

On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

Issue 93 – Autumn 2009

abd.org.uk

Full steam ahead for the ABD

This issue of *On The Road* is packed with articles on what the ABD has been doing on your behalf over the past few months. The most important is our new *Fair Deal for the Motorist* campaign, launched in the last issue, and about which you can read more on page 7 – but that's just the start of things. The usual slew of motoring-related stories has led to massive demands on the ABD's spokesmen, in the press, on the radio and on TV too. Much of this has been driven by the appointment of Brian Mooney as the ABD's London-based lobbyist, whose role it is to liaise with decision makers and present the driver's case as frequently – and as vociferously – as possible.

However, while the ABD has been much in demand in recent weeks, there's also some great news from within, as the inaugural



Member of the Year award was presented to Sean Corker by ABD chairman Brian Gregory, at the recent AGM. Sean was given the award for his fantastic efforts in helping to defeat the congestion charge proposals in Manchester, where 79% of the public across all 10 boroughs voted to reject the package.

The campaign created exceptional demands on Sean's time and energy; his determination to succeed in the face of adversity was a brilliant example of what can be achieved. We now need to build on this award by ensuring members' efforts are recognised every year, which is why the committee would like to hear from you about what you've been up to along with your fellow members.

We will also be introducing another award in 2010: the Paul Smith award for positive road safety contributions; we'll also be having a golden raspberry award for the worst schemes. To make your nomination, please contact Brian Gregory, who – along with many of the rest of the committee – will be at the next open members' meeting, to be held at Gaydon on 14 November. For more details on this, see page 2.

Road death low hides bigger picture

The number of people killed on UK roads has reached a record low, with 2538 deaths on in 2008; the lowest annual total since records began in 1926. The drop came despite half of Britain's A-roads failing to be rated as safe in a European survey. However, the number of people killed in road accidents involving alcohol rose last year, rising from 410 in 2007 to 430 in 2008. Meanwhile the number of drink-drive fatal accidents – where at least one person was killed – also rose from 370 to 380.

Meanwhile the Conservatives seized on figures accusing the Government of relying too heavily on speed cameras for road safety. It based its attack on figures showing that areas with the largest number of speed cameras were also where the most accidents took place. The police authorities in the top five for speed cameras – London, including the Metropolitan Police and City

of London Police (780), Thames Valley (413), West Midlands (344), Lancashire (293) and Greater Manchester (245) – all come in the bottom six areas for those killed, seriously injured and slightly injured in road accidents.

Meanwhile, a National Audit Office report shows the UK is fifth safest globally for road deaths – but it's 11th out of 24 developed nations on pedestrian deaths and 17th on child pedestrian deaths. The NAO has called for the government to set separate targets for those killed and those seriously injured, as road death numbers are declining more slowly than those for serious injuries. The NAO report also highlights the fact that while the number of cyclists killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads fell between 2000 and 2004, they rose again by 11% between 2004 to 2007. Seems like there's still some work to do...

ABD launches first prize draw

With Christmas upon us, a bit of extra cash would no doubt be very welcome. So if you fancy a £405 bonus soon, you'll be wanting to buy a ticket or two, for the ABD's first ever prize draw.

If you're wondering why the first prize is such an odd sum, it's because that's the maximum you'll now pay in road tax if your car isn't especially frugal. Thanks to Brian MacDowall for donating the first prize; he's no doubt very glad that the proposed £950 top tax rate hasn't yet arrived...

By the time this issue of OTR arrives you'll have received £10 worth of lottery tickets (two books), which we'd like you to sell ASAP please. Other prizes were still to be confirmed as this OTR went to press – if you'd like any more books of tickets to sell, please contact Brian Mooney, whose details are on p16.

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

It's been a joy putting together this issue of *On The Road*, because it's crammed full of information about what the ABD has been up to, and it's brilliant to be able to share it with you. The problem in the past has not been one of inactivity on the part of the committee and others – it's been one of a lack of write-ups to let me know what's been going on. This isn't a whinge about a lack of communication in the past; it's an acknowledgment that we're all so busy campaigning on behalf of the ABD, that it's been too easy to fail to tell you what we've been up to. That's hopefully set to change though; everyone is making a concerted effort to report on what they've been up to. So while some of the reports are a bit rough round the edges – they're little more than a series of tidied up notes in some cases – at least you'll now know what the ABD has been doing on your behalf.

One of the reasons why we have to work harder as well as smarter than our opponents, is because we're funded purely by our members' subscriptions, and all those active within the group are active on a voluntary basis. That's something to bear in mind when you make comparisons with groups such as Brake and the Campaign for Better Transport, who have rather better funding than we do. If you want to know just how well off they are, take a look at page 11 – but not if you've got high blood pressure.

Apologies if you didn't receive your last copy of OTR in good time to notify you of the AGM; everything was sent through in good time to the printer, but a Royal Mail strike conspired against us to hold everything up for well over a week. The result was a lot of copies delivered until the day of the meeting – and even slightly later in a few cases. However, the AGM was also promoted in the previous edition which is why we still had a reasonable turnout. More importantly though, this illustrates the benefit of being subscribed to ABD-Action, as this allows us to tell as many members as possible what's going on within the group. If you're not signed up, check out page 15 to see how easy it is to do so.

Poor Al Gore. He makes a film about climate change, he even wins a Nobel Prize for his efforts, but nobody really takes him very seriously. In a desperate bid to be listened to, he spouts forth ever more ridiculous notions, and the latest is – wait for it – that climate change is as great a threat to civilisation as the Nazis were during the Second World War. Yes, really! What the fool doesn't seem to have latched onto is that the more outbursts like this that he makes, the less credibility he has. And he already has none at all in the eyes of most...

On page 5 you can read a news brief about Colin Gant, who has a phobia of scammers. Even though he's always had a clean licence he's terrified of the prospect of being nicked by mistake. Even though he's on record as saying that his phobia is "completely irrational", he went to see those nice chaps at his local scammer partnership, to help cure him of his phobia. There he was told that it's pretty much impossible to be sent a NIP by mistake. Of course. Let's hope he never reads OTR, as there's a story in most issues about a stack of drivers who have been sent NIPs by mistake.



Kart racer Daniel Lloyd recently passed his driving test on his 17th birthday after just 90 minutes' tuition. Despite having never previously driven on public roads, he booked his theory for the morning of his birthday and after just one lesson he managed to pass his test in the afternoon. The teenager originally scheduled his practical test for two days after his birthday, to give him time for some intensive practice. But when a cancellation came up his father booked it. Great news for Daniel, but while he might be familiar with the mechanics of driving, his almost complete lack of experience of driving on public roads should not have allowed him to get a full licence.

The Tories recently released Labour's eco-town blueprint in which you can't have a house

find anybody who refused to take them. If you live in the North East or West and want to meet other members and help out contact John at northeast@abd.org.uk

- Sent out second issue of South East newsletter to Kent, Surrey and Sussex members; intend arranging members' meetings for these areas

- Medway towns have a vicious parking regime; I've drafted leaflets and had 4500 printed to distribute with the help of Kent members.

- London members' meeting arranged for 24 October (venue to be advised).

- Attended Urban Mobility conference with Brian Mooney.

- Went to Somerset for a three-day motorhome show where we had an ABD stand; superbly supported by Keith Peat and Dave Barry.

- Delivered 800 leaflets in Bristol with freepost

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The next issue of *On The Road* goes to press on Monday 14 December. Contributions deadline is Monday 7 December.

Open meeting: 14 November

The next open meeting will be held at the Heritage Motor Centre on 18 November, starting at 10.30 am. Please come if you can; you can meet most of the committee, learn what the ABD is doing for you and also find out more about how you can get involved in the ABD's campaigning. For venue details, see www.heritage-motor-centre.co.uk

with a drive or garage so you have to park on the edge of town where a permit costs £13,000. Presumably you then take your shopping home in a wheelbarrow. The Tories claim this could be the model for any new housing developments; seems as though the spectre of the newly constructed ghost town is almost upon us.

Just got back from a trip to Germany to get this issue of OTR to press. Taking advantage of the good weather and light traffic I wound my car up to well over 100mph for the cruise home, enjoying the good lane discipline and attentiveness of the drivers around me. Sure there were plenty of sections with a 120kph speed limit, but between these it was possible to sit above the ton, cruising in safety while making rapid progress home. God knows why I was in such a rush to get home however; as soon as I landed in Kent there were scammers everywhere, plenty of congestion and a 70mph limit...

Chris Medd

ABD director Brian Macdowall is spearheading our Fair Deal campaign with Brian Mooney; he's been flat out raising its profile; this is merely a summary of his activity over the last month. If you want to help with campaigning, contact him ASAP; his details are on p16:

- Local authority approval for lottery tickets granted; tickets now printed.

- Press release on latest fuel price increase distributed to all local papers in the UK.

- Attended North East members' meeting organised by John Ryle, for those who can't get to Gaydon. He's also been distributing Fair Deal leaflets in his locality. Took opportunity to speak about Fair Deal to members. John lives in a rural area where a car is a necessity; when he began distributing Fair Deal leaflets he couldn't

envelope attached to increase response rate.

- Liaised with Brian Mooney over contacts he made with *Daily Express*; they are very receptive to us submitting pro-motoring articles.

- Contacted Nigel Humphries to submit article on cowboy clampers in *Sunday Express*.

- Delighted to receive good news both John Ryle and Keith Peat have volunteered to become regional reps.

- Brians Mooney and MacDoawll have drafted plans to get more publicity as the party conference season approaches.

- As if I wasn't doing enough Brian Mooney has been delivering leaflets in Teresa Villiers (shadow transport spokeswoman) constituency, Barnet, aiming to stir up locals on driving issues. He has contacted a member in Barnet who has agreed to write to her.

Magistrates: Police can't be trusted

In an extraordinary attack, the Magistrates' Association has said it's a "certainty" that officers will misuse powers because they can't be relied on to handle them appropriately. The comments have been made as part of the Association's response to Government plans to allow police to issue £60 fixed penalties for careless driving.

Police have been accused of increasingly dealing with offences using on-the-spot fines as an easy way to hit the government's crime targets. Magistrates are worried that the number of offences now dealt with in this way is keeping some serious offenders out of the courts.

However, police leaders insist the use of the fines, which have risen sharply under Labour, help to reduce paperwork and free up officers' time. It leaves two of the key bodies responsible for tackling crime and administering justice at loggerheads.

The Government's proposals would make careless driving a fixed penalty offence, meaning those guilty being handed an on-the-spot fine and given three points. Currently, those suspected of careless driving are prosecuted in the courts where they can be fined up to £5000 and given up to nine points.

Chris Hunt Cooke, chairman of the Magistrates' Association road traffic committee said: "Regrettably, recent experience with out-of-court disposals shows that the police cannot be relied on to use them appropriately or as intended. Once they have been given these powers, the police will misuse them, that is a certainty, and careless driving will be generally treated as a minor offence, unless serious injury is involved.

"This is a proposal that places the convenience of the police above what is right in principle, may coerce innocent drivers into accepting a fixed penalty, and is certain generally to downgrade careless driving in terms of offence seriousness."

Hunt Cooke, a magistrate for 13 years, said the offence is a subjective matter, unlike speeding or driving with no insurance, and any judgement of how serious that is should be made in a courtroom. He said police officers will be "prosecutor, judge and jury, deciding on guilt and then sentencing the offence".

"Faced with the choice between the heavy burden of taking the matter to court and the simplicity of issuing a fixed penalty, it is certain that many police officers will opt for a fixed penalty, however bad the driving may be."

Credit card surcharges ruled unlawful

Thousands of parking tickets paid by credit card could be cancelled after a council's charges were ruled unlawful. Camden Council has been charging 1.3% extra for tickets paid by credit card, but a firm claimed the extra charge is unfair – and the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service (Patas) agreed, saying the entire ticket should be cancelled.

The ruling could also affect the boroughs of Harrow and Merton, which also charge extra to pay tickets by credit card. Harrow has been charging people extra to use credit cards for 18 months.

In January, London General Transport Services

Limited was given a £120 penalty charge notice by Camden Council. But the company appealed, claiming it was unfair to charge an extra 1.3% for a ticket that they had no choice but to pay.

Patas adjudicator Henry Greenslade agreed. Referring to the rules by which councils must abide, he said: "The words 'authorities cannot justify applying surcharges in relation to credit cards' could not be clearer".

If Camden Council is unsuccessful with its appeal, every fine paid by credit card since the 1.3% charge began in January could be challenged. The council has given out £26m in parking fines this year.

Much-needed road schemes are axed

Dozens of road schemes announced by the Highways Agency will have to be delayed or cancelled because of escalating costs. The agency's existing roadbuilding bill will cost up to £4bn more than originally thought and it will be able to afford only a fraction of the schemes it had promised to complete by 2015.

Traffic volumes fell by 3.5% in the first three months of 2009 because of the recession, but are forecast to rise rapidly when the economic situation improves. The DfT says traffic in England will grow by 17% by 2015 and 32% by 2025. The Government announced a £6bn roadbuilding programme in January, but supporting documents reveal that more than half the schemes are optional and could be cancelled when budgets are revised.

Figures obtained from the agency under the FoI Act show that several new roads have cost more than three times the original estimate. The

total cost of the agency's 56 major schemes could rise by almost 50% from £8.4bn to £12.3bn. The A38 Dobwalls bypass in Cornwall, finished in December, cost £52m against an original estimate of £17 million. Work on upgrading the A2, near Cobham, Kent, was finished in February. It was supposed to cost £35m but ended up at £130m.

Cost escalation is even worse for roads still being built. The Hindhead tunnel, designed to relieve congestion on the A3 in Surrey, was expected to cost £107m but now the agency expects a bill of £372m. The cost of work on the A1 from Peterborough to Blyth has risen from £31m to £96m.

The agency has already been forced to scale back or delay key projects, including plans to widen the M25 and a bypass to relieve the villages of Mottram, Hollingworth and Tintwistle in the Peak District.

in brief...

• Figures released by the Met show scameras were activated by foreign-registered vehicles on 8880 occasions in 2007-08. But the force admitted the "majority" escape legal action as officers are almost powerless to identify them. Senior officers could only find four examples of foreign drivers who have been prosecuted for more serious driving offences. They blame a lack of access to foreign databases and the fact driver summons papers are unenforceable outside Britain.

• A council's 'Go Green' boss has come under fire for clocking up thousands of pounds in mileage – in his SUV. Martin Heatley, Warwickshire County Council's environmental leader, has racked up more mileage expenses than any other councillor at the authority. The Tory councillor drives to meetings in his Toyota Land Cruiser. He said: "We can't all go green overnight". He was elected in 1993...

• A 700-yard bus lane has opened in Bath; it cost £916,000, or £1300 per yard. The lane on the A367 can be used by buses, taxis, cyclists and motorbikes currently just four buses an hour run along the road.

• Parking wardens have hit a disabled pensioner with a £75 fine because he displayed his 'blue badge' the wrong way round.

• Great grandfather Ron Padwick has been fined £75 for displaying his blue badge upside-down. Worcs-based Parwick complained to Herefordshire County Council which issued the fine, but it has refused to back down, stating the rules are clearly laid out.

• Parking companies will be subject to strict limits on the penalties and fees they can charge, under government plans to drive rogue operators out of business. They'll be forced to erect prominent signs setting out the parking rules on private land. They will have to release clamped vehicles promptly, establish an appeals procedure and comply with a new duty to act "reasonably" at all times in their dealings with drivers.

Parking costs to spiral

Higher parking charges could soon rake in more money than council tax for local authorities as some town halls face up to black holes of more than £100m each. Struggling councils will target parking as one of the big sources of additional revenue; the government is already allowing local authorities to tax companies for on-site car parks, now the same drivers will increasingly have to pay to park outside their homes as councils introduce controlled parking zones.

Parking already generates almost £1.5 billion a year for local authorities. Many London councils issue annual permits costing up to £154, but make much more from parking meters – and fines. Westminster raises £85m a year from on-street parking, only £3m less than it makes from council tax.

in brief...

•A man clocked by police driving at 173mph in a 50mph zone has avoided jail - after it was found his car was incapable of travelling that fast. Officers recorded the remarkable speed for Tex O'Reilly's Lotus Elise as he drove along a country lane in Derbyshire last July. But defence lawyers successfully argued the builder's unmodified car had a top speed of 127mph.

•A group of bendy buses have been taken out of commission in London. The nine vehicles, operating on Route 507, have been replaced by new buses. Bendy buses on the seven remaining routes will be phased out when their contracts expire, by 2015 at the latest.

•A member of Lancashire Police staff has been given a warning after 2115 speeding tickets had to be cancelled. The Independent Police Complaints Commission said the failings in the force's Central Processing Unit resulted in a "total shambles". It found that paperwork was not completed properly for speeding fines, leaving them open to challenge.

•The budget for London Safety Camera Partnership has been cut from £5.9m to £3m by TfL. Officials at the Westminster unit - which operates 900 speed and red light cameras in the capital - say the move will not hit their ability to process millions of tickets handed out every year.

•Average speed checks are on the way for Welsh drivers for the first time. New mobile cameras will monitor speed between two points, then issue penalty notices if the limit is exceeded. The cameras are likely to be introduced on a stretch of the M4 motorway around Newport, where there's a 50mph limit.

•More than 67,000 people have been billed incorrectly since Barrier Free Tolling began on Southern Ireland's M50 in August 2008. Figures obtained show that the system has been misreading 200 cars a day. They also show that 12,500 people a day are not paying their toll within the required time. However, the operators say the system is improving.

•Abu-Haris Shafi, joint MD of Britain's largest driving school, has avoided a car ban despite accruing 17 points. Shafi, of BSM, faced court action after his car was caught breaking a 50mph limit by speed cameras. He declined to reveal who was driving his car and received six points on top of 11 he already had.

•Lib Dem MP Malcolm Bruce has presented a Bill that bans vehicles overtaking a stationary school bus; he also wants more safety training and warnings. The call follows the deaths of two pupils in Aberdeenshire last year, after being struck by cars when they stepped off school buses.

•Motoring taxes have been handled so badly that drivers no longer trust what ministers say the charges pay for, an MPs' report says. Inconsistency over justification for green taxes "tarnished their image", according to the transport committee. No kidding!

Spy cars ruled illegal

Motorists issued with parking fines after being caught out by so-called "spy cars" may now have grounds to appeal after a legal ruling. Rachel Johnson challenged three £60 fines issued by Wirral Council using evidence gathered by Smart Cars fitted with periscope cameras. A tribunal upheld her claim she was loading and unloading her car when the the Penalty Charge Notices were issued.

About 30 councils across England and Wales are believed to use the cameras. Johnson appealed to the local authority after receiving three tickets in a week. On each occasion, she'd parked briefly on double yellow lines outside the off-licence she runs in New Brighton. "I felt like my privacy had been invaded," she commented. "We were just going about our business, trying to run a business, and I knew we were allowed to park here."

The fines were overturned by the Traffic Penalty Tribunal, which rules on appeals against parking penalties issued in England and Wales.

Drivers stitched up by justice system: 1

Violent crime victims are having thousands of pounds slashed from compensation payouts if they've been given speeding fines. The policy was slipped out without any announcement by the Ministry of Justice and it's expected to save the Government millions by reducing costs for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, which makes payments from public funds to crime victims.

Changes to the rules governing the CICA scheme were introduced last November and now involve far greater financial penalties against those making compensation claims. As many as 5m motorists are at risk of reduced compensation, as the courts hand out up to 1m motoring fines a year;

If you have a cutting you'd like to have included in OTR, please send it to Chris Medd - contact details are on page 16.

Crash drivers to pay

A motorcyclist who spent two weeks in intensive care after colliding with a car has been sent a bill for £505.34 for the use of four road-closure signs, five diversion signs, 16 road cones and seven sandbags.

The bill was sent to Alex Hall, 23, by Devon County Council, the highways authority, two years after the accident in April 2007, in which Hall suffered serious head injuries. He'd already pleaded guilty to careless driving, been fined £140 plus costs including £240 for "clean-up and recovery" and been given five points.

The council says it is using discretionary powers granted by the Highways Act to recover costs. It claims that such recovery is "standard practice", a Council spokesman saying: "It's not the first time we've recovered costs of remedial work from a motorist. Councils are entitled to recover the costs of remedial works from any person responsible for damage, spillage or debris on the highway. This is in accordance with the Highways Act 1980.

convictions are only 'spent' after five years.

In the past, CICA payments could be reduced where 'the applicant's character as shown by his criminal convictions makes it inappropriate that a full award should be made'. But that didn't include minor offences as speeding, anyone fined less than £250, or who was fined more than two years previously. The vast majority of motoring fines fall well below the £250 cut-off point; in 2006 the average was £142. But now CICA staff have been told to make deductions for all unspent convictions including minor motoring matters, 'unless there are exceptional circumstances'. Payments will be slashed by 10-25%; the same reductions that apply to rapists and murderers.

Drivers stitched up by justice system: 2

Thousands of middle-class motorists who challenge speeding fines face having to pay most of their legal costs even if they win their cases. Reforms, which have been described as a 'stitch-up' aimed at excluding the middle classes, will limit the costs that can be claimed back by the drivers. From October, the Ministry of Justice is cutting the current generous level of costs awarded to successful defendants to the lower rates used in legal aid cases.

Legal experts say that as a result, some court victors who currently have 80-100% of their costs reimbursed, can expect to have only between a fifth and a third paid back. The new rules will also affect drivers who successfully challenge drink-drive and other motoring prosecutions. Currently, nearly 400,000 drivers a year (about one in four of those who go to court) win their cases.

Critics say the Government's decision to wage war on motorists on low and modest incomes means justice will become the 'preserve of the rich', who can afford the services of 'loophole'

lawyers. They fear the new rules will deter thousands of innocent motorists from seeking to defend themselves.

Legal aid rates are around £60 an hour while many lawyers in motoring cases charge from £175 an hour for a junior lawyer to £375 an hour. Under the current system, a motorist who paid £2000 for legal representation might see the full amount paid back by the court if cleared. But under the new system the driver might only receive £600. Defending a speeding case typically costs £3000-£4000, rising to up to £8000 if expert witnesses are involved. A drink-drive defence can cost £5000-£10,000.

Jeanette Miller, senior partner of specialist motoring offence firm Geoffrey Miller Solicitors and president of the Association of Motor Offence Lawyers, said: 'It's a stitch-up of the middle classes. A lot of people with a valid challenge will simply accept the fine, even though they are not guilty. They simply won't take the financial risk of defending themselves.'

Councils snoop on drivers nationwide

Town halls accessed the details of more than 800,000 drivers last year to try to link them to low-level crimes such as littering. The DVLA database of every vehicle owner has been combed by local authorities in pursuit of offences such as dog fouling, littering and nuisance noise. Council staff have been given powers to trawl the system when they suspect cars are linked to minor offences often punished with no more than an £80 on-the-spot fine.

In the past three years local authority staff used the Web Enabled Enquiry System to search the DVLA database 803,748 times – that's nearly 800 times each day. There have been four separate inquiries in the past two years into claims certain authorities used the system in an inappropriate way. Last year a DVLA team investigated whether Manchester city council used the system properly and this

year Slough and Lewisham councils and TfL have all faced investigations.

Town halls were originally given 24-hour access to the DVLA's database to make it easier for them to locate the owners of abandoned cars. But following an intervention by DEFRA the access was expanded to help council staff investigate 'environmental crimes'.

Defra's definition of environmental crime includes leaving wheelie bin lids open, putting out rubbish at the wrong time and leaving 'side waste' outside bins.

Last year a survey found that councils had used the DVLA data to investigate a range of incidents that included horse fouling, leaky petrol tanks, graffiti, bogus callers, out-of-control dogs and benefits cheats. Bexley Council, in South-East London, checked it 44 times last year to trace those illegally advertising cars for sale in the street.

in brief...

- Hundreds of drivers caught using bus lanes have escaped fines after a computer virus forced town hall chiefs to cancel their tickets. The 'Conficker worm' caused chaos when it hit Manchester town hall in February; it cost the council more than £43,000 in lost bus lane fines. The computer problems meant 1609 tickets could not be issued within the 28-day legal limit, rendering them useless.

- Drivers shouldn't hide their car keys when at home because it risks a violent confrontation with burglars, a policeman has warned. The controversial advice was given after a case in Clifton, Lancashire, where a 16-year-old burglar murdered a pensioner for his car keys. Speaking after the killer was jailed for life, a vehicle crime specialist from the Met said: 'I'd rather they broke in and found the keys and nicked my car. If we say hide the keys then we are actually putting people at risk of ending up in the sort of situation which happened in Lancashire.'

- Motorists have been left furious after a council issued fines worth £350,000 in just three weeks after changing regulations for the heavily used junction of Henshall Street and Balls Pond Road. Islington Council fined thousands of drivers in a matter of days after installing a CCTV camera to catch road users who were unaware of the new rules. Previously it had been legal to turn into the tiny backstreet.

- The boss of Britain's biggest speed-camera firm has been nicked for driving at 102mph. Police clocked Tom Riall on a 70mph stretch of the A11 as he raced to a business meeting in Norwich. Riall, 49, is chief executive of Serco, which oversees more than 5000 cameras on the UK's roads.

- Colin Grant has suffered from a genuine phobia of speed cameras for four years, despite never being caught by one. Despite being an IAM member who has never had a speeding ticket, Grant is terrified of the fixed-point Gatsos - just in case they incorrectly flash him. Driving 500 miles a week, he regularly takes huge detours to avoid camera sites and said that if he sees a speed camera he suffers a panic attack and has to pull over.

- Plans to make thousands of residential streets across Preston 20mph zones are "impractical," the leader of Lancashire's highways authority has said. A radical plan to look at transforming Preston into northern England's first 20mph city was voted through at a stormy Preston Council meeting. Chief executive Jim Carr will now write to County Hall urging them to review their policy and roll out 20mph default limits across the city's residential roads. That would see 20mph signs put up across all residential non-A roads.

- The British public has become more sceptical of climate change over the last five years, according to a Cardiff University survey. Twice as many people reckon "claims that human activities are changing the climate are exaggerated".

EU deaths fall

The fatality rate on Europe's roads declined in 2008, compared with the previous year. Around 39,000 people were killed in road collisions in 2008 in the 27 EU nations, a drop of 15,400 from 2001 but still far short halving of the road deaths to 27,000 that the EU set as a target for 2010. The average annual reduction since 2001 has been only 4.4% instead of the 7.4% needed. This could delay the EU in reaching the target until 2017. The data comes from the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) which has analysed EU and national performance in road safety. After a particularly bad 2007, 2008 saw a promising decrease in road deaths by 8.5%. This has been the best year-to-year reduction since 2001. Estonia (-33%), Lithuania (-33%), Slovenia (-27%) and Latvia (-25%) achieved the best reductions in 2008 but still have some of the highest road death rates in the EU.

More CC exemptions?

Low-emission petrol and diesel cars would be allowed free entry to London's congestion charge zone under a plan by TfL. Most drivers pay £8 a day to enter the C-charge zone, with drivers of electric and hybrid cars already exempt. TfL has ordered a review examining whether more vehicles should become exempt based on their emissions.

A TfL spokeswoman said no changes would be made to the C-charge system until spring 2010 at the earliest. Drivers of electric cars or vehicles with alternative fuels with strict emissions criteria – such as hybrid cars – are exempt from paying the C-charge. But drivers of about 14,000 petrol or diesel cars in London which have lower emissions than the hybrid cars must currently pay the charge.

WPL arrives in 2010

The country's first "workplace parking levy" will come into force in Nottingham in 2012 and is likely to be adopted by other councils. Under the scheme, any firm with 11 or more staff parking spaces will be charged £250 a year for each. That cost could rise to £350 within two years. Employers would be free to pass the cost on to their staff. An estimated 40,000 commuters in Nottingham drive to work and some businesses have threatened to leave the area if the scheme is introduced.

Business associations oppose the extra cost, which has been put at more than £3bn if rolled out nationwide. About 10m people in Britain drive to work every day. Councils in Milton Keynes, Exeter, Cambridge and Oxford have expressed interest in the scheme, along with the Core Cities Group, which represents Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle and Sheffield.

M6T traffic reduces

Road traffic on the M6 Toll in the West Midlands has fallen 17% in the last two years, according to data published by the operator. The average daily traffic volume on the road in the period April-June this year was 39,581, compared with 47,964 in the same period of 2007. Traffic levels are 5% down in the last year. Road operator M6 Toll attributes the fall to the weak UK economy and "improved network capacity" on the non-tolled M6.

Despite the traffic drop, the operator says toll revenue increased 0.8% in the quarter 2009 compared with 2008. This reflects the new tolling regime introduced in January that sees cars charged £4.70 (Monday-Friday 06.00-23.00); £4.50 (Sat/Sun 06.00-23.00); and £3.50 (at night). The corresponding charges for heavy goods vehicles are £9.40, £9 and £8.

aa friend?

There was a time when the AA protected the interests of drivers – indeed, that's why it was set up. *Malcolm Heymer* looks back at the early days of the Automobile Association.

ABD member Keith Wilson brought to my attention the existence of *This Motoring*, sub-titled *Being the Romantic Story of the Automobile Association*. It was written by Stenson Cooke, the AA's first Secretary, and covers the organisation's development from its founding in 1905 until the late 1920s. It makes very interesting reading, not least by comparing official attitudes to motor vehicle users in the early days with those of today – in many ways, very little has changed.

I'm sure most ABD members are aware that the AA was formed in order to combat the tyranny of the blanket 20mph speed limit, imposed by the Motor Car Act 1903. One of the problems in the early years of motoring was the absence of metalled roads, so cars threw up a lot of dust, to the annoyance of many residents. This was part of the justification for the speed limit, but it applied everywhere under all conditions, even when no nuisance or danger was caused to anyone. As noted early in the book, speed by itself was made an offence, irrespective of danger.

In conservative rural Britain, cars were viewed with suspicion and distrust, aggravated by the dust problem: "This is awful," was the wail. "Why can't somebody do something about it?" Feelings ran high. Meetings were held. What should be done to be rid of this new plague? "Here! What about that new Act with the speed limit, and fines, and things? Get the Police to set traps and make the beggars pay. There's money in this!"

There certainly was money in it, just as there is today! In 1905 the usual fine for exceeding the speed limit was £5, a great deal of money in those days. Of course, at that time cars could only be afforded by the wealthy and it was from those early motorists that the founders of the AA were drawn, with the specific purpose of fighting back against the speed traps.

The method used by the police was to set up a measured furlong (220 yards), with a plain-clothed policeman at each end equipped with a handkerchief, and a uniformed officer with a stopwatch beyond the end of the measured distance. The stopwatch was started when the first handkerchief was waved, and stopped at the wave of the second one. If the car had covered the distance in less than 22.5 seconds, the driver was stopped and charged.

There were claims that some police traps were manipulated to convict innocent drivers, for instance by starting the stopwatch a few seconds after the first handkerchief was waved. When a case went to court, the word of the police officer was always believed over that of the accused – just as it is today.

The AA deployed cycle scouts to find where traps were set up and to warn drivers of them. This didn't go down well with the police! Things came to a head when an AA member was accused of speeding up a steep hill, even though he had been followed through the trap at the same speed by a cycle scout, who maintained he could not possibly have



reached, let alone exceeded, 20mph. The scout was called as a witness when the case went to court, but the driver was found guilty and the scout charged with perjury. This was make-or-break time for the AA – and justice for drivers – so it had no choice but to defend the scout at all costs.

The prosecution alleged that the scout had not followed the car through the trap, as all three police officers denied seeing him. The AA drafted in surveyors to produce plans of the road, to explain how the police might have missed seeing the scout (if indeed they had!), and to establish the gradient. Expert timekeepers were also employed. The case was tried by jury and the scout was acquitted.

This success did nothing to reduce the enthusiasm of the police for trapping drivers. It was reported that one county bench alone was making £1000 per week in speeding fines. Speed traps were also seen as the route to promotion within the police:

It had been borne in upon the simple mind of the average police constable that the road to promotion was paved with motoring convictions. Burglary, setting fire to a barn, or a punched head, had, like the poor, been always with them, but motor traps! Oh, splendid! A bunch of fivers every bench day, booked to their credit, growing in volume and likely to grow, except for this interfering Organization which made bold to combat their activities and, what was worse, bade fair to prosper thereby.

A couple of years after the failed perjury case, the police started prosecuting scouts for obstructing them in the course of their duty. Here they were successful, by virtue of using underhand methods to lure the AA scouts into warning drivers

when they were already inside a trap. As a result of these prosecutions, the AA adopted the policy of warning its members passively – if a scout failed to salute, members were told to stop and ask the reason – rather than actively stopping and warning them. This new approach was also tested in court, but this time the AA won.

The battle between police and drivers continued until abolition of the speed limit in 1930. The AA lobbied strongly for abolition after consulting its membership: of 100,000 who responded, 92% voted in favour. In the debate on the Motor Traffic Bill that eventually abolished the speed limit, the AA's position was summarised thus:

Much publicity has been given to the idea of raising the limit, but retaining the principle. The AA has always fought for abolition. We have opposed speed limits as being arbitrary, and proved them so.

It's a pity the AA is not as forceful in its support of drivers today, as there wouldn't be any need for the ABD!

The book covers many other aspects of the AA's growth, including setting up the star ratings system for hotels and garages, providing village name signs and signs warning of hazards, installing the first petrol pumps, and providing legal advice and insurance. It also set up a service for drivers touring abroad, which became popular as a way to escape the speed limit.

Used copies of the book are available on Amazon from as little as one penny, plus postage! It is an entertaining read, not least for the quaint language sometimes used and the insight into the society of the early twentieth century. If ordering a copy through Amazon, don't forget to do so via the ABD website, as we earn a fee for all purchases made.

fair deal

Following on from its introduction in *OTR92*, Brian Mooney expands on what the ABD's *Fair Deal for the Motorist* campaign is all about

The last issue of *OTR* introduced the concept of our 'Fair Deal for the Motorist' campaign, and it effectively launched at the AGM on 18 July. A launch date just before the main holidays is hardly ideal, but with the General Election now months away, the quieter period has been good for laying down the campaign's foundations.

The first weapon in the campaign arsenal is a colourful, punchy leaflet, printed on glossy paper. At one-third A4 in size, it's been cost-effective to produce for wide distribution. We've done some 'test marketing', and it's been well-received by enquirers at shows. We've also been getting filling stations in London and East Anglia to stock supplies on their counter.

I got the idea couple of years ago. Peter Roberts and I had both been giving out leaflets in Reading town centre, warning voters about a local road pricing scheme. I asked local petrol stations if they would display spare stock for us – and found ready takers. This time round, retailers have been very willing with only one supermarket station having to decline due to a more general 'no advertising' policy. As the leaflets are now starting to go out in volume, it'll be interesting to see if motor dealers, car part shops and garages are prepared to stock the leaflet.

There is an evolving campaign website, at www.fairdealabd.org.uk, that'll be updated as the campaign progresses. You'll see that we already have some respected public figures on board! As the ABD's manifesto from 2004 is being updated, we have only asked people to endorse a set of common-sense principles.

However, we are pleased to already have support from the actor Tom Conti; the popular campaigner and force behind 'Parking Appeals', Neil Herron; Honest John, 'the dealer you can trust' – well known to newspaper readers; last but certainly not least, the former Greater London Assembly members Damian Hockney and Peter Hulme Cross who held Red Ken to account.

If you personally know any other public figures who might lend us their name, please contact them directly. We undertake both to respect their privacy and in what capacity they can support us.

A quick trawl has identified as possibilities, people of the calibre of Jools Holland, Noel Edmonds, Sir Terry Wogan, Ewan McGregor, Samantha Bond and Emilia Fox – that's just a selection of those who've spoken out over the London Congestion Charge.

We have been asked why, if we are the Association of British Drivers, is the campaign formally 'Fair Deal for the Motorist'? There are two main reasons – first, because Transport for London have their own 'Fair Deal for Drivers' campaign – enough said – and secondly, because the media tend to use 'motorist' more.

Given that most people use 'driver' and 'motorist' interchangeably, I don't propose to nitpick. Suffice it to say that the main ABD website will



Drivers pay £50bn each year between them, and this is the state our road network is in...

refer any enquiries for the slogan 'Fair Deal for the Driver' to a wonderfully-compact webpage, www.abd.org.uk/fairdeal.htm.

Both sites make it easy for visitors to give active support and offer a range of options. Apart from the basics like giving out leaflets and spreading the word to friends, enquirers are helped in writing to local Parliamentary candidates and elected representatives. Our pages link seamlessly into other research that ABD's experts have compiled.

With money being on a Conservative election victory, there will be increasing attention on Shadow Transport Secretary Theresa Villiers and Shadow Roads Minister, Robert Goodwill. Villiers has so far focused more on airports and high-speed rail – she has not commented much on motoring issues.

I heard her deputy, Goodwill, speak in June. With his driving background, he seems more in tune with the driving public, and does not want the Conservatives to be seen as an 'anti-motorist party'. Some of his ideas for improving traffic flow and restoring police patrols are solid common sense.

On the downside, he may come into office as part of a government facing a £175 billion black hole in public finances. There will be immense pressure on investment and even a temptation to find new sources of money. The Conservatives have ruled out national road pricing for cars, although might consider it for trucks, claiming it could even competition with foreign hauliers.

They are also considering the possibility that extra capacity on main roads might be financed by toll lanes, or even charging 'drivers who might benefit from extra lanes'. His punchline seems to be to want to listen to what drivers are prepared to pay for.

ABD is going to rise to the challenge of putting the case for drivers – since 1997, we've made a net contribution of over £400 billion to the Exchequer, so should regard proper investment as being paid for in advance.

There is some truth in the saying that politicians respond to those who shout the loudest. David Cameron admits that the next election is not yet 'in the bag' and may only decide manifesto commitments at a relatively late stage. He is known to listen to focus groups in marginal constituencies, and MPs may decide what is a priority on the size of their postbag.

The government has been on a bit of a charm offensive this year, appointing 'nice guy' Lord Adonis as Transport Secretary and generally steering clear of controversial initiatives.

However, we sensed the opportunity of September's fuel duty rise to write to local papers across the UK, with our Chairman, Brian Gregory's letter being widely published. The jewel in the crown was the *Yorkshire Post* commissioning an article in which he outlined our current deal.

It's been a good start, but we must keep getting our messages across to the public – remember, advertising works through repetition. We are getting revived interest from TV companies and, with the party conference season approaching, are taking steps to forge links with radio stations and newspapers.

To help provide a war chest, we're launching a Fair Deal lottery. Apart from the chance of a cash windfall just before Christmas, there are some very worthwhile novelty prizes – you can read more about this on the front page of this issue of *OTR*.

As you can see, the ABD committee has been very busy in recent weeks and months, but we need *your* help. Even if you don't normally consider yourself as an activist, any time you can lend us may make the difference between succeeding or falling short. Guidance will be offered where needed.

•Brian Mooney acts as ABD Media Spokesman in London. To discuss help, you can contact him via brian.mooney@abd.org.uk, 020-7385 9757 or 07976-414913.

The ABD has been working hard to keep you informed – and there are now more opportunities than ever to stay in touch with other ABD members

ABD launches new forum for members

Since 1998 the ABD has been using member forums which have operated via YahooGroups. Whilst these have greatly improved our communication and consequently our campaigning effectiveness, we have for some time been aware of their shortcomings.

The problem with these mailing lists is that you get a never-ending stream of messages containing all manner of topics there's no structure, so it's hard to focus on matters of interest to you, and impossible to ignore matters of no interest. Some find this constant deluge of messages too much to handle on a daily basis, and as a result our main mailing list for members (ABDML) has always been relatively poorly utilised, with only around 10% of members subscribing – even fewer participating regularly.

To encourage many more members to participate in discussions and campaigning, we've set up a new online forum which makes it easier for you to join in whenever you have the time, and discuss issues that matter to you.

To make it easy to find things, the new forum is broken down into four categories:

- **Organisation forums:** Concerned with the operation of the ABD and its forums.
- **Topic forums:** Contains a sub-forum for each major issue we campaign upon; this one replaces ABDML.
- **Regional forums:** A sub-forum for each region of the country, helping you to find issues local to you. These are something most areas have not had before.
- **Sundry forums:** For off-topic issues, these replace abd-chat.

The topic forums cover national issues such as congestion charging, environment, motorcycling, parking, public transport, roads & motorways, speed cameras, speed limits, taxation, tolls, etc. These allow you both to focus on issues of interest to you, and conversely ignore those you have no interest in.

Regional forums for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the nine regions of England, allow members to discuss local issues and get help with local campaigning activities from fellow members in the area.

The forum uses phpBB3 software, so if you've used other online forums that use this you'll already know how it works. If 'phpBB3' means nothing to you, worry not, there's a detailed FAQ explaining everything, and we have a dedicated sub-forum within the organisation forums to discuss and seek help upon the ABD forum itself.

You can set up your own profile and even upload a photo of yourself. Tools allow you to quickly view all active topics across all the forums, and all new topics since you last visited. You can even get a list of all your own postings.

To find out how to register on the all-new ABD Forum, just visit the member's site (www.members.abd.org.uk) where you'll find full instructions.

More Tweets in store for ABD members...

The ABD began using Twitter in February as a means of promoting the ABD and disseminating our message to supporters. As I write this we have 240 people following us, and we've sent out over 1000 messages (or 'tweets').

'Followers' are other Twitter users who have chosen to receive our messages, so most of them are supporting us (apart from the odd green who clearly just wants to know what we're doing). As well as many members of the public, our followers include Autocar, British School of Motoring, 4 Car, Driving Standards Agency, Halfords, Fiat UK, Fifth Gear TV, Jaguar UK PR, the *Kent Messenger*, London Air Ambulance, NAAT, NO2ID, NoToBike ParkingFees, Pistonheads, Seat Cars UK, Toyota UK PR and (possibly) Nigel Mansell. So you will see that Twitter has enormous potential to spread our message to other influential organisations.

We also follow many people and organisations to get updates from them. We can pass on (or 'retweet') their messages, and we can put our perspective on it. Some of the Twitterers we follow include Auto Express, Autotrader, Boris Johnson, Christopher MacGowan (former SMMT CEO), DfT, Drivers' Alliance, Downing Street, Edmund King (AA), Highways Agency, IAM, Jaguar Land Rover, PACTS, Paul Clark

MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport), Renault UK, RoSPA, Sadiq Kahn MP (Minister of State for Transport), Tiff Needell, UK Parliament, Volvo PR and What Car. Influential people and organisations!

Now, you may have read articles in the British press that rubbish Twitter, but there's a reason for this - they are terrified of it because it takes away their power.

When a plane crashed in the Hudson River in New York last year, where did people turn for news? CNN? ABC? Fox News? No, they turned to Twitter, because Twitter had hundreds of reporters all around the scene of the accident who could tell the rest of the world what was happening instantly, whilst journalists and TV news crews were still on their way.

Twitter allows everyone to be a reporter, a commentator, a blogger - to influence the world. No longer do the press have a monopoly on the power to direct people's opinion, and you can play your part too.

So help us to spread the ABD's message by signing up to Twitter. Follow the ABD (<http://twitter.com/TheABD>). Find people and organisations of interest and follow them. Build up a following. Then when the ABD tweets something you like, retweet it so your followers

get to see it too. With luck, some of them will retweet it, and maybe some of their followers, and so on. By this simple means, messages can potentially be distributed around the world, but it needs more of you to support us.

I defy any of you not to be able to find people on Twitter who you'd like to get updates from. Many celebrities have realised that Twitter is a fantastic way for them to communicate with their fans without having to go through an expensive and time-consuming middle man. Then there are countless organisations such as football clubs, Formula 1 teams, newspapers, NASA, police, radio stations, TV stations and many more. No matter what your interests, from astronomy to zoology, you'll find people around the world on Twitter who share them.

At the present time the ABD is gaining an average of three followers per day, but we only have 240 in total at present, whilst Greenpeace UK has 7293. We need many many more followers to increase our influence – if all our members helped out we could easily have thousands of followers, so please help us out. It's very easy to do, and you can have fun whilst doing it.

Log on to <http://twitter.com> and get stuck in!
Chris Ward, ABD webmaster

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...

AGM 2009 sees launch of member involvement plans

The ABD's 2009 AGM was held on 11 July at the Heritage Motor Centre at Gaydon. The turnout was a little down on usual, largely because of Royal Mail failures, as detailed on page 2 of this issue.

Treasurer Hugh Bladon kicked off by reporting a small loss on operational activities for the financial year, well down on the previous year, but stressed that we must seriously consider cutting our printing and postage bill by reducing the number of hard copies of OTR. The committee will present plans to the membership on this within the next year.

Guest speaker Guy Herbert, chief exec of NO2ID (which has spearheaded the campaign against government attempts to track everyone's movements), gave a highly informative account of the recent surge in surveillance techniques by government. He also expanded on how a skilled and dedicated team at NO2ID, aided by its supporters, (the ABD is affiliated) are fighting back.

Next was the launch to members of the ABD's membership involvement campaign, key to which are sustained efforts to get many of the issues we have been arguing for higher up the political agenda. ABD director Brian Macdowall and newly appointed Media and Lobbyist rep Brian Mooney have collaborated to produce a campaign pack, available soon. This will list organisations which you can lobby to highlight the issues on which we campaign.

Brian Mooney showed a draft leaflet, which will be issued at the next open meeting (on 14 November) to be distributed where possible. Part of the campaign will involve approaching celebrities for their support; these include people such as Tom Conti and Samantha Bond, who have been outspoken over anti-car policies.

We will also be forging stronger links with like-minded groups to get our message across and the committee will be taking a lead over the run up to the general election (and beyond) by asking you to back our efforts.

To aid this important cause, we're asking

all members with email to subscribe to ABD-action (details p15), for fast notification of events where added support can help apply pressure to decision makers.

Another key part of the strategy is to undertake regional meetings where possible, to engage you more fully. As ever, we'd appreciate it if you can ensure your current contact details (especially your email address), are with the membership secretary (details p16).

Brian Macdowall next gave a presentation of how effective you can be just by using a camera and PC, when he showed how Kent ABD had photographed road layouts in the county, drawing attention to how Kent County Council is focusing on the wrong things. A back-to-basics slide show which focused on anti-car measures, it highlights how the council is breaking its rules on reducing CO2.

A really useful tool for campaigning, if you want a copy on CD, contact Brian (details on p16 under Kent); a contribution to costs of £5 would be appreciated, any profits going to our fighting fund.

Over the next year more campaign tools will be made available on the members' website, including skeleton letters to save you time and effort in writing everything from scratch, plus some of Brian Gregory's key presentations.

Much of this in response to members' requests for campaign material, which is why we'd ask you to regularly check the members' website for new material; there's a wealth of useful, practical information there to assist members.

Finally new director Paul Biggs, who is now our environmental expert, gave an

interesting talk on how the argument over climate change is slowly being won with several high-profile scientists altering their views on man-made global warming and seriously questioning the blind faith that governments have capitalised on to

raise taxes. Scientific research on climate change has now been moved onto a separate website run by Paul. Well worth a look, you'll find it at <http://climateresearchnews.com>



in brief...

IMPORTANT!

•Have we got your email address? A recent exercise to send email to members has shown that a large number of members have changed their email address since they joined the ABD, but not told us. If we don't have your email address it's impractical for us to communicate with you other than by OTR quarterly, because of cost and limited resources. Thus you cannot be quickly advised of any urgent or important issues. So please, if you've changed your email address since you first joined the ABD, drop our membership secretary an email telling her this, and quoting your membership number; it would also be helpful if you can copy in your local co-ordinator so they can keep you updated with any local information.

•In connection with the ABD's appearance at the Motorhome and US RV show at Shepton Mallet in September, David Barry wants to establish which councils and organisation should be "named and shamed" regarding height barriers. For example, the Forestry Commission seems to have height barriers at all of its sites; perhaps not surprising as this a government department. Please send nominations and any picture evidence to djb@freedomroad.plus.com

•Peter Morgan has been busy completing an online AA/Populus survey and thinks ABD members should do the same. All you have to do is go to www.theaa.com/public_affairs/aa-populus-panel and proceed. It takes 5-10 minutes.

•Chris Lamb has spotted a useful resource for those needing to counter the usual climate change arguments; it's at <http://tinyurl.com/nhhq9f>

•Earlier in 2009, our chairman Brian Gregory was asked to put the case for the car by BBC Tees online. There was no debate as such, Brian was simply given the chance to put forward the ABD's view on a range of topics such as road capacity, the environment and transport investment. It's online at <http://tinyurl.com/m4r9y8>

•Malcolm Heymer has written to say that it's easy to check whether your car is correctly shown on the insurance database; just go to www.askmid.com. It's probably worth checking after first buying a car and then after each insurance renewal, to make sure the database has been updated. If not, chase your insurance company and carry documents with you until you know it's sorted. MoT certificates are now issued by computer, so provided you check the registration number and vehicle details have been printed correctly, the database should be right; the same goes for your road tax if you renew on-line.

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

abd action

Avon: get involved

As the Avon and Somerset coordinator, life is both interesting and frustrating. Along with Hugh Bladon and other local active members I've tried to shake local motorists from their apathy. We've held two poorly attended local meetings, regularly been heard on local radio and appeared in the *Bristol Evening Post*. We even forced a meeting with the previous council, yet still we suffer from total apathy in the area. The new Liberal council is obsessed with anti-car policies; some of the actions which I'd have thought would provoke action include:

- Millions spent on being the UK's first cycle city
- Closures of roads and bridges
- A campaign to introduce 20mph limits
- Most roundabouts changed to traffic lights
- Doubling of Clifton suspension Bridge tolls
- Reduction in parking and waiting zones.

Despite all these measures, drivers refuse to be stirred from their apparent slumber. So if you're a member in this area, please get in touch and let's make a concerted effort to make a difference. After all, many hands make light work!

Bob Bull

An ally in Cambs...

Peter Roberts and Brian MacDowall recently met with John Bridge, CEO of Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, who has made clear his opposition to plans to introduce congestion charging in Cambridge. It turns out he's been doing a lot of good work behind the scenes, as his job involves meeting politicians and others who can affect business growth in the region. He deserves credit for the generally negative reaction from businesses; without us having any local person acting on our behalf has saved us a lot of hard work.

John has promised to keep us informed of any developments; despite a recent announcement that charging plans are being put on ice, there always remains the likelihood such schemes will be pushed by councils.

After the meeting the pair noticed Heart FM were in the building so they called them and did a quick radio interview. They then spoke to a *Cambridge Evening News* journalist contact and left a joint ABD/Drivers' Alliance press release, put together with Sean Corker's help. A very productive day in Cambridge and a very useful ally too.

The ABD is busier than ever making contacts and lobbying on your behalf. This is just a tiny fraction of the meetings since the last issue of OTR.

...and Warks, Staffs...

Nigel Humphries and I met up with two Conservative Warwickshire County Councillors recently; we were being consulted on how to get rid of unwanted speed humps. Nigel gave a good account of ABD policy on speed and we also spent a bit of time talking about the farcical Warwickshire Speed Limit Review, and what a missed opportunity it was.

Meanwhile, I'm being kept informed and consulted by my local Staffordshire Conservative County Councillor on the policy of 20mph limits outside schools; he agrees with my views on this; see the piece directly below for more. He's also working on overturning the last folly of Staffs New Labour; dangerous and ridiculous alterations to a roundabout near me, that's made local people angry enough to start a campaign against the changes. After six years as an ABD member, sweeping changes in the political landscape have opened doors to me. A good case perhaps for never giving up!

Paul Biggs

Mooney goes on the conference trail

Yesterday I went to a 'low carbon vehicles event'. If global warming is a new religion, the conference started with a hellfire 'n' damnation sermon from Kevin Anderson of the Tyndall Centre. Most of the presentations were either on policy measures to encourage electric vehicles (EV), or technical such as battery technology, extending range, etc.

Boris Johnson spoke; he apologised for having been a 'petrolhead' in the past, and promised to upgrade his 12-year old Toyota to an EV when it finally conks out. He wants at least 1 in 5 parking spaces in London to support recharging, and 25,000 points by 2015. He feels it's bad to depend on fossil fuels, and wants to look at electric buses, like Beijing. He's also talking of introducing a zero congestion charge for electric vehicles. Although UK power generating capacity is due to fall 35-40% by 2015, Boris assured us London will cope with charging needs.

The day's questions were punctuated by rants from Stephen Plowden of the Slower Speeds Initiative and Mayer Hillman, who asked why we can't reduce vehicle power, why we shouldn't restrict cars to 70mph, why we shouldn't cull the number of vehicle suppliers and why can't we introduce personal carbon rationing?

Hillman's questions got so long-winded, droning and miserable that the chairman had to refuse one as "a polemic not a question". Even the true disciples of man-made global warming were laughing at Hillman, who believes that civilisations fail because of male vanity and environmental degradation!

There seems to be a fair bit of momentum behind EVs, even though there are currently more questions than answers; it'll be interesting to see how it pans out in the short term.

Soon after the EV conference I attended a conference which was chaired by Stephen Glaister of the RAC Foundation – a well known fan of road pricing. However, while he talked up road pricing a little, he wasn't especially forceful about it. Perhaps it's because one of the key presenters was Robert Goodwill, the Shadow Minister for Roads, and increasingly seen as the next Roads Minister. Goodwill emphatically ruled out 'spy in the sky road pricing' as 'political suicide', with a possible exception for trucks, which he said might put them and continental hauliers on a level playing field.

When I attend events, I try to engage with our opponents to put an ABD point of view across to them. Over lunch, I collared Glaister in his capacity as RAC Foundation boss. I mentioned both organisations would like to reduce congestion, but road pricing would be unacceptable. When I asked if the RACF would be open to other ideas for reducing congestion, he said yes.

I had previously seen Glaister as a forceful advocate of road pricing. He actually came across as rather retiring – although I'm not saying that he has lost his interest in road pricing. He is either a brilliant actor (I think not), or he's mellowed with age. Or most likely, he sees national road pricing as unlikely to happen under an odds-on Tory government.

Brian Mooney

20 plenty on BBC

BBC Radio London recently interviewed Nigel Humphries on Southwark's plans to implement blanket 20mph limits. As Nigel was kept on hold he had to listen to the contribution from the Borough Council, whose spokesman was asked: "so you admit you haven't done this as a last resort in specific areas where every other road safety measure has been tried?" The response was that "everyone supports 20mph zones except a few people who don't understand the relationship between speed and accidents".

Then it went into a series of headlines and trailers, together with quotes from a couple of callers who were vitriolically against the plans. When Nigel went live, he was asked what he thought of the Council's spokesman; he avoided, answering as it wouldn't have been broadcastable!

Our response was that we support timed 20mph limits around schools and in certain specific locations where visibility is curtailed, and that this would have benefits – benefits that are lost with a blanket 20mph zone. Nigel then went on to say that Portsmouth's 20mph zones were not complied with and backed this up by saying that the Government has no right to impose laws that criminalise the reasonable behaviour of the majority.

Crucially though, Nigel finished off by making the observation that the whole thing is motivated by a belief that driving is anti-social at any speed and that safety has been hijacked to serve this end.

UK charities: the sordid truth

Paul Biggs came across a fascinating website recently, called fakecharities.org. On its homepage the site states:

"this is a directory of those so-called charities that receive substantial funding from either the UK or EU governments. These charities are usually brought to our attention through interviews in the mainstream media, in which they support the position of the government that funds them."

Unsurprisingly, there are plenty of anti-car groups on there, with some of their financial details and why they claim to exist.

For example:

Campaign for Better Transport

Stated aims

In promoting research and education on transport and the environment, the trust places great store on dissemination. Its programmes aim to ensure

that results of its research are spread both to decision-makers in government and people who are affected by transport and its environmental impacts. We want to help those people use the research the trust does to make a difference to their surroundings.

Context

Successfully campaigned against the widening of UK motorways.

Details

The Campaign for Better Transport (previously Transport 2000) crusades against private transport, airport expansion and road building. Most of its campaigns focus on climate change and it is a member of Stop Climate Chaos. Its climate change campaign is led by the fanatical anti-motoring activist Rebecca Lush.

The charity's website tells readers "how to organise a demo, get your campaign into the local press or make an impact at a council meeting". It takes the credit for persuading the government to endorse "20 mph as a default in new residential streets" and for persuading the

Transport secretary to create "a carbon-reduction strategy for the transport sector"

According to its website:

"We lobby Ministers, MPs, regional government and local authorities, making sure green transport issues are kept high on the political agenda."

The government may be inclined to listen to this lobby group since it is the government that funds it. According to its latest accounts, the largest donor to the CfBT – with £272,266 – is National Business Travel Network (NBTN). NBTN is "a Department for Transport initiative and part of the government's ACT on CO2 campaign".

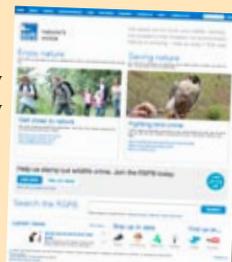
Not only does the CfBT receive 40% of its funding from NBTN, it also runs NBTN on the DfT's behalf. It also runs Tomorrow's England, which donated £66,311 to the Campaign for Better Transport in 2008. Most of the rest of its funding comes from bus and train companies.



RSPB

Stated aims

The RSPB is the uk charity working to secure a healthy environment for birds and wildlife, helping to create a better world for us all.



Summary

The RSPB is one of Britain's oldest and most respected charities. It used to exist on voluntary donations. Not any more. The RSPB formed Stop Climate Chaos in September 2006 and were amongst the first environmental groups to call for an 80% reduction in UK carbon emissions by 2050.

Details

In 2008, it received a staggering £19,731,000 in public money, including:

DEFRA	£2,618,000
Landfill Communities Fund	£1,560,000
Scottish Natural Heritage	£1,091,000
Natural England	£931,000
Scottish Executive	£664,000

Nat. Assembly for Wales	£552,000
Environment Agency	£333,000
Forestry Commission	£177,000
European Union	£3,169,000
Heritage Lottery Fund	£2,247,000
Local councils & other	£5,291,000

Incredibly, the charity's total income was nearly £104m, including £26.3m from member subscriptions and nearly £27m from legacies.

Brake

Stated aims

Advance the education of the public in issues of road safety with the object of reducing death & injury on the roads and help people traumatised and injured by road crashes through provision of support services to relieve their suffering.



Summary

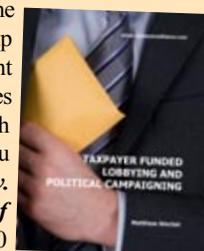
Brake is a road safety charity that campaigns for tougher driving tests, 20 mph speed limits in "built-up areas", a lower drink-drive limit and greater traffic enforcement measures.

Detail

According to the 2007 accounts, Brake's income for road safety education was £296,984. The DfT provided a grant of £41,811. It received further government grants totalling £17,480.

For much more, see <http://fakecharities.org>

•The Taxpayers' Alliance has done a similar piece of work; the group has produced a 54-page document containing details of which charities are lobbying Labour, even though they're government-funded. You can download the file from www.taxpayersalliance.com/tfpc.pdf – of most interest are pages 30 onwards.



Contact your MP

MPs are listed by name & constituency on the Parliament site (parliament.uk/directories/directories.cfm). Many MPs have their own email, but if you use the Parliament webpage to email them, it's involved. It's often better to check their constituency website (if they have one) for contact info. Make sure you state clearly you're a constituent to get priority in a reply. Conservative 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 Brian MacDowall (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 Terry Hudson – 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.

letters

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

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

Another sickening PR from the IAM about the all-time road deaths low, in which it's stated: "the Government, councils and police simply cannot continue to reduce deaths on Britain's roads on their own."

So it's all down to them is it? Drivers, manufacturers, medics and the rest play no part. ABS, stronger cars and airbags haven't helped at all? Government, councils and police have done it all by themselves. I really have had it up to here with the politically correct IAM PR department. One could suggest the only input government has made is by causing a recession leading to a drop in traffic!

Dave Razzell

I've noticed recently a trend for offenders to be given penalty points even if their 'crime' was nothing to do with driving. For example, a cyclist was recently given points, even though he was on a push-bike at the time of committing his offence. This is a dangerous development that needs to be monitored. If this is allowed to stealthily creep (and our government is expert at this) how long will it be before one faces a driving ban for overfilling one's wheely bin or allowing one's dog to smoke on the pavement in a public place?

John Ryle

According to recent press reports, Labour "has been frightened off for the moment" with regard to national road pricing. This is true in the sense that it's not going to happen overnight – but it's only a tactical charm offensive with an election coming, and while the capability is being developed. The TIF fund is still open, and road pricing trials continue with TFL.

There was an interesting article in the 31 July edition of *Local Transport Today*, on road safety audits. This is the process by which potentially hazardous features in the design of a new road or traffic management scheme are spotted (or should be) before the scheme is built.

The article is an interview with Malcolm Bulpitt, author of the first ever safety audit guidelines. He is about 60 and is clearly a real engineer, not an apologist for political correctness. He expresses some forthright views on recent trends in urban road design. A while ago the Government issued new guidelines that sought to end the construction of culs-de-sac and ensure all residential roads were through routes for traffic. Bulpitt is opposed to a return to grid patterns for urban roads:

"I spent part of my life as a safety engineer trying to engineer out crossroad crashes on urban grid patterns... We know the problems that exist living on main roads and fast through routes."

He also makes the point that many people prefer to live in a cul-de-sac and a house there may be worth 20-30% more than a similar one on a traffic route. He thinks this raises fundamental questions about the role of street designers generally:

"What are we in the business for? Isn't it to

"One of the greatest delusions in the world is the hope that the evils in this world are to be cured by legislation."

Thomas B. Reed, 1886

There's a current vogue for introducing blanket 20mph limits, but they're fundamentally flawed. Travelling speed and impact speed are often confused, but rarely equivalent, and then only when a driver fails or doesn't have time to brake or take avoiding action. Around 10,000 children are involved in collisions with vehicles in the UK each year. Research suggests that an average impact speed of 20mph would result in up to 500 deaths. The actual number of deaths is around 50, which suggests that average impact speeds are well below 20mph.

Furthermore, accident statistics tell us that children are rarely killed in the vicinity of schools. This is no doubt due at least in part to congestion caused by the dreaded school run, which results in vehicle speeds below 20mph, and driver awareness of children travelling to or from school.



Thus speed humps are a 24/7 solution to a perceived temporary problem at school arrival and departure times. As an alternative, the likes of Suffolk and West Sussex County Councils have implemented school safety zones (SSZs). This involves the use of road markings and advisory 20mph limits around schools. Advisory flashing lights warn people using the road at school pick-up and drop-off times of the 20mph limit. SSZs eliminate the well-known disadvantages of speed humps, which include increased vehicle emissions and fuel consumption, damage to vehicles even at low speeds, increased noise and vibration, traffic displacement on to non-humped roads, plus the potentially deadly effect on ambulance response times and patient comfort.

Paul Biggs

I suspect that the motorway communications network is being upgraded for dual-use, so that it is quicker and cheaper to implement road pricing. For years, even Tories who want to be seen as 'motorist friendly' have dallied with the idea of road pricing for trucks. Let there be no doubt that the song remains the same, either because the EU wants it or the usual suspects in DFT (and their lobbyists) want it.

Brian Mooney

provide something that the people who pay us, i.e. the punters, want? Now if the punters want quiet cul-de-sacs (sic) isn't that what we should be providing? Do you sometimes get the impression that the urban designers are saying, 'We're the new governors, we are going to rule the planet, everybody will live on traffic streets?'"

Too right we do! He goes on to say that not everyone lives the way that urban designers would like them to live:

"People live in ideal worlds don't they? Because people drive their Toyota Prius's and cycle to work doesn't mean to say a lot of other people out there aren't going to buy souped-up Golf GTIs."

He also criticises the use of 20mph speed limits on grid pattern streets where they are not self-enforcing, as they won't be obeyed. The idealistic view of some urban designers that they are trying to develop a new scenario of the way roads are used just won't work. He also has mixed feelings about shared-space schemes, saying they can work in a low speed environment but can lead to confusion.

If you'd like to read the whole article, email me and I'll send the scans.

Malcolm Heymer
malcolm.heymer@btinternet.com

So the government wants to increase our domestic fuel bills by £100-£300 per annum so we can be "green" as we create a low-carbon economy in the UK. In an article you can find at <http://tinyurl.com/nbgkcn> it says:

Under new targets announced yesterday (14 July 2009), ministers want four million more people living within five miles of work to cycle instead of taking their car.

I reckon that (five miles) includes all the residents of 10 Downing Street as well as many more living and working in Westminster and within the range of the division bell. Bring it on. Given that Gordon Brown can't even drive a car, the sight of him attempting to cycle (or maybe wobble) to work would be wonderful to behold.

From the ABD forum

In Hertfordshire the Highways Agency has been busy handing over most of its trunk roads to the County Council. There were arguments as to how much funding should be handed over at the same time but HCC has now taken over responsibility. If the same is happening in other counties these major roads will become even more difficult to protect and promote the interests of road users. Even the M10 no longer exists and is now part of the A414 trunk road.

Robert Bolt

The RAC Foundation recently called for an official body to be 'champions of the motorist' – even though the group already claims to be doing this! They're obviously not doing such a brilliant job if they have to reinvent the wheel. Where they have really lost the plot is in calling for yet another body to take responsibility for the roads. We already pay through the nose for central and local government to do this.

From the ABD forum

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

What do we think about road safety and road safety partnerships? We think of road safety as benign, good, helpful, life saving, altruistic, nice, kind. We certainly don't think of it negatively, do we? In theory that is how it should be and what we think should be what we get. But is it what we get in reality? Is it not true that the term 'Road Safety' has been hijacked by a very aggressive, lucrative and profitable industry — the Road Safety Industry?

From ACPO Ltd and its spin-off companies like Road Safety Support Ltd all earning millions, the partnerships are doing very nicely, thank you. Then the equipment manufacturers, installers, suppliers and maintenance companies and their shareholders all making vast profits too, and all proving that the term Road Safety is a nice little earner.

Hilary Benn recently took part in a webchat in which he made the statement that Earth has warmed by about 0.7°C since the pre-industrial period, confirming climate change is man-made. It's absurd that his entire 'evidence' relates to a claimed 0.7°C global increase in 150 years.

Given the miniscule 'increase', the accuracy of temperature measurements, the change in methodology over that time period, and the limited number of sample points on the earth's surface, it's a joke.

Chris Ward

A speed camera was erected near me after a woman was knocked down. Fine you say! But I was there when it happened. The woman was crossing the road, trying to catch the bus. She thought the bus was stopping at the bus stop, and ran in front of it! The bus had no need to stop as there was no-one waiting and no-one exiting, so the driver continued at the normal speed only to find this stupid woman run in front of him. He had no chance to even slow down!

The criteria for sighting these tax collectors is flawed. No-one believes they are a safety issue and whenever funds are low they have a blitz.

From the ABD forum

I'm a bit worried about Boris Johnson. In his bulletin *Keep London Moving*, which is about the tube strike, he notes:

"...to help keep traffic flowing the Congestion Charge will remain in operation throughout the strike and TfL will be suspending road works on major London roads wherever possible. Londoners and commuters are

If this were not bad enough, when real accident causes are ignored and accident prevention is ignored too, if there is no profit in it, then people die. When false claims are made to justify expensive policy to needlessly prosecute people, then untold hardship is caused too.

The DfT and the Police partnerships dishonestly peddle the lie that driving too fast and exceeding the speed limit are closely related, to justify the lucrative camera projects and thousands of prosecutions. This is nothing less than aggressive and dishonest road safety for profit. There is too much money swilling around in road safety for it to be honest and benign any more.

It is about time the partners asked questions of truly altruistic and independent experts on the question of road safety (*What, and cut off the hand that feeds? Ed*).

Keith Peat

encouraged to consider alternatives to the car where feasible."

This is a sick joke – many people will have little alternative to driving into work during the 48-hour strike, unless they are lucky enough to have hotel accommodation, or their meetings are cancelled and they can stay at home.

From the ABD forum

There was recently the story of a 20-year old man who, not wishing to stop at a red traffic light, cycled onto the pavement, went round a blind corner and hit an 84-year old pedestrian, who later died. For this he got seven months in prison – and a one year driving ban!

It seems a new and sinister approach is now being used by our 'independent' judiciary, that banning drivers is now acceptable punishment for many other offences. If the judge wanted to punish him, why not give him the same amount of prison time any driver would get if they mounted the pavement and killed somebody?

Terry Hudson

The September edition of *Which?* looked at the truth about fuel efficient cars. They compared 'normal' and 'fuel efficient' versions of the same car. An interesting snippet is that in every case the braking distance from 62mph was longer for the fuel efficient car than for the normal car. For example the Vauxhall Corsa normal stopped in 36 metres whilst the ecoFLEX took 40.5 metres to stop from 62 mph. There were similar results for the Ford Fiesta and Focus, the Mitsubishi Colt and the Skoda Fabia. The reason was not spelled out but there is mention that narrower

The Bedfordshire and Luton Casualty Reduction Partnership has launched a publicity campaign focusing on the anti-social nature of speeding (www.roadsafetygb.org.uk/news/478.html). As usual it emphasises the perception rather than the reality with such quotes as "Our latest public opinion survey showed that speeding and driving too



fast for the road conditions is considered the single greatest risk to safety on our roads and yet many people admit to speeding themselves." No facts, just opinions, another example of government spreading unrealistic fear amongst the populace to keep them cowed. I despair!

Robert Bolt

Shorts

When I last went down the M6, the M6 toll was empty. I stayed on the M6 even though the gantry signs warned of congestion ahead and suggested the M6T as an alternative – yet the M6 had no congestion. The HA which controls the gantries must be in collusion with the toll operators!

John Ryle

Always seems odd that you need to pick up dog mess (however small) from the roads or be fined, yet horses leave huge piles of it – often on bends where it can be a real hazard – and no-one bats an eyelid...

Tim Wright

20 limits at school times is a complete nonsense; at most schools, you can't get near 20 because of the chaos. If there are masses of children milling around, 20 is way too fast. Anyone who needs a limit to stop them going too fast needs to be taken off the road as they're clearly unsafe.

Peter Morgan

At a recent conference I attended, somebody cited the European Environment Agency as claiming that the UK scrapping scheme had 'no environmental benefit'. A bit like the Kengestion Charge, VED discrimination, the ActOnCO2 campaign...

Brian Mooney

Recycling is based on the idea that we'll soon run out of landfill space, but surely we can be more imaginative than filling in holes? Many areas could benefit from some constructive landscaping. 'Conservationists' forget that the countryside has never stood still: much of what we find attractive today is a result of past industrial activity.

Dave Razzell

I recently discovered a great website at <http://fakecharities.org>, which lists various charities and details how much of their funding comes from government. Seems Brake receives 6.5% of its funding from government, Living Streets 67% and Transport 2000 a whopping 74.1%!

Keith Jones

EU friends of mine who drive UK-registered cars on their EU licence are not allowed the 'privilege' of accepting a fixed penalty for speeding, but must instead have the fine imposed in court – and they're then 'fined' an additional £15 for the victim surcharge.

From the ABD forum

It amuses me, all this continuing talk of road pricing. On every single occasion that the public has been given the chance to vote on the issue, it has overwhelmingly rejected it. Those who continue to talk about it need reminding of this important fact.

Chris Burmajster

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wheels on eco cars often have less grip. I've never before seen this worsening of braking distance mentioned for eco cars and I wonder how many people are buying such cars in ignorance of the fact that the cars have a poorer braking distance than their 'normal' equivalent.

Robert Bolt

In a recent blog, environmentalist George Monbiot made the implicit admission that there are sceptics, as opposed to 'deniers'. The OED defines a sceptic as "A seeker after truth; an inquirer who has not yet arrived at definite conclusions."

Yet, to my knowledge, anybody who dares to question any part of the climate change dogma is a 'denier', and not a sceptic – at least, according to Monbiot and his ilk.

So here's a challenge to Monbiot, the BBC, *New Scientist* and any other purveyors of 'scientific' pro-AGW media: name the sceptics whom you recognise as being respectable, knowledgeable and credible scientists, whose views deserve to be aired and debated. And give them airtime.

It's (almost) unprecedented in any scientific arena not to find at least an equal number of scientists who adopt a sceptical stance – especially in areas as contentious as AGW. But for there to be not a single credible sceptic quite

simply beggars belief, and anyone who asserts that has no credibility themselves.

From the ABD forum



Why should taxis be allowed into bus lanes, as there's no regard for the number of passengers being carried? All this does, is allow smug anti-car hypocrites and government officials to travel around busy city centres easily, while the rest of us sit in jams, made worse by the bus lanes! If 'buses only' were allowed in bus lanes in London and 'important' and influential people had to suffer congestion like the rest of us, you would see soon see a massive reduction in bus lanes.

From the ABD forum

The 14 per cent fall in road deaths in 2008 is welcome news, but the Government must not be allowed to take the credit for it ('Road deaths fall to new low' LTT?3 Jul). Indeed, this reduction has come about despite the Government's policies, not because of them.

The sudden drop in fatalities can be attributed mostly if not entirely to the recession. In 2008, motor traffic fell by 0.8 per cent, which may not sound much but it is the first time that traffic levels have actually fallen since the 1970s. Traffic levels are driven by economic growth, so the rate of traffic growth is closely linked to the rate at which the economy is expanding. Under normal economic conditions, traffic grows year-on-year and acts to increase accidents (though not linearly), as opportunities for collisions to occur become more frequent. This negative effect on accident levels partly offsets the positive effects of safer vehicles and safer roads, which are the main drivers of casualty reductions. In a recession, however, negative traffic growth amplifies the accident reductions brought about by safer vehicles and roads, so a sharp fall in casualties results.

This is not necessarily the whole story. Canadian road safety researcher Al Gullon has developed what he calls the 'Drivers Economic Distraction Theory'. This proposes that drivers are more distracted (and therefore less safe) during periods of economic growth and become more cautious during the uncertain times of a recession.

Whatever the precise mechanisms, the 2008 fall in fatalities is by no means exceptional compared with previous economic downturns. In the last recession, in the early 1990s, road

deaths fell from 5,217 in 1990 to 4,229 in 1992, a reduction of nearly 1,000 deaths or 19 per cent in two years. Traffic levels remained constant during this period, they did not fall.

From the mid-1990s until recently, road deaths have fallen at a very slow rate compared with the long-term trend, despite continuing significant advances in vehicle safety. This is most probably the result of lack of investment in the strategic road network, especially the failure to replace overloaded single-carriageway routes with much safer dual carriageways or motorways, and the Government's fixation with speed limit enforcement as the basis of its road safety policy.

The latter policy has served to undermine the culture of road safety that gave Britain the safest roads in the world, by sending the subliminal message to drivers that they just have to obey simple rules and not think for themselves. If Al Gullon is right, small changes in drivers' psychology can have a significant effect on casualty rates.

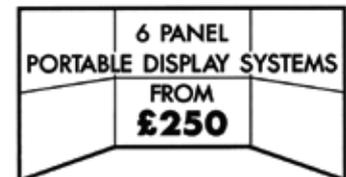
The recent fall in traffic levels has led to reduced congestion and an increase in traffic speeds, which rather refutes claims that higher average speeds lead to more accidents!

The accident problem on rural single carriageway main roads, which is a key issue in the Government's latest road safety consultation, is the result of too little speed, not too much, due to the failure to upgrade the network. Congestion on these roads reduces average speeds but increases driver frustration and leads to risk taking.

Malcolm Heymer

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
- **VAS**: Vehicle-activated sign



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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, so if you have email please subscribe to our 'ABD Action' mailing list. You can add your name to the list by sending an email to abd-action-owner@yahoo.com stating your full name and membership number.

Forum

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

Website

The main ABD website (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 Terry Hudson, 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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