

On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

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www.abd.org.uk

Penning takes a stand

Herts is the latest county to see a driver backlash. A taxi/bus lane in Hemel Hempstead's Moor End Lane saw 10,000 drivers caught on camera and fined for straying into it – in just three weeks! This is equivalent to one-eighth of the town's population. Herts County Council (HCC) responded by claiming the signs had been authorised and met DFT standards. Angry residents have set up a Facebook group in protest, and deluged the local MP, roads minister Mike Penning, with letters. The *Hemel Gazette* has also had a heavy postbag about the unfairness and money-raking, and the story continues to dominate the headlines.

One spirited lady, Lesley Baldwin, has stood outside the lane, turning drivers away and gathering evidence for HCC that the signs are not clear enough. Penning has written to HCC warning the situation is not 'morally right', and that the signage needs to be clearer - until then, no fines should be levied and existing fines should be repaid.

In a double embarrassment for the council, the highways department failed to meet his deadline for releasing speed camera data. Penning warned HCC to publish by the end of September, or he'd ask why it wasn't being honest with drivers. He added that data provided for the rest of the country indicated that the majority of speed cameras were for raising money rather than reducing crashes.

The ABD's speed camera expert, Idris Francis, had a hard-hitting article published on the ConservativeHome (CH) website, in which he showed that claims of camera accident reduction are flawed, and that the cameras could even result in accidents (a point also made by Penning about Hemel's Queensway camera). CH is respected as



an influential website, and is widely read by Tory MPs, councillors and candidates.

Eric Bridgstock addressed a recent ABD meeting with Francis; the ABD has enlisted his help in writing to the *Gazette*, as a safety engineer and a local man. He's been challenging HCC for nearly four years, and can confirm that despite spending £2m a year on speed cameras, they've provided no evidence of any road safety benefit. Rather than further waste time and money on statistics for individual cameras, he calls for them to be decommissioned immediately.

In the party conference season, it's opportune to remember the pledge made by Shadow Transport Secretary, Theresa Villiers, in 2009 – that a new government would scrap the bureaucratic camera partnerships and introduce better approaches to road safety such as Vehicle Activated Signs, which are far cheaper than cameras. This pledge is still to be kept.

Penning may well be aware of this, as Transcom has just opened up the government's road safety strategy published in May for consultation. He's told

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The next issue of *On The Road* goes to press on Monday 12 December. Contributions deadline is Monday 28 November.

his local paper that drivers are being proved right in seeing speed cameras as cash cows, and hinted at a 'next stage in stopping the war on the motorist'.

This hopefully is the real roads minister speaking out, as an ABD member has received correspondence in his name from the DFT, claiming there's never been a war on the motorist! Although we've had a change of minister, the old guard remains in place, and it may be that those in charge of road safety policy for years are loathe to admit they were wrong.

While the government has been approving new speed cameras such as SpeedSpike and letting discredited camera partnerships revive under another guise (such as in Thames Valley), it's possible that protests from constituents and in the national media are having an effect. This summer, an RAC survey recorded 91% of drivers as having no confidence that the government was serious about ending the war on the motorist.

The ABD is awaiting a follow-up meeting with Mike Penning and is making contact with Herts residents, such as parking charges protesters in Welwyn. The next few months should be very interesting.

To join the ABD
call us now on
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The ABD campaigns for:

- Improved road user training
- Real transport choices
- Investment in Britain's roads
- Honesty on transport issues

2011 AGM a huge success

The ABD's pro-lobbying stance certainly paid off at this year's annual meeting. In recent years, despite having well-informed, engaging speakers, attendances had declined. This year broke the trend with an almost full house: we drew a much wider audience by opening the meeting to friends and families of members, plus a debate on the effects of HS2.

Chairman Brian Gregory opened the meeting with a list of the ABD's strength and weaknesses. Despite our relatively small size, we continue to punch well above our weight, probably as the only truly independent pro-motoring group fighting for drivers.

For the first time, we had a sitting MP as a speaker; Steve Baker, a member of the Commons Transport Select Committee and a dedicated driving enthusiast. His polished and confident presentation opened with a reminder of the statements of the coalition's transport policy; the Government believes transport infrastructure is essential but we need greener and more sustainable transport, to include:

- A national recharging network for electric vehicles.
- Dropping funding for new fixed speed cameras.
- No road pricing, except for HGVs

Baker said high fuel prices will be lowered by a levy on oil companies, but this is only postponing a 4p increase until next year. The tax on fuel duty is now 60%, down from 66% in 2009, despite massively increased retail prices. This shows raising prices beyond a certain level produces a decrease in revenue.

He demonstrated, using a graph he designed, that oil prices barely fluctuated from 1945 until 1971, when the link between oil prices and gold was broken, with oil thereafter priced purely in US dollars, with subsequent huge fluctuations.

Baker also supported an increase in the motorway speed limit to 80mph and backed moves to base speed limits on the 85th percentile principle. He roundly criticised any attempts to impose EU cross-border fixed penalty fines and also drew loud applause when he announced he was a fan of JJ Leeming's book *Prevent or Punish*, reprinted thanks to the ABD's Malcolm Heymer.

On congestion, Baker was more contentious. In theory he supported the concept that all products, including roads, need a realistic price on which to base their true cost, and underpricing a resource



creates excess demand. However, following questions, he acknowledged there are severe problems in trying to introduce road pricing.

It was pointed out that drivers pay well in excess of what is returned to the road network; Baker noted excessive government expenditure still badly needed to be curtailed, and he came out firmly against any increase in the share of taxation borne by drivers.

Baker's presentation showed he is one of the very few MPs prepared to put their head above the parapet by challenging the status quo on issues like road safety. He's prepared to counter speed limit reduction arguments from people who have suffered injuries or know people who have been involved in road accidents.

The presentation also highlighted issues that planners do not foresee, such as community blight; in Baker's constituency, where the A40 crosses over the town there's considerable road noise.

Although there are endemic problems with political parties, acceptance of party whips on most issues blocking an MP's instinctive judgements, Baker made it clear he's an independent thinker, and wasn't prepared just to accept so-called 'received wisdom'. Baker urged everyone to join a political party and to work for change from within, to get transport issues higher up the agenda. His parting message was "if you can turn disillusionment and resentment into enthusiasm and positivity you are doing well".

It was a superb presentation and earned spontaneous applause.

The TPA demolishes HS2 Claims

The Tax Payers' Alliance Research Director John O'Connell, gave an entertaining and informative presentation about the mega costs and overstated benefits of the mammoth rail project that is HS2, which affects Baker's constituency in the Chilterns.

O'Connell pointed out passenger growth claims of 267% from government are wildly unrealistic; some 11-18 trains an hour are reckoned to be provided to meet this demand, but to stand the faintest chance of recouping costs, average passenger income would have to be around £70,000 a year. Half of all current passenger journeys, certainly the longer ones, are already undertaken by the top 20% of earners, which is why the TPA has dubbed the project "a railway for the rich"

Claims of improved passenger productivity (excess working from laptops during journeys) were dismissed, and so too were the wider economic benefits; 30,000 construction jobs will be created at an estimated cost of £800,000 per job, but additional job creation is guesswork.

Crucially though, most people live and work in one area and road improvements in the Midlands would do more to tackle congestion and improve journey times in those areas. In fact places like Coventry and Nottingham will suffer cuts of up to two-thirds in existing services, to give priority to HS services.

O'Connell also pointed out that the pro-HS lobby group did itself no favours depicting the south east as a bowler hat brigade in an advertising campaign! Also, depicting the

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opposition as NIMBYs doesn't rebut the fact that the Chilterns will not get any new stations or services; all the focus is on cutting journey times between our big cities. Finally, polls conducted by the TPA in Birmingham show two-thirds are opposed to government plans, with the cost to UK families estimated at £1000 each.

Standing up to Sir Humphrey

Motorcycle enthusiast Warren Djanogly, leader of the NO To Bike Parking Tax waged against Westminster City Council (WCC) gave an illuminating talk on the campaign which has seen thousands of riders demonstrating outside City Hall and running a high-profile campaign against the council's attempts to force bike parking charges in the borough.

Indeed, as he pointed out, WCC was the first council to introduce parking charges in the UK in late 1950s. "Parking is a tax" he said, "It's not unreasonable to regulate demand, but such a management decision must be based on a genuine need for such a levy".

Djanogly admitted there's been a huge increase in powered two-wheeler (PTW) users, with a much broader demographic across age and classes. He also claimed no council in the world charges bikers to park; with cities favouring public transport, bikers find themselves in the middle of a public/private argument over road usage.

WCC, however stated a massive rise in the use of PTWs justifies charging, but they hadn't banked on the extent of opposition it aroused by wanting to scrap the difference between car and PTW users. The bikers' continual protest led them into a secondary investigation into behind the scenes deals between the police councillors and officers, which came to light with the awarding of a new parking contract with NCP, which eventually became NSL; the latter has taken over parking contracts worth £200m over 40 local authorities.

EU rules, however, say material changes to contracts must involve retendering. In the meantime WCC had awarded a new parking contract to Mouchel, a totally different company. A month later, lawyers for WCC announced they had found a "problem" with the contract which "made it not in the public interest" – subsequently a retendering process awarded the contract to NSL!

Sadly, bikers lost the fight against the introduction of bike parking charges in the Appeals Court but have taken it the European Court of Human Rights for a final decision.

Djanogly insisted parking policies had to be on a new footing with control taken away from councils. "Councils are the modern day robber barons" said Djanogly: "double council income

and they double their expenditure".

Challenged by Steve Baker about the worth of transferring parking controls to a new public body Djanogly asked "who's guarding the guards?" What's wanted is a public watchdog with real teeth to safeguard road users from excessive parking regimes.

Oil crisis – what crisis?

ABD member Martin Kicks next gave a superb presentation on a huge range of new and adapted technologies for extracting oil in his talk on meeting the nation's future energy needs. Such



technologies can supply oil for another 100 years. Amazingly, some of it is 19th century technology, such as distilling coal to produce oil, with estimated coal reserves in the UK of 120 years.

There's a huge stumbling block though; the Climate Change Act 2008, which binds us (so far the Government has refused to repeal it) to find energy from renewable sources of 80% by 2050.



As the old power stations will have to close down under EU directives and the cynical introduction of a floor price for carbon (which has shot up the price of fossil fuels) has created the real threat of blackouts accompanied by high price rises in fuel to pay for the introduction of renewable energy, especially wind turbines.

Wind turbines work well in the lab, but experience massive problems in scaling up the technology to meet the UK's energy requirements. Wind needs the backup of other power sources to make it more reliable and wind speed is a completely variable factor in our weather, even in mid-winter, when power is most needed.

The current off-peak rate for overnight charging either for heating, (Economy 7) or recharging electric cars will make it the new (highly expensive) peak rate.

Martin explained that new technologies such as extracting oil from shale, could easily provide power for another century or more, while plutonium or uranium extraction (the nuclear option), could give energy supplies for another millennium.

The ABD needs you

The final presentation by our media/lobbyist rep Brian Mooney, assisted by Campaigns Director Brian Macdowall, detailed the hard work that has taken place over the last year in raising the ABD's profile amongst the political class. Government attitudes are clearly hardening: some Labour fuel duty rises have been kept; VAT on fuel is now 20% and the threat of above-inflation fuel duty increases for 2012 remains.

Whilst in opposition, Teresa Villiers lambasted Labour's obsession with speed cameras, saying that they blinded them to the proven merits of better ways of keeping our roads safe. Just over a year on there are precious few reductions in the number of fixed cameras.

An RAC survey earlier this year claimed 48% of drivers were reducing travel and the vast majority seemed resigned to almost no improvement on national issues affecting drivers.

Labour's transport policy review, to which we have contributed (see *OTR100*), is still in a state of flux. It will be decided at the party's conference this September.

The threat of localism is a double-edged sword: it may provide residents with more opportunity to hold local referenda, but is likely to give local authorities extra fundraising powers. Despite promises, there is as yet, no real guidance on how to set speed limits properly based on research, key facts and evidence. There's also a trend towards parking charge rip-offs, police patrol cuts, potholes/road repairs piling up and depressed speed limits.

Brian Mooney listed a number of initiatives, showing the hard work put into lobbying over the last year, with ministerial meetings, placing articles in the media and working with other campaign groups. He hopes our idea of keeping a web-based scorecard showing how the "War on the motorist" is progressing, will appear on our website, further raising our profile.

It cannot be over-emphasised just how important it is for you to contribute to this debate by lobbying your MP/councillors, submitting FOIA requests, placing comments in/on local media, websites or blogs and working with other groups in order to raise the ABD's profile in your own area.

Want to get more involved? There are plenty of ways you can help the ABD to move forward. Just check out page 15 to find out how

The ABD negotiates a great offer for its members, plus a new range of subs options have been announced – requiring your immediate attention.

Protect your licence for just £24

Every year nearly 270,000 drivers are disqualified through the totting-up process, primarily for speed-related offences. In a significant – and rising – number of cases, signage régimes and/ or the enforcement process are known to be either invalid, erroneous, illegal – or conceivably all three.

However, getting scamera partnerships to admit that their enforcement processes can be less than perfect is a long, expensive, uphill struggle – not least since the ACPO Ltd spinoff company, RSS Ltd, began offering 'expert witnesses' to support the CPS' case, however flawed, at substantially inflated prices.

These witnesses, who are supposed to

be objective and impartial, are typically representatives (or selling agents) – of the manufacturers and importers of speed enforcement equipment. So no conflict of interests apparent there, then?

Hardly surprisingly, the courts almost always find in the Crown's favour – no matter how damning the counter evidence. And once RSS intercedes, prosecution costs spiral from hundreds, to literally tens of thousands, of pounds. "Come and get us if you think you're hard enough" is the RSS Ltd superno and ex-ACPO head Merdydd Hughes' challenge to drivers who contest wrongful prosecutions.

The situation is even further stacked against the innocent by the fact that the ConDem Coalition

seems likely to backslide on its opposition to proposals from the previous Labour administration, which would restrict the costs the defence can reclaim to legal aid rates – typically representing about 30% of the the total outlay.

Someone needs to act to swing this patently canted playing field back in the defendant's favour and towards a fair trial equilibrium. So, the ABD has teamed up with Motoring First to offer its Licence Shield legal protection product (normally £39.99) at the substantially discounted price of £24 to ABD members. This can provide up to £25,000 in financial support and boasts a higher than 95% rate of successful trial outcomes. For full details, see tinyurl.com/5wu7pc

ABD Members should log onto this site via the link on the ABD website and be ready to input their name, ABD membership number and address details to be able to take advantage of this very attractive offer.



Have your say: 1

Lincoln's MP and ABD patron Karl McCartney, has placed a short survey on his website (www.karlmccartney.co.uk) asking his constituents for their views on whether fines in the county are high enough for those caught and prosecuted for driving an uninsured vehicle - the average fine in the county was £233 in 2008, the last year's figures available.

The survey also ask residents if someone has been caught three times whether they should go to prison and also whether anyone locally has been 'scammed' by insurance fraudsters such as fake accident and claim costs being made to their insurers.

The online survey closes on 17 September and after the results have been collated, Karl will produce a report and take up any of the conclusions from the research findings.

Karl McCartney MP, said: "I am keen to find out whether local people think the penalties in the county are strong enough and act as a big enough deterrent to make people think twice before putting themselves behind the wheel without the right insurance. It is one of those crimes that can really undermine and shake people's belief in the rule of law if someone who is caught is not punished strongly enough. It may not make the front pages but I know from my experience as a Justice of the Peace3, and from what my constituents tell me, it is an issue that needs far more attention."

•See tinyurl.com/3ppahpa for more on this.

Oxford's new Mr Fixit

Oxford has long been a hotbed of anti-driver activity. It was refreshing therefore to see an article in the *Oxford Mail* about the fightback being organised by local resident Nick Fell. In the mould of Richard Bentley or Neil Herron, Nick is one to irritate the authorities by boning up on legislation for parking and the like – and finding that the authorities have not complied with the law.

Nick admitted it involved some effort, but it was worth it. "It's about fairness. It's a two-way street. They have to get it right. I hate to see people being given penalty charges where the restrictions are defective."

Apart from getting several residents off parking tickets, Nick has presented a dossier to Oxfordshire County Council, the highways authority, and demanded action. He's attended County and City Council meetings on transport issues, particularly on parking, CPZs and 20mph speed limits. He has worked with local residents to stop an inappropriate CPZ and make another area 'no go' for parking attendants.

When Oxfordshire County Council tried repeatedly to install a CPZ, Nick joined forces with the Cowley East Oxford traders' association and the Divinity Road residents' association to get the proposals thrown out.

Another success was in Iffley Fields, one reason being that the residents managed kept a united front. The issue became an embarrassment for the County Council once the local paper got onto the story, and supported the residents. The local Councillors and MP, Andrew Smith, added their support and the CPZ plans were dropped. There is now a moratorium on installation of new CPZs in Oxford!

I managed to track Nick down and sent him information on the ABD. After a phone call, he was keen not just to join us for the AGM, but fit in a last-minute slot about his local activities. His 15-minute talk was thought-provoking and spiced with humour.

I am since pleased to report that Nick has been inspired to join the ABD and we look forward to hearing about more local successes.

Nick's many current interests include stopping the speed limit being lowered to 40mph (from 70mph) along the Northern Bypass, and transcribing a collection of old road safety videos onto DVD, for which any professional media assistance would be appreciated. If you'd like to contact Nick, in the first instance you can do it through me, via fairdeal@abd.org.uk

Brian Mooney



The ABD warms up in Essex

Some time ago Nick Arden held meetings for Essex ABD members. Essex has now been chosen by the ABD to stimulate local member activity with a view to making decision makers take greater notice of drivers' issues. Rowland Pantling, based in Colchester, is the contact for Essex and has been speaking on your behalf with the County Council.

We would like to build on Rowland's initiative by encouraging you to send him any useful traffic or transport items to him, (be selective, he can't deal with every item) concerning the county, and we'd like to know if you'd be interested in helping him by writing to the press, acting as a local contact, or assisting in some other capacity such as sending in FOI requests.

I'd be happy to chair the occasional Essex members' meeting, but it would be far more effective if members use email and the internet

to keep in touch with each other, as well as campaigning to bring drivers' issues to the attention of the public.

There are many things that make life difficult, expensive and frustrating for drivers in the county and it only takes a few people to put pressure on local politicians to make them start listening to drivers.

Concentrating on items such as excessive numbers and phasing of traffic lights, as Rowland has done, is exactly the kind of issue that attracts the attention of politicians and the public; parking restrictions is another hot topic while there's plenty of scope for further campaigns.

If you're based in Essex, make a note of Rowland's contact details, which are on the back page. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please contact Rowland or myself.

Brian Macdowall

New subs rates and membership options

Following the announcement in OTR100, of the committee's wish to move to electronic version of OTR, in order to make substantial savings to fund vital campaigning costs, a final decision on OTR/subscription rates has been made, taking into consideration feedback from members. In addition we're trying to enhance the membership benefits package.

As one such add-on benefit, we have negotiated with Motoring First to be able to offer its Licence Shield legal protection to ABD members at £24 per annum – a 40% discount on the market rate of £39.99. Once protected you can get legal advice or representation at minimal cost if you're threatened with points or licence removal.

Details of the Licence Shield product offer have also been posted on the Members Forum website at: tinyurl.com/3tpnbpv - but for terms and conditions, you'll need to read through the separate article.

For those who pay (or wish to pay) their subs by standing order and receive OTR electronically, the subscription rate will now be £25 per annum. The magazine can be downloaded from the members website; this is our preferred and recommended form of membership as it's simple to operate and saves money. Realistically, £25 is the lowest rate we can set.

This will come into effect on 1 January 2012, so please ensure you're paying at least £25, preferably by standing order. If you've already renewed, please check you're paying at least £25 and that you've notified the membership secretary that you want OTR electronically; she

will also need your current email address.

Providing it's permitted by company law, AGM and other notices in the future will also be notified by email and will be downloadable from the members' website, which will produce further savings for us.

Following the publication of OTR100, several members expressed a desire to continue receiving a hard copy of the newsletter. Providing you pay your subscription by standing order, we will make a charge of £40 per annum to cover the costs of sending a printed magazine; this cost includes the £25 membership. Please notify the membership secretary you want this option, otherwise the next issue of OTR will be the last hard copy you receive.

Our long-term aim is to have as many members as possible receiving OTR and official notices electronically, with all new members joining online. Anyone paying less than £25 per annum

Have your say: 2

The government has recently relaunched its petition website. At the moment, any petition that gets over 100,000 signatures will be debated in parliament – although this figure may be raised or cut depending on the number of petitions that reach it. You'll recall how successful ABD member Peter Roberts' petition against road pricing was, so it's definitely worth taking the time to vote on issues you feel strongly about. Here are a few petitions you may like to sign, and don't forget that you can share those petitions you support with your contacts on email, Facebook, Twitter etc. For each petition you'll need to type in <http://petitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/> and then the number of the petition on which you want to vote, such as <http://petitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/353> to vote on HS2.

- Legal costs: 5322
- Stop HS2: 353
- Remove all Speed Cameras: 3632
- Parking: 905
- M6 Toll: 1837
- Mway speed limit: 1630
- Traffic lights on roundabouts: 2193
- Dartford Crossing tolls: 1878
- F1 free to air: 57
- Speed humps: 901
- Stop war on drivers: 5305
- Cheaper petrol and diesel: 347

will become an associate member and will not have full access to the members' website or any voting rights. If you're paying less than the new subscription rate, we'll write to you before your membership expires, requesting you to increase your standing order.

OTR cannot portray all the hard work done by the committee and others behind the scenes. We remain the only independent and unashamedly pro-motoring drivers lobby group. We trust you see ABD in the same light and will give us your full support changing your standing order where required. **If you need to change your standing order, you should contact your bank and increase the amount, do NOT cancel it and try to set up a new one.**

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'Localism' – is it an opportunity or a threat?

The Coalition agreement expressed determination to "oversee a radical redistribution of power away from Westminster and Whitehall to councils, communities and homes. Wherever possible, we want people to call the shots over decisions that affect their lives".

This isn't all that radical though; there will be no powers to override national and EU legislation, and national government will still call the shots over 'infrastructure' matters such as power generation facilities (wind turbines?). Building on research from former Wycombe MP, Paul Goodman, I note as possibilities:

"Making the police more accountable to locally-elected representatives, and obliging them to publish detailed crime statistics every month". This could have some relevance to scrapping 'cash cow' speed cameras.

"Giving communities the right to run local state-run services; supporting the creation of 'mutuals, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises'. This includes allowing public sector workers to form employee-owned co-operatives and bid to run the services they deliver". Sounds harmless at first but it could see companies like Road Safety Analysis, which has taken over from the Thames Valley camera partnership?

"Training a new generation of community organizers and support the creation of neighbourhood groups across Britain". There is the danger of 'community groups' being hijacked

by environmental and political activists; some counties like Essex and Oxfordshire have been reported to have seen drivers snapped by speed guns held by local lay operators and then written to by officials; the pitfalls should be obvious.

"Enabling local authorities to levy new taxes" but also "giving residents the power to veto large council tax increases". With funding tight, there will be temptation for some councils to rely on fine-generators or parking charges, particularly those that hit visitors without votes. Cherwell District Council had to back down after planning to charge disabled drivers! Democratic safeguards would have to cover more than just council tax.

"Giving residents the power to call for a referendum on any local issue" - but the current Localism Bill doesn't make it compulsory for councils to grant them, even if a trigger percentage figure is reached. Political pressure might be one way round this. So might the 'Local Referendums Bill' proposed by Zac Goldsmith MP. It seeks to make referendums mandatory with a certain level of support and the results binding. One to watch – see www.parliament.uk.

The Local Government Act 1972 already allows for parish referendums on any issue. There has been speculation over town/parish councils taking over parking, so this may be an area to watch.

We want to see the 'War on the Motorist' ended, not delegated to local level. OTR has

reported cases of hysteria being whipped up on spurious grounds, petitions being run and elected representatives put under pressure to 'be seen to do something'. Objectivity has gone out of the window, for instance, Police advice has been ignored in setting lower speed limits.

ABD has a wealth of knowledge and is in demand by the national media, however it needs to sink deeper local roots, e.g. engaging with local residents' associations.

There are three straightforward ways to help: 'Level 1' – just take an interest; keep us posted on developments, such as through the Forum.

'Level 2' – those with stronger feelings can make a stand, e.g. writing to local media or councillors. As a yardstick, a MP getting even three letters indicates an issue is significant.

There may be meetings you can attend. Chances are that other people have the same gut-feeling as you, and this encourages speaking out.

'Level 3' – for those with a bit of go - take the lead in organising something, like a petition. You might not immediately be familiar with every issue, but expertise is often available from experienced campaigners in ABD.

Possibilities include contributing to a local webpage, or setting up a Twitter account...

If you want to discuss any ideas of your own, or would like help in getting started, then please either contact Brian Macdowall or Brian Mooney – details on the back page.

Brian Mooney

You may be aware of a new bill going through Parliament called the Localism Bill, which will revolutionise planning law. Without wishing to get into the argument about whether the "presumption for sustainable development" is a good thing or not – which is generating considerable controversy – there is another aspect of the bill that is worth mentioning.

This is the ability to create a Neighbourhood Development Plan. This introduces an additional tier into the national and local planning environment. The really interesting thing about this is that a Neighbourhood Development Plan can be created by a Parish Council, or any other local group that cares to represent residents (in London of course there are no Parish Councils anyway). It's aimed at applying to the 'village' level.



So for example, in Chislehurst where I live, the Chislehurst Society which is a local 'amenity group' is planning to create such a Plan as it is the obvious body to do so. Chislehurst is of course only a few square miles and is simply a

part of the conurbation of greater London. The author of this article is on the Executive Committee of the Chislehurst Society. But if there is no suitable local group existing, or the local Parish council does not want to bother, there is nothing stopping you forming one.

Perhaps you don't have experience of writing Development Plans, which you might think a rather specialist task? Well it was until recently, due to the complexity of planning law, and is likely to remain so even after Planning Policy

Guidance has been reduced from 3000 pages to 50 as is intended. But that's no problem as the Local Council has an obligation to assist and provide funding if you need expert advice.

Development Plans are not just about building developments, but they also tend to embrace transport infrastructure and such matters as parking, so anyone interested in transport provision should take an interest in the possibility of having some influence via a Neighbourhood Development Plan. This does not mean you can overturn national policy and regulations, and it is not yet clear exactly how the new tier will interact with other levels, but it is certainly something that those interested in local issues should try to get involved in.

Even though the Bill has not yet passed into law, you can start applying to create a Neighbourhood Plan already, so now's the time to push ahead if you have the urge.

Roger Lawson

Brighton's Green chaos

Earlier this year, Brighton & Hove City Council offered the prospect of a 5% reduction in the cost of resident parking permits and more funding for repairing potholes, pavements and street lighting. Council Leader Mary Mears said: "At a time when residents are struggling with high fuel and food bills, we think it is important that we give them some relief". Unfortunately for her, this was too little too late for voters, and the Green Party took control of the council with Labour support. A surviving councillor mused that the Greens "managed to keep a lid on the more extreme Marxist elements in their ranks which might otherwise have put some floating voters off". The Greens threaten to:

- Bring in citywide 20mph limits
- Introduce work-place parking charges.
- Earmark a percentage of parking income for 'environmental improvements' (which is very dubious legally).

I would be interested to hear from any ABD members with local connections, particularly if there is scope for a 'day of action' which might get local drivers fighting back.

Brian Mooney

References:

- tinyurl.com/439s3oc
- tinyurl.com/3dj9afe
- tinyurl.com/3eofezr

Will you?

It'll come as no surprise that money is at the heart of what the ABD can achieve. More cash means we can campaign on a wider variety of issues, more effectively. We can communicate more fully with the media, potential members and existing members if we've got more money in the bank.

The ABD is indebted to the generosity of a former member who left us a modest amount in his Will to help fund our campaigning. If you are in a similar position after making provision for those you've left behind, you could make a big difference - in which case, please let our Treasurer know.

In drawing up the document, make sure that the legacy quotes the legal name, number and registered address of the ABD for the avoidance of confusion. These are: the Association of British Drivers (an operating name of Pro-Motor, a company limited by guarantee and registered in England under Company Number 2945728) and whose registered office is 4 King Square Bridgwater Somerset TA6 3DG.

Of course you don't have to wait until you've gone before you donate some money to the ABD's fighting fund - we're always happy to accept a cheque or some cash at any time, no matter how small or large the amount.

Being social

We've been getting some very encouraging feedback from members on the benefits of social media, which is why it's worth setting up a personal Twitter account, as described in *OTR100*. Online communication tools are taking over from paper formats; it's quick and easy to reach a wide audience. A recent ABD Tweet about the HA downgrading pothole repairs on trunk roads was retweeted by a driving school which follows us and as a result, potentially up to 300 followers got that message. Yet the process took just seconds.

If you're on Facebook, make sure you recirculate items from the ABD's Facebook page so your family and friends get to see what driving issues are topical. It's easy to set up; you don't have to write articles yourself and you can add your own, (supportive comments) and/or photos to the original ABD article/news item.

In recent weeks, Kent ABD has been quoted in the press virtually every week, on subjects such as speed limits, parking and potholes; the key issues which affect local people. Campaigning works most effectively – like advertising – through repetition. Becoming a local contact and asking for National Committee help is the best way forward. All the necessary contact details are on the back page of this issue of OTR.

Keeping up the pressure – get involved

Central lobbying at Westminster has become one of the main focuses of ABD action. While these efforts continue, the next phase will be harder; coalition attitudes towards drivers have started to harden. Witness parking charge rip-offs, road repair problems and postponement of above-inflation fuel price increases. The localism agenda is becoming increasingly important for drivers; it's a double-edged sword; local people may be able to hold referenda, but local authorities may be given extra fund raising powers.

We've already seen excessive parking charge rises, extension of yellow lines and new meters installed as councils try to balance budgets; something they're not supposed to do with parking charges. As yet, there's also no detailed guidance on setting speed limits locally; a real problem in every area of the country.

Our lobbying campaign, particularly getting Steve Baker and Karl McCartney on board as patrons, certainly inspired some of you to greater participation. Tony Smith-Roberts (our Bucks coordinator), contacted our chairman Brian Gregory earlier this year, to ask for help giving a talk to Bletchley Rotary Club. I sent him a PowerPoint presentation of road issues that we covered in Kent, which

could be adapted for local members' use; this will be available on the members' website shortly. It covers bread-and-butter issues like roadworks, traffic lights, speed limits, parking etc, and, if combined with photographs of local road layouts, provides a powerful visual demonstration of how badly taxpayers' money is spent by those in authority, and how the ABD can help.

A firm date has yet to be arranged but we intend to share the presentation between us, with Tony leading the talk; with a captive audience you're guaranteed their attention.

Also, earlier this year, I was contacted by our Essex coordinator, Rowland Pantling, following a transport conference he attended at County Hall, Chelmsford. Since then, we have held two members' meetings while energetic and resourceful Essex member Rob Moore has tackled his local Council (Southend) over its proposal to install average speed cameras along the seafront. Between us we drafted an objection letter, and Rob has made contact with a sympathetic local councillor.

One or more of us will be speaking at the committee meeting, where this subject will be debated. We would still like other Essex members to send in photos of poor road layouts

in the county to Rowland, and we will be working again on the Dartford tunnel consultation, for which we ask member support.

Inspired by our lobbying efforts, East Sussex member Brian Moon, a retired businessman who has lots of connections to car clubs, contacted our media rep Brian Mooney. He's offered to lobby car clubs, as well as making a generous offer to fund new leaflets for ABD members to give out.

Other issues under discussion are an initiative to start lobbying activity in the Surrey, Sussex, and West Kent areas. This forum is open-minded; we need to find out what aspects of campaigning members are interested in. A meeting has yet to be arranged; we'll contact members when it's arranged. Meanwhile, Terry Hudson, our Kent coordinator, had encouraging feedback from his last edition of the members' South East newsletter: many thanks to those who updated us with their new contact details.

Terry is gathering material for the next edition and would love to hear from members in Kent, Surrey, Sussex Berkshire, Hampshire and Essex on issues in their areas they feel strongly about. Terry's contact details are at the back of OTR under Kent.

Brian MacDowall

Imagine you're in your annual appraisal, and your boss is scrutinising the contribution you've made to the company over the past year. You're going to shout from the rooftops just what an invaluable asset you've been, aren't you? You'll cite references and take every opportunity to demonstrate your worth. So why haven't the scammer partnerships felt the need to do the same with their recent instructions to reveal how effective they are? They should be bombarding interested parties with data, to prove that they have a valuable part to play in making our roads safer. Oh wait. Hang on. They don't. Perhaps that's why they're so keen to sit on the data; they don't want to let the cat out of the bag.

The IAM recently sent out a press release posing the question "are roads just for cars?" It was in response to a member poll in which 58% voted that drivers should be held legally responsible for accidents between cars and more vulnerable road users in pedestrian-priority zones. Further proof – if it were needed – that the IAM and its members inhabit a different planet from the rest of us.

I'm always sceptical of statistics, just as (I guess) every ABD member is. But it's always worth throwing a few numbers about when you can show that where the Government is concerned, the left and right hands aren't talking to each other. For example, according to the latest DfT figures, the number of trips made by individuals in Great Britain last year reached the lowest level recorded by the National Travel Survey since 1975/76. Apparently, respondents made an average of 960 trips a year, a drop of 12% from the 1086 recorded in 1995/97 but still above the 935 recorded in 1975/76.

Meanwhile, public transport is taking a growing proportion of trips, with an 8% increase between 1995/97 and 2010. Between 1995/97 and 2010 the number of trips by private modes of transport fell by 14%. Walking trips fell 8% last year to 210 per person per year, which is the lowest level recorded to date – but just how accurate can that figure be?

Crucially though, the average distance travelled per person per year has fallen by 7% since its peak of 7208 miles in 2005 to 6726 miles in 2010. So why do we constantly hear that we're all travelling more and that our transport networks are going to struggle to cope in the coming years?

To prove my point about the pointlessness of many (or even most) statistics, a press release popped up recently, courtesy of Green Flag Breakdown and University College London. The latter had spent time working out an equation to decide how long it takes to get stuck behind a tractor when driving along a rural road. It turns out the answer is 80 minutes – and you'll be stuck behind it for anywhere between 1.2 and 3.1 miles. And to think that somebody paid for this 'research' to be done. Now you can see why insurance premiums are so ludicrously large.



Local authorities will have more freedom to implement 20mph schemes under reforms announced by transport minister Norman Baker. The Department is expanding the list of specified traffic calming measures allowed in 20mph zones, to include repeater signs and mini-roundabouts. This should reduce the number of traffic calming measures – such as road humps and chicanes – that are currently installed in the zones. In future the Department will also allow local authorities to paint 20mph speed limit symbols on roads to serve as repeater signs. Upright signs will still be necessary to indicate

What's on the mind of Chris Medd, OTR editor. This issue; the pointlessness of most statistics, plus the Dartford Crossing rip-off.

the start and end of schemes. Other changes aim to lower the cost of variable 20mph speed limits outside places such as schools. In future, councils will be able to apply to the DfT for council-wide authorisation for all of the above measures on residential roads. At the moment they have to apply for individual scheme approval from the Government. So expect to see a proliferation of 20mph zones in the near future, but not necessarily a corresponding cut in casualties.

The Highways Agency has revised the rules on trunk road and motorway potholes. Previously contractors were required to ensure that drivers were given a quiet, comfortable and even ride by making sure that any defects in the road surface were repaired within 24 hours. However, the new rules state that potholes smaller than 15cm wide or 4cm deep are not classed as urgent for repair. The massive increase in potholes is a consequence of three severe winters with 2010/2011 being the coldest for 100 years combining with years of underinvestment in routine road maintenance.

A new EU diktat could lead to up to a million diabetic drivers losing their licence, because of new rules which classify them as unfit to drive. Under a new definition of the rules to meet an EU directive, a diabetic who has two hypos in a year – even while in bed – will end up banned from driving. The charity Diabetes UK has protested to the DfT about the changes, due to take effect in October; it's told officials that up to a million people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes, who use insulin could be 'negatively affected' by the changes, but says there is no evidence that drivers with diabetes pose a greater risk than others. The charity fears the DVLA is applying the EU directive far more strictly than other countries. Indeed, some diabetics have found the DVLA is already using the new interpretation to ban them from the roads. Quelle surprise; British officials over-reacting. Whatever next?

Chris Medd

We were told that when the Dartford Crossing had been paid for, charges to use it would be scrapped. Of course once it was paid for, the charges remained, even though the antiquated payments system often leads to massive tailbacks. And as if that isn't enough, the DfT is proposing to increase the car toll from £1.50 to £2 late this year – then £2.50 in spring 2012. HGV charges will rise from £3.70 to £5 and then £6.

But it's OK, as drivers have been offered a concession; if the tailbacks from having to stop to pay the toll get too bad, the charges will be suspended to keep the traffic flowing. Naturally only a tightly-defined scenario will lead to this, and that is "queueing traffic (stationary or moving at less than 10mph) which extends continuously from the Dartford Crossing to M25 junction 28 (A12) for southbound traffic or to M25 junction 4 (A224) for northbound traffic". And the distance between the Dartford Crossing and each junction? About 12 miles. Needless to say the ABD isn't happy about it, which is why we've contributed to the consultation; read our contribution at tinyurl.com/5v25s8c



letters

Opinions expressed are personal views and not necessarily those of the ABD. Please note letters may be shortened.

The fatality rate per million vehicles in 2010 is half of what it was in 2000, one-sixth of what it was in 1980, an eleventh of that in 1965, and roughly a fiftieth of what it was in 1930.

The reasons are multiple. In the mid-1930s tests were introduced for new drivers acquiring driving licences. Improvements to vehicle design and the introduction of MOT tests for vehicles in the 1960s have also made vehicles significantly safer. The use of seat-belts has reduced casualties, particularly fatal ones, since the 1980s, and the passing of laws to stop people drinking under the influence of alcohol has also helped.

But there are also factors for which those of us involved in highways planning and traffic management can be rightly proud. The construction of major new roads, including motorways, is one. Another, probably more significant, action was the application of specific safety factors to existing roads. In the late 1960s and 1970s in London, accident data analysis was used to identify accident blackspots, and help develop solutions, many of which were relatively cheap. These included providing refuges – not necessarily linked to formal crossings – in wide roads, pedestrianisation schemes to remove traffic from major shopping areas, and the removal of extraneous traffic from residential roads.

We also now plan new developments with highways that have layouts to reduce accidents.

Data suggests that the total number of injury accidents has also reduced, sadly by not as much – from some 400,000 in 1965 to some 225,000 in 2009. If recent reports that a large number of alleged minor injury accidents involving whiplash do not actually involve injury are correct, then the accident numbers would also come down – to say 150,000 if not more.

There is obviously more to be done, particularly for cycling, but progress has been dramatic.

Philip Sulley

Mike Penning MP expresses disappointment that Herts CC has not published speed camera data (see front page). I share his disappointment but I'm not surprised. I'm a safety engineer by profession and have been challenging Herts

One immediately noticeable effect of the coalition's Localism Bill from the ABD's perspective, is that local councillors have, in its name, started passing more anti-car measures in response to NIMBYS, including more traffic calming, more 20mph zones and ever more decreased speed limits on main roads. The Transport Minister has compounded this situation by making it easier and cheaper to bring in 20mph limits. My personal opinion is that "localism" has become "parochialism" of the worst kind. In fact many requests for these schemes originate from parish councils. Councillors rush to oblige presumably thinking they'll pick up votes.

All this runs totally contrary to the ABD's long-standing policy that speed limits should be set consistently and nationally by people who know what they're doing – and not by local authorities at all.

In Kent this has been particularly seen because last year the county council introduced a Members Highway Fund - £25,000 per year that each councillor may use in their own ward for local highway projects. There are 84 county councillors so this represents over £2 million of our money per year. Some of it goes on "good causes" like resurfacing but it is also getting donated to bring in speed limit and 20mph schemes "demanded" by residents, which would not otherwise have sufficient priority for the expenditure.

Some weeks ago I was in London for an evening meeting at which one of the speakers was Emma Boon of the Taxpayers' Alliance .

CC for nearly four years on this subject and can confirm that they have spent £2m a year operating speed cameras but have no evidence of any resulting road safety benefit. My self-funded wider research into this subject can shed some light on the reasons why and I will claim some credit for turning the spotlight on speed cameras over the last year or two.

The view presented by speed camera proponents is based on the premise that speed cameras should "work" (ie prevent collisions) but that some (where collisions increase or stay the same) for some strange reason do not work as well as the rest. For this to be valid there needs to be a compelling argument why a camera can prevent

After the meeting we all adjourned to a nearby pub (as one does) so I broached this subject to her. The Taxpayers' Alliance is for giving local authorities more freedom in how they spend their money, but they too don't like the way the Kent Members Fund is working out. The following morning I got a phone call from their National Grassroots Co-ordinator, Andrew Allison, requesting more details. He was duly provided with an online report on the scheme. The current situation is that he thinks we may have "opened a can of worms" and is seeking further information to see if other councils are doing anything similar. To date we know for certain of just one other authority with a similar scheme – Cheshire west & Chester Council – but only to the tune of £10,000 a year.

The Taxpayers' Alliance are concerned about misuse of public funds for any purpose by any public body. The ABD share that concern, but with regard to the sort of things that are being funded that affect drivers by highway authorities.

We should like to know if similar schemes and consequences anywhere else across the nation, so this is an appeal to members to let us know if it happens in your area. Please get in touch, initially with the ABD in Kent (contact details on back page) – with a "link" to documentary evidence if available on your council's website – and we'll build a picture of what's happening – and pass to others where appropriate – as well as telling the Taxpayers' Alliance.

Ian Taylor

a collision (supported by examples of actual collisions where it could credibly be argued that "if only a camera had been installed . the collision could have been prevented"). No such argument or examples exist, and I have asked countless camera "experts" and supporters.

On the other hand, there is compelling argument and evidence that speed cameras can, and do, trigger erratic or distracted driving and hence contribute to collisions and near-misses. The recent inquest into the death of motorcyclist Timothy Rowsell in Dorset is a tragic example of this. The authorities and academics (Highways Agency, TRL, Prof Richard Allsop) admit that cameras can cause collisions and it is

There were fewer deaths on UK roads last year than at any time since records began in 1926. Safer vehicles, the development of motorway networks, and road safety schemes to address accident blackspots have played a major part in the reductions in fatalities we have seen over the decades. It would be wrong to assume, however, that road safety policies have played a significant part in the sharp reductions in fatalities in the last three years.

While the fall in Britain's road fatalities of 16% last year may sound impressive, in the EU as a whole fatality rates (per million population) fell by 11%, with several countries seeing reductions of more than

25% (tinyurl.com/3lp9ssy). The EU average would have been higher but for a 14% increase in Romania.

Continuing improvements in vehicles and roads will account for a small part of these reductions, but the common factor across most of Europe, explaining the majority of the decrease, has been the effects of the recession. These effects are not limited to reductions in traffic levels or growth rates. Canadian researcher Al Gullon has looked at fatality rates (per billion veh-km) in several developed countries and found that these rates (which take account of changes in traffic flow) fall faster during recessions than when economies are growing. He believes this is due

to psychological factors that make road users more cautious and less easily distracted when times are tough.

It is already established that a majority of road accidents are caused by lack of attention or care on the part of one or more road users. Al Gullon's research strengthens that view and should lead to the development of road safety policies and interventions that address the distraction issue, rather than the blinkered obsession with speed limits and their enforcement.

If policy-makers would only learn the lesson of the recent sharp reductions in fatalities, then at least something worthwhile would emerge from the current economic difficulties.

Malcolm Heymer

inconceivable that they can magically prevent more than they cause.

There are examples of true safety systems with proven benefits, which occasionally have negative consequences (the usual example is someone trapped by their seat belt when the car plunges into a river). But cameras are not in that category. They should be referred to as Hazard Cameras.

The cameras where statistics fall are clearly not "working" - other statistical factors (such as regression to the mean, long term trends such as improved vehicle design, displacement as traffic avoids the cameras, etc) are clearly contributing to the reductions.

The publication of statistics for individual cameras is a further waste of time and public money. The cameras must be decommissioned immediately before someone else gets killed because of them.

Eric Bridgstock

I've just had a reply from Philip Hammond to my letter asking how many people are killed by sober, otherwise legal drivers travelling a few miles an hour over the speed limit. Surprise, surprise he doesn't know as "Our data records those whom the police judged to be exceeding

Give us a quote

"The only power any government has is the power to crack down on criminals. Well, when there aren't enough criminals, one makes them. One declares so many things to be a crime that it becomes impossible for men to live without breaking laws."

Ayn Rand

the speed limit at the time of the collision but does not record by how much they were exceeding". He has completely ignored the bit about 'otherwise legal', so clearly he doesn't know that either.

My reply will suggest that it's about time he found out before he continues to focus on these drivers as the main target for punishment. All that is needed is to take a random sample of say 200 fatalities, find out the details and establish what proportion were 'otherwise legal' travelling a few mph over the limit. I may suggest that if he won't action such a survey I'll find a journalist who will!

Dave Razzell

Easier said than done, sadly. Not only will that be a lot of effort but I'm not convinced that the necessary data will be released – or even available. Those scamera partnerships like to play their cards close to their chest, knowing they're on thin ice. Ed

I had to go up to London today to renew my Canadian passport. On the way back, by chance, I passed in front of the Department of Energy and Climate Change. Outside was a civil servant in shirt sleeves, smoking. I suggested that this would only add to the global warming problem. His response: 'You don't have to believe in that tosh to work here.'

Dave Mason

Green Jenny Jones is running for London Mayor next year; one of the things she has a bee in her bonnet about at the moment is the number of hit-and-runs in the capital. Last year there were 3400 of them, which she says is down to "the rise in the number of illegal drivers" along with a "cut in the budget of the Metropolitan police unit that investigates hit-and-run collisions". What she doesn't say is that while the figure of 3400 is quite alarming, it's rather less than the 5800 such incidents recorded in 2002.

Just what planet is the government on, with its plans for the HS2 high-speed rail link? I can't find anyone who supports this venture, yet it's still on the drawing board. One of the best demolitions I've seen of the project was by Economist John Kay, who recently trashed the Government's plans in one of his regular columns in *The Financial Times*. "The published economic case for HS2 displays knowledge of the far future in astonishing detail," he began, with more than a hint of sarcasm. "It predicts postcode by postcode which station in London passengers will use in 2043 to begin their journey and which of two – not yet built – Birmingham destinations they will use to alight. And rail use for most of the century. We learn that by 2040 demand for the existing rail service would have more than doubled, and be growing steadily."

Kay then added, however, that "It is not clear why a static population would be seized by this urge to visit Birmingham by train" before also ridiculing the claimed 'value of time' savings that the Government says HS2 would produce. "(These are) valued at £48.62 an hour," he noted. "I am reminded of an accountant who once worked for me (briefly): asked for any figure, he would take days to provide an answer calculated to the nearest penny but frequently thousands of pounds wrong."

Kay next provided his readers with a brief history of the use of cost-benefit analysis in the appraisal of transport projects and observed that: "Cost-benefit assessments of accident and time savings are now routinely used to prioritise road improvements that yield no direct revenue."

Kay suggested, however, that the HS2 rail link is very different. "The benefits of greater speed, comfort and reliability are real. But these benefits



overwhelmingly accrue to the people who use the link. There is detriment, not benefit, in seeing a train pass your garden at 150 miles an hour, and the effect in relieving the overloaded motorways from London is negligible – on the optimistic estimates of the planners, such traffic would fall by less than 1 per cent. And if you were concerned about the effect on carbon emissions, that is also too small to notice."

In contrast, Kay recommended that HS2 should be analysed in the same way as any other commercial project. "The way you usually calculate the benefits of a new product in a market economy is to ask how much people would pay for them," he said. "Despite the fantastic detail underpinning the so-called economic case (for HS2), there are no answers to the questions any investor would pose to the most modest of start-

ups – even though taxpayers are asked to commit up to £30bn for this project. The experience of other countries – or Britain's unhappy financial history with the Channel tunnel and its rail link – are not explored."

In conclusion, Kay opined that: "At a time when public expenditure cuts are focused excessively on capital expenditure, we are in danger of directing too much investment to vanity projects – like the Olympics, high-speed broadband, high-speed rail – whose returns are political excitement rather than tangible. The right response to the HS2 consultation is the one any *Financial Times* reader would give to an enthusiastic young entrepreneur who produced similar documents. Come back when you have formulated a proper business plan."

Steve Johnson

Does the membership secretary have your current contact details – including a correct email address? If not, please send an update ASAP!

However, while irresponsible drivers are an issue everywhere, so are other types of careless road user.

Maybe Jones could tell us what she's going to do about the menace of 'illegal' cyclists who show no consideration for other road users, even threatening pedestrians on pavements. Some of them are glued to their mobile phones and ipods and are oblivious to the outside world. Drivers have to take sudden and drastic action to avoid them.

Can Jenny Jones please advise us if she favours a licensing system and numberplates to identify cyclists like Ken Livingstone did, or is she happy with the current situation? Because as someone who drives a lot in London, I know I'm most certainly not happy about it.

Paul Ardern

Are electric vehicles green or brown? Almost certainly the answer is brown. The UK Government's belief that electric vehicles will emit less carbon (e.g. 40% less) than internal combustion engine vehicles depends largely on a paper produced by consultant Arup and Cenex (the Centre of Excellence for low carbon and fuel cell technologies) for the former Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform and the DfT.

We found that Arup's claim could be substantiated only if battery manufacture were ignored and if the comparison was with existing diesel vehicles.

In contrast, when battery manufacture is included, electric powered vehicles may emit between 22% and 63% more carbon than



improved diesels and between 50% and 100% more than the experimental MUSIC, an engine under development by MUSI Engineering.

Additionally we found that, void of taxes, and at current prices, the difference in fuel costs would be very much in favour of the internal combustion powered vehicles. For details, see www.transport-watch.co.uk/topic-31.htm

Paul Withrington

I have now seen in person original documents sent to a friend of mine one month ago who was recorded by a mobile speed gun doing 51 mph in a 30 zone.

This automatically goes to court apparently. However, my friend will be away quite a bit and gave dates he could not attend court. The Police replied "just take this as a warning in this case" and no further action was taken.

I have seen this letter myself and confirm its authenticity. How absurd is that? I have been to court 5 times and spent hundreds of pounds for 39 mph. Here the Police have let off someone who was going 51mph!

Peter Middleton

The IAM recently issued a press release about how drivers don't trust scamera partnerships to be open and honest. In the release, the IAM stated:

Many motorists are still cynical about the aims and deployment of speed cameras and much more work needs to be done to dispel their negative perceptions.

Well, how about some honest statistics for a change? Oh, hang on that would confirm the negative perceptions, not dispel them.

Dave Razzell

According to the IAM's recent release on scamera partnership honesty, just 29% think that cameras are at places where cameras should be, and 50% think raising money is the main aim. But suddenly, support generally for cameras runs at 79%! Are there really people who reckon they're installed where they shouldn't be and they're only there to raise money, but they're sat in favour of them? Then there's the line which says:

Seventy per cent of motorists agree that speed awareness courses are a better idea than prosecution.

What they actually mean is that not getting points is better than getting points. They'd probably agree that a course in just about anything would be better than getting points -

trigonometry, egyptian history, conversational swahili, anything but points! Then there's the line which goes:

Nearly half of all respondents think that road deaths and serious injuries would increase if cameras were turned off.

Which means that over half think they wouldn't. It would be nice if we had the funds to have a survey done asking the proper questions and getting the proper answers.

Chris Lamb

The release in full:

Less than a third (29 per cent) of Britain's motorists think that speed cameras are only used at sites with a bad record of crashes and injuries, and 50 per cent think that raising money is their primary aim, according to Public Opinions of Speed Cameras, the latest research report from road safety charity the IAM.

The survey of more than 1000 respondents also shows that support generally for speed cameras is high at 79%. The highest level of support is in London (85% approval) and the lowest in the North East (67%).

70% of motorists agree that speed awareness courses are a better idea than prosecution. The greatest support for this is among 17 to 24 year-olds with 82% in agreement. In

OTR glossary

- **ACPO**: Association of Chief Police Officers
- **ALG**: Association of London Government
- **ANPR**: Automatic Number Plate Recognition
- **Brake**: Vocal anti-car group
- **CbFT**: Campaign for Better Transport (previously Transport 2000)
- **CPRE**: Campaign to Protect Rural England
- **CPS**: Crown Prosecution Service
- **DfT**: Department for Transport
- **DVLA**: Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency
- **EC**: European Commission
- **ECHR**: European Court of Human Rights
- **FoI**: Freedom of Information (Act)
- **Gatso**: Speed camera that measures a car's speed at a single fixed point.
- **IAM**: Institute of Advanced Motorists
- **IPCC**: Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (pushes man-made CC view)
- **ISA**: Intelligent Speed Adaptation
- **KSI**: Killed or Seriously Injured
- **LTP**: Local Transport Plan
- **MART**: Manchester Against Road Tolls
- **NAAT**: National Alliance Against Tolls
- **NIP**: Notice of Intended Prosecution (usually a speeding ticket)
- **RHA**: Road Haulage Association
- **PACTS**: Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety (of which the ABD is a member)
- **PCN**: Penalty Charge Notice
- **Scamera**: Speed camera
- **SPECS**: Speed camera that measures a car's average speed between two or more points.
- **TfL**: Transport for London
- **VAS**: Vehicle-activated sign

contrast, 65% of the over-65s think they are a good replacement for prosecution.

The survey found less support for using the income from these courses to fund cameras; 48% support this, but 34% actively disagree. However, 17 to 24 year-olds are once again the most likely to support the proposal.

81% of all respondents think that speed cameras contributed to falling road death rates over the past decade and nearly half of all respondents think that road deaths and serious injuries would increase if cameras were turned off.

IAM director of policy and research Neil Greig said: "Support for cameras is strong as is support for speed awareness training rather than fines or points. Prosecuting and fining drivers does not improve driving skills or awareness of the hazards of excessive speed. Training would reduce the number of casualties and prosecutions. That so many young people want this is very positive.

"Many motorists are still cynical about the aims and deployment of speed cameras and much more work needs to be done to dispel their negative perceptions. In times of cut-backs to police budgets, speed cameras are an essential part of the policing toolkit, but it's clear that the public need reassuring about their purpose and funding."

in brief...

► Lincs County Council has agreed a proposed funding package for a £98m eastern bypass of Lincoln. The 7.5km bypass would link the A158 in the east of the city with the A15 Sleaford Road in the south, removing traffic from the city centre. The Council has asked the DfT to provide £50m; the Council will give £14m and the remaining £34m will be sought from developers. Lincolnshire will act as guarantor for the £34m developer funding, with the funds expected to be recouped through development over 20 years.

► Councillors in Hartlepool have rejected plans for a town-wide 20mph limit after a public consultation on the idea attracted fewer than 100 responses. "Due to the very poor response to the consultation it would seem to be inappropriate to continue towards the implementation of a town-wide 20mph speed limit" said Alistair Smith, Hartlepool's assistant director (transportation and engineering). 35 of the 62 responses opposed town-wide limits. The council now plans to explore implementing 20mph limits in residential areas if they command majority support from residents.

► Road accidents and casualties have increased at locations where TfL has removed guardrailling. Since 2009 TfL has removed 63.4km of guardrail, 31% of the total. It has monitored the accident effects at the 808 separate locations. At these sites there were 1913 collisions before the removal and 2015 after; a 5% rise. These collisions resulted in 2330 casualties before and 2495 after; a 7% rise.

► Buckinghamshire County Council is to divert more than £2.5m of this year's transport revenue and capital expenditure into road maintenance. The switch has been demanded by Conservative-controlled Buckinghamshire's leader Martin Tett who has made improving the county's roads his priority since being elected leader in May. Tett says surveys show this is a top priority for residents.

► A signed-only 20mph speed limit introduced in central Cambridge last year has barely affected traffic speeds, according to the county council. Average speeds have fallen in seven instances but increased in five. Meanwhile, the 85th percentile speed has fallen in five cases, increased in five, and stayed the same in two. The greatest recorded reduction in average speed was 2mph, with most reductions being 1mph or less.

► The Government's Plug-in grant scheme was introduced on 1 January, offering 25% off the cost of a sub-75g/km car, up to a maximum of £5000. The Government allocated £43m to the grant until 31 March next year, but it turns out that just 680 cars were ordered through the scheme in the first six months. Assuming each purchase qualifies for the maximum £5000, just £3.4m will have been spent. About three-quarters of purchases are understood to have been made by organisations rather than individuals.

Govt overhauls transport policy

The Government has published its draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), heralding major changes to transport and land-use policy in England. The NPPF streamlines the Government's planning policies, condensing about 1000 pages of advice into just 52. Key transport aspects of the NPPF include:

- The abolition of national maximum parking standards for non-residential development
- The retention of the 'town centre first' policy for retail and leisure development but the removal of the test for office development
- Retention of travel plans for developments generating significant amounts of movement

The NPPF is pro-growth. "Local planning authorities should plan positively for new development, and approve all individual proposals wherever possible," it says. One of the framework's core planning principles is that planning policies and decisions "should actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable".

But the framework also states that development "should not be prevented or refused on transport grounds unless the residual impacts of development are severe, and the need to encourage increased delivery of homes and sustainable economic development should be taken into account".

Road deaths at all-time low

The number of people reported killed in road accidents across Britain fell 16% last year to below 2,000, according to figures published by the DfT. The total figure of 1,857 deaths in 2010 is the lowest figure since records began in 1926 and compares with the 2,222 recorded deaths in 2009. The number of people reported killed or seriously injured in 2010 fell 8% to 22,660.

Total recorded casualties were 208,655, 6% down on 2009. Although overall deaths are down, the number of cycling deaths increased, from 104 to 111. Reported serious injuries to



cyclists rose 2% and overall injuries to cyclists rose 1%. This was the third year running that cyclist casualties increased, with numbers now 6% up since 2007. But cycling levels rose an estimated 17% in the same period.

Pricing for HGVs?

The EC is consulting on whether road user charging should replace existing taxes and charges paid by lorries. The consultation on the internal market in road freight says the current structure of charges for lorries across the EU is too complex. The report says: "Today many fragmented national charging systems and policies exist in parallel that require hauliers engaged in international transport to purchase the Eurovignette, several national vignettes and various different electronic tags and on-board units to be able to drive unhindered on Europe's tolled roads."

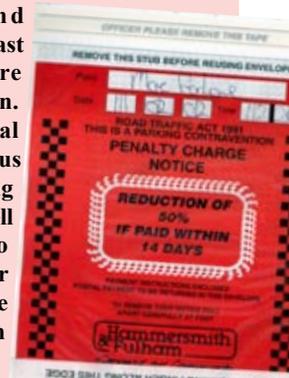
"Should existing taxes or charges like the annual vehicle tax and time-based road user charges (vignettes) or other taxes be replaced by distance-based road user charges?"

It then asks whether such charges should cover infrastructure costs, environmental costs, congestion costs and any other costs. The Commission has to draw up a report on progress made on harmonising the EU's road transport market by the end of 2013. In June, the commission set up a group to assess the state of the market and make recommendations on what measures should be taken to further integrate the market.

TfL PCNs down

The number of penalty charge notices (PCNs) issued to drivers by London boroughs and TfL fell by about 1% last year – but there were still almost five million. PCNs issued for illegal parking, driving in bus lanes and other moving traffic contraventions fell by 41,208 in 2010/11 to 4,813,865. The number is down 22% in the last three years, from 6,176,752 in 2007/08.

Parking infringements account for the vast majority of PCNs; 4,022,476 in 2010/11 (down from 4,151,901 in 2009/10). The data suggests that compliance with bus lane rules is improving. London Councils says that despite more boroughs enforcing bus lanes, the number of contraventions has fallen for the sixth year in a row, from 697,816 in 2004/05 to 216,495 in 2010/11. Penalties for moving traffic offences have risen, from 482,184 in 2009/10 to 571,590 in 2010/11.



TfL to opt for lane rentals?

Transport for London has begun consulting on a proposed lane rental scheme, with the aim of having it up and running next spring. The scheme would cover 206 miles (57%) of the TfL road network, encompassing sections of carriageway and pinch points where the effect of closing a lane of traffic is more than 50% higher than on the rest of the network. These areas have been defined as congestion management areas (CMAs) and would be split into three bands with their own specific charges and timings.

TfL says works undertaken in the CMAs is currently costing £233m a year in terms of delays, diversions and journey time variability. Its cost-benefit analysis of the proposals assumes that the charges will prompt 80% of works to clear the carriageway during the times that charges apply. Revenue raised by the scheme will contribute to a roadworks innovation fund that would be



jointly overseen by TfL and the major utility companies. This could develop technologies such as quick curing materials and better plating, allowing excavations to be temporarily covered. Subject to the outcome of consultation, TfL plans to formally submit a proposal to the DfT early next year for approval.

•View the report at tinyurl.com/3fy2duj

in brief..

▶A third of drivers have had their cars damaged by a pothole, according to the latest poll from road safety charity the IAM. A further 16 per cent have been involved in, or have seen an accident caused by a road user hitting a pothole. Of the 2600 respondents, 88 per cent voted pothole repair the top priority for local council maintenance. Only 14 per cent of people think that their council's current performance maintaining local roads is good or very good, with more than half rating it as bad or very bad. When asked what areas of road maintenance were being done well, 50 per cent responded 'none', and half also think that the roads in their area are getting worse.

▶Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Constabulary are investigating a new funding model to keep the county's six fixed speed cameras operating. The local press reported the operation had ceased following the withdrawal of funding from Suffolk County Council. But Suffolk Constabulary says some cameras are still operating and the council and constabulary had met to explore "a new approach to the financial running and placement of fixed cameras". A Suffolk Constabulary spokesman said the county council has indicated it may now be able to part-fund the operation; extra funding is likely to come from speed awareness courses.

▶The Government has no plans to introduce graduated fixed penalties for speeding, transport secretary Philip Hammond has told MPs. The power to vary penalty points and fixed penalty notices according to the magnitude of the offence was included in the Road Safety Act 2006. Hammond said the Government doesn't plan to use the powers "because of the increased use being made of remedial training as an alternative to prosecution". The Government also has no plans to use powers to prohibit motorists from using devices that detect speed cameras. Hammond said banning the devices is inconsistent with the policy of making speed camera enforcement visible "in order to get immediate improvements in driver behaviour".

▶The Highways Agency has awarded a £136m contract for a managed motorway scheme on the M62 in West Yorkshire, featuring hard shoulder running and mandatory speed limits. The joint venture will deliver the scheme over 15.5 miles of road between junction 25 (Brighouse) and 30 (Rothwell). The scheme should be completed in 2013/14.

▶The M6 Toll operator Midland Expressway has reported pre-tax annual losses of £49m, raising concerns as to the six-lane motorway's viability. The 27 miles of road were opened in 2002 to ease congestion on the existing M6 stretch, but Midland Expressway has blamed economic conditions for recent falling usage. Despite the gloom, the operator's parent company, Macquarie Motorways Group, claimed that adequate resources are available for it to continue in business for the foreseeable future.

UK rebels on CO2 targets

The UK Government and other EU member states have rejected the EC's proposal that transport sector greenhouse gas emissions should be cut by 60% by 2050 against 1990 levels. The Commission included the target in its recent transport White Paper but member state transport ministers have rejected the figure.

"Member states broadly agreed that the transport sector has to make an adequate contribution to the achievement of the medium and long-term climate change targets," transport secretary Philip

Hammond told MPs. But he added: "We are not in favour of having targets for their own sake and do not think that it is practical or desirable to have a multiplicity of goals and targets. Furthermore, we do not support sector-specific targets. Wherever targets are set, we believe that they must be realistic and supported by robust evidence and cost impact analysis."

Hammond's comments raise fresh doubts about the Government's commitment to the Climate Change Act and its target to cut UK emissions by 80% by 2050.

HS2 'flawed and unrealistic'

The Conservative Party's special interest group on transport has called on ministers to rethink the high-speed rail plans, saying the route is flawed and the demand forecasting unrealistic. "Although we are mostly in favour of high-speed rail as the means of relieving rail capacity to meet future demand, not all of us support the planned destruction of the countryside in the manner being proposed by HS2 Ltd," says the Conservative Transport Group (CTG), whose committee comprises councillors and grassroots supporters.

The group even questions whether high-speed rail is justified at all. "It is not clear whether a better co-ordinated and more strategic approach to transport planning might deliver at least some increase in capacity with existing infrastructure. The current state of the public finances, and the findings of the recent McNulty review (on rail), suggest that careful analysis is required before committing to a project costing at least £32bn."

The CTG describes the demand forecasts for the London-West Midlands line as "remarkable", because Network Rail analysis indicates that



Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds and Liverpool and their surrounding areas currently generate 7m rail passenger journeys a year to and from London.

"Assuming an average of 12 trains per hour (18 at peaks) in each direction, throughout a 19-hour operating day, with 1100 seats per train, HS2 provides circa 500,000 seats per day – equivalent to 183m a year, an increase of more than 2000%. Our fear is that, like the initial forecasts for the Channel Tunnel, HS2's demand modelling is over-optimistic, with the inevitable result that there is a call on the public purse to ultimately subsidise operations."

in brief...

▶ The DfT's potholes review will consider if highways maintenance service standards are too high, as well as authorities' ways of working. Matthew Lugg, who is leading the review for the DfT, said he was concerned that some authorities had stopped routinely carrying out preventative maintenance such as surface dressing. The review will consider the reasons why, and look at whether the cost involved in meeting the response times for reactive repairs contribute to this. Northamptonshire is repairing defects within five days instead of 24 hours in order to reduce the number of temporary repairs carried out that need work done again.

▶ Local communities across England could take control of street improvements and parking and traffic controls. The Open Public Services White Paper sets out ministers' intention to consult on the scope for enabling parish, town or new neighbourhood councils to take greater control of local authority services, including "street improvements, parking and traffic restrictions". The White Paper acknowledges that this is "an ambitious agenda" given that "many neighbourhood councils are not used to this sort of power and many areas do not even have neighbourhood councils yet".

▶ The DfT has placed the onus on electric vehicle owners to recharge their cars at home or work, saying an extensive public recharging infrastructure would be underutilised and uneconomic. "We want to see the majority of recharging taking place at home, at night, after the peak in electricity demand," the DfT explains. "Home charging should be supported by workplace recharging for commuters and fleets." The Department concedes there will be a need for some public infrastructure and suggests charging points should be located at key destinations such as supermarkets, retail centres and other car parks. There should also be a "focused amount of on-street infrastructure, particularly for residents without off-street parking".

▶ The road repair budget will be cut from £400m to just £280m next year, despite a huge deterioration in road condition over the last year. One of the key ways the Government is looking to save money is by cutting the amount of work done at night – so expect even more congestion as a result.

▶ In a landmark court ruling in New Zealand, Greenpeace has been stripped of its charity status. High Court Judge, Justice Paul Heath made the groundbreaking decision after overwhelming evidence was presented that proved that the organisation's illegal activities were motivated by zealous political advocacy and crossed the line of what charities are permitted to do.

Police reject 20mph enforcement

A council call for police to enforce Oxford's 20mph speed limits has been rejected. A senior officer spoke out after Oxford City Council passed a motion urging Thames Valley Police to crack down on speeding drivers. Ch Insp Gill Wootton, of the roads policing department, said road layout changes such as chicanes should keep speeds down – and enforcement would only be used as a last resort.

A 20mph limit was brought in on almost all residential roads and some main routes in September 2009, but police said from the outset they would not be actively enforced.



The Labour-controlled council's motion came after the force switched on speed cameras on April 1 after an eight-month hiatus. The motion – passed unanimously – said: "Council welcomes the fact that speed enforcement by Thames Valley Police using roadside cameras has come back into effect. Council believes that enforcement of all speed limits is necessary to ensure that injuries and fatalities on Oxford's roads continue to reduce. Council therefore calls upon Thames Valley Police to give enforcement of 20mph speed limits in Oxford their urgent attention."

Camden in £50k fine refund mess

A motorist has forced Camden Council to pay back thousands of pounds to motorists who were wrongly hit with fines. PCNs worth £50,000 are being returned after Maurice Daly challenged a fine he received in Bloomsbury Street, Bloomsbury, in 2009. Daly, a delivery driver who lives in Oxford, discovered that motorists who entered the bus lane from January to June 2009 should not have been penalised for entering a bus lane due to a temporary traffic order that was in place to facilitate roadworks. After his own fine was

cancelled he then began a two-year campaign on behalf of hundreds of other victims who had received £60 or £120 charges.

The council has now set up the Bloomsbury Street Refund Project to ensure the 2926 wrongly issued fines are refunded. Daly said: "It took me months to get the council to even acknowledge their errors. It is morally wrong for Camden Council to benefit financially from their mistakes; they should have done everything in their power to return these funds much, much sooner."

Richmond backs down

Richmond Council is writing to every vehicle owner wrongly issued with a penalty charge notice inviting them to apply for a refund. The council said more than 18,500 penalties given between April 2009 and April 2011 by CCTV cars could not be imposed following a court ruling. It has agreed to repay more than £1m in wrongly issued penalty charge notices.

Council Leader Lord True admitted tickets were issued "when the authority should have known better". The tickets were issued by council-operated CCTV patrol cars which did not have the correct licence.

A ruling that the charges were unlawful was given by the independent Parking Tribunal Service after a motorist appealed against his penalty charge.

Letters will be sent in the coming weeks to the registered owners of the vehicles which received fixed penalty notices. No further proof will be required from the owners to claim their refund because the council has the records of everyone who was fined. The cost of refunding the wrongly issued tickets will be covered by expected underspends in the council's budgets and from reserves, the authority said.

Mersey cameras to die?

Local authorities on Merseyside are considering whether to commit to the long-term future of camera enforcement. David Foulkes, Merseyside's road safety partnership manager, says the partnership has funds to continue camera enforcement this year and probably next, partly by using revenues from speed awareness courses. But he said the longer-term future of the camera operation is in doubt because the wet film camera stock is reaching the end of its life and needs replacement by digital cameras. Foulkes said most camera manufacturers are aware that partnerships face financial problems so they're offering leasing deals for new equipment.

"The partnership is seeking a decision in principle from all the partners as to whether they wish to continue with camera enforcement into 2012/13 with a view to establishing a financial model for the next 3-5 years, which will include the potential costs for conversion to digital technology," Foulkes told Merseyside's strategic transportation committee. To continue on an annual funding basis is in effect closing the partnership as without investment in digital technology, camera enforcement will cease by default."

Stay informed

Email groups

Keep abreast of what the ABD is up to by subscribing to the ABD Action mailing list. Join the list by emailing abd-action-owner@yahoogroups.com with your name and membership number. Get even faster updates via Twitter (twitter.com/TheABD) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/associationofbritishdrivers)

Forum

You can discuss issues with other members by registering on our online forum. The forum is split into both topics and regions, so whether your concern is a particular topic such as speed limits, or something happening in your local area, you can easily find other members to advise and assist you. Full details of how to register can be found on the members' website.

Website

The main ABD website (www.abd.org.uk) is available to everyone, and there's a members' site at members.abd.org.uk – both contain mountains of information on a diverse range of subjects, with dozens of links to other websites which may help you in your research. Log on to find out more or email the ABD webmaster – Chris Ward – at website@abd.org.uk

OTR – go electronic

You can save the ABD lots of money if you opt to receive each issue of *On The Road* electronically, rather than as a hard copy – you'll also see it far quicker. To go electronic please email membership@abd.org.uk using the subject header **electronic OTR**. Please use this header and no other to ensure your email isn't binned as spam.

OTR in cyberspace

OTR31 onwards are now available as PDFs, which you can obtain from Chris Medd or download from the ABD website.

Speed limit objection packs

The ABD has prepared an informative action pack which sets out in detail the process by which local authorities set speed limits, and the rights that every member of the public has to object to the imposition of new or reduced limits. The pack costs £5 to non-members, but is available free to current members. Please send a large SAE (30p) to:

**3 Wheatcroft Way
Dereham
Norfolk NR20 3SS
malcolm.heymer@abd.org.uk**

Help out

ABD publicity material

If you'd like copies of any ABD literature please contact Susan Newby-Robson (details overleaf), but please don't over-order as printing costs are high.

ABD merchandise

Via Zazzle, the ABD has a store where you can buy promotional and campaigning items. The ABD earns a small commission on sales; log on to www.zazzle.co.uk/theabd and if you order something, please click Join fan club on the Store front page to help promote us.

Affiliated organisations

The ABD runs an affiliation scheme, allowing groups which support the ABD to formally recognise the work we do. Overleaf is a list of the groups currently affiliated, along with contact details for Terry Hudson, the affiliations contact. If you're a member of an organisation which you think should support the ABD, please let Terry know and we'll endeavour to sign them up.

Complain

Object about proposals for traffic calming and speed limit reductions. Few people do, which is why they happen.

Facebook

Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/associationofbritishdrivers where you can comment on posted articles, find out about press articles you can comment on, and by sharing some of our updates, encourage your friends to support us too.

Fighting fund

The ABD has a fighting fund to which you can donate any amount at any time. You can also donate by standing order if you wish to give a regular sum. Please contact the membership secretary for more information; she'll send you the relevant form to fill out.

Joint memberships

These are free and help us to increase the size of the group easily. If your partner/spouse isn't a joint member, please sign them up if you can – just contact the membership secretary to do so.

Local/regional contacts

Have you been in touch with your local co-ordinator recently? Advise them of anything local you see, find out how you can help campaign locally. You can find out their details on the members site (<http://members.abd.org.uk>). If there's no local co-ordinator for your area, perhaps you can take on the role – more details on what is involved can be found on the members site.

National committee

The ABD's national committee is always keen to increase its effectiveness, which means getting more members involved. An ability to function effectively and diplomatically in committee email discussions across a wide range of issues is essential, and ideally, after an acclimatisation period, new recruits would eventually become a media spokesman too. There are usually around four committee plus (up to) two members' meetings each year, which you'd ideally be able to attend. If you reckon you could get involved, just contact Brian Gregory (brian.gregory@abd.org.uk), Brian MacDowall (brian.macdowall@abd.org.uk) or Bob Dennish (national@abd.org.uk) and they'll do the rest.

Twitter

Follow us at <http://twitter.com/TheABD>, where you can stay up to date on what's happening. Find out about press articles you can comment on and retweet our posts to spread the word. You can also use Twitter to update us on things you see, if you make sure we're following you. If you're in Birmingham, East Midlands, Herefordshire, Kent, North West, Rutland, Scotland, Staffs, or Warwickshire we have a local Twitter account too: <http://twitter.com/TheABD/local>

Write to the press

Take the time to reply to anti-car articles and letters in the local press. Not only do you get to respond to information already published, but you may be able to get a debate going – and could even become a local point of contact.

Contact your MP

Write to your MP regularly, reminding them of their duty to stand up for drivers. MPs are listed by name & constituency on the Parliament site (parliament.uk/directories/directories.cfm). Many MPs have their own email, but if you use the Parliament webpage to email them, it's involved. It's often better to check their constituency website (if they have one) for contact info. Make sure you state clearly you're a constituent to get priority in a reply. Conservative ministers are listed at conservatives.com

national & regional contacts

We are always pleased to hear from members who can offer support or need help. But remember that the ABD is a voluntary organisation – funded only by its members' subscriptions – and is staffed by unpaid volunteers who do their best to help members. **So please, no phone calls after 9pm!**

Affiliated organisations

▶ *American Automobile Club*
▶ *BMW Car Club*
▶ *CIPS (Choice in Personal Safety)*
▶ *Citroen Car Club*
▶ *Driver Awareness*
▶ *Jaguar Drivers' Club*
▶ *NO2ID*
▶ *Parkingticket.co.uk*

▶ *Professional Drivers' Association*
▶ *Renault ClioSport Club*
▶ *Safe Speed (safespeed.org.uk)*
▶ *South East Lotus Owners' Club*
▶ *Subaru Impreza Drivers' Club*
▶ *The Independent Porsche Enthusiasts' Club*
▶ *Triumph Stag Enthusiasts' Club*

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