

On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

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abd.org.uk

MPs' VED backlash

The government is coming under mounting pressure from hauliers and its own MPs to change its mind on measures that threaten to raise the cost of driving even further. Many Labour MPs are furious that poorer motorists will suffer most from plans to increase road taxes on thirstier cars. Road hauliers are also angry that fuel duty could still rise by 2p this autumn. But environment minister Joan Ruddock has said that while she sympathised with motorists, the government "could not lose sight of the environment agenda".

The MPs say they're concerned about the potential impact of planned changes to road tax which will see drivers paying more for many cars registered since the end of 2001. So far 48 Labour MPs have signed a motion calling on the Treasury to think again about the retrospective aspects of the policy. They've warned the chancellor that the government is likely to lose votes over the issue.

One Labour MP warned that the party also risked alienating the middle-income voters that Labour needs to woo if it wants to defeat the Conservatives. Rob Marris, MP for Wolverhampton South West, said: "Millions of people will be affected. Medium-sized family cars, depending on what sort of engine they have and what sort of emissions they have, could be hit very hard."

Labour MP Ronnie Campbell, who framed the MPs' motion, said: "The increase is unfair to people who bought their cars a year ago, not knowing that the government was going to put that road tax on." He says the government is in danger of making the same sort of mistake as when it abolished the 10p income tax rate, and was accused of penalising poorer families.

However, Chancellor Alistair Darling has assured backbenchers that he will 'fix' the car tax problem before the autumn. Under the



New VED plans mean even some family cars will be hammered

scheme, cars will be divided into 13 groups depending on CO2 emissions. Annual road tax will then be charged at £440 for the top band – those vehicles emitting more than 225g/CO2 per km – in 2009 and £455 the following year. Official estimates say vehicle excise duty will rise for 43% of vehicles made since 2001 – but will fall for 18%.

At the moment, cars bought before 2006 are exempt from the top rate and pay a maximum £210. Darling's proposals sweep away this exemption, meaning some popular family models would attract far more tax, even though they may have been bought up to nine years earlier. Models facing big rises include variations of the Vauxhall Zafira and Vectra, Renault Espace and VW Passat.

Options open to the Treasury include redrawing the bands so that fewer family models are clobbered, or adjusting the retrospective element.

Also from April 2010, people buying the thirstiest cars will pay a one-off 'showroom tax' of up to £950. However, The Environmental Audit Committee's official report backs the move as a "step in the right direction". But chairman Tim Yeo said the benefit to the environment would be limited, and called for more ambitious changes.

New motoring group launches

A new pro-motoring organisation has been launched by Peter Roberts, who initiated the infamous Downing Street petition against nationwide road pricing that attracted 1.8m signatories. Roberts has given up his job in the car industry to become chief executive of the Drivers' Alliance which has received startup funding from a number of West Midlands businessmen. The Alliance will campaign against policies such as high fuel tax, the backdated vehicle excise duty plan, Manchester's road pricing plans and Nottingham's workplace parking levy.

The Alliance's mission statement says freedom to travel is a fundamental human right, but

it doesn't want to be regarded as a group of petrolheads having a dig at Government. Roberts remains a member of the ABD but is keen to

see Drivers' Alliance members on transport working groups set up by local authorities and the OFT. Brian Gregory set up the ABD 16 years ago; he's proud of what the group has achieved and is aware of how much work the Drivers' Alliance has ahead. He commented: "Peter's enthusiasm is just what a new campaign group needs, and I wish him great success with the project.

I've no doubt the ABD and Drivers' Alliance will work closely in the future".

•<http://driversalliance.org.uk>



To join the ABD
call us now on
07000 781 544



The ABD campaigns for:

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

All too often in these pages the ABD finds reasons to criticise Brake, which is renowned for objecting to any proposed measures which will benefit drivers. So it's good to be able to report something positive about the Brake Academy, which has recently been promoting its resources available to volunteers who want to teach kids how to use the roads safely – whether they're walking or cycling. Also included is information on how to drive more safely; I wonder what aspects of driving that includes...

•www.brake.org.uk

Another fresh breath of air as the new mayor abolishes old Mayor Ken's Road-User Hierarchy. At his GLA Confirmation Hearing, Mayor Boris's new TfL Director of Transport made clear that such mean-minded prejudice is over and from now on all modes will be respected and treated fairly, including the motorist. The Road User Hierarchy meant that higher placed users counted for more than lower ones, with private car driver at the bottom of the pile, so three cheers for Boris!

The average price of unleaded in the UK is currently 502.12p a gallon. Although that's sky-high compared with the average American cost of \$3.62 (184.6p), it seems politicians from across the Atlantic are far more inclined to make a stand. The governor of Florida, for instance, has proposed that the state doesn't take any tax for a two-week period, an idea mirrored in Missouri, New York and Texas, where a tax 'holiday' has been proposed. "It's about trying to understand and serve the people, and care about what they're dealing with at the kitchen table," said Charlie Crist, governor of Florida. Fuel in the USA is taxed at 18.4 cents (9.5p) a gallon by central government, as well as a levy set individually

by each state that can be as much as 45.5 cents (23.6p). However, that means a maximum of 33.1p of tax per gallon, which compares with the UK tax rates of 228.59p per gallon (50.35p a litre) of unleaded petrol – meaning UK petrol buyers are paying 690% more tax than their American counterparts.

Sir Howard Bernstein is Manchester City Council's chief executive, and much in favour of congestion charging in the city. At a recent seminar he is on record as saying that "taxation is the best way to change behaviour... the key to changing behaviour is related to providing choice... and the introduction of a pricing mechanism provides this choice". He's also quoted as claiming that Manchester's residents are in favour of the scheme, but what's really galling is his assertion that "there's no difference between taxation to influence the purchase of alcoholic drinks with taxation to influence the way we choose to travel". Seems his ivory tower is so high, he's inhabiting a different planet from the rest of us.

**M o s t
stupid road user
seen in the past month:**
The woman who swung from lane one to lane three in front of me on the M40, braked sharply, then went back to lane one – just to get a closer look at what was happening on the opposite carriageway. Which was merely a broken down car with RAC truck...

A scheme is being piloted at Swarland in Northumbria, which encourages people from the village to make notes of speeding cars. They're being asked to write down car and driver descriptions, which can then be reported anonymously to police who will issue a letter to the alleged offender and store their details on a database. A person reported twice will get a visit from the police and after a third time, will be targeted by police, who will look out for the vehicle while on patrol. Incredibly, there's no speed measuring equipment involved, so people are being asked to shop 'speeding' drivers, even though they might be within the speed limit. Since when did law enforcement become a guessing game?

Robin Simmons – obituary

"I never let the grass grow under my feet Brian" was a common saying of the late Robin Simmons. How true! For a man who was over 60 when he joined the ABD in 2001, hanging about was not an option. He took on the county coordinator's job for Surrey, a role he continued up to his death in July this year; whether it was the camera partnership, police or councillors he always wrote in with his suggestions and ideas and chased them up if they didn't reply.

In the same year that he joined the ABD, Robin revived the idea of an ABD presence at motoring shows. These stands, which gave the ABD a shop window, brought us into contact with potential members, giving us the opportunity to put across the ABD's message.

The first stand at Brands Hatch that year was an open-sided gazebo with a handful of leaflets. The weather was wet and windy but

we had fun. Robin secured funds for a proper stand, which made a big difference. Working with Terry Hudson and myself we've spent the last seven years touring the south and midlands with our stand. Robin was a terrific organiser and we'll miss his input, while his wife Sue was a great supporter of his activities; their hospitality was always first class.

Ill health dogged Robin's life but that never stopped him from being active; a keen motorcyclist and Austin enthusiast, he also liaised with car clubs enhancing relations between the ABD and its affiliated clubs, and was a regular attendee at Gaydon meetings, always ready to offer help and ideas.

Robin's death leaves a big gap; the ABD now needs someone to liaise with car clubs. If you think you can help, please contact me, but in the meantime our sympathies and best wishes go to Sue and the Simmons family.

Brian MacDowall

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The next issue of *On The Road* goes to press on Monday 15 December. Contributions deadline is Monday 1 December.

An interesting scenario cropped up earlier in the year when ABD member Keith Jones spotted something on the BBC website, which mysteriously disappeared very soon after. It was a video clip showing two cars crashing after braking heavily – because they'd spotted a scamer van. The clip was used to illustrate how dangerous speeding drivers are, but it was quickly realised that the accident wouldn't have happened if the scamer van hadn't been there. When Keith probed the BBC about it, all they could do was claim that "technical difficulties" meant it could no longer be shown. Good old Auntie Beeb; impartial as ever.

Shared responsibility is something the ABD has long advocated, but it's an alien concept to many road users. On BBCi recently, Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary posted some CCTV footage showing just how stupid people can be, with a film that showed a 14-year old schoolboy jumping over some railings, straight into the path of a bus. He was struck by the bus, breaking his nose and shoulder in the process. Without the railings he would have been dead, but installing railings is no substitute for using one's brain before crossing a busy thoroughfare...

•http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/south_of_scotland/7597866.stm

Oxfordshire County Council is planning to introduce 20mph limits across much of the city next year, on all unclassified residential roads, virtually all unnumbered distributor roads and some sections of A and B roads. Steve Howell, Oxfordshire's head of transport, environment and economy, claims that on most of these roads the current number of accidents each year is nil or very low, "so it is anticipated that the main benefits will result from general perceptions of improved safety". Oxfordshire hopes agreement can be reached with the police and Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership for some targeted enforcement while Councillor Ian Hudspeth, Oxfordshire County Council's cabinet member for transport, claims: "While this is very exciting and radical it is still a proposal. We will be consulting." Er, right. So how wide will the consultation be, and how many licences will be lost (with livelihoods) so people can feel safer – without actually being any safer of course.

Chris Medd

Tougher driver penalties on the way

Drivers are being warned against distractions such as receiving text messages, eating, and fiddling with satellite navigation systems, now that a new offence of causing death by careless driving has come into force. It means motorists who kill while avoidably distracted could for the first time face prison; historically, careless driving has only been punishable with a fine, whatever the consequences. The new offence means UK motorists, who kill after allowing themselves to lose concentration, can be imprisoned for up to five years.

Avoidable distractions include reading a text message, glancing at a map, eating, drinking, tuning a radio or putting on make up. Alongside careless drivers, the new laws will also penalise uninsured, disqualified and unlicensed motorists who kill.

Meanwhile, drivers who fail to pay three parking tickets face having their cars towed away, under new rules. The legislation, which comes into force in two months time, will see council-employed traffic wardens monitoring the streets for the worst offenders. They will be able to act when they spot a car which has at least three unpaid parking fines, even if it is legally parked at the time. The car will either be clamped or towed away and will only be released when all outstanding parking fines have been paid.

Motorists who have failed to pay fines for other offences, such as driving in a bus lane, will also face similar action. The new powers have been given to local authorities in London first but are expected to be sought by councils elsewhere in the country.

Parkers uncovers DVLA shambles

The used car experts at Parker's have discovered that the DVLA is giving misleading and inaccurate information to as many as three-quarters of motorists. Parker's made 100 enquiries by telephone and email to the DVLA's Swansea-based call centre, posing as members of the public. Parker's picked 100 of the cars that are worst affected by upcoming VED rules changes – those registered between March 2001 and March 2006 that produce more than 225g/km CO₂ – to test whether the DVLA knew that the cars would temporarily move into Band K next year (£300 in road tax) before being liable for a £430 or £455 charge in 2010.

76 of the 100 cars were given wrong road tax figures for at least one of the three years enquired about; only one in ten was answered with correct information. Parker's received a string of ill-informed and inaccurate replies that points to poor briefing of staff at the front-line of dealing with road tax enquiries.

The biggest area of concern, and confusion among DVLA call centre staff, surrounds what

is happening in 2009. Cars that emit more than 186g/km CO₂, but registered between March 2001 and March 2006, will move from Band F to Band K – a rise of £90. Most of the call centre staff were unaware of this and instead mistakenly placed the cars into bands L or M – the bands they will be in from 2010. Staff claimed the cost of road tax will be £415 or £440 – depending on emissions – rather than the £300 it actually is.

Parker's was told by one adviser that: "This year the road tax might not even go up. But it may go up. But I don't know how much it'll go up by." Another said that a year's road tax in 2009 would be £445 – a rate that doesn't even exist. During one call, Parker's was informed that a Jeep Cherokee 2.8-litre CRD would cost £750 every year to tax from 2010 onwards – even though this figure only applies to the first year the car is on sale. After the 100 enquiries, the DVLA had made mistakes that averaged £104.44 per enquiry. When presented with the findings, the DVLA initially maintained that the information provided by their call centre staff was correct.

50mg drink drive limit to come?

Just one small glass of wine or a single pint of beer could soon put motorists in the dock for drink-driving. The crackdown, which has won support from ministers, could see up to 200,000 drivers a year losing their licences - double the present number. Ministers are said to be "minded" to cut the limit from 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood to 50mg – the legal maximum found in most of the rest of Europe – and such a move could come in within 18 months.

Lowering the limit would be accompanied by increased enforcement with police likely to be given wider powers to introduce random breath-testing. This could lead to 24-hour road blocks and cordons around pubs where drink-driving is a particular problem.

Ministers are considering three options for penalising drivers who are caught between the

proposed 50mg limit and the existing 80mg. These are:

- Keep the existing penalty of a ban and a maximum six months imprisonment and £5000 fine.

- Introduce automatic participation in a drink-driver rehabilitation programme.

- Impose six penalty points for a five-year period on first time offenders, followed by automatic disqualification for a second offence.

Ministers believe growing concern about binge-drinking means the climate is now right to lower the limit. They've been stung by criticism that they're failing to get to grips with the drink-drive problem because there are too few traffic police to enforce the law – and an overreliance on technology such as speed cameras which cannot catch such offenders. The question is – who will enforce the new laws?

in brief...

- Parking fines generated more than £650m for London councils over the past three years, but the amount raised in 2007 was down £7m to £216m. While 21 councils saw parking fine revenues go up in 2007, nine, including Camden and Lambeth, two of the top three, saw a drop. Westminster had the highest figure of £41m while Greenwich recorded the lowest at £1.7m.

- London mayor Boris Johnson has paid about £400,000 to Porsche after scrapping plans for a £25 congestion charge. The company started a legal challenge to the proposal, put forward by Ken Livingstone, earlier this year. With the plans scrapped, a court ruled that the GLA should pay Porsche's legal costs, which it will donate to Skidz, a charity that offers youngsters training in mechanical skills and maintenance.

- Traffic police across Norfolk are to be set strict targets on the number of tickets they issue after bosses decided they are not punishing enough motorists. One of the first departments to be set new performance targets is road policing. Senior officers have decided that not enough is being done to combat speeding, talking on mobile phones while driving and failing to buckle up.

- Frank Blackmore has died, aged 92. He's the man responsible for the introduction of the mini-roundabout in 1969; the first was installed in Peterborough.

- Only one driver has been caught speeding on the main A2 road in north Down since new speed cameras were switched on in May. The 32 sets of SPECS cameras monitor traffic flowing in both directions of the A2, between Bangor and Holywood.

- Charges for pay-and-display parking in Guildford have been suspended after a mistake in council paperwork. The error has affected 495 on-street spaces; about 10% of parking in the town. People who have paid to park, or who have been fined, in the past four years can ask for their money back. Drivers wanting a refund should write to Guildford Borough Council.

- Three-quarters of AA members polled don't believe that any of the three main political parties are motorist friendly. Also, of 18,500 members questioned, 49% blame the Government for high fuel prices.

- Motorists could face £20 spot fines if they leave their engines running while stuck in traffic. Traffic wardens will be able to issue the penalties - after a warning - in a bid to cut down on pollution. A pilot scheme is due to be launched in January in Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex, and will be expanded if it proves successful. West Sussex Council said it would target areas where exhaust emissions build up unnecessarily, such as rail crossings and town centres.

- A new report from the Noise Association says that traffic noise in rural areas is much worse than is currently recognised and guess what; "The quickest way to achieve a large reduction in road noise in the countryside is to cut speed limits". The report also calls for more restrictions on heavy good vehicles in rural areas.

in brief...

•Truck drivers have been issued with more than £5.2m in fines for contravening London's Low Emission Zone. But because many of the fines were scrapped on appeal and others were discounted for prompt payment, TfL is set to generate only about £1m from the scheme, which was launched in February. More than 5200 fines of £1000 were handed to drivers caught entering the zone without paying the £200 fee levied on "dirty" vehicles. But TfL scrapped more than £3m in fines because some operators were unable to fit special emission filters in time. Others saw their penalty cut to £500 for swift payment.

•The Association of British Insurers (ABI) says 24,000 claims worth £260m were found to be dishonest last year. They included one driver who pushed his vehicle off a cliff and then said it had been stolen. Fraudulent claims led to honest motorists having to pay an extra £40 a year on average on their premiums, the ABI said. It added that the number of dishonest motor claims had risen by 70% over the past three years.

•A unique 'pray and display' parking permit for drivers carrying out religious duties is being launched. Barnet council says it will provide religious leaders with permits allowing them to park in a resident's bay free of charge when on business. It says the scheme - believed to be the first of its type in Britain - will help "vulnerable residents in time of spiritual need".

•Russia has overtaken Saudi Arabia to become the world's biggest oil producer. In the first quarter of 2008, Russia extracted 9.5m barrels of oil each day; Saudi Arabia managed 9.2m. The USA is third at 5.1m followed by Iran (4m) and China (3.8m).

•Telford has been nominated as the most car-friendly town in the UK, in a survey by Virgin Money car insurance. It won because of its fuel prices, parking charges, car crime levels and availability of parking spaces. Dundee came second and Newcastle-upon-Tyne was third.

•Wokingham Borough Council has become the first local authority in England to use variable speed limits outside schools after securing agreement for trials from the DfT. The trial will see a 20mph limit at the beginning and end of the school day, outside four of the borough's rural primary schools. At other times the normal limit will apply. Variable limits are already applied in Scotland but this is a first for England.

•A Wiltshire couple who bought a pub that's off the beaten track, have been told they must remove a sign that points drivers towards them. Even though the sign has been there for 20 years, the Highways Agency has decreed that leaving the sign there will encourage motorists to drink and drive - even though the pub serves soft drinks and food.

•Bournemouth officials recently decided to stop drivers so they could volunteer to take part in a survey - only to discover that six-mile tailbacks resulted. Some drivers were stuck in the queue for over two hours, but despite the problems caused, there are plans for further sessions...

Bristol's cam failure

Speed cameras haven't reduced the number of accidents on roads in Bristol despite the number of motorists slapped with speeding fines increasing 11-fold in a decade. The number of accidents recorded at fixed camera sites last year, at 150, was higher than the 148 logged in 1998. Meanwhile, the money collected in Avon and Somerset has soared from £290,000 in 1997 to £3.15m in 2006.

Using accident figures posted on the Safecam website for Avon and Somerset, it's clear that in many locations there's no clear downward trend in accidents - and in some areas the average number of accidents has risen in the years since a fixed camera was installed.

•On the A4 at Saltford Hill there were an average of two accidents a year in the three years before 2001, when a gatso was installed. Since then, the average has been three a year.

•A camera was installed on the A4 at Brislington Hill in 1994. But in 1998 there were 17 accidents, in 2000 there were 29 and last year there were 23.

•On the A4018 Westbury Road there were four accidents in 1998 and 10 last year, with no clear trend in the intervening years.

Derbys scam error

A driver has had his speeding fine overturned because of a road sign blunder - but fears many other drivers won't be so lucky. Nathan Alton was caught by a speed camera travelling at 40mph in a 30mph zone in Nottingham Road, Codnor. But the limit had just been reduced to 30mph from 50mph - and signs with both speeds were still being displayed side by side. He appealed and has had a £60 fine and three points on his licence withdrawn.

Alton said: "I remember being flashed by the camera and thinking that would mean points on my licence. As I drove away I thought to myself that I was sure I had seen 50mph signs as I approached the camera so I turned round and drove the route again. There were 50mph signs next to 30mph zones so it is no wonder I was confused."

Alton contested his fixed penalty and in a letter to Derbyshire Safety Camera Partnership, he asked how many other drivers had been caught at about the same time. He cited the Freedom of Information Act, but the reply stated it was impossible to give that information, but any penalty against him had been dropped.

London offences up - again

London boroughs and TfL issued 6,176,752 penalty charge notices to motorists in 2007/08 for offences such as illegal parking, driving in bus lanes, ignoring No Entry signs or contravening the London Lorry Control Scheme. The figure represents a 2% rise on 2006/07. The number of parking offences has risen just over 1%. Bus



lane offences have fallen by 541,282 in three years.

This is the first year that a two-tier system of parking PCNs has been in operation, with a higher penalty for more serious contraventions. London Councils says 76% of parking penalties issued have been for the more serious contraventions.

DVLA licence blunder

Thousands of motorists are unwittingly driving without a valid licence, and risk £1000 fines after failing to spot that their photocard licence automatically expires after 10 years. It's all because officials haven't properly publicised the fact that new-style licences - unlike the old paper ones - expire. The first batch of photocard licences was issued in July 1998. But DVLA figures reveal that 16,136 expired this summer, yet fewer than 12,000 have renewed. With another 300,000 photocard licences due to expire over the coming year, the number of invalid licences will soar.

A total of 25m newstyle licences have been issued but drivers were never sufficiently warned they would expire after 10 years. Motorists who fail to renew their licences in time are allowed to continue driving. But the DVLA says they could be charged with "failing to surrender their licence", an offence carrying a £1,000 fine. Usefully for the DVLA, a new licence is £17.50 - so the Treasury will take an estimated £437m by the time all 25m licences have been renewed.

EU screws drivers

Millions of motorists face bigger bills to have their cars fixed because of EU plans to scrap a rule which enables thousands of garages to carry out services and repairs cheaply. The changes mean car manufacturers will no longer have to provide parts and computer codes to independent garages so they can carry out repairs on the vehicles. Instead motorists will have to have their cars fixed at the manufacturer's dealership workshops, where charges are up to 40% more. The average hourly charge at an independent garage is £55.63 compared to £94.70 at a dealership garage, according to recent figures.

The changes, which take effect from 2010, will hit as many as 20m motorists. The EU is now expected to scrap Block Exemption also, from 2010, arguing that it's unnecessary. This would protect 6000 garages linked to main dealers, but undermine that of around 20,000 independent operators. As a result, drivers may have to pay more for repairs, drive further to a garage, and have their repairs delayed, because fewer garages will be attending to more cars.

Dodgy Lancs dealings

A Lancashire Police scamer worker has been sacked for an error which led to 545 unsafe convictions and £35,000 in fines being refunded. Between September 2006 and May 2007 he failed to ensure the cameras' distance measurement and alignment were correct. But he signed court papers saying they were correct, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) discovered. On top of the refunded fines, about 1500 penalty points were rescinded.

When the civilian employee, who worked in the Central Processing Unit, had 435 tapes of his work checked, 41 had faults through failing to calibrate the cameras correctly. He was the highest performing camera technician in the force in terms of offences captured. A file was prepared for the CPS which determined there was insufficient evidence to bring criminal charges. Two colleagues from the CPU also faced disciplinary hearings over inconsistencies with the processing of court paper work.

Warks fails to see sense on speed

Warwickshire councillors are set to approve reduced speed limits on A and B-roads across the county despite opposition from the police to many of the reductions. Proposals to reduce limits on 125 sections of A and B-road have been drawn up following a review to satisfy the requirements of the DfT's Circular 1/2006, *New guidance on setting local speed limits*. Authorities have until 2011 to complete their reviews but Warwickshire plans to complete its by next March.

The majority of the reductions are from 60 to 50mph, but some go from 50 to 40, or 40 to 30mph. Forty of the limit reductions have attracted formal objections, the majority from Warwickshire Police. However, so far, the objections have all been overruled by the area joint committees (with district councils) that take the final decisions on the limits.

Members of the Stratford-on-Avon East joint committee heard that Warwickshire police had formally objected to a number of proposals to reduce the limit from 60 to 50mph. "The mean speed is not currently at or below the proposed

Fairer Welsh parking?

Motorists in Wales have been told that parking will become "fairer and clearer" under a new system. The Welsh Assembly Government said it made clear that local councils should not use parking tickets to raise money. Transport Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones said it would make parking arrangements more transparent and easier to challenge.

The regulations have already been on trial in London and have now come into force in Wales, and the rest of England outside the capital. Councils will now be able to issue lower penalties for less serious offences; they must also ensure that tickets carry full details on how to appeal against the charge. The changes will also make penalty tickets easier to challenge, and clamping will only be used as a last resort. CCTV cameras will be used in some areas instead of traffic wardens, who are now to be known as civil enforcement officers.



limit," said the police, adding: "This road is the very essence of what a road user would consider to be a road subject to the national speed limit. It is unlikely that the new limit will be as effective in maintaining compliance as the present limit has been".

However, even in many of the instances where the police haven't raised formal objections, the force has said it does not support the council's lower limits. One councillor has claimed that councils must take account of a broader range of issues than the police and pointed out that the circular specifically mentions the need to consider community concerns about speed.

Swindon sees the light on scameras

Swindon Borough Council is reviewing its involvement in the local camera partnership scheme, because it says cameras might not be the best way to make roads safer. The Tory-run council currently spends about £400,000 to fund speed cameras in the town, but its leader, Roderick Bluh, said there could be better ways to cut the number of accidents on roads. It's thought to be the first time a council has challenged the government on the issue of speed camera funding.

Fellow Conservative councillor, and head of

transport in Swindon, Peter Greenhalgh, said the money spent on cameras could be spent on local safety measures instead. "These are far more effective than speed cameras which, I feel, are a blatant tax on the motorist," he said. "They are being used as a cash cow. I take exception to the positioning of some mobile speed cameras. They're designed to raise revenue. I think enough is enough. There are much more important things we as a council should do instead of acting as a law enforcement arm of this government."

Norfolk cooling

Norwich is a fine city, but it's also a major source of green misinformation and anti-car propaganda. It's home to the University of East Anglia's Climate Research Unit, one of Britain's foremost proponents of man-made global warming alarmism. It's also home to one of the leading members of the Slower Speeds Initiative, and one-third of Norwich City Council's elected members are from the Green Party; the council recently voted to impose 20mph speed limits on all residential roads in the city, against the recommendations of its own officers and the police.

Norwich is also home to the *Eastern Daily Press*, the foremost regional newspaper in East Anglia. The EDP's editorial policy is strongly influenced by the city's green institutions in its biased reporting of climate change and road safety issues. ABD member Alan Dale, a former EDP employee, and Malcolm Heymer, who now lives a few miles from Norwich, have been fighting a losing battle to get the EDP to give more balanced coverage. Letters to the editor are either not printed at all, or are heavily edited to remove any factual information that might help readers understand the alternative viewpoint.

The situation is not all gloomy, though. One of the EDP's sister publications, the *Dereham & Fakenham Times*, has published a series of letters from Malcolm in response to those from green correspondents, and has done so without undue editing. A good debate has been kept going, with readers able to see both sides of the story.

Until earlier this year, the EDP had one saving grace in the form of columnist Tim Lenton, who is very sceptical of man-made climate change and *speed kills*. His hard-hitting and witty contributions were obviously becoming unacceptable to the editor, and they are no longer published. Tim has his own website, though, at <http://web.mac.com/timlenton>, where many of his EDP articles can be read as well as his recent ones. His site is well worth visiting, and independent journalists like Tim should be encouraged. Spread the word!

Parking too cheap?

Driver should pay more to park in town centres to force them to walk more and reduce traffic congestion, according to Local Government minister John Healey. He claims that local councils should charge more for basic services such as off-street parking, saying: "Only one in five councils are using charging to the full potential. Not just to cover costs but to shape their area." Healey said that charging more would result in "reducing congestion, improving levels of health and exercise, encouraging the use of local shops".

mixed messages

Never have messages been more mixed than when the Government is talking about road pricing. The question is, will it happen and if so, in what form?

In *OTR88* there was an article on road charging, and how it appeared to be on the backburner. Just three months on, it already seems the piece was somewhat optimistic, as Labour still appears to be intent on pricing drivers off the road; the Government is pushing ahead with plans for a national road-pricing scheme, including testing 'spy in the sky' technology. Eight areas of the country have been selected by ministers for secret pay-per-mile trials which will begin in 2010 and are expected to pave the way for tolls on motorways. Motorists face paying up to £1.30 a mile during peak periods on the busiest roads.

Gordon Brown was thought to be against national road pricing, a flagship policy of the Blair administration. But the detailed level of planning now underway indicates the issue is set to become a key battleground in the next general election – which is likely to coincide with the trials beginning.

Eight areas – Leeds, North Yorkshire, Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire, south west London, Suffolk and Essex – have been selected for the trials. Initially, in January 2010, 100 cars in each area will trial the new technology – in many cases entailing placing black boxes to allow their movements to be tracked – but members of the public will be invited to join the pilots in June 2010.

The Government is close to signing contracts with four companies who will run the national trials, testing not only the technology which will be fitted to the cars, but also the bureaucracy needed to run a system including sending out bills. In most cases, the trials will involve



The M6 toll road is proving ever less popular with drivers

a satellite tracking a vehicle's movements. Motorists will then receive a monthly or weekly bill which will vary depending on when and where they drove. Three more companies will be paid to double check the system, ensuring that the charging machinery is legal and that the trials are properly monitored.

It is understood that there's greater enthusiasm in the Treasury than the DfT for road pricing. However it's not known if the scheme would entirely replace existing motoring taxes or be introduced on top of them – it's highly unlikely to be the latter. Ministers have previously pledged cuts in other duties if the scheme is introduced, but even if the scheme is revenue-neutral (which is highly unlikely), drivers will

still end up paying massive sums to fund the infrastructure.

The DfT insists that the pilots are designed "to inform thinking about motorway capacity". But the effectiveness of charging schemes in cutting congestion has been undermined by the London congestion charge. The £8 daily charge has done little to cut congestion in the capital and other cities are now more sceptical about following London's scheme.

Earlier this year Ruth Kelly insisted that charging schemes would be limited to areas where congestion was greatest. A spokeswoman for the DfT said the trials had been announced last year and did not mean road pricing was going ahead. She said: "We have been absolutely clear

ABD London swings into action

Boris Johnson has announced that there will be fresh consultation on the Western Extension of the London Congestion Charge, commencing in September. A promise in his Mayoral election manifesto, Johnson said: "The previous Mayor made the decision to introduce the western extension in the face of overwhelming opposition. Unlike my predecessor, I am going into this with an open mind and this will be a genuine consultation. It is high time that politicians listened to the people whom they represent and I am proud to keep the pledge made during my election campaign to hold a further consultation.

"Londoners can be assured that, whether they stand for or against, this time their opinions will be respected and we will abide by the results. The western extension is a massive issue for those who live and work in the west of London, and the consultation is likely to elicit strong views. This is not a referendum, so it won't be limited to a 'do you or don't you want to keep it?

"Yes, there will be the option to scrap it, but there will also be other options including keeping it and changing certain aspects of it, like whether it should operate all day. But this will be an opportunity for

everyone with experience of the extension to tell me whether they want to see it removed, improved or if they are simply unmoved."

It is a pity that a simple referendum has not been selected to get the unbiased views of the populace. Let us hope that this is not another consultation as were many previous ones issued by TfL, with leading questions, and containing spurious statements. But it certainly gives us the opportunity to take the first steps in removing the congestion charge from the whole of London – that hated tax, with ludicrous economics and no environmental benefit.

Crucially, the latest Annual Monitoring Report from TfL shows that this unnecessary and unreasonable tax has not resulted in any benefit in terms of congestion on the roads of London. Indeed although it claims traffic levels are down, TfL had to admit that "congestion rises back to pre-charging levels".

TfL suggests that much of this can be accounted for by roadworks, and in particular in the Western Extension by a major redevelopment at the Scotch House Corner junction, but this is nonsense. Roadworks are a continuing fact of life

to road users in London and have been for many years – indeed there were complaints in the year before the Congestion Charge was introduced that the large number of road works at that time would distort analysis of any improvements in traffic flows in the following years.

In reality the Congestion Charge (which should be called a Congestion Tax because that is what it is) was never likely to have a major impact on traffic volumes, and all that has happened is that a few fast moving private vehicles have been replaced by slow moving buses and taxis, which obstruct other traffic. That is the main reason why Congestion Charging has not worked.

The ABD will be launching a major campaign to advocate the total scrapping of the Western Extension during the consultation period recently announced by the Mayor. The Western Extension was not wanted by residents of the area and has had numerous detrimental impacts on business and community activities. We welcome the Mayor's commitment to consult the public again on this matter.

Roger Lawson, ABD London
•www.freedomfordrivers.org

Common sense starts to break out in London

Boris Johnson has told TfL to accelerate the delivery of initiatives to ease traffic jams as new data shows that, five years after the congestion charging scheme was launched, congestion in central London has returned to pre-charging levels. Johnson has asked TfL to bring forward plans to allow motorbikes to use bus lanes, deliver a plan to rephase traffic signals and review all major schemes that could reduce the capacity of the road network.

One of the first fruits of Johnson's approach to tackling congestion came when he announced that he is to scrap £18m plans championed by Ken Livingstone, to part-pedestrianise Parliament Square. Johnson said TfL had



Parliament Square

advised him the pedestrianisation scheme would have a significant negative impact on traffic flow, not only in Westminster but also in the wider local area around central London.

that any proposal for national road pricing would need to address the legitimate concerns people have. We're a very long way from that which is why our priority now and over the next decade is on tackling congestion where it is experienced most – in our cities and on our motorways."

As a result, toll lanes may be introduced on motorways around London. Motorists could be charged up to £5 a time to use a special lane on the M3 and M4 leading to the M25. Ruth Kelly has said she will press ahead with turning the hard shoulder into an extra lane on sections of Britain's motorway network. She has confirmed that the M3 and M4 approaching the M25, the M23 junctions 8-10 around Gatwick, as well as the stretches of the M25 between junctions 5-7 and 23-27 had been chosen as "candidates" and detailed work will be carried out on how best to use this extra lane, check it is feasible and consult the public.

Options include using the extra lane for car-sharing vehicles, a blanket toll, a toll for people not carrying passengers in their vehicle – a combination of these – or a crawler lane for lorries and caravans. The scheme is also set to be introduced on the M4 and M5 around Bristol and the M3 and M27 around Southampton.

The M25 will also be widened between junctions 16 and 23, plus 27 to 30, under the motorway expansion blueprint for the six years until 2014, which will also make more use of advanced motorway signalling.

Meanwhile, Greater Manchester's congestion scheme will shortly be put to a referendum of voters in the 10 participating council areas. Unless it's backed by a majority of those polled in at least seven local authorities, the scheme will be dropped.

Setting up Manchester's congestion charge will cost a staggering £318m to be spent on buying and installing computer systems, cameras and infrastructure. The operating costs will be a further £31m each year. With the scheme claimed to be capable of pulling in £174m annually, it will take two years just to pay off the set-up fee.

However, Manchester Against Road Tolls

(MART) has questioned how a handful of drivers are going to raise annual congestion charging revenues of £174m. The lobby group, run by ABD member Sean Corker, also believes the estimated £30m a year running costs are too low when compared with London's congestion charging scheme.

A MART spokesman commented: "The authorities have said that 1% of drivers will pay the full fee and only 20% of peak-time drivers will pay any charge at all. Yet it's now revealed that they expect to make £174m a year from road tolls. Is all this money to come from a handful of drivers? To expect Manchester drivers and businesses to pay £174m more every year is a tax too far. The Transport for London accounts show that for the year to March 2007, its congestion charge cost £163.3m to collect income of £252.4m. The London scheme covers a very small area in the centre of London while



phase one of the Manchester scheme goes out to the M60. The London scheme also affects fewer vehicles and has a simpler flat fee of £8 rather than Manchester's proposed twin cordon system for phase one. It's highly unlikely that a Manchester scheme could be run for less than 20% of the cost of the London scheme."

Meanwhile, an independent advisory panel set up to ensure that Greater Manchester's transport investment package and congestion charging proposals satisfied AGMA's four 'key tests'

According to TfL's Sixth Annual Impacts Monitoring report of the congestion charge, charging has been successful in reducing traffic volumes, with 70,000 fewer cars entering the original zone each day and 30,000 fewer cars entering the western extension. But TfL adds: "The report also reveals that decreasing levels of road space in both the original and western zones has caused congestion to return to levels experienced before the charge was introduced. A widespread programme of water and gas main replacement works has greatly reduced the road capacity in both zones, as have various traffic management measures to assist pedestrians and other road users."

has been disbanded after its independence was called into question by critics of the authorities' plans, who said many of the panel members were vocal supporters of road pricing generally and/or Manchester's specific proposals.

The panel, chaired by Professor John Arnold, director of Manchester Business School, also included Stephen Glaister, the new director of the RAC Foundation, who endorsed Manchester's proposals earlier this month and David Begg, the former chair of the Government's Commission for Integrated Transport and a keen champion of road pricing. Meanwhile, three panelists were apparently developers who are also members of the new business lobby group United City, set up to support the investment package. That discovery prompted GMMG to suggest that, in the interests of fairness, three of their members should also be represented on the panel.

By the time *OTR90* goes to press, the Manchester referendum results should be out. Postal ballots will be sent out to residents across Greater Manchester at the beginning of December with a closing date of 11 December. Opinion polling carried out for the local authorities by IpsosMORI shows that the public and business communities are split on the merits of the proposals. Significantly, barely 40% of respondents currently use public transport in the Greater Manchester area at least once a week.

Meanwhile, Cambridgeshire County Council has abandoned plans for congestion charging in Cambridge; it's setting up a commission of stakeholders to look afresh at the best way forward for the city's transport system. Cambridgeshire submitted an outline proposal last year for a city-wide congestion charge, but the Conservative council's new leader, Jill Tuck, has said: "It is clear that the TIF scheme we put forward for consultation last autumn does not have sufficient support either from key organisations or the public. It will be for the new commission to determine what is best for Cambridge."

• www.manchestertolltax.com

• www.abd.org.uk/road_user_charging.htm

ABD AGM 2008: the best so far

The ABD enjoyed probably its best ever AGM on 6 September at Gaydon's Heritage Motor Centre, with a superb line-up of speakers. The Chairman, Brian Gregory, welcomed members and outlined the key challenges facing our organisation. Membership, reflecting economic conditions and fewer high profile issues recently, has dipped so recruitment and fund raising are important internally. Looking outwards, the fight against road charging in all its forms and the roll out of SPECS cameras to general use, not just in road works, must be fought against with full vigour.

The formal business was quickly approved, with eagle-eyed members pointing out a couple of typos in the new Articles of Association. These are now available on the ABD website at www.abd.org.uk if you'd like a closer look.

The speaker line-up had changed from that advertised due to illness, but we hope to meet John McGoldrick of NAAT and Damian Hockney of One London Party on a future occasion.

Peter Roberts noted that an application has been made to include his famous petition to the Prime Minister in the Guinness Book of Records, with its noteworthy 1,811,424 signatories before it closed officially. He warned that we must work in close alliance

with business, other motoring organisations, planners and all interested parties to fight congestion charging, road tolls, workplace parking levies and other threats to the freedom and cost of motoring. Vigilance is essential.

Sean Corker echoed the need to work in partnership with others as he updated the meeting on progress in the fight to avoid the introduction of road tolls in Manchester. See www.manchestertolltax.com for the latest information.

Roger Lawson reported on the success in squashing a threat of charges in Greenwich and the friendlier attitude of the new London Mayor, who had cancelled the proposed increase to £25 per day for the congestion charge there, and was reviewing the whole position.

Neil Herron gave a thoroughly entertaining presentation about the work he's been undertaking on fighting unfair parking charges; you'll find details on his excellent website at www.parkingappeals.co.uk, with some exciting developments expected in the near future, so watch that space.

After lunch, Nigel Humphries briefed the meeting on the work done by the Strategy Committee formed at the previous AGM. It had been agreed, as everyone involved was a volunteer, to experiment with 'job-share' for the main executive role. At present, Brian

MacDowell and Nigel Humphries had agreed to fulfil this role and a third person was needed to share the burden.

The overall objective remained winning the hearts and minds of people, politicians and the press for the benefit of all road users, especially motorists. To achieve this, we need more members, more funds, improved communications and to underpin this with good planning and budgeting.

Recruitment embraces both new members and greater involvement by existing members, with more regional activities and even greater emphasis on equipping and motivating people to campaign within the overall ABD objectives. Communications between members need strengthening, but a start has been made with increased use of electronic media and facebook membership, while ensuring that those without ready internet access are still informed by hard copy as necessary.

The offensive against all forms of road charging is the main cause at present. Everyone must find a myriad of ways to hassle local and regional politicians and decision makers about the unpopularity of road pricing to counteract the attractions of promised extra funding as a benefit of its introduction. This will be carried out in alliance with other interested organisations and by increasing involvement at local level.

Climate change: a Singer in Westminster

On 25 June, Malcolm Heymer attended a lunchtime seminar in Westminster, organised by the Centre for Policy Studies, on climate change and the case against CO2 as the driver of global temperatures. Chaired by Nigel Lawson, there were several other peers in attendance, and more PhDs and professors than you could shake a stick at.

The speaker was Dr Fred Singer, the 84-year-old American climate scientist and author of *Unstoppable global warming every 1500 years* and one of the founders of the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change (NIPCC), set up to examine all the evidence on the subject, including that ignored by the politicised IPCC.

The London seminar was the last in a series that Dr Singer had held around Europe, where he had also had a meeting with the EU Environment Commissioner. Apparently, after listening to Dr Singer's views, the

commissioner replied that they were very interesting but he would have to seek the views of scientists!

Dr Singer gave a presentation on the NIPCC paper *Nature, not human activity, rules the climate* (www.heartland.org/pdf/22835.pdf), of which he was the editor. He showed that the most damning evidence against man-made climate change was the 'fingerprint' method of comparing what the climate models predict should be happening to atmospheric temperatures and what measurements show actually is happening; they're totally different.

There was a question and answer session after the presentation. In response to a question from the Bishop of Chester about what was driving the whole climate change scare, Dr Singer described the financial beneficiaries (activists, scientists, industrial organisations) and ideological factors. CO2 control was also the perfect

vehicle for promoting world government.

One of the issues stressed by Dr Singer was that climate policies are negatively impacting energy policies, making energy much more expensive. In his view we need to be seeking economic growth throughout the world, which can only be achieved with access to relatively cheap energy. Since the end of the current interglacial cannot be too far away, we need to be wealthy enough to have the resources to adapt to the potentially catastrophic effects of the severe cooling that is inevitable within the next few thousand years.

Dr Singer believes that continued cooling over the next ten years, plus the economic consequences of the sharp increase in energy prices that is now occurring, will be needed to cause a break in the ranks of politicians towards trying to control CO2. More recognised academics need to speak out on the issue to keep the pressure up.

Get a free electronic copy of *OTR* each month to send to whoever you like – email otr@abd.org.uk and you'll be added to the free PDF list

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

Beware the Local Transport Bill

The Local Transport Bill is being sneaked through parliament, and as you can imagine, it's not being passed to make drivers' lives easier. To give aflavour, here's an extract:

The Bill looks at important areas of public transport like local bus services and sets out proposals for a more consistent approach to local transport planning. It plans to reform the existing laws on road pricing schemes for local authorities who wish to have schemes in their areas.

It was published in draft form in the 2006-07 session of Parliament. The Bill includes changes that followed public consultation, further discussion on the role of traffic commissioners and the report of the Transport Select Committee which scrutinised the draft Bill in June and July 2007.

Key areas

- Enable local authorities to improve the quality of local bus services, building on the measures set out in December 2006 in the DfT report *Putting Passengers First*.

- Reform the arrangements for local transport governance in major conurbations. This aims to encourage stronger local leadership and a coherent approach to transport across individual local authority boundaries and different transport modes.

- Reform existing legislation relating to local road pricing schemes. This would ensure that, where local authorities wish to develop schemes, they can do so in a way that best meets local needs - while ensuring that schemes are consistent and interoperable.

- Full text at: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2007-08/localtransport.html>

Spanners in the Warks

Warwickshire County Council is proposing vast swathes of speed limit reductions unless there's major opposition. A mass of 60 limits will be removed, with reductions to 50, 40 and even 30mph – and you can bet that mobile speed cameras will be much in evidence as soon as the reductions take place. ABD member Keith Brickell wrote to his councillor, John Hawkins, expressing his dismay at the proposals. Intriguingly, and rather worryingly, Hawkins replied to Keith, stating that:

As a Councillor I am in favour of a lot these speed reductions, although not all of them. We as a Council are actively pushing

*for these reductions. I don't think your objections will be worth jack ****.*

If you've got something to say about the proposals, get in touch with Warks County Council, via:

safetyengineering@warwickshire.gov.uk
Speed Limit Review Consultation
Road Safety Engineering
PO Box 43, Shire Hall
Warwick CV34 4SX

Or see the proposals, at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/F446059189B4303A802573C40057A12D

ABD Scotland – our friends in the north

Following on from the untimely death of Paul Smith, who as well as running the SafeSpeed campaign was ABD North of Scotland Co-ordinator, now is an appropriate time to update our local website. I have made a number of significant alterations, standardising typeface and layout of the pages and generally updating and clearing out dead wood and redundant links. A fair amount of new material has been added and we are now hosting an online forum which may be read by everyone (including the general public). For that reason it has been decided to restrict posting in it to Scottish Members only and for obvious reasons the forum will be monitored – so you simply send in your posts to me, John Baird at john.baird@abd.org.uk – provided they are of reasonable and reasoned content they will be published either as a new thread or as a follow up to another

member's post. Obviously details of source material are necessary and language should be reasonably moderate.

Also included in the updated website are details of our replacement North of Scotland Co-ordinator, Alasdair Wood, a retired hotelier from Scourie in Sutherland. Alasdair can be contacted on highland@abd.org.uk

For those who haven't visited our website you'll find us by either going through the main ABD website and then clicking on the Saltire (St Andrews Cross) in the 'Updated Local Pages' (left-hand frame on the home page) or by going directly to jbaird.org.uk/abd – naturally our friends from south of the border are more than welcome to read any postings on our forum although sadly for the present we are unable to publish their comments.

John Baird, local webmaster, Scotland

in brief...

- John Ballinger** has discovered a useful website for reporting roads in a poor state of repair; no effort is required, just a description and location. See www.fixmystreet.com

- Chris Burmajster** received an email from Bucks County Council confirming that his objections to their plan to reduce masses of speed limits all over the county have been ignored. They'll now reduce more limits, some from NSL to as little as 30mph.

- Roger Lawson** has been beefing up the ABD London website, so it now covers the scrapping of the western extension. Look at www.freedomfordrivers.org/westerncon.htm

- Peter Morgan** is signed up to a Yahoo Group which details parking and similar problems within Haringey. It's not very active, but there may be something there of interest. You'll find it at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stop-cpz-muswell-hill>

- If you're looking for a useful resource in the climate change debate, including plenty of facts and figures, look at <http://tinyurl.com/6zww8m>

- Peter Morgan** has also written in with details of somewhere that you can chat online with other wound-up drivers; it's www.laughingcavalier.co.uk/bb. If you like that, you could also take a look at www.britainsrevolting.co.uk

- If you want to catch up on national and regional announcements that don't always make the headlines, **Brian Mooney** recommends logging on to <http://nds.coi.gov.uk>, where you can check by date or government office. Recent gems include plans to help councils tackle inconsiderate parking, Eco-Towns (supposedly about 'creating more options for travel!') and the community emissions trading scheme.

- Thanks to **Malcolm Heymer** for highlighting that you can take a look at all the scamera partnership accounts for 2006/7 at www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/nscp/seccampartneracc0607/

- Chris Burmajster** recently objected to several proposed speed limit reductions throughout Buckinghamshire (see above), only to have them ignored. He discovered that if he was to make a formal objection, they cannot just ignore it; they have to go through due process which should mean a hearing of the Appeals and Complaints Committee. The question is, what's the difference between an objection and a formal objection? According to resident ABD guru **Malcolm Heymer**, the best way is to state in your objection is that you are making a formal objection – that way it's hard for them to claim it's anything else, so they can't dismiss things quite so lightly.

Want to get more involved? There are plenty of ways you can help the ABD to move forward. Just check out page 11 to find out how

One member discovers what must be the least appropriate speed limit in the country, while another member gets the least conclusive answer ever from the DfT.

The lunatics have landed in Devon

Gerald Brierley has discovered what is possibly the most incomprehensible speed reduction in the country. It appeared overnight around mid-March 2008 reducing a section of the A39 in North Devon to 40mph from a long-established national speed limit. There's a speed camera behind which is a bend in the road where the national speed limit applies. Beyond a gentle rise in the distance the environment is the same and the road is still clear and straight but the road becomes even wider with two lanes west, and one lane east for another half-mile. It then becomes two lanes again but reverts to the national speed limit. There are absolutely no premises (this is a rural area) or bends along this 40mph section and only one junction leading to the village of Abbotsham.

Gerald searched back to early November 2007 in the local press archive for a 'Notice of Proposal' and 'Notice of Making' and found nothing, so he wrote to the Devon County Council Solicitor pointing that out and asking for:

- The names of the publications and the dates of the statutory notice placements.
- A copy of the active Traffic Regulation Order or the address where it can be examined.

He received no reply from the County Solicitor, but did receive a letter from the Area Engineer promising a "full response" or "an update on our progress" later. The signs however, remain in place.

Bemused as to how to proceed, he has asked what to do, as he's concerned that he'll be fobbed-off. Our resident expert, Malcolm Heymer swung



into action to say that this is certainly one of the most extraordinary misuses of speed limits he's ever seen; on a straight rural road, a 40mph limit is ridiculous. Malcolm could only assume that there have been accidents somewhere within the new 40mph limit area, and the council has accepted the flawed argument that a reduction in speed of 1mph produces a 5% reduction in accidents, regardless of whether speed was a cause. This case is so extreme, however, that it's unlikely that it complies even with the latest speed limit setting guidance, as the mean speed on the road must surely be greater than 40mph.

Malcolm also pointed out that Gerald is quite right to question whether the speed limit has been introduced lawfully, suggesting that he should also ask for the technical analysis of speeds and accident records that led to the proposed speed limit reduction. It's highly unlikely that anyone will take a blind bit of notice of this speed limit and it is likely to lead to more danger, not less.

Cornwall watch

John Hatton has written in to say that since November 2006, Cornwall County Council has been checking that traffic regulation orders match the signed speed limits in the county. The official line is that it's proposing a review of speed limit signage, respecifying the legal description of the speed limit to match the current physical extents of the limit. The review is being done in conjunction with the scamera partnership, to ensure that enforcement of the speed limit can continue. As an example, CCC is proposing two short sections of 30mph limit on Rialton and Trevelgue Roads in Newquay. According to the Council, this will have the effect of specifying the legal description of the speed limit to match the current physical extents. Currently, there's a short gap between the streetlighting and terminal signs on these roads. The new Traffic Regulation Order will cover these areas and ensure there's no doubt over the limit's validity. The Council claims this is purely a technical measure to clarify the existing legal situation.

Delve deeper though, and it transpires that recently CCC discovered there was no TRO to substantiate a 30mph limit which had been illegally signed for years on Castle Drive, Falmouth, so one was hastily drawn up. An FOI request put in by John revealed that only one person had been prosecuted for speeding on this road in the last five years, but it's still one person too many. The most recent consultation involves Camborne, where eight discrepancies have been found between signed limits and TROs; for the latest Cornwall news, log on to www.abd.org.uk where you can find updates on what's going on around the county.

Breaking the law: OK or not?

Steve Green has been 'enjoying' some correspondence with the DfT, over emergency vehicles trying to make progress; the lack of useful information offered is nothing less than fascinating; Steve begins:

I was recently followed by an emergency vehicle with blues and twos. My only means of giving them free passage was to pull into a bus lane enforced by cameras along its length of about one mile. Given the progressive increase in numbers of enforcement cameras, be it for bus lanes, parking, red lights or speeding, the risk of committing a traffic offence whilst giving way to an emergency vehicle is becoming significant.

With recent changes in legislation and cameras that do not flash, a driver may not be aware that an offence has been recorded until a penalty notice arrives in the post several days later. It would be difficult or impossible to offer a defence in such circumstances as the driver is unlikely to be able to identify the registration number of the emergency vehicle; the only evidence that would be available, apart from the photographic evidence, which in all probability would not show the emergency vehicle itself.

I wonder what the Department's preferred course of action would be in such circumstances, and what defence would be available to the hapless driver?

The reply from the DfT went:

I have consulted with my colleagues on the issue you have raised and unfortunately I am not able to give you a specific answer. Any emergency vehicle given a response call is free to take whatever route the driver decides to take. All drivers are expected to give way by simply pulling into the lane, stop, pull out when emergency vehicle passes. With traffic lights, a vehicle may need to move over the white line but not over the junction.

It remains the driver's responsibility to drive in accordance with the law and simply let the emergency vehicle pass. If necessary break the law, but if possible, allow the emergency vehicle to use the bus lane.

Not exactly constructive, but it seems that breaking the law can be condoned, but you still have no defence!

Seeing the signs

A member wrote in recently, to say that he'd woken up to find his village plastered in Community Speed Watch posters attached in pairs to lampposts. Claiming that they're a dangerous distraction to drivers and an eyesore he asked what the rules are regarding fixing signs to lampposts – suggesting that even if it's legal to put the signs up, it's also legal to take them down. Interestingly, the parish council objected to the scout group putting up signs for the village fete on the grounds of driver distraction!

Malcolm Heymer swiftly answered the query, to say that it's illegal to put up signs that are meant to look similar to authorised traffic signs, but posters that bear no resemblance to traffic signs are subject to the local council's policies on the use of roadside advertising. Presumably the council in this case approved them on the basis that the claimed road safety benefit would outweigh the distraction effect, although that is highly debatable. If there is evidence that the council rejected other posters because of concern about distraction, that is the argument that should be used.

you've been quango'd

Unelected committees are controlling every aspect of our lives – which is bad enough. But it gets worse; they're also draining our wallets at every opportunity

The Taxpayers' Alliance has published a full list of the UK's vast quango industry, a detailed run-down of the staff and cost of the 1162 bodies, boards and agencies that make up Britain's unseen Government. It's five years since the Parliamentary Select Committee on Public Administration recommended that the Government publish such a list, a recommendation that the Government has failed to fulfil. In the absence of an official list, the TPA has compiled one instead, providing the public with the most comprehensive information available on the organisations that increasingly spend their money and influence their lives without democratic oversight.

The report is the first in a series of papers on the Structure of British Government and the problems caused by its bewildering scale, staggering range of activities and chaotic duplication. The key findings of the report are:

- There are 1162 quangos in the UK, running at a total cost to the taxpayer of £64bn, equivalent to £2,550 per household.

- Even under the Cabinet Office's restrictive definition of quangos, the cost of these bodies has risen 50% in the last ten years.

- UK quangos now employ an army of almost 700,000 bureaucrats.

Even the Government itself does not know the full extent of the unaccountable quango industry, which ranges from the massive such as Job Centre Plus (staff: 70,042, cost: £3.5bn) the Courts Service (staff: 19,986, cost: £704.8m); to the bizarre such as the British Potato Council (staff: 49) and the West Northants Development Corporation (staff: 34, cost: £15.3m).

When the total number of quangos is added to the other government subsidiaries such as local authorities and NHS trusts, the total number of organisations controlled by the UK Government rises to 2063, costing the taxpayer £257bn and employing over 5.1m people.

Ben Farrugia, author of the report and Policy Analyst at the TaxPayers' Alliance, said: "Government in the UK is now so large, diverse and complex that it is impossible for anyone to manage effectively, let alone Ministers with no prior experience of management and little in-depth understanding of the work carried out by their departments. Government today tries to do

too much, and consequently fails; the structure of government needs to change if we hope to see better value and significant improvements in our public services."

Over the past hundred years Britain has witnessed a relentless increase in the size of government. Politicians have steadily taken responsibility and authority away from civil society, establishing a presence in every aspect of British life. Government today spends 45.1% of Britain's GDP, employs nearly 20% of the UK workforce and regulates or provides almost every service available to UK citizens.

The Government employs just under 6m people and has an annual expenditure of almost £600bn. Twenty senior ministers and around 500,000 civil servants oversee 1162 public bodies, 365 NHS Trusts, 469 Local Authorities, 60 police forces (140,500 officers) and countless other local and regional spending bodies. No-one could effectively manage such an organisation, and as such British government suffers from terrible inefficiencies, waste, and ultimately depreciation in the quality of services provided.

Effective management requires an in-depth knowledge of the sector in which the organisation operates, its customers and processes. Yet the breadth of government today makes this impossible. No Minister, or anyone else, could have sufficient knowledge to agree the vision, objectives, plans and budgets for any department of government; their interests are just too diverse. For example, the predecessor to today's Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), the Department of Trade and Industry, in 2006-07 managed an expenditure of £23bn, 244,000 staff (there are only four FTSE companies larger) and 68 subsidiary public bodies – advising on everything from employment, architectural design to chemical weapons, not to mention the activities of two major British corporations, Royal Mail and Remploy. Astonishingly, the DTI still only constituted a small unit of government, accounting for only 3% of total staff and 4% of total expenditure.

Worryingly, the Government has a monopoly on key services; free from the threat of customer loss or bankruptcy, monopolies remove the

basic tools of management – the need to innovate, improve and reduce costs. The services government provides – education and health in particular – exist as monopolies, presenting the majority of tax payers with little choice and ever sinking standards.

The inadequacies of our current structure of government are clear when the quality of services is considered. For example, four out of ten pupils in state education now leave school without the minimum standards in English and Maths that the QCA deems necessary for 'Life, Learning and Work'. After 11 years of schooling, at a total cost of £75,000, the state system fails to provide individuals with the means necessary to succeed, trapping them in poverty and dependency. Year on year, British educational standards fall in comparison to other wealthy countries.

Then there's health; the standard of care provided by the NHS is now ranked 16 in a comparison of 19 peer countries. In 2004 alone, 17,157 deaths amenable to healthcare occurred in the NHS, which would have been avoided if Britain matched the performance of European peers. Levels of hospital-acquired infections are among the highest in Europe and waiting times continue to force people abroad for treatment.

It's no better where welfare is concerned; the complex system of tax credits, allowances and income support has created a welfare trap, while at the same time necessitating a large and costly bureaucracy to administer it.

Nothing but fundamental structural reform can reverse the trend of declining standards in our public services. Government is poorly designed to deliver the services which people deserve, and after a decade of spending, money alone is clearly not the answer.

To give the public a higher quality and wider choice of services at a greatly reduced cost, and most importantly, return control over their lives. Politicians, advised by a small, informed team of civil servants, should set high-level policy. This is the area where they can make a real contribution, freeing them from day to day management responsibilities. Civil society, employing experienced management, should execute that policy.

• www.taxpayersalliance.com

Contact your MP

MPs are listed by name & constituency on the Parliament site (parliament.uk/directorios/directorios.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 shadow ministers are listed at conservatives.com

How you can help the ABD to grow

- Speak to Bob Dennish about becoming a regional contact/support your existing contact
- Speak to Robin Simmons (p16) about volunteering to help at events
- Are you a car club member? Then get your club to support our affiliation scheme, which is run by Robin Simmons – whose contact details are on the back page
- Donate to the ABD's fighting fund. Get a form from the membership secretary
- Make your spouse a joint member

- Subscribe to ABD-Action (see email groups on p15)
- Get your friends to join – they can sign up online at abd.org.uk
- Write to your MP regularly, reminding them of their duty to stand up for drivers
- Take the time to reply to anti-car articles and letters in the local press
- Complain about proposals for traffic calming and speed limit reductions. Few people do, which is why they happen.

It seems to me that all too frequently, the police involved in these TV chases are guilty of driving or riding in a more dangerous fashion than those they're pursuing. If the video footage of the undercover police on one of the recent TV cop programmes is anything to go by, it's highly dangerous. The cop followed a biker, who was riding quickly but safely. The chances he took, some of his overtakes, and the way he rode was at times scary. The police bike was black and unmarked, and other road users were unaware it was a police bike in pursuit.

When he stopped the other bike he couldn't really fault the riding just the speed – yet in my opinion he was the one who posed the real danger by his pursuit along a good A-road at a higher speed than the biker, while taking chances the biker didn't. Give coppers something high speed and unmarked, and they seem to take any excuse to drive/ride it to the full – just cowboys in uniform really.

From the ABD forum

We're hearing ever-louder calls for hands-free car phones to be banned, but I'm quite capable of prioritising so that if I need to devote more concentration to my driving I simply say 'hang on a mo' and stop talking. To suggest that they want to ban hands-free kits is plainly absurd when so many cars these days come equipped in the same way as mine. After all, I could be talking to myself. In fact, I think I shall start to do so!

Hugh Bladon

Seems that the great bastion of green propaganda, the BBC, has not quite taken up walking, cycling and public transport as it urges us to do, through its never ending parade of 'green' speakers. Their taxi bill last year come to £11.8m with another £5.2m spent on private car hire. When are 'green' speakers going to be asked how many bus miles they clock up in a year? I expect they would answer, that they're too busy to travel by public transport...

Terry Hudson

Philip Gwynne, of the West Yorkshire Casualty Reduction Partnership, is on record as saying: "In speeding matters, it is the law of the land not the law of physics that matters."

In any other 'crime' the laws of physics do matter. If you're accused of murder and can prove that you were 200 miles away, you would be acquitted, because the laws of physics say that you cannot be in two places at the same time.

I strongly believe that GB plc is heading further and further into financial ruin as each year passes. Our government and other MPs seem to have no grasp of the concept of sound financial management. You can say what you like about capitalism (and it does have its issues) but there is nothing like the profit motive to focus attention on the finances.

Rather than trying to balance income and expenditure, our leaders seem to just spend what they like and then look at ways to get the money

Give us a quote

"All decision makers at the local, regional, national and European levels are urged to play their part in changing our culture of mobility."

The Copenhagen Declaration, made by 'Car-Free Cities' – the European Commission's anti-car committee in 1996

A few observations on Trench Warfare, on page 5 of OTR88:

- Utilities already had to advise councils of all roadworks prior to the introduction of the Traffic Management Act.

- Councils already had powers to manage the timing of streetworks, particularly on so-called traffic sensitive streets, although these have increased. Councils could already fine utilities for over-running works and other infringements, the difference is that now there is a Fixed Penalty scheme instead of going to Court.

- Utilities will only have to apply for a permit if the relevant local authority decides to introduce a permit scheme, and if they do so they can elect to apply this only to selected streets. The earliest that permits will come in is October. Given that the first part of the legislation was meant to come into force in April yet many parties have only

just implemented it due to delays in publishing the details, this deadline looks unlikely to be achieved.

- The permits, where used, will be paid for by the utility so it is difficult to see how this will keep down overall costs for council taxpayers because utilities may need to pass on the costs. Moreover, the permit schemes have some parallels with speed cameras in that they are not supposed to be revenue-generating. Councils, who actually carry out more work in the highway than utilities, now have to ask themselves for permission to work – thus increasing bureaucracy and cost.

- The three months' notice applies only to major schemes taking more than 10 days to complete, not to the vast majority of individual excavations. These major schemes already required a month's notice under the old legislation.

Quentin Gallagher

I remember seeing a story where a man had been accused of doing 420mph in a Vauxhall Cavalier, and yet another at 406mph in a Peugeot. They both got away with these serious crimes because the laws of physics were important and showed easily that these vehicles simply were not capable of these speeds. So the message is clear: don't come to Yorkshire because the laws of physics don't apply up here!"

Richard Cleal

Halsbury's Laws of England has just published its fifth edition - it is published every 20 years. As one might expect, it has more than doubled in size since 1987. Road traffic law has doubled in 20 years, from one volume to two. We are however better off than schools, universities and criminals, where the relevant legislation has quadrupled in the same period. Don't get me started on company law ...

Joan Bingley

I was driven into last weekend by a young lad who was driving sensibly, leaving plenty of room, was not on a mobile, and was not being aggressive in any way whatsoever. It was simply a split-second decision which he made badly.

If he had been on a mobile, the accident would have been blamed on this, and he could very well have been prosecuted. Yet hands-free mobiles are no more dangerous than talking to a passenger. I know the argument that a person on the other end of a phone does not know what situation you're in, but half the time your passenger is also oblivious because:

- They don't drive so aren't aware of the degree of concentration you need in a difficult situation.

- They drive but are oblivious anyway.
- They drive but are having an argument with you

You could also be having an argument with Jeremy Vine, with no phone involved, just shouting at the morons he gets on there. You could be singing along to a song on the radio.

The only way to stop all this is to stop people carrying passengers, remove all phone systems, sat-navs, radios, etc and ensure that people do not fall asleep by installing software to stop the engine every ten minutes and not allowing it to restart until the driver gets out and walk about a bit.

From the ABD forum

So what you're saying then, is that accidents will happen...? Ed

from the population. Fuel duty, speeding fines, VED, road tolls, road user charging, eco taxes, showroom taxes, workplace parking charges – it's all just part of a money-grabbing agenda.

Whilst inflicting all of this on the working population, the MPs themselves are busy feathering their own nests with numerous pay increases, expense allowances, staff allowances, second home allowances and a pension scheme which is hugely more generous than that enjoyed by the normal taxpayer.

It's depressing stuff but I really can't see how the country is going to recover. Once the current government have moved on to their pensions and their private consultancy incomes, the working population will have to, at some point, pay the bills that are left behind.

And the number of people working (and paying taxes) is dropping, whilst the number living off the state is increasing. It's no wonder that so many of the tax-paying group are emigrating.

George Layton

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

I've just returned from a holiday in Tuscany; we drove, of course. Our TomTom was beeping away more than ever before at the sheer number of greed cameras festooning mainland Europe, all painted grey to blend in with the surroundings.

The Autoroute signs were giving messages like "drive slower to lower your CO2 emissions" and the like, while there were also lots of pictures from those acknowledged experts on road safety, school children, on safety matters.

What surprised me was Tuscany. Quite a

I was driving through the centre of Coventry (which I know reasonably well, but haven't driven through for a few years) this afternoon. Driving along Corporation street, I came to a point where I was not able to continue because straight ahead was buses only. The only option open was to turn right towards a large multi-storey car-park. Further on, I was able to turn left, and down to a set of traffic lights. Wary of one-way streets, I checked the signage, and saw nothing to prevent me turning right, as it turns out, back into Corporation street.

This later became a one-way street, and I was forced (no left turn) to turn right into Hales street. Hale street further along, turned into Trinity street. Half-way up Trinity street, there was a large sign, stating 'Buses and taxis only beyond this point – bus lane cameras'. I stopped my car, but was unable to do anything except go forwards past the sign, as the street was one-way.

I then drove through Broadgate, and back out onto Little Park St, back onto the ring-road, and out of the whole wretched city. However, I now expect a fine in the post, but I'll be appealing against it, as I had no option but to continue past the warning signs. Maybe I missed a sign somewhere along the route, but what is this country coming to when a simple navigational error lands you with a £120 fine?

Dave Derrick

Vision Zero is a Swedish philosophy of road safety that eventually no one will be killed or seriously injured within the road transport system. That all sounds laudable, but an extract from the document reads: "human life and health are paramount and take priority over mobility and other objectives of the road system".

So ideally, they would like you to never leave the hospital you were born in, so you'll be perfectly safe all your life and be perfectly placed should you fall ill and be also be safe from the dangers of the big wide world! Is that the sum of a few million years of evolution?

Terry Hudson

Many people went out and bought low-CO2 cars because they were promised Kengestion charge exemptions – only to see them withdrawn. Now we're hearing that those who bought electric cars because they were promised free parking and recharging are now seeing the concessions withdrawn in the City of London. Apparently

few roads have a maximum speed limit of just 70kph with all the associated bunching that goes with it. We saw some pretty desperate overtakes and everywhere we went there were signs warning of speed traps. Arrow straight roads with great visibility had solid white centre lines in addition to a silly speed limit.

Amazingly, about half of all drivers we saw kept to the limit and they can't all have been tourists in hire cars. We don't just need the Association of British Drivers, we need the Association of European Drivers!

Chris Burmajster

this is because lots of people bought electric cars and they're now causing congestion. How predictable was that?

So you do the right (green) thing, only to find you've been conned again. Ironically Westminster is increasing electric car concessions. Who is going to fall for that? These green taxes are spun as being designed to change people's behaviour and purchasing decisions, but when people do actually change and the politicians do not get the cash they need for their second homes they just change the rules again.

•Full report at <http://tinyurl.com/3ve29y>

John Ryle

You might think that you can find out all sorts of things from a scamera partnership using the Freedom of Information Act, but there are all sorts of get-outs. Information about individuals (such as the name of a scamera operator) will not be released as it breaches the Data Protection Act, which takes precedence. You can request, and have a legal right to see (under DPA, not FoI) any information held about yourself. Interestingly this includes any recorded CCTV images, so I guess any London driver could ask for stills of any video or ANPR shot of their car.

Importantly, an organisation can refuse to provide information if the cost of garnering it is "disproportionate" or "unreasonable". There are also exclusions around "threats to national security" and something being "not in the public interest" – that's the one used by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities when faced with a request from MART and NAAT.

While we're on the subject, something you might like to try when next in your local supermarket or corner shop, where you are almost certainly being videoed, is to ask to speak to the Data Controller. This is an appointment required to be made by the DPA in any organisation retaining personal data. Then ask for stills of all images taken of yourself - which is your legal right.

From the ABD forum

I was horrified to read in my local paper that Crawley IAM are manning speed interactive signs that display a smiley face to those below the speed limit. There is a picture of them with a large IAM banner.

As the kind of person who volunteers to stand in a reflective jacket doing such things is not universally popular, is this really going to portray a good image

Shorts

Governments have nothing, own nothing and have no income, save what they reap from the people by taxation. Government departments and personnel should be reminded of this daily. It's all too easy to spend money when it's not yours.

From the ABD forum

If Robert Mugabe is ever deposed, I'm sure he could well find a lucrative job working for one of the speed camera partnerships!

Simon Butler

In my region (Lancashire), speed cameras are nearly always located on roads with the greatest volume of traffic (and hence revenue earning potential). I've yet to see one on a housing estate! Money talks. Safety doesn't.

Simon Butler

In Aberdeen, at two points on one road, there's a combination of a traffic island, double yellow lines and a bus stop (sign on lamp post). When the bus stops, all following traffic must stop. This seems to be an example of surreptitious traffic calming. Is this combination legal? I refer to the Highway Code 243.

David Caughey

According to dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/environment/ukreptoecbiofuels2003301?page=7, we use about 50,000m litres of fuel a year. Fuel has gone up about 25p/litre in the last year, and the extra VAT from that is about 3.7p a litre – or a windfall of £1.85bn to the treasury. Seems like plenty of money to get started on scrapping VED...

Keith Jones

The green agenda is simple; they want us to stop using cars and use public transport instead. They don't want people using environmentally friendly cars; they want people not to use cars. If someone invented a car which ran on sunshine and emitted only moonbeams they'd find some reason to oppose them. Car = bad, bus = good.

Chris Lamb

The Daily Telegraph of 3 September reported on a briefing by John Hirst, the CEO of the Met Office. In it he is said to have referred to "the onset of climate change". So we have something which has been going on for millions of years and it seems the Met Office has just noticed. Doesn't give you much faith in their forecasts, does it?

John Pearson

Brown has reportedly employed PR staff at £140,000 a head - public money if you please - to improve his popularity. He could achieve the latter for nothing by leaving.

Derek Reynolds

Richard Brunstrom claims to be a self-made man: that relieves the Almighty of a terrible responsibility.

John Ryle

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for the IAM? It is my belief that the obsession with numerical speed in accordance with limits does the IAM no favours in recruiting candidates.

The second, and more important issue is one of safety. Displaying a smiley face to anybody doing 30 in a 30 limit regardless of conditions is encouraging the attitude that 30 is always safe. They get a smiley face even if there are children in the road a few feet from their bumper. This is a dangerous message to put out and one very contradictory to one of the key objectives of advanced training, that one should set one's speed to the road conditions so that one is always able to stop safely.

Dave Razzell

Three teenagers recently admitted stealing a Bentley before leading police on a high-speed pursuit and crashing into a tree. Five police officers suffered minor injuries when the three patrols cars they were in crashed during the pursuit on the A35 in Hampshire in April. At Southampton Youth Court, two girls, 17, and a boy, 15, admitted theft. Both girls, who were told they were lucky to escape with their lives, received detention training orders.

One of the girls, who admitted taking a vehicle without consent, dangerous driving, driving without a licence and burglary, was told she'd be automatically banned for 12 months should she apply for a driving licence. The boy received a supervision order with a night time curfew.

The teenagers had seen the Bentley Continental GT in a driveway in Ringwood and broke into a house stealing a laptop, mobile phones, a wallet, car keys and the Bentley, which was fitted with a tracking device. This enabled the police to pursue it, at speeds of up to 100mph through the New Forest. Then on the A35 near Holmsley, it crashed into a tree and overturned. The teenagers

came away with minor injuries.

The first police car was hit by debris, stopped and was hit from behind by the second police car. In trying to avoid the others, the third car ran off the road. Several officers were affected by whiplash injuries.

Leaving aside the questions this event raises about the conduct and skill of the police drivers, there's another aspect which is astounding. We have girl 1 who is guilty of a string of offences, receiving a detention training order. The boy is guilty of the same but receives a supervision order with a night time curfew. We have girl 2 also guilty of the above, plus damage to the vehicle, dangerous driving (including 100mph on roads which probably had 50, 40 or even 30 limits), driving without a licence, driving without insurance, putting peoples lives at risk and possibly other offences, yet she receives just a detention training order and told that she would be automatically banned for 12 months should she ever apply for a driving licence.

I am an experienced driver with a long no claims record and a clean driving licence. My car was built to safely do speeds in excess of 170mph and is equipped with brakes which can stop it safely and effectively at those speeds. It is meticulously maintained and is taxed, insured and MOT'd.

If I was caught driving at, say, 105mph up the M1 on a clear and dry evening with virtually no traffic on the road I would in all probability get a 12 month ban, a huge fine, possibly points on my licence, be treated like one of the lowest criminals and if going even faster, potentially be given a jail sentence too. Is it any wonder that so many people in this country feel that sensible, appropriate and equitable law and order has completely gone out of the window?

George Layton

ABD forum exchanges

Did you know that in Spain, the law (on traffic, motor vehicle traffic and road safety, RD 339/1990, of 2 March, Article 51) says that the speed limit can be exceeded by 20kph when overtaking? It applies only on non-urban roads by cars and motorcycles when overtaking other vehicles driving at a lesser speed.

Dave Razzell

If it is legal (so presumably considered safe) to travel at 20kph over the limit while overtaking (on the wrong side of the road), why is it not safe to travel 20kph faster on the correct side when not overtaking?

Malcolm Heymer

I was driving home yesterday evening, along a fairly busy country road. What struck me is that our safety is so dependent on those coming the other way. Will they reach down and fiddle with their radio, will they be talking on a mobile, or will they nod off, blink, look the wrong way? Then I looked at what is quite a bendy road, and cars can creep towards the middle, hence

the reason so many bikes become a cropper around this area.

The point is, every time a car goes by another, and every corner we get around without an accident is actually an achievement. Think of the billions of miles driven each year and the number of cars which are passed and the number of awkward bends we all get around, and quite honestly the number of accidents in between is not so significant.

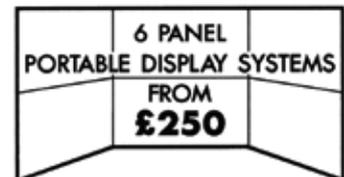
Bill Hollis

Yes, this is a missed point throughout the media and political world. 24m drivers travelling an average of 10,000 miles a year (often far more) creates a daily mileage of 648m for all vehicles (very conservative estimate). Each one of those miles will engage in meeting and passing hundreds if not a few thousand other vehicles – say 1000 for argument's sake. That gives us 648bn opportunities daily for a fatal accident. That's without bends, corners and junctions. How many fatalities a day – 10?

Derek Reynolds

OTR glossary

- **ACPO**: Association of Chief Police Officers
- **ALG**: Association of London Government
- **ANPR**: Automatic Number Plate Recognition
- **Brake**: Vocal anti-car group
- **ChFT**: 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
- **ECHR**: European Court of Human Rights
- **FoI**: Freedom of Information (Act)
- **Gatso**: Speed camera that measures a car's speed at a single fixed point.
- **IAM**: Institute of Advanced Motorists
- **IPCC**: Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (pushes man-made CC view)
- **ISA**: Intelligent Speed Adaptation
- **KSI**: Killed or Seriously Injured
- **LTP**: Local Transport Plan
- **MART**: Manchester Against Road Tolls
- **NAAT**: National Alliance Against Tolls
- **NIP**: Notice of Intended Prosecution (usually a speeding ticket)
- **RHA**: Road Haulage Association
- **PACTS**: Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety (of which the ABD is a member)
- **Scamera**: Speed camera
- **SPECS**: Speed camera that measures a car's average speed between two or more points.
- **TfL**: Transport for London



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Books discount

ABD members get a 12.5% discount and free postage from Haynes Books. For a free catalogue you can email emma_isaacs@haynes-manuals.co.uk and identify yourself as a member of the Association of British Drivers – not ABD as it confuses their computer. Give your membership number, name and address. The ABD website also has a bookshop section. A link is shown on the main page of our website at abd.org.uk The ABD Bookshop operates in association with amazon.co.uk which give us a referral fee for all books purchased via our website.

IAM discounts

The ABD has negotiated a special rate for the IAM Skill for Life programme - everything you need to prepare for, and take, your advanced driving test. ABD members over 26 will be entitled to a £5 discount, reducing the price to £80. This is in addition to the £10 discount for under 26s. The IAM manual *Pass Your Advanced Driving Test* is available to ABD members at a 25% reduction (£6).

Breakdown recovery

If you quote your ABD membership number when joining Britannia Rescue you'll get 10% off your membership.

Chauffeurplan

If you lose your licence you will find Chauffeurplan's service invaluable. Offered by Longford Insurance, it's an insurance policy against losing your licence or car, with a 10% discount for ABD members. Call Chauffeurplan on 0800 242 420 for more.

Ferry tickets

Book Ferry tickets online using the ABD website and we earn a small commission which helps boost our fighting fund.

Number plates

If you are in the market for a personalised number plate, Simply Registrations is offering special rates for ABD members. Go to simplyreg.com or contact james@simplyreg.com for details.

Protective film

Rhino Protect is offering ABD members a 15% discount on its range of stone chip protection film. To obtain the discount, phone 0870 803 0187, give them your membership number and request a 15% discount. See rhinoprotect.com for more.

Will making

Everyone should make a Will, to make life easier for those you've left behind in the event of your death. You can arrange for the ABD to benefit from a legacy of whatever size your estate can afford. For advice on making a Will, contact Gibson-Forge – see the advert on p14. In drawing up the document, make sure that the legacy quotes the legal name, number and registered address of the ABD for the avoidance of confusion. These are: *the Association of British Drivers (an operating name of Pro-Motor, a company limited by guarantee and registered in England under Company Number 2945728) and whose registered office is 4 King Square Bridgwater Somerset TA6 3DG.*

Stay informed

email groups

We sometimes need to contact as many members as possible in a short space of time. If you have an email address please subscribe to ABD Action, allowing us to do this. You can add your name to the list by sending an email to abd-action-owner@yahoogroups.com stating your full name and membership number. You can also subscribe to the ABD forum to take place in various discussions. If you'd like to join send an email to abdml-owner@yahoogroups.com, stating your name and membership number. abdml subscribers will automatically be added to abd-action as well and if you've got a bit more time available you might like to subscribe to ABD-Chat, which has a higher rate of postings. To subscribe to this just send an email to abdchat-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Website

The main ABD website (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 to find out more or email the ABD webmaster – Chris Ward – at webmaster@abd.org.uk

OTR – go electronic

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

OTR in cyberspace

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

Speed limit objection packs

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

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

Help out

ABD publicity material

If you would like copies of the ABD leaflet, flyer or poster please get in touch with Susan Newby-Robson (details overleaf), and she'll send you what you need – but please don't over-order as printing costs are high. There's also a limited stock of car stickers available.

ABD merchandise

Help publicise the ABD with a group polo shirt or a golfing umbrella. They cost £20 apiece (including P&P) and you can order them from Susan Newby-Robson, whose details are overleaf.

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 Robin Simmons, the affiliations contact. If you're a member of an organisation which you think should support the ABD, please let Robin know and we'll endeavour to sign them up.

Business cards

Business cards are available from the membership secretary if you're representing the ABD.

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

Joint memberships 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.

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

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

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