

On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

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Road tolls back on the agenda - again

The government wants us to believe that it doesn't want to toll existing road capacity for private vehicles (at least before 2015). However this is not the view of the European Commission, which sees major UK roads as part of a 'Trans European Network' (TEN-T) governed at EU level. A European Commission transport White Paper called *Roadmap Towards a Single European Transport Area* is pushing towards a single European approach, including "new congestion and 'climate change' taxes such as road pricing".

Transport Commissioner Slim Kallas wasn't credible when he recently said that "curbing mobility is not an option", and neither was the press release that hints that any moves towards road pricing are for national governments. The Executive Summary compares four different policy options (including do-nothing) – but the small print makes it clear that the Commission is going to push for European road user charges for 'all vehicles'. (Relevant phrases - 'demand

management', 'all vehicles/passengers cars', 'full and mandatory charging'). The White Paper also warns that transport users are likely to pay more than today. Unbelievably, both options are claimed to reduce household costs (!) and assist economic growth, though again the small print admits to "a significant degree of uncertainty" and "factors that are difficult to predict or quantify".

The general thrust indicates road pricing ambitions for major routes (TENs) and other main roads that 'compete' with them, and by implication more local roads that take displaced traffic. A vicious circle would see traffic progressively displaced onto smaller roads in an attempt to avoid the charges, until the authorities felt it necessary to toll the next level of roads and so on – similar to the 'domino effect' seen in setting up controlled parking zones. Crucially though, it's fair to read that the plans are for all vehicles on all roads.

Brian Mooney

• See page 6 for a full road pricing update

ABD launches new general enquiries line

Thanks to the generosity of member Brian Moon, a new ABD general enquiries line has been established. Funded by Brian at his own expense, we have at last a number for all general enquiries – the media, membership and committee members still have their own numbers.

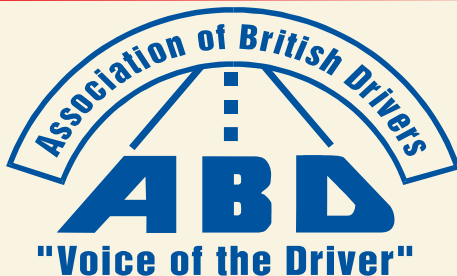
This is a service we haven't been able to offer up to now, simply because we didn't have anyone to respond to calls. We're asking members to keep a record of the new number which will allow the public to contact us by phone with any queries. Brian can then

forward them on if necessary or deal with them himself.

Campaign director Brian MacDowall said: "Hopefully we will be able to dispense with the 07000 number listed under the Membership Secretary, encouraging greater contact from the general public who want to get in touch with us by phone. We are very grateful to Brian for filling in this gap in our range of services"

The number to remember is 01825 764 162. An answerphone message will click in when a call is received, and Brian will get back to enquirers.

To join the ABD
call us now on
07000 781 544



OTR 105

Highlights

- 2-3 *Members' meeting report*
- 4 *FPNs: the ABD view*
- 5 *Bristol action day*
- 6 *Road pricing latest*
- 8 *Talking point: traffic police*
- 9 *Soapbox*

Regulars

- 9 *Soapbox*
- 10-11 *Letters*
- 11 *Abbreviations glossary*
- 12-14 *News*
- 15 *Get involved*
- 16 *National & regional contacts*

The next issue of *On The Road* goes to press on Monday 10 December. Contributions deadline is Monday 26 November.

New transport head

Patrick McLoughlin has become the coalition Government's third transport secretary in two and a half years, replacing Justine Greening in the Prime Minister's mid-term reshuffle. Greening was demoted to international development secretary and the two other Conservative members of the transport team were also moved: Theresa Villiers joins the cabinet as Northern Ireland secretary, and Mike Penning becomes minister of state in Northern Ireland. Only Liberal Democrat minister Norman Baker remains in post. Chelmsford MP and former health minister Simon Burns replaces Villiers as minister of state for transport, and Wimbledon MP Stephen Hammond replaces Penning as parliamentary under-secretary of state. McLoughlin, 54, has been MP for West Derbyshire (now Derbyshire Dales) since 1986. He joins the DfT having until now been the Tories' chief whip. This is his second stint at transport, having served as aviation and shipping minister between 1989 and 1992 in Margaret Thatcher's Government.

The ABD campaigns for:

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

Members' meeting 2012: the most fruitful yet

Adapting the old line, if you can't beat them, join them, at its recent members' meeting the ABD showcased the efforts it continues to make, to forge links with onside individuals and organisations to build the case for a fair deal for all motorists. The list of driving issues we aim to cover, (see our manifesto at www.abd.org.uk/about/manifesto.htm) is almost infinite; whilst we remain committed to pursuing the case for driving, we cannot cover all bases; utilising the skills and strengths of others provides a more forceful weapon for raising public awareness.

Peter Carroll: Fair Fuel

One of the biggest issues for ABD members is fuel pricing, which is why we're working with Fair Fuel, a consortium of the RAC Foundation, fuelcard companies and 20,000 UK hauliers which was formed 18 months ago to press the

case for cuts in fuel duty. Retired UK haulier Peter Carroll gave an exciting, impressive performance showing the gains Fair Fuel have achieved since its inception.

Peter pointed out that fuel for hauliers is their biggest cost and price rises severely affect profitability; many hauliers have gone out of business in recent years, to nobody's advantage. His firm's fuel bill was £600k a month, with every penny increase adding another £3500 to their costs!

To date Fair Fuel's campaigns have resulted in deferments of rises amounting to £4.5 billion for taxpayers. However out of 150 MPs contacted by them, only 54 have pledged to sign the Fair Fuel website opposing the latest proposed rise.

This, against 300,000 online supporters, who were in no doubt what they thought the government should be doing, and another 140,000 who signed Fair Fuel's e-petition.

Peter related how, faced with staggering odds against the recently proposed, now cancelled, 3p a litre (13.5p a gallon) increase, they fought a successful campaign. Firstly they secured 100,000 signatures on an e-petition, which should have guaranteed a parliamentary debate



Peter Carroll

on the subject. But it's up to a Commons committee to use their discretion as to whether they actually allow it; and they, possibly under pressure from government, dragged their feet.

Behind the scenes Fair Fuel gained the support of the six Scottish nationalists in parliament to put down an amendment to the budget and persuaded nine Tory MPs to sign the Fair Fuel website pledge. Momentum was gained with further parliamentary support; the debate went ahead, resulting eventually in literally a last-minute announcement of the cancelled rise.

On the same day, treasury minister Chloe Smith was interviewed by Jeremy Paxman on *Newsnight*; she refused to answer his question on exactly when she was told the policy was changed, making herself and the government look completely inept. Various versions of this interview on YouTube have been watched by tens of thousands of people, causing maximum embarrassment to the government. The message has been relayed; fuel duty is hurting livelihoods and the government has u-turned on its budget announcement.

Every campaign tactic was used, ranging from giant cheques on sides of vans showing just how much is taken in fuel duty, features (such as in the *Daily Express*), and most importantly, lobbying of MPs at Westminster. They also commissioned, at considerable cost, a report of a think tank which concluded a 2.5p cut in fuel duty would generate 175,000 new jobs, creating a whole new argument, bearing in mind that politicians have for years insisted raising fuel was essential to funding public finances.

An online poll by Fair Fuel showed 77% of MPs are out of touch with the public over drivers' concerns, after the government made attempts to shift the blame onto oil companies. This is excellent progress showing what can be achieved when running an emotive single issue campaign. The current band of politicians and civil servants intend to retain power at all costs; we can change minds by joining forces, so please register your support at www.fairfueluk.com

Andrew Allison: Taxpayers' Alliance

Former driving instructor Andrew Allison, now

the grassroots organiser for the Taxpayers' Alliance, was next up. The TPA's campaigns to create a leaner, fitter and far less intrusive government, to get better value for all taxpayers, will strike a chord with readers. And the TPA is very sympathetic to drivers.

Andrew said we have amongst the highest levels of fuel duty in Europe, especially diesel. If you factor in (which we reject) the so-called social cost of driving (the cost of carbon emissions), which the UK Treasury says cost £3.5bn, the TPA's report on excessive motoring taxes shows that UK drivers are overtaxed by £18.1bn a year, or £293 per person. Andrew highlighted the huge disparity in costs by area, ranging from nothing in the City of London to £338 (Canterbury) £406 (East Yorks) and Maldon in Essex at £566 the highest in the country.

Andrew was adamant "It's immoral to single out one user group" bringing a loud cheer from the audience. He detailed his own fuel costs of £60 spent on that day. Of that, a mere £2 would go to the retailer, with £36 to the Government and for what? The cash is hardly spent on the road network.

The TPA is also devising a poster campaign to go into forecourts, showing just how much the Government takes in fuel duty per litre; it has also rebutted the Labour Party's argument that the way forward is to reduce VAT; for businesses which claim back VAT, this would adversely affect their cash flows.

On an ongoing basis the TPA is also always busy with the regular gathering of petitions; you can read more about this in OTR104, where there was information on fuel duty and parking charge petitions. While it would be easy to dismiss these tactics, the reality is that they have forced a rethink of policies in some areas. For example, East Yorks and North Lincs now have free parking after 3pm, to encourage trade; this contrasts sharply with Salisbury, where massive increases caused uproar. The pathetic response from the council was to say it would take 20



Andrew Allison

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You can donate any amount to the ABD's fighting fund at any time. Just contact the membership secretary (see p16) for more information...

weeks to reverse the decision!

Both the ABD and the TPA have condemned the HS2 project to build a high-speed rail line connecting the midlands and the north at a projected cost of £33bn; all this simply to cut 20 minutes off the current London to Birmingham journey. According to TPA studies, the Government has massively over-estimated the demand for rail travel, yet it's continuing to press ahead with this mammoth folly.



Eric Bridgstock

Independent campaigner Eric Bridgstock was welcomed back to Gaydon. The former aerospace engineer, who has conducted safety audits in various industries knows what he's talking about when he accepted an invite to speak at 20's Plenty conference earlier this year. He used his talents to destroy the myth that 20mph blanket zones are the answer to road safety.

This was extensively covered in OTR104, but it provided a humorous as well as sad statement on the efforts to bring in blanket wide 20 limits. Portsmouth, said Eric, is always held up as the example where 20 zones work. The facts suggest different however:

- ▶ 38% increase in pedestrian KSIs
- ▶ 11% increase in cyclists injured
- ▶ 6% increase in KSIs, despite a 12% decrease in KSIs nationally
- ▶ 12% decrease in traffic in 20 mph zones

Oxford, Bristol and Warrington, the latter being home of 20's Plenty chief Rod King, all showed increases in casualties in these areas. So it's a shame local transport minister Norman Baker left the meeting early, missing Eric's cogent analysis.

Eric described the earlier presentations as "nauseous" high on emotion ("if it saves one life") but flawed on fact and methodology. A safety policy based on hitting people at slower speeds so they may incur less injury is repugnant, said Eric, who also claims the problem is that pedestrians get complacent, taking less care, because slower speeds provide a false sense of security. And crucially, the driver's outlook is shifted away from driving safely at appropriate speeds, to the erroneous belief that as long as they stick to the limit, they're driving safely.

Eric put a huge amount of research into his presentation, resisting repeated attempts by the

organisers to supply his analysis and conclusions in advance; he played a successful game of cat and mouse with the organiser, but regrettably these zones continue to be rolled out, financed by Baker's local transport plan.

Eric kept a trick up his sleeve though, as he finished by noting a useful weapon; zones where accidents rise could well be in breach of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 s3 (1), in that they expose people to unnecessary risk.

Winning intellectual arguments is an important first step to changing policies; the mood in conference changed during his presentation as the facts emerged; winning on the campaigner's own doorstep is the equivalent of Manchester United losing at home; it may not happen often, but we can savour it when it does.

Dave Finney

Also providing impressive intellectual argument was researcher Dave Finney whose report on the ineffectiveness of speed cameras in the Thames Valley region was featured in OTR103. Dave sought to become the first to evaluate

the true causes and effects of speed cameras, to see whether the claimed benefits stood up to analysis.

Dave set out to measure the degree to which regression to the mean (the tendency for accident frequency to return to its long-term average after an upward blip) contributed to the claimed success of speed cameras in reducing accidents. He did this by analysing the full accident record for all Thames Valley's speed camera sites.

Camera partnerships normally only compare accidents in the three-year site selection period, plus the three years after the camera was installed. But the site selection period is invariably unrepresentative of the long-term trend (which is why the site is chosen for a camera in the first place), so Dave looked at accident data for several years before that, right through to and including the after period.

This usually includes a year or so in between the site selection period itself and camera installation, which is when the selection process is made.

What he found is that the three years before the site selection period, plus the year between that and camera installation, give a much better indication of the real, long-term accident rate for the site to compare with the after period. By removing the effect of the upward blip in the site selection period, therefore, Dave was able



to compare the real accident rate before camera installation with the rate afterwards, eliminating the effect of regression to the mean.

In many cases Dave found no significant difference, and even a small increase at some sites. This was ground-breaking work, which no one else had attempted before. When we press released the report earlier this year, it drew wide interest from the media, as no one else had previously publicised it.

Peter Roberts: Drivers' Alliance

We were delighted to welcome back Drivers' Alliance CEO and author of the anti-road pricing petition, Peter Roberts, to outline the case for a merger of the DA with the ABD. Peter was unequivocal; drivers need a champion to push their case amongst the political class. History shows we have consistently been the only two organisations repeatedly standing up for drivers, and feedback from our members on a proposed merger has so far been positive. Peter's personal circumstances mean he is unable to work full time for the DA, which gives us the chance to fuse the two groups into a larger, more effective fighting machine.

"Cash is important but what matters is numbers to persuade political class to alter their thinking" said Peter. We've resolved to continue with our joint working party to integrate the legal, technical and logistical implications of the merger. Most likely we will adapt the present DA website to become our public face, with a simpler user-friendly website using, initially, links to the ABD website with its wealth of facts and figures on a wide range of driving issues to act as library resource.

We will gain access to the DA's 3000+ supporters and formulate campaigns based on research or studies (as do Fair Fuel & TPA) to bring driving issues to the fore. We hope an official announcement launching the new group can be made before the end of the year; the most likely name for the new group is the Alliance of British Drivers.

After 20 years of the ABD this represents a golden opportunity to step up campaigning to appeal to a wider audience which can take the fight on with new ideas for the next two decades. If you have any ideas, suggestions or can offer help, we'd like to hear from you to take this idea forward. Please contact Roger Lawson, (whose details are under 'London' on the back page).



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

Fixed penalties: the ABD view

In June, the DfT began a consultation on proposals to make low levels of careless driving a fixed penalty offence (FPN), with a fine of £90 and three penalty points. The police would be able to offer remedial training to drivers as an alternative to a fixed penalty. At the same time, the Government signalled its intention to increase fines for other fixed penalty offences by 50%. The ABD responded before the consultation closed in early September.

The ABD's position is strongly opposed to making careless driving a fixed penalty offence. Unlike other fixed penalty motoring offences such as speeding or using a mobile phone, where there is usually some form of tangible evidence or record of the offence, careless driving is largely subjective, especially at the lower end of the scale. The consultation document made it clear that FPNs or remedial training would only be offered in situations witnessed by a police officer where there are no victims, no collisions and no public complaint. This means that the 'evidence' against a driver could often be the uncorroborated opinion of a single police officer.

While a driver would still have the option of going to court, experience shows, especially in magistrates' courts, that a police officer's word will invariably be accepted over that of a defendant, even where the police officer's evidence is shown to be faulty. The presumption of innocence does not apply in practice, therefore, with only wealthy defendants having the option of appealing to a higher court to seek justice. Consequently, the majority of drivers accused of careless driving would feel they had no option but to accept the FPN or remedial training, even if they genuinely believed they had done nothing wrong.

No doubt the majority of drivers would opt for the training course, if offered. While education is obviously preferable to punishment, there are serious concerns over the police having a financial incentive to send as many drivers as possible on training courses. This is already happening with speed awareness courses, where the police have relaxed the criteria for offering the courses to offending drivers so they can earn more referral fees. The money is being used to fund the operation of camera partnerships, now that the Government has withdrawn direct funding for camera operations. In the West Midlands, for example, it was revealed recently that only £40 of the £80 fee for a speed awareness course goes to the course provider, with the rest going to the local police (£35) or ACPO nationally (£5) to 'administer' the scheme.

This practice is morally unacceptable and of dubious legality. The police rightly have discretion to decide whether a driver should be prosecuted, let off with a warning or offered



remedial training for a minor offence. If the offence is sufficiently serious to warrant consideration of a fine and penalty points, however, it is wrong that the police should be encouraged to waive prosecution in return for payment, albeit one made indirectly. This could be construed as perverting the course of justice.

It is easy to see how an explosion in police enforcement of allegedly careless driving offences could occur if this fee-earning practice is extended to remedial training courses. The ABD's response made it clear that safeguards need to be implemented, whether careless driving becomes a fixed penalty offence or not:

- ▶ The payment of any form of referral fee by the providers of speed awareness or driver improvement courses to the police or other organisations involved in road safety or camera partnerships must be made illegal, thus removing any financial incentive to increase enforcement activity.

- ▶ The uncorroborated opinion of a single police officer should not be sufficient grounds for issuing a fixed penalty notice or summons for an alleged offence of careless driving.

- ▶ The minimum acceptable evidence of an incident of careless driving should be a video recording or a series of time-lapse, still photographs. A single still photograph should not be admissible, as it can give a misleading impression. For example, a driver maintaining a safe headway could be accused of tailgating if another driver moves into the lane ahead of him, and a photograph is taken before the first driver can drop back to a safe distance.

The consultation document failed to make a compelling case for allowing careless driving to become a fixed penalty offence. The case appears to hinge on the cost and bureaucracy to the police of taking drivers to court for lower-end instances of careless driving, discouraging them from doing so. But the consultation document then admits that "these examples of the offence may not be suitable for prosecution when considering

the public interest and lower risks". So why try to bring them into the criminal arena at all?

Lower-end cases of careless driving may be anti-social and increase danger to other road users, and some drivers may be unaware that their actions come into this category. This is evidence of the need for remedial training or advice, not prosecution. The police already have the discretion to refer drivers to improvement courses, and the ABD would welcome a greater police presence on the roads to advise such drivers of the error of their ways. This only applies, of course, if the police are not allowed to benefit financially!

The consultation document listed examples of behaviour where the issue of a FPN or remedial training might be considered appropriate: driving too close to a vehicle in front; wrong lane at a roundabout; ignoring a lane closed sign and pushing in to an orderly queue; lane hogging on motorways when inside lanes are empty; inappropriate speed; and wheel spins. The ABD's response was that all the circumstances of individual cases needed to be taken into account, including inadequate road signs that might cause drivers to be in a wrong lane by mistake. Only the most serious offences should be considered for prosecution, in other cases advice or a warning should be given.

The Government claims it is necessary to raise fixed penalties by 50% to compensate for inflation since the current levels were set in 2000. The ABD pointed out in its response that the Consumer Prices Index – the Government's favoured measure of inflation for adjusting benefits such as pensions – has risen by only 32% since then. Consequently, there is only justification for raising £60 penalties to £80, and £30 penalties to £40.

You can read the ABD's full response online at tinyurl.com/9zoedda. We have arranged a meeting with the new Roads Minister, Stephen Hammond, for October, when we will reiterate our concerns, especially about fees from training courses being used to fund camera operations.

When left is right



If you're a long-standing ABD member, you'll remember the series of articles I wrote for OTR in 2003/4, based on JJ Leeming's 1969 book *Road Accidents: Prevent or punish?* Those articles were later added to the ABD website, where they can still be found at www.abd.org.uk/jjeleeming.htm. Their publication led to John Leeming's son David contacting me, which in due course led to the book being republished in 2007. For those who have not yet bought a copy, they are still available for £11.49, including p&p, from www.abd.org.uk/shop/jjeleeming.htm.

In the second instalment I referred to Leeming's international comparisons of fatality rates, from which it appeared that in countries that drive on the left the fatality rate might be lower than in those that drive on the right. This was an intriguing possibility, so I subsequently carried out an analysis of my own, using year 2000 data from a larger number of countries than Leeming was able to. This appeared to confirm Leeming's findings, although there were some anomalies. I assumed that, if there was a real road safety benefit from driving on the left, it might have something to do with most people being right-handed, but I did not investigate further.

Fast forward to August 2012, when the ABD was contacted by Joanne Robertson, a postgraduate researcher at the University of Melbourne, Australia. She is a neuropsychologist and is carrying out research for her PhD on spatial awareness within the brain. Apparently this function is located in the right side of the brain in most humans, regardless of whether they are right- or left-handed, leading to a slight bias in attention towards the right side of what they can see ahead of them beyond touching distance.

She believes this could explain why the left-hand rule of the road might be safer than driving on the right, as drivers pay more attention towards the middle of the road, where

the greatest hazards (from vehicles travelling in the opposite direction) are likely to arise. In contrast, those driving on the right would give more attention towards the right-hand shoulder, making them more likely to drift into the opposite lane, or fail to notice an oncoming driver doing so. She has carried out an experiment using an eye-tracking device to monitor the direction in which people tended to look when navigating a vehicle through a gap, and found that people's typical eye position was towards the right. This supports her idea that people pay more attention to the right side of space.

Joanne had found the Leeming articles on the ABD's website and wanted to refer to them in her thesis, but she needed specific details about date of publication and page numbers to complete her list of references. The OTR editions containing the Leeming articles are not available on-line, but I found my paper copies so was able to provide the information she needs. I also sent her a copy of the reprinted book, as she had not been able to track down a copy of the original. So there is now at least one copy in the southern hemisphere! I also sent her the spreadsheet of my own comparisons of left-hand and right-hand rule fatality rates, which she will also be referring to.

Joanne's research does not specifically investigate whether there is a difference in fatality rates between left-hand and right-hand rule countries, but if a statistically significant difference were established, her research could provide a possible explanation. There are many factors that may be relevant to understanding the differences in fatality rates between countries, and these would need to be included in any analysis before the impact of the rule of the road could be assessed. I will keep members informed through OTR of any further developments.

Malcolm Heymer

action briefs...

Tayloring the limits

As the war on the motorist continues in the form of increasing numbers of 20mph zones, Kent ABD member Ian Taylor was asked by Radio Kent to supply a response in a live radio interview on the subject over the August bank holiday weekend. He followed Kent Green Party spokesman Stuart Jeffries; KGP is pushing for a county-wide introduction of 20 mph limits. So far, KCC has refused to back such a policy.

This gave us a day long exposure on the subject and proved to be an ideal way to get across our message on the subject. Ian used the info given by Eric Bridgstock in his presentation given at our annual meeting in July, to provide facts and figures; this info is now available to all members on the members' website (www.members.abd.org.uk)

Bristol Action Day

Our allies at the Taxpayers' Alliance have started a campaign to defeat the proposed introduction of a workplace charging levy in Bristol. Kicking things off, the TPA is organising a protest day outside the Corn Exchange, Bristol on Saturday 29 September at 11am.

All ABD members are welcome to come and show their lack of support for this initiative, which the council will use to pay for an extravagant multi million tram system which is no longer being funded by central government. TPA grassroots organiser Andrew Allison has got the backing of the Federation of Small Businesses in Bristol and we need all the help we can muster to show our solidarity.

Contacts if you can support the protest:
andrew.allison@thetaxpayersalliance.com
brian.maccdowall@abd.org.uk

Brake and Ramblers join forces

The Ramblers' Association has launched a road safety survey, in conjunction with Brake, supposedly aimed at establishing how safe – or otherwise – UK roads are for walkers and cyclists. If you'd like to have your say on how safe (or otherwise) you feel when on foot or two wheels, get along to <http://tinyurl.com/8v1kc27> where you'll find the link to take part in the survey. You've got until 11 October to do it; the survey is being done in the run up to Brake's annual Road Safety Week, so expect lots of stats to be trotted out about how vulnerable Britain's walkers and cyclists feel when using the roads.



price point

EU-wide road pricing for all drivers has been talked about for years. It seems to go away occasionally, but as *Brian Mooney* explains, it'll never disappear altogether...

There's been a lot happening on road pricing of late. The ABD has been busy this summer trying to piece together various developments. The first step of any fightback is to know your enemy and the conditions of the battlefield.

Last year, Alan Cook's 'independent' report opened up the prospect of the sweeping changes to the stewardship and financing of England's roads, particularly the Strategic Road Network (SRN). In May, the government accepted practically all of his recommendations (see *OTR102* or www.fairdealforthemotorist.org.uk), then duly reappointed Cook as non-executive Chairman of the DFT's Highways Agency (HA).

The media didn't look too deeply into the Government's response. While talking up the needs of 'customers' (drivers) the Government's long-term strategy for motorways and trunk roads will ominously cover:

- ▶ Long-term goals (including hyped carbon emissions)
- ▶ Levers available to achieve those goals (e.g. capacity, demand management)
- ▶ Policies to reduce the impacts of road traffic
- ▶ The circumstances in which it's acceptable for users to contribute to the cost of road provision (e.g. tolling for new roads).

Some next steps were outlined in governmentspeak; basically the HA will:

- ▶ Get more power over investment and other initiatives that will shape its future (handy for the new chairman, who wanted his top team turned into highly remunerated asset-sweaters.).
- ▶ Identify 'alternative ownership and financing options' for major routes (the SRN) this autumn.
- ▶ Identify local concerns then outline selected 'route based strategies' by 2013 (this probably means new roads, new lanes, upgrades and maintenance, but could mean more).
- ▶ Identify a 'performance specification' for the SRN in 2013, defining the interests of road users.

The notion that the government is to 'act as a champion for the road user' is of concern for a number of reasons:

- ▶ There's a clear conflict of interest – the DFT is working closely with the Treasury, which has a major financial interest in our national infrastructure. Under new guidelines, measures for 'demand management' (which may include 'access rationing') are to be considered.

By pure coincidence, the Treasury 'Infrastructure UK' Advisory Board includes a representative of Arup, a consultancy that collaborates with the RAC Foundation to promote road pricing.

- ▶ The last Budget showed that the Treasury wants to find more income from drivers, potentially adding road pricing to the punishingly high level of taxes.

The Treasury has been persuaded that fuel duty revenues will wane – either through people travelling less, use of more fuel-efficient vehicles



or (unlikely) the move to hyped electric vehicles. Ironically, these would all be the consequence of tax-hungry and coercive government policies!

Charging for 'new infrastructure' was just one example in the report; what's the betting that charging for using existing roads will be a 'solution'? Road pricing pundit Scott Wilson reckons that private investors will pressure the government into replacing existing motoring taxes with tolls. Experience has shown that new toll roads by themselves are not viable, as they do not compete with 'free roads'. For this to change, existing capacity either has to be regularly and heavily congested – or become tolled. The A14 is the first proposed target; more on this later.

You don't need too much imagination to construe that if the government listens to road pricing advocates and even anti-car fanatics as 'voice of the road user', that 'voice' might duly 'demand' that the government imposes road pricing to achieve desired sociological, 'environmental' or even 'performance' ends!

This is not just idle speculation, as the government has convened a controversial 'Motorists Forum' to help it in precisely this task.

The joker in the pack is the EU. It's interested in a number of ways. First, Britain has to run its economy to European guidelines, and the flavour of the month is achieving growth through infrastructure investment – particularly in transport. The EU also wants to develop key routes in Europe as a 'Trans European Network' and run them under a common approach.

Secondly, the EU has long eyed road pricing as a means to pay for its financially challenged Galileo satellite – or to push drivers onto public transport. It was behind road pricing trials in Bristol (e.g.) in the 1990s and has run projects such as CURACAO to try to bamboozle drivers into loving road pricing. After 1998, Labour tried repackaging EU proposals as its own, but met strong public opposition at home (led by the ABD).

Thirdly, the EU has been pushing 'environmental charges', with its mania about 'reducing carbon emissions' – this featured prominently when the EU launched its road pricing consultation in August.

As for the 'need to reduce carbon emissions', even those who accept the suspect 'science' should note that in May, the EU judged that Britain was well on track to meet its national target without the need for additional policies, and would probably exceed it.

The consultation hints at making money for infrastructure – including using road pricing revenue to tempt private investors with a secured income stream. The questionnaire is highly leading, hinting at a more centralised European Electronic Toll Service, where drivers are charged by distance travelled rather than for a period of time. This would point to systematic journey tracking and a potential threat to our civil liberties.

By pure coincidence, Dr Mark Walport has just been appointed to the Treasury's Infrastructure UK arm - NO2ID reminds us that under the last government, he pushed for widespread data sharing between government departments.

The European Commission is a fan of collating large databases on us, and enabling government agencies to search across records of where we go, what we spend and whom we talk to. (See Statewatch's 'Digital Tsunami' report). Apart from the surveillance possibilities, there is the prospect of government (or its licensees) looking at money-making opportunities from selling extracted data or using it for marketing purposes.

Last year the EU produced its *White Paper Roadmap towards a Single European Transport Area*. It was quite a drastic document, but the media was fooled into covering a relatively minor distraction on banning conventional cars from cities after 2050!

The real devilry was hidden in the detail – the small print makes it quite clear that the European Commission is going to push for European road user charges for all vehicles on all roads – starting with major routes, then other main roads that 'compete' with them, and then more local roads that take displaced traffic.

The White Paper warns that as part of "assisting economic growth", drivers are likely to pay more than today. Also compulsion is intended – after 2015, the date before which David Cameron has been reported as ruling out wider road pricing.

In its own words, the Commission reserves the right to go for "a pervasive command and control approach to mobility".

EU proposals are expected in 2013. To date, Germany has been against road pricing for cars, which would be a potential block, although there is the prospect of a change of government next year.

A14 to get tolls?

Just after Parliament went into summer recess, plans slipped out for a tolled 20-mile section of the A14 in Cambridgeshire. The A14 is the key route connecting the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich with the West Midlands, with its many warehousing distribution and logistics points. The route is busy with freight, and there are ambitious plans to expand Felixstowe, which is easily England's main commercial port.

Some of the reporting has been loose, but the DFT press release says that construction work could begin by 2018. This depends on a number of factors – government spending plans, agreement with interested local enterprise partnerships, local authorities and 'commercial decision making'.

The blueprint includes a new bypass to replace the existing road around Huntingdon and upgrades along the A14 as far east as Milton. Two new roads would be built parallel to and either side of the current A14 immediately north of Cambridge for local use. Meanwhile, the existing A14 carriageway will be upgraded through the removal of accesses and junctions, and improvements to junctions at the northern and southern ends.

Funding could be generated "in part" through tolling some of the enhanced A14, featuring around 20 miles of new or widened road. However, study is needed on the length of tolled section and other charging details.

The Coalition had committed not to introduce tolls on the existing road network (for cars, during the current Parliament), but car drivers would be charged to use a new or widened stretch. Local traffic would be able to travel for free on new roads running parallel to both sides of the existing A14.

Road pricing pundit Scott Wilson summarised some uncertainties; the exact map has not been agreed and the options will go out to consultation. He notes that an earlier report for DFT assumed:

- ▶Tolls would apply only in peak periods, (three hours morning, three hours afternoon)
- ▶They would be payable each time the tolled route was entered
- ▶Freight vehicles would be charged at a toll (£3) twice that of private cars (£1.50).

However there are now doubts on 'such low rates' and charging only for peak periods. Wilson speculated that the A14 might be leased off to

a private company for 40 years, for building the upgrade and then operating the route. He described enthusiasm for tolling as "weak at best" and claimed that the AA was opposing it (presumably due to the cost to its patrols and breakdown vehicles?).

East Anglian MPs welcomed the extra capacity on the busy route, but wanted to see the detail and expressed concern over the impact on their local communities.

The *Peterborough Today* paper reported that local businesses were concerned about tolling increasing their costs, or that motorists avoiding the tolled route would increase traffic on local roads. Wilson speculates that tolling would

almost certainly have to be extended to include the existing road, with pricing to avoid drivers diverting from the main tolled route.

Road Haulage Association (RHA) Area Manager Philip Scotney was totally against the plans. An unnamed spokesman for the RHA was also quoted as supporting new infrastructure, but stating "we are against tolls... there is no way that haulage companies can absorb the costs, so the end user will have to pay." He added: "In a way they've got a captive market, it's the only route from the Midlands to Felixstowe... we are being held to ransom. What choice have we got?"

Ironically, the cost of developing the A14 is given at around £1.3bn; the same amount as our 'top up' contribution to the European Investment Bank, which finances building roads abroad.

Road pricing for lorries

The Labour government proposed a lorry road user charge (LRUC) in 2002. Critics pointed out it was too complicated and would cost much more to administer than it raised, so it was dropped. The Conservatives were originally against reviving plans; in 2008, shadow transport minister Stephen Hammond noted "too many family-run businesses are falling by the wayside".

However, in 2010, Transport Secretary Philip Hammond committed to introducing a new charge for heavy goods vehicles, claiming all users would contribute towards our roads, but that Britain's hauliers would get a fairer deal. Making foreign hauliers pay for a 'Brit Disc' had been ruled out in Europe, and the government would not adopt a 'red diesel' type scheme for Britain's hauliers as it would lose tax revenue.

Roads Minister Mike Penning told a FTA audience that ministers "passionately believed that you are taxed too much already. I'm not going to bring in a road charging scheme that costs you money. It's not going to be done as a spy in the cab: I want a simple system that

compensates only those that are losing out to foreign competition."

He added that he was looking at a simple charge targeting the operators most at risk from cheaper foreign competitors. However Prof. Alan McKinnon calculated a gross take of £19-£27m a year at most. He warned offering a reduction in VED would not adequately compensate UK hauliers, and said that some fuel duty rebate would be needed to meet assurances of 'revenue neutrality' for UK-based operators. Having already identified high admin costs, he foresaw this being even more complicated and costly. "So why go to all this bother to raise tiny sums of money?"

Some estimate that 1 in 8 lorries in Britain is foreign, although Penning told Parliament (2011) that only 3.5% of the HGVs on British roads and 5.2% of those on our motorways are foreign.

This year the government launched a consultation on LRUC, which admitted several uncertainties, but claimed that 94% of Britain's hauliers would be no worse off. Charging would start in 2014/15.

FTA Policy Director James Hookham felt it was only right that foreign lorries paid for their use of UK roads, but industry support would be entirely dependent on no additional costs for British hauliers. A FTA press release noted that the LRUC was for vehicles over 12 tons only. It expressed concern that some British hauliers would pay more tax and the rates on foreign vehicles wouldn't remove their competitive

advantage on fuel prices. Bizarrely, it noted that it was against EU rules to stop foreign vehicles at the border to charge them, although the DFT fell back on talk of inspections and ANPR enforcement.

The FTA was also concerned at the prospect of the EU increasing maximum LRUC rates, and levying charges based on emissions (the government had been reported as strongly lobbying the EU to raise the capped rate of approx £9 per day).

The RHA was also lukewarm on the proposals, and the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association (BVRLA) concerned that lax enforcement would lead to foreign hauliers not paying. BVRLA has complained about a Whitehall farce, whereby the additional cost for its members alone could be nearly £4m per year. Put simply, the LRUC plus EU rules on minimum VED would mean extra costs for 6% of UK operators, and DFT's envisaged grant system to get round this would break other EU rules for fleets with more than 50 eligible vehicles, so larger operators would be hit.

Could the government's enthusiasm be that in setting up an England-wide tracking and taxing system, it laid the foundations for a wider-based and more lucrative road pricing system after 2015?

•For more information on road pricing, log on to www.fairdealforthemotorist.org.uk



talking point

Roads policing officer James Holden was recently cleared of dangerous driving while following a suspect, but the case could have a massive impact on police drivers being held responsible for the actions of those they are pursuing. Barrister Mark Aldred, who defended the officer, writes:

The recent case of R v Holden heralds a new and disturbing approach to police pursuits by the Crown Prosecution Service. PC Holden was attached to Hampshire Constabulary's roads policing unit and trained to the highest levels in pursuit driving. The pursuit that he and a colleague were involved in lasted about four minutes and ended when the driver they were pursuing crashed into a level crossing barrier and ran off.

PC Holden stopped the pursuit and no one was injured. Neither the suspect's vehicle or the police vehicle had an accident with any third party. There was no public complaint. PC Holden was pursuing a serial burglar. An independent review of the driver by another force expert described PC Holden's driving as "admirable" and "not careless, reckless or dangerous" and "typical of an urban pursuit". However, the in-force review panel felt, in retrospect, the risk was too great and the pursuit ought to have been terminated some one minute 30 seconds earlier.

PC Holden was then prosecuted for dangerous driving before being cleared by a jury in February this year.

A central plank of the case against him was that he had a responsibility to 'discontinue' when the risks became disproportionate, and he had not done so. The prosecution case against PC Holden was largely based upon the danger created by the subject driver. In the words of the prosecutor: "If you continue to pursue you continue to expose the public to risk of serious injury and serious damage to property. That is dangerous."

By failing to terminate at the point where the force head of driving standards had retrospectively decided that the risk had become disproportionate, PC Holden had in effect 'caused' the subject vehicle to drive in a dangerous manner and was responsible for the danger that resulted. Again, in the words of the prosecutor: "He [the subject driver] is a dangerous driver. He will exhibit risk. The contention is PC Holden continued when it was disproportionate and exposed other road users to risk."

One is tempted to ask the question, why was this not dealt with by the in-force procedures? However, the more pertinent questions are, how did this case get past the CPS, a District Judge and a Crown Court Judge? Why did it go all the way to a jury? If it does go to a jury what protections or exemptions do police have? Are police drivers who engage in pursuits at risk of a similar fate to that of PC Holden in the event that someone refers a drive which is "typical of an urban pursuit" to the CPS?



The fact that PC Holden's case survived all the legal hurdles suggests that the view of the CPS cannot be said to be an aberration. The real problem is the law and the lack of protection it offers police pursuit drivers.

This first concern is that it seems there is now a willingness to hold an officer legally responsible for the danger created by the driver he is pursuing. If a subject vehicle makes off he will create a danger. He will exceed the speed limit. He will ignore road signs. The ACPO guidelines tell us that "all pursuits are inherently dangerous". Does this mean all officers who pursue could be liable for causing or perpetuating that danger?

An answer along the lines of "only if the officer pursues when he should have discontinued" is no answer at all. There will always be a difference of professional opinion about when and if a pursuit becomes disproportionate.

At either end of the spectrum, the answer will be obvious. In the middle it is a finely balanced judgment. There will be differences.

In PC Holden's case neither he nor the pursuit commander, the roads policing unit driver in car two of the pursuit, the control room supervisor or the controller felt the need to end it before it was terminated.

An independent driving expert, chosen by the prosecution, also did not feel the pursuit ought to have been terminated before it was.

However, on the basis of the opinion of the head of driver training, supported by a traffic sergeant, the prosecution was mounted. Once it had started, it continued under its own momentum, through committal, through a half-time submission, all the way to a jury.

Once the case is before the jury the officer is really exposed. If the danger relied on by the prosecution is that created by the fleeing driver, then, on the argument in PC Holden's case, the police driver will have caused or contributed to the danger by continuing to pursue. This argument may well be supplemented by an argument that the officer, in driving at speed in an urban environment, exposed the public to danger and was therefore dangerous. This also occurred in PC Holden's case.

These arguments can be applied to virtually any substantive pursuit. The yardstick against which an officer's driving will be judged is not the standard of a trained police pursuit driver. It is the standard of the careful and competent driver. Did the officer's driving fall far below the standard of the careful and competent driver?

Unfortunately, the careful and competent driver does not engage in pursuits, he does not contravene traffic signs and speed limits. Yes, a police officer has exemptions under road traffic legislation but there is no exemption from dangerous driving.

If there are no legal exemptions permitting dangerous driving by a police officer during a pursuit, what distinguishes a police pursuit driver from the subject he is pursuing? The obvious answer is his training and his skill. Unfortunately, since the case of R v Bannister, a jury is not permitted to take into account an officer's special skill and training in determining whether the driving was dangerous, only against the standard of the careful and competent driver.

At present, forces have the best of both worlds; they can tell the public there is not a 'no pursuit' policy but, when it's politically expedient, officers who pursue can be prosecuted, and the law offers them little protection. Thankfully for PC Holden, the jury applied common sense and acquitted him. However, that was after a year of worry that he would lose his job and possibly his liberty.

Until the law is changed a police officer can only hope that a reviewer does not refer his case for prosecution. The other option is for the driver not to pursue at all. But if he does pursue, and his case is referred, a police officer is left in a very exposed position, reliant upon a good barrister and a jury that accepts common sense arguments. The Police Federation can control the former, but not the latter.

Alan Jones, lead on roads policing for the Police Federation, says the issues have been raised with the director of public prosecutions Keir Starmer and ACPO. The Federation is in talks on how this will impact on operational issues and is seeking clear guidance as well as a change in the law in the long term to protect officers.

soapbox

Transform Scotland has described the Scottish government's transport priorities as "perverse" because it's increasingly subsidising road use, rather than investing in sustainable transport. It's also highly critical of plans to accelerate the dualling of the A9. The group, made up of public transport operators, local authorities and 'voluntary groups' is angry that "Public transport fares are rising ahead of the price of using a car, and the government's cuts to bus investment are likely to drive people away from public transport." Perhaps if public transport operators weren't so desperate to line their own pockets along with those of their shareholders, car use wouldn't be eminently more affordable than catching the bus or train...

A new French law means drivers must carry a breathalyser kit in the car at all times. Now it's emerged that the chief of the road safety group that persuaded Nicolas Sarkozy's government to adopt the ruling is also a senior executive with the leading manufacturer of the blow-in-the-bag test kits. Daniel Orgeval, the president of the anti-drink driving lobby group I-Test, also works for Contralco, the leading manufacturer of the eq I-Test was formed just eight months Sarkozy's government adopted the new law in March last year. Contralco, one of only two companies who produce a test-kit of the required standard, was reportedly in financial difficulties until the law was approved. But since then it has taken on over 100 staff, thanks in no small part to a demand for five million test kits a month.

Tragically, Barnsley Council has disclosed that it can no longer afford to build any new speed humps. Unsurprisingly, there's been the predictable backlash from self-appointed road safety experts, but senior councillors also claim such humps had become unpopular with drivers whose vehicles were damaged by them. And if the council can't afford to spend cash on humps, it certainly can't afford to pay for replacement suspension systems or exhausts.

West Suffolk MP Matthew Hancock would rather not see the existing A14 tolled, but sighs that "there's no money around". He might look a little harder, as Britain is spending billions on dubious causes such as wind turbine subsidies. Through our EU contributions alone we are financing the Rural Roads Rehabilitation Project will build or maintain about 25,000 miles of road in Kenya. Overall objectives include reducing transport costs and travel time, as well as improving road safety.

Our money is also helping Italy with soft

It's always disappointing when those in power fail to learn from history, but when that history is very recent, it's all the more galling. Cardiff councillor Ralph Cook wants the city to create a new car-free suburb in a bid to "encourage more people onto public transport if its roads and economy are not to grind to halt". The cabinet member for transport wants to look at the feasibility of making one of five new sites in the city's development plan a car-free zone, making up to 2000 homes largely vehicle-free. Cook reckons the city doesn't have room for each new home to have "a drive that can take two cars and a public road that can take a third" and that the car-free suburb would be the first of its kind in Britain. He clearly doesn't remember the damage done by Labour when it introduced PPG13, massively reducing the available space for car parking in public and private developments...



Damon Hill has gone on record as saying that the government should be slashing the motorway speed limit to 55mph, instead of increasing it to 80mph. In an interview with the *Radio Times*, said: "People drive too fast on the motorway. Mostly they drive too fast, too close to the car in front, and they think they know what they're doing. And they don't. What happens when people drive on the roads is that they don't concentrate, they just think about

something else, so they're relying on their unconscious to respond to things. That's why it's better to drive at a sensible pace." Not to focus on the task in hand then? Just to drive more slowly, but while still oblivious to what's going on around you?

Many thanks to Giles Peperell, who sent in the picture to the right. Does it strike a chord with you?

The Scottish government failed to meet its own climate change targets in 2010, according to the latest official

loans via the European Investment Bank (EIB). A £400 million line of credit is going to Autostrade per l'Italia, to relieve traffic congestion north of Florence, speed up traffic on the Apennine segment of the A1 and have a positive environmental and employment impact. (But don't tell the DFT and DECC about the 'environmental improvements' going hand in hand with greater and faster motorway traffic).

In Italy the EIB has a long tradition of financing the motorway network. However, Italy has had to repay a record £307 million to the EU after a motorway project in the south

What's on the mind of Chris Medd, OTR editor. This issue; Damon Hill reckons drivers are unsafe over 55mph and the DVLA "improves its service" by closing all of its local offices.

figures. They showed greenhouse gas emissions rose by 1.9% on 2009 figures, after taking emissions trading into account. The government is attempting to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 42% by 2020. Climate Change Minister Stewart Stevenson said exceptionally cold weather conditions in Scotland in 2010 was to blame. Stevenson said "Scotland faced its coldest winter temperatures in almost a century - and quite rightly people across Scotland needed to heat their homes to keep warm and safe". You couldn't make it up.

We all have to deal with the DVLA at some point, and if like many of my friends you have to do it over the phone, the chances are you don't hang up with a warm feeling inside. Sure the online services are generally easy to use, but if you've had to deal with your local DVLA office because of complications with a registration transfer, or V5/taxation issue, you'll almost certainly be glad they were there. Whenever I've had to go to my local DVLA office, I've always found them courteous, knowledgeable, and efficient. So you can imagine my annoyance when I recently got a press release from the DVLA which claimed that:

"Motorists will benefit from a better, quicker service from the DVLA after Roads Minister Mike Penning gave the go-ahead for wide-ranging reforms to improve how the Agency works... Key to the improvements is centralising the DVLA's services and making more transactions available online.

This will make it easier than ever for people to deal with the agency at a time and place that suits".

The release goes on to say that the DVLA is closing all of its local offices, so drivers have to do everything over the phone or online. And motorists will benefit how, exactly?

Chris Medd



of the country was found to be riven with mafia infiltration, corruption and kickbacks.

The investigation found that more than 381 million euros was lost through fraud, fake contracts and ghost road works. (Maybe someone could investigate our road works that seem to go on forever?).

Next year's EU's budget will see large rises in expenditure on road and other infrastructure in southern and eastern Europe, 'investment' will also support 'climate change' goals. Britain recently committed an extra £1.3 billion contribution to the EIB.

Brian Mooney

letters

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

Write to OTR: Chris Medd, PO Box 2228, Kenley, Surrey CR8 5ZT or send an email to otr@abd.org.uk

Transport analyst Christian Wolmar rejects the theory that future transport growth demand will be mostly on roads. He said: "There has been no increase in road traffic over the last 10 years if you look at the figures. Some of that is to do with pricing and there has been some transfer from road to rail". In other words, road usage may have reached its peak.

Professor Chris Nash of the Institute for Transport Studies at the University of Leeds agrees: "There has been a marked change in trend in road use. Even before the recession, for 10 years the miles travelled per person per annum did not rise and that was markedly different from the decade before. This probably reflects increased travel times by car, as roads became more congested, population redistribution to the big cities, particularly London, and higher density living. Unless the Government went back to massive road building and building on green belt land, then this is a permanent trend," he suggests.

So why is this not something we hear more about? Indeed, why is it the exact opposite that we constantly hear?

Pat Kinnon

Nationwide, there suddenly seems to be pressure from local councillors for blanket 20mph limits. The Liberal Democrats are proposing 20mph speed limits, without any physical means of slowing vehicles down. The use of 20mph roundels alone, as they propose, will reduce the speed of the vehicles, on average, by 1mph. If they are travelling slowly already, then what is the point? Liberal Democrat councillor Sarah Osborne believes that signed-only 20mph limits are cheaper than putting infrastructure into 20mph zones. But if they don't work, then they are bad value for money.

Close to where I live is a 30mph road that is due to be made part of a 20mph limit area. But a



Give us a quote

"There are many reasons to shift away from fossil fuels, and we will do so in the next century without legislation, financial incentives, carbon-conservation programs, or the indeterminable yammering of fearmongers. So far as I know, nobody had to ban horse transport in the early twentieth century". Michael Crichton, *State of fear*, 2004

speed survey indicates that some vehicles travel at 60mph. If the car drivers won't obey the 30mph speed limit, why will they obey a 20mph limit? Wouldn't enforcing the existing speed limit make more sense?

Mark Cox

On a recent short break in Wales I visited the town of Caerleon, just north of Newport. It's famous for its extensive and impressive Roman remains; it's also brought in a town-wide 20mph speed limit. There are some narrow roads where the traffic more or less dictates speeds around 20mph – so why is the official new limit needed? Many other roads are normal urban streets where 30mph would be the natural speed. However, they are all now down to 20mph.

The self-enforcement used is for all the through roads to be lined every hundred yards or so with Speed Indication Devices, that measure your speed down to the last mph, and constantly flash it at you – in green if below 20 and in red if over. On the side streets there are almost continuous speed cushions.

Having experienced this at first hand, I regard it as driving hell – a totally unnatural crawl in constant low gear. Have I seen the future of urban driving? I really hope not. More power to the campaign against the 20's plenty nonsense.

Ian Taylor

While the increase in road casualties in 2011 is disappointing, it must not be forgotten that the decrease in 2010 was exceptionally large. In addition to recessionary factors, 2010

The proposals will remove the need to advertise in local newspapers and will instead give local authorities "the freedom to publicise changes to those likely to be affected in ways that they think will reach them best". Councils would still have to publicise changes, but could choose different means such as advertising on local websites, displaying notices in the area or distributing leaflets on affected roads – or they may still choose to use local newspaper advertising.

I don't have any problem with councils not having to publish notices in newspapers, but they should be compelled to publish them on their website, as there is no excuse not to do so. They should also be obliged to allow people to register to receive such notices by email, or provide an RSS feed. Again, there's no excuse not to do so.

Chris Ward

experienced severe winter weather for significant periods at both ends of the year, which would have suppressed traffic levels, discouraged cycling and walking, and encouraged road users to take greater than normal care. It is probable, therefore, that the 2010 figures are a statistical blip, and those for 2011 represent a regression to the trend of the last few years. Only time will tell.

The road safety establishment seems to think that all falls in casualties are the result of its interventions, and any increases represent a failure of road safety policies. This self-importance is unjustified, as similar casualty trends occur in most developed countries, regardless of widely differing road safety policies. The 2011 figures are no cause for panic, but should be analysed carefully to see where and why casualties have increased, if at all, in relation to the trend to 2009.

Malcolm Heymer

As a life-long resident of Southend-on-Sea, I live within proximity of the CCTV cars and the operators have my full support (OTR104 p13). Apcoa provides the enforcement under contract to Southend Council and, in a town the size of Southend, 10 miles east to west with around 225,000 residents, 46 fines on average per day is not excessive. Part of the town is high-density housing with overcrowding of a typical seaside environment. Despite them being around for about two years, I have not yet seen one of the cars on my travels. Maybe this is because I know how to avoid the congested areas.

I do not commit parking offences and I have no sympathy for those who do, and get caught. For too long, illegal parking has been seen as something to get away with and on many occasions I have experienced the "I've only been here a few minutes officer" excuse, mickey taking by motor traders and those who think it's OK to park outside a shop while they buy their convenience items. Of course, every school has its regular offenders who fail to comply with no Stopping Orders. In my retirement, I'm please someone is at last doing something about it.

Failure to comply with Government Guidance and Recommendation does not make something illegal, and the eye-catching headline of 'Southend Spy Cars ruled illegal' cannot be accurate. Like it or not, CCTV on a mobile vehicle is far more efficient and cost-effective than having a walking operative who can be persuaded or given favours to turn a blind eye. The fact that someone got out of the car to check for a disabled badge should be seen as positive attitude towards fairness, rather than criticism of someone doing a job which happens to make them unpopular with a selfish and arrogant section of the motoring public.

I notice nobody has apparently told you

Changes to streamline the process local councils and the HA must go through when introducing new traffic restrictions have been put forward by Transport Minister Norman Baker. Councils wanting to bring in controls on their roads, such as to allow road works to take place or to vary parking restrictions, must put in place a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) detailing what the controls cover. Currently, councils and the HA must advertise in local newspapers both when these orders are proposed and when they come into effect.

The Department estimates that these adverts cost councils and the HA around £20m every year - around 60% of these costs are covered by the taxpayer, the rest being paid for by businesses such as utilities and property developers when arrangements are made to allow them to carry out works on the road.

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

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) thinks that drivers should be taxed much more heavily to fully cover the externalities of car travel, which they estimate at £43-56bn per year. What they fail to mention is the other side of the balance sheet – the benefits of motorised road transport.

Cars, vans and taxis account for 85% of passenger journeys, and goods vehicles carry a similar proportion of inland freight tonnage. Motor vehicles thus make a massive contribution to the economy. Indeed, if the Government is serious about stimulating growth, it would do well to make a significant cut in fuel duty (not VAT, as this is reclaimed by hauliers, so they would not benefit from a cut in its rate).

Motor vehicles enable a mobile workforce to change jobs as some industries decline and others replace them. They provide fast access for the emergency services, saving many lives. They enable families dispersed around the country to remain in touch, and for tourism and the businesses that depend on it to thrive – the list goes on. Many of the people the IPPR would consider to be 'victims' of motor vehicles also use and benefit greatly from them.

The IPPR refers to accidents, poor air quality and noise impacts caused by motor vehicles, but things were worse in major cities in the 19th century in the horse-drawn age – at least 1000 people a year were killed in road accidents in London alone. The noise of iron-shod horses' hooves and the iron-clad wheels of the vehicles drawn by them, over cobbled streets, would hardly have made for tranquility. The several tons of horse manure deposited on the streets

every day were a breeding ground for flies, which carried disease. Air quality in cities today is much better than it was in the days of coal fires and the smog that came with them. Cities have always been noisy, congested places, but they are more attractive today than before the motor vehicle was invented.

As for greenhouse gas emissions, the IPPR must be one of the few bodies that still believes they have a significant impact on global temperatures. Even Phil Jones, of the Climatic Research Unit of the University of East Anglia, has admitted there has been no statistically significant global warming for 15 years, despite carbon dioxide levels increasing throughout that time. Most solar physicists agree we are on the verge of a period of significant cooling, the only question being how long it will last and how far temperatures will fall.

In 1998, David Newbery of the Department of Applied Economics at Cambridge University wrote a report entitled *Fair payment from road users*, which concluded that "current transport taxes more than cover the full social and environmental costs of transport, as well as the cost of providing the transport infrastructure". Since then, taxes on road users have increased, fatal road accidents have fallen significantly, as have harmful emissions from road vehicles. His conclusion must, therefore, be even more robust today.

One-sided reports such as that of the IPPR give a grossly distorted view of the way in which motor vehicles have impacted our lives. We would be much worse off without them.

Brian Mooney

about some offenders reportedly covering the registration plates of vehicles parked contrary to waiting restrictions in the town with shower hats and plastic bags to prevent the plates being read. The idea is that Enforcement Officers have no power to remove the bags which may be the case but those offenders commit the offence of failing to display registration plates and should be reported for this by the police.

Merv Whitney

The profiteers of road safety must be salivating at some of the schemes being promoted lately. Evidence of this can be found in a recent *Local Transport Today* story about West Midlands' speed awareness courses. I've discovered that there is no legal framework whereby police, having acknowledged an offence, can then wheel and deal with it to the advantage of private companies who run these lucrative courses. Who has given police the authority to ignore an offence on payment of money to privateers?

£5 of the course fee is retained by Road Safety Support Ltd, set up by ACPO Ltd (see under RSS at www.driveeastmidlands.com for more). This company exists to provide 'expert' evidence for the prosecution against drivers who dare to deny a speeding offence. The £5 is just the retainer, but the company will claim massive costs against the driver in addition should he lose his case.

abd.org.uk

This is a further deterrent against pleading not guilty. Do the police employ such firms against other 'criminals'?

Keith Peat



Just replacing all four wheels on our family Seat, and I'm still driving my old Subaru around on an odd set. All these wheels were terminally damaged by pot holes and bad roads. A very expensive form of taxation where we pay twice! I never had this problem when living in West Africa...

Dave Bodecott

An example of the garbage trotted out by the IPPR (Institute for Propaganda Posing as Research), taken from its website at tinyurl.com/8ox3pub:

OTR glossary

- **ACPO**: Association of Chief Police Officers
- **ANPR**: Automatic Number Plate Recognition
- **Brake**: Vocal anti-car group
- **CfBT**: 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)
- **FTA**: Freight Transport Association
- **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

It is a common perception that motorists contribute more than their fair share towards the cost of roads and, similarly, that they are somehow a cash cow for government. The RAC have stated that this is compounded by 'the fact that the government's annual tax take from Britain's motorist – through fuel duty, VAT, new car tax and the road fund licence – totals some £45 billion' (RAC 2008). This figure exaggerates the cost since they include VAT, which is a general tax not specific to road users.

So presumably the VAT element should be excluded from the cost of fuel when calculating 'motoring costs'! Other IPPR gems, taken from an interview with the *Telegraph* (which you can read at tinyurl.com/cyhwyvb) include:

- ▶ *Compared to users of public transport, there is no war on motorists.*
- ▶ *Rail and bus users have seen fares spiral out of control while the cost of driving has actually fallen over the last decade.*
- ▶ *Drivers are in a far easier position (than public transport users), because they can cut their motoring costs by using more fuel efficient cars and cutting out unnecessary journeys.*

Alex Barton

in brief...

► Parking perks for councillors at Conservative-run Torbay Council should be scrapped, according to opposition groups. The Council ended free parking for councillors and staff on 1 September; staff now pay £1 a day to park, which for full-time employees working 47 weeks a year is £235, but councillors can buy a £50 annual parking permit. The Conservatives say it is fair because members are not paid, but opposition parties and the union Unison want the move scrapped.

► Carrying out speed checks in Cambridge's central 20mph zone has been dropped as a priority for the city's police. Councillors voted to end the crackdown after police said enforcement had not made motorists slow down – and after deciding there were more important problems, including targeting anti-social cycling.

► One in 10 drivers in Wales have admitted they park illegally in spaces set aside for disabled people. The survey found Bridgend was worst for parking space abuse, with one in four admitting to misuse. The survey of more than 1000 people across Wales found those aged 45-55 were the worst offenders, with one in six saying they had parked in reserved spaces often.

► Conwy Council is teaching staff to drive in a more fuel-efficient way, in a bid to save over £100,000 a year. Conwy council has more than 350 vehicles and spends over £1m a year on fuel. Officers say the lessons are included in routine driver retraining at no extra cost. The council also now uses tracking software which logs how a vehicle is being driven; some vehicles also have alarms which warn when the driver is wasting fuel.

► Swansea City Council is proposing to introduce a camera car "to tackle illegal parking". The council has agreed to a £77,000 scheme, and councillor June Burtonshaw is on record as saying that "the scheme will pay for itself once launched. The camera is attached to a vehicle and can issue a fine instantly, and it can go anywhere". She can clearly hear the cash till ringing already.

► Road casualties in 20mph zones increased by almost a quarter in 2011, according to the DfT. The number of people killed or injured on roads in built up areas with a speed limit of 20mph totalled 2262 in 2011, up by 24% from 2010. Meanwhile casualties on 30mph roads were down by 1% from 2010, recorded at 125,494 in 2011. Despite this, councils have been given powers to set 20mph zones indiscriminately – and they'll use them.

► Hull City Council has introduced pedestrian countdown signals at a city centre crossing in possibly the first application of the technology outside London. Countdown signals inform pedestrians how long is left in the 'blackout period', the time between when the green man is extinguished and the red man appears. Transport for London is rolling out countdown to 200 locations across the capital following the completion of trials.

Scots drink consultation

A consultation on plans to reduce the drink-driving limit has been launched by the Scottish government. The current UK limit of 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood has remained unchanged since 1966 and is the highest in the world. By proposing the lower level of 50mg, Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill reckons the change would save lives.

Powers to alter the limit were given to Holyrood under the 2012 Scotland Act and ministers have made it clear they want to bring Scotland in line with most of continental Europe as soon as possible. Labour and the Lib Dems support the move, although the Scottish Conservatives said the government has "yet to make the case" for reducing the limit.

• See www.abd.org.uk/topics/drink_driving.htm for the ABD view.

Crossings "too quick"

The majority of elderly pedestrians are unable to completely cross the road during the 'green man' phase of a pedestrian crossing cycle, researchers from University College London have found. The research, led by Laura Asher of UCL's epidemiology & public health department, found that the mean walking speed of participants in the Health Survey for England in 2005 was 0.9 metres per second (m/s) for men over 65 and 0.8m/s for older women.

Both figures are significantly slower than the 1.2m/s minimum speed required to safely use a pedestrian crossing during the green man phase in the UK under current DfT guidelines. Overall, 76% of older men and 85% of older women had a walking speed that was below the DfT's threshold.

London penalties on the rise – again

The number of penalty charge notices (PCNs) issued to drivers in London rose 2% in 2011/12 to over 4.93 million, according to figures released by London Councils. Tickets issued for illegal parking rose from 4.0 million to 4.1 million. There were also increases in bus lane penalties – up from 216,495 to 233,201. The number of moving traffic penalties issued fell from 571,590 to 564,028.

More than three million of the parking PCNs were higher level penalties, issued for offences such as parking on double yellow lines, stopping on a pedestrian crossing or bus stop and double parking. Just over one million were lower level PCNs issued for less serious contraventions such as overstaying time on a parking meter and not



parking within the markings of a parking bay.

Westminster City Council issued the most PCNs – 492,881, up more than 20,000 on 2010/11. TfL issued 486,068, down from 515,586 in 2010/11.

Olympic fines revealed

Drivers in London were issued with 6900 penalties for breaking Games traffic regulations, TfL has confirmed. People were fined £130 for taking banned left or right turns and parking on the routes reserved for athletes, officials and the media. But motorists were not fined for driving in the lanes; 30,400 warnings were issued instead. TfL said 97% of drivers kept out of the exclusive lanes. During the Olympics, the restrictions applied on 30 miles of lanes in London. That was reduced to 8.7 miles during the Paralympic Games.

The restrictions on the Olympic Route Network (ORN) - which included the Games Lanes - came into effect on 25 July and was suspended after 14 August. The Paralympics Route Network (PRN) was in place between 29 August and 9 September.

In total, 6500 penalty charge notices (PCNs) were issued for the ORN and 400 for the PRN. About 25,700 warning notices were issued to people for driving on the ORN and 4700 for the PRN. About 24,000 drivers who parked on the special lanes moved their vehicles when asked to by wardens monitoring the lanes, but 230 other vehicles had to be towed away.

Edinburgh parking farce

Almost one in six parking tickets handed out in Edinburgh has been issued wrongly, it has emerged. Since 2010, parking wardens in Edinburgh have issued 388,039 tickets – but 59,144 of these were later ruled invalid following an appeal by the driver. In the last 12 months, half of the people who appealed their ticket saw their fines scrapped, while in 2010-11 45% of all appeals were successful. At the standard rate of £30 per ticket, this comes to £1,774,320 saved by motorists across the city thanks to wardens handing out around 80 incorrect tickets per day. Parking wardens, operated by private company NSL, work in the capital 24 hours a day. CPZs start at 8.30am and run until 5.30pm or 6.30pm.

Just under 45% of contested tickets were cancelled following an appeal – around 15% of all tickets issued between 2010 and 2012. When the figures are broken down by year it shows that although more fines were issued in 2011-12, the number of appeals more than halved compared with the previous year, and the number of successful appeals dropped from one in five of all issued tickets to one in ten.

Merton's £10million parking charges blunder

A fair parking crusader who has clawed back £1m in unfair fines for motorists claims an extraordinary oversight at Merton Council could pave the way for £10m in refunds. Nigel Wise claims Merton Council failed to properly update a bylaw underpinning its right to charge motorists for using car parks, known as a traffic management order (TMO) – despite a warning by MPs six years ago. Wise, 59, was the driving force in getting Richmond Council to refund £1.1m to motorists after he challenged the legality of its mobile CCTV enforcement vehicles.

He discovered the error at Merton after taking on the case of Debbie King, who was fined by Merton Council after her valid parking ticket became unreadable when it curled up on her car window. He said: "This is a serious situation that could impact on car parking charges going back several years and cost the council £10m in refunds – and that's a conservative estimate."

Wise said Merton had not provided him with a TMO that complies with the 1984 Road Traffic

Regulation Act, the law which underpins the council's right to charge for off-street parking. Instead, it has produced a TMO drawn up in 1979 under the 1967 Road Traffic Regulation Act, which was repealed in 2004 after the 1984 Act replaced it. This means, he claims, the council can't lawfully issue penalty charge notices (PCNs), or even charge motorists, for using their car parks across the borough.

The DfT issued guidance in 2008, which confirmed a council's power to manage off-street parking is derived from the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. It added: "Flawed orders... may be unenforceable." And an earlier report by MPs, on Parliament's transport select committee, said councils need a clear legal basis for their traffic management work, and the public "needs to be able to see and understand the rules in a simple and straightforward text". The 2006 report said: "Those local authorities who are guilty of this maladministration need to remedy the position without delay."

Garage labour rates at a record high

According to Warranty Direct's annual Labour Rates Survey, the average labour rate (franchised and independent workshops combined) climbed 3% to £82.86, up from £80.44 in 2011 and over 10% higher than two years ago. Some drivers pay as little as £36.60 per hour while others, like those in Hertfordshire, could be hit by rates as high as £201.60. Based on data from Warranty Direct's 50,000 live policies, the study of nearly 4250 workshops shows that the amount you pay per hour at smaller, independent workshops has risen the most dramatically, from £60.68 in 2011 to £64.58 in 2012 – a 6.44% rise.

Main dealer labour rates are up fractionally too, at an average of £95.94, meaning the gap between independent businesses and main dealers has narrowed further, the latter



now charging 48.6% more on average than independents (down from 57% in 2011). Surrey is the most expensive county to get cars fixed; an hour of a mechanic's time costs £98.27 on average. Vehicle owners in Powys, Wales, are charged the least, with the average of £58.46 roughly half the Surrey high.

DfT encourages more 20 and 40mph zones

The DfT is inviting highway authorities in rural parts of England to come forward with plans to establish 40mph zones on minor roads. The invitation is contained in a new draft speed limit circular for England that, once finalised, will replace circular 01/06, *Setting local speed limits*. The new document also encourages local authorities to implement more 20mph limits.

"We would welcome applications for zonal rural speed limits, usually 40mph zones, for example in national parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or on other networks of minor rural roads where speeds are already in line with such a limit," says the DfT. It says a 40mph limit may be appropriate for roads "with a predominantly local, access or recreation function... or if it forms part of a recommended route for vulnerable road users. It may also be appropriate if there is a particular collision problem."

The circular also encourages greater use of 20mph zones or limits. "Traffic authorities are asked to consider the introduction of more 20mph limits and zones, over time, in urban areas," it says. The lower limit may be suitable not only for residential streets, but also "streets where business on foot is more important than slowing down road traffic".

Area-wide 20mph signed-only speed limits are also supported. The DfT says research suggests signed-only 20mph limits cut vehicle speeds only by an average of 1mph and are therefore most appropriate where vehicle speeds are already low.

A new section of advice emphasises that compliance with air quality limits can be a relevant consideration in speed limit setting. "Where limits for air quality are in danger of being exceeded, compliance with those air quality limits could be an important factor in the choice of speed limit."

in brief...

► Road traffic volumes in Great Britain fell 1% in quarter 2 of 2012, against the same quarter of 2011, according to DfT estimates. Car traffic fell 0.7% and heavy goods vehicle traffic fell 4.4% but there was a 1.5% rise in light goods vehicle traffic. The DfT says the fall in overall traffic may be explained by the 0.5% fall in GDP recorded in the period, high fuel prices and the wet weather that could have reduced leisure car trips.

► The Government is to make available £16.842bn for the rail industry during Network Rail's next five-year Control Period (CP5). The figure covers enhancements, maintenance, and subsidy to train operators. The figure is broken down as £3.165bn in 2014/15; £3.382bn in 2015/16; £3.385bn in 2016/17; £3.516bn in 2017/18; and £3.394bn in 2018/19.

► The UK's road safety policies have come in for criticism from the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) which has given the UK a red (disappointing) mark for performance on the basics of road safety management, partly because the DfT failed to set new road safety targets after 2010. The UK also earns a red mark for implementation and monitoring of road safety policies. One contributory factor to the grade is the low number of speeding tickets issued to UK motorists.

► Figures for Scotland's first bike hire scheme show it has averaged less than 20 rentals a week since it was started two years ago. The £155,000 Dumfries Bike2Go project was launched by Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson in September 2010. Figures to the end of June this year show the bikes had been rented 1529 times by scheme members. That translates to a cost of more than £100 per hire since the project got under way in the town.

► More than 100 cyclists have bought bike lights to avoid a fine after being caught in the first fortnight of a trial scheme in Cambridge. The Lights Instead of Tickets pilot gives those caught riding without lights seven days to buy new lights, and so far 80% of the 150 caught have taken up the offer. Cyclists stopped without lights during the hours of darkness are issued with a £30 fine but given the option of participating in the scheme.

► Two of Edinburgh's five bus lane cameras have been turned off, following an outcry from motorists, including residents who were fined on a daily basis for crossing a greenway in order to turn safely into their street. The devices have been de-activated after some residents complained of being hit with £60 fines every day as they turned into their street. A flood of appeals is now expected. The two cameras – part of five used for enforcement – caught more than 1700 people in their first six days of operation.

► Egham has seen several cats killed after they darted out from behind parked cars. The solution? Six locals will work with police officers and get trained using speed guns. Even Runnymede police's casualty reduction officer will get in on the act.

in brief...

► Councillors in Hampshire have authorised ten pilot signed-only 20mph limit schemes in residential areas. One scheme will be implemented in each of the ten districts requesting a pilot, with the programme expected to cost £238,000. Hampshire had initially planned only three or four pilots but has increased the number in response to high demand.

► Aberdeen City Council has ruled out introducing 20mph speed limits across all residential roads. Traffic engineering manager Andy Smith said: "Experience from Portsmouth (which pioneered blanket 20mph limits on residential streets) would suggest that the introduction of a city-wide 20mph speed limit would have limited benefits that would be difficult to justify in road safety and financial terms." About 30% of Aberdeen's residential road network is already covered by mandatory 20mph limits with physical traffic calming measures, and a further 20% is covered by '20s plenty' advisory limits. Councillors have asked officers to study converting the advisory schemes to mandatory ones.

► The Scottish Government has launched a consultation on lowering the blood alcohol limit for driving from 80mg/100ml to 50mg/100ml using powers in the Scotland Act 2012. The Government estimates that in 2009 there were 30 fatalities and 920 casualties due to drivers exceeding the existing limit. The consultation closes on 29 November.

► The use of average speed cameras in London is to be stepped up as part of a multi-million pound upgrade to the capital's camera network. The plan envisages that average speed cameras will be installed on eight TfL routes, replacing 86 existing wet film fixed site speed cameras and 12 digital spot speed cameras. Camera suppliers are being invited to express interest in a 20-year contract for the supply, installation and maintenance of the cameras, the contract being worth up to £15m.

► Oxted and Limpsfield residents took Surrey CC to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) after the council failed to provide a business plan to justify proposed parking charges. The ICO reprimanded the council after it failed to respond to a FOI request, and gave it 35 days to comply. The council had to admit there was no business plan and dropped the proposals.

► Parking prices rose 12.5% in the last year according to confused.com; Brits are now paying almost £8bn a year on parking their cars. But the website claims this parking spending spree might be about to grind to a halt, as it's found that over-priced parking is now proving to be too great a turn-off for the majority of UK shoppers, with over two thirds (69%) of Brits reporting they intentionally avoid shopping areas with high parking prices.

RDRF wants more fines

The Road Danger Reduction Forum (RDRF) is calling for drivers to be fined for overtaking cyclists too closely or opening car doors carelessly. It says fixed penalty notices are needed "to deter motorists from behaviours such as passing cyclists or pedestrians too closely, opening car doors carelessly, and to help enforce respect for [cyclist] advanced stop lines". The comments come in the Forum's response to the DfT's consultation on introducing fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for a range of careless driving offences. The RDRF is disappointed that the DfT anticipates police issuing just 15,000 FPNs per year across the UK. It says 300 times as many fines – 4.5 million – should be issued to ensure FPNs have a deterrent effect.

Labour plans UK-wide TfL-style bodies

Transport for London-style authorities with powers over rail, buses and roads could be created across England if Labour wins the next General Election. The proposal is contained in a new policy statement on local transport launched recently by shadow transport secretary Maria Eagle. It suggests the widespread devolution of local rail powers; bus 'Deregulation Exemption Zones'; and the transfer of some trunk roads to local authority control. The statement draws heavily on the London model as well as on visits that shadow transport ministers have made to see how local transport is governed in the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden.

London's transport governance arrangements, whereby the mayor specifies bus services, many rail services, sets fares and delivers integrated ticketing, are "leaving the rest of England behind", says Labour. It says passenger numbers on public transport in London have risen 92%

Car-Free Day collapses

A collapse in the number of British towns supporting World Car-Free Day on 22 September can be blamed on slashed budgets for local government and dwindling interest in the environment, according to the Environmental Transport Association – the organisation that first coordinated the event in Britain. Over the last decade, an average of over 50 British towns each year have staged events to highlight alternatives to car travel, but this year the number has plummeted to fewer than ten. The ETA earlier this year wrote to over 400 local authorities around Britain to ask if they were planning to support World Car-Free Day 2012; only two councils replied.



(over an unspecified period) while falling 41% in Metropolitan areas. Labour is vague on the precise administrative geography at which transport would be governed, saying there "could be significant benefits from providing greater powers and responsibility over funding to city regions and for bringing together local transport authorities to make decisions over rail services and investment decisions at a regional level".

Wolmar for Mayor?

Transport writer Christian Wolmar has launched a campaign for the Labour candidacy for the contest to become London mayor in 2016. Wolmar said the manifestos of Boris Johnson and Ken Livingstone had included "a ragbag of vague ideas designed to appease various interest groups rather than an attempt to set out what a 21st Century city should look like".

He promises more pedestrianisation and more bus priority lanes and an "extended but better targeted" congestion charge zone. "Cars get vast amounts of space and priority. Parliament Square has become an ugly roundabout... traffic-choked Oxford Street is a car park for empty buses and bad-tempered taxi drivers; Hyde Park is a dual carriageway for motorists speeding between two roundabouts. Look at Paris. There the mayor has just agreed to pedestrianise a large section of the riverfront. The architect Richard Rogers put forward a similar scheme for London in 1986 but it has just gathered dust."

Portsmouth KSIs jump

Portsmouth City Council is investigating why the number of people seriously injured on the city's roads rose by 55% last year. But it sees no connection to the city-wide 20mph speed limits on residential streets.

The number of reported killed or serious injuries in the city jumped 55% from 91 in 2010 to 143 in 2011. Slight injuries were 664, up from the 651 in 2010 and 608 in 2009. A council spokesman pointed out that the 20mph limit was implemented in 2008 and this was the first rise in serious injuries in ten years.

While the number of casualties on 20mph streets increased in 2011, he said bigger rises were recorded on higher speed roads. "Although the vast majority of road space in the city is covered by 20mph limits, there were 30 serious accidents on such roads in 2011," he said. "On roads 30mph and above – representing only a small minority of road space – there were 111 serious accidents."

make a difference – get involved

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
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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.

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, Essex, Herefordshire, Kent, North West, Rutland, Scotland, Staffs, Surrey 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*
▶ *Repeal the Act*
▶ *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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