member Darren Johnson.

The protest coincides with World Carfree Day, which happens every year on the 22nd September and promotes reduced car use across the globe. This will be the first ever protest at TfL's offices, but comes at the end of a summer of outcry from the cycling community over TfL's redevelopment of the junction at Blackfriars Bridge. Cycle protests in June and July saw thousands of Londoners oppose the new junction design, which maintains space for cars despite a predicted doubling of pedestrian flows[1] and recent doubling in cycling. A Climate Rush stunt on Tuesday night saw a makeover of Rotherhithe tunnel as the message "BIKES = POLLUTION SOLUTION" was scrubbed into the grime-coated walls.

Cycle and air pollution campaigners see Blackfriars as symptomatic of Transport for London's car-centric policies. From Southwark to Blackfriars and beyond[2], TfL have ignored the wishes of London's democratically elected bodies, and redesigned streets in favour of private motorised vehicles at the expense of extra space for people on foot, bicycles or public transport. Given that the current cost of congestion in the UK is estimated to be £30billion[3], such measures are not only an inefficient use of public money and public space but also ignore the health concerns which have been linked with car use, such as obesity[4], asthma, and leukaemia.[5]

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Andrew Tobert from Climate Rush says, "Imagine if cars were banned from central London. Buses would glide through town, people would feel safe cycling and our air would be clean. Children could walk to school. Instead, we have inefficiency. We have time being wasted and lives being lost. Rather than perpetuate this, TfL need to start prioritising people."

Climate Rush are calling for the re-prioritisation of people, specifically, a 20mph limit throughout central London, car-light and car-free areas, and a democratically accountable TfL.