

Advanced Motorists oppose new curbs

Britain's hard-pressed motorists are concerned at a series of recent stories which, if true, could hit all drivers, good and bad, the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) has warned.

Zero tolerance of motorists going slightly over the 30mph limit (since denied), blanket speed reductions on A-roads (also since denied), mandatory car immobilisers for older models and now news that carrying driving licenses could be made compulsory have all caused widespread concern.

"These stories have combined to create the impression that the poor old private driver is a sitting duck for half-baked ideas and threaten to undermine public respect for the law," said IAM Chief Executive Christopher Bullock.

"As the country's leading organisation dedicated to road safety through improving driving standards, it takes something for the IAM to object to measures that are allegedly meant to reduce road casualties. But we have to speak up for responsible drivers and riders where we see reports of proposals which will needlessly punish the many for the crimes of the few.

"Instead of imposing further blanket curbs on all, it is time to make a step change in increasing driver education. It should be aimed at the worst offenders. Most urgently we need structural change to replace the current 'fines and points' regime with compulsory driver re-training."

Regarding "Zero tolerance" for drivers slightly over the 30mph limit, the IAM believes that drivers should be punished severely for inappropriate, i.e. dangerous speeding, but the IAM cannot support zero tolerance. Drivers should concentrate on the road, not the speedometer. Speed limits are not targets.

On the proposed blanket speed reductions on A-roads from 60mph to 50mph the IAM says there is no need for such reductions, which would be a ham-fisted attempt to minimize road casualties. In order to achieve the desired level of respect and compliance with all statutory speed limits, they must be relevant to the road and the environment to which they apply.

New tax will cost drivers £260 a year

The Association of British Drivers has revealed that proposed "congestion taxes" could mean the average driver's tax burden rises from £1,300 a year to more than £1,560 - a rise of £260. The cost of driving is also set to rise when the Government introduces new taxes for parking at workplaces.

In proposals launched at the Labour party conference, head of the Commission on Integrated Transport, David Begg, outlined a plan to begin taxing drivers for driving in towns. Labour suggests that this new tax might be offset by reductions in other car taxes, but this is just a cynical ploy to try to defuse opposition to fuel tax increases amongst rural motorists and so divide and rule amongst car drivers. Begg knows this will never happen.

Far from lowering the 500% road fuel tax

and the cost of the tax disc, the Government will increase Vehicle Excise Duty in the next Budget for the vast majority of practical family cars. This could see the cost of a tax disc rising by 60% to £250. Labour is also likely to increase fuel tax (with or without the escalator), adding further to the £32bn (1997/98) it takes from drivers each year.

This new tax hike will mean that the elderly, people in rural areas and those without access to public transport are hit particularly hard - and this includes many people in towns. If congestion charging is brought in, local councils will have a direct financial incentive to actually create congestion with the sort of obstructive and unpopular measures that David Begg himself has so ruthlessly introduced in Edinburgh.

"Many businesses will also feel the blow," says Mark McArthur-Christie, the ABD's Roads and Traffic Spokesman. "The new taxes, coupled with plans for charging people to park at work will mean a dramatic rise in the cost of doing business for many companies, putting an end to Gordon Brown's aspirations for full employment."

The whole thing comes down to freedom of choice. Who has the right to decide how individuals travel, Government or people? If the answer is Government, then people will be increasingly forced to get out of their cars onto inadequate and inflexible public transport, which will have no incentive to improve. If it is the travellers themselves, then public transport must win them over without the kind of restrictive practices which would be illegal in the private sector, and it will be forced to improve, and the government will have to invest some more of the £32bn they raise from the motorist.

Yes, let's have better public transport, particularly light rail links, but we need to recognise that the car needs to be at the heart of the integrated transport policy, not excluded from it. Labour's policy of "tax the driver off the road and onto the bus" won't work. People

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will always need their cars and Labour needs to recognise the key place of the car in people's mobility plans, whether in the country, the suburbs or the town.

Big Brother Awards

The Big Brother Awards were "presented" at the LSE on 18th October. Regrettably Trafficmaster, who have been credited with developing the number plate recognition system were only runners up in the baddies' section. However Jack Straw and the Home Office featured prominently and it was learned that Borders & Lothian Police apparently take DNA samples from all suspects.

Leaflets given out advertised a book "The Maximum Surveillance Society - the Rise of CCTV", and a forthcoming Big Brother Survival Kit.

Workplace parking - councils back off

According to a report in a local paper, Solihull and Coventry councils have withdrawn from a project considering workplace parking taxes across the West Midlands.

No doubt there are other centres of common sense and realism defying "Cool Britannia" too. Send in your local details and the ABD will maintain a directory listing councils which are for and against workplace parking taxes. A sort of "Guide to where to set-up / re-locate your business"

Cameras not for safety - official

It was reported in the Richmond Borough Guardian, 16 September 1999, that Twickenham MP Vincent Cable had proposed ploughing money raised from speeding fines into road safety and traffic policing. The Home Office response quoted was that it will use the revenue from speeding fines to pay

UK News

for extra cameras *or* road safety measures.

So the Home Office has admitted that cameras are not road safety measures.

20mph not supported

Ben Plowden of the Pedestrian's Association appeared on Jimmy Young's programme on Radio 2 at lunchtime, 27th September. Plowden said there weren't enough crossings for walkers, town centres should be pedestrianised and 20mph speed limits should be more or less mandatory for urban areas and villages.

During the whole programme there was no support for his views except for one listener, a councillor said pedestrianisation can work, but you have to be careful how you do it. He said his town had just been pedestrianised, so in a year's time he may revise his opinions.

Except for him the response was absolutely against Plowden's ideas. 20mph was scorned as a realistic speed limit on any road, and many people said pedestrianisation creates ghost towns. An ambulance driver said most of the accidents he attended were because pedestrians had crossed at an inappropriate time and/or place. His advice? Drivers should not look at the speedo, but should look out for errant walkers!

J2J voted a hypocrite

ITV teletext ran a poll with the question, "Do you think John Prescott is a hypocrite for using a car to drive 300 yards to the Labour Conference venue whilst urging drivers to leave their cars at home?"

The result: 3855 people responded, voting "Yes" 96%; "No" 4%. The great British public is waking up at last.

Hague off-message

In July, this journal reported that the Tory Party seemed to be coming off the fence and moving away from past mistakes. It welcomed the appointment of Bernard Jenkin as Shadow Transport Spokesman.

However, as reported in the Daily Telegraph, 19th October, Wm Hague went PC at the launch of the Independent Transport Commission. Paul Marston, Transport Correspondent wrote:

"Cars must not be allowed to destroy the quality of urban life, the Opposition Leader said yesterday in a marked softening of recent Conservative rhetoric on transport policy.

William Hague said that the long-term role of the car was "the biggest question of all" and called for more provision for people without cars and more encouragement of cycling and walking. He said that the motor vehicle was a "force for good" in society, but had to be kept "in its proper place", not overwhelming places designed for simpler and slower traffic.

"As we plan our cities for the future,

perhaps we should plan how and where we want to live first, and then work out how to make the car fit around how we want to live". Somewhat vague considering cars are such a "force for good", Mr Hague?

Transport Policy

Air Quality - your action needed

Local authority environmental health departments are now reaching a critical stage in meeting their individual obligations under the National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS). All members should be aware and should be prepared to challenge their own local authorities.

How accurate are local authority assessments?

The Government's National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS) lays down maximum concentrations of various air pollutants, which are targets not to be exceeded in 2005. Under the requirements of the NAQS, local authorities are obliged to assess air quality in their areas, what the sources of pollutants are and, most importantly, whether any parts of their areas will suffer from levels above NAQS targets in 2005. They are required to complete these latter assessments by the end of 1999. If any such areas are identified, then Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) must be declared and action plans drawn up to bring levels down to within the targets.

The accuracy of the 2005 predictions is very important, since the declaration of an AQMA can lead to quite severe restrictions being imposed. For example, certain types of development might not be allowed, traffic might be banned from particular roads or whole areas. The City of Westminster has already declared an AQMA throughout its entire area and is considering moves such as restricting access to low emission vehicles.

Local authorities are carrying out their assessments using one of a number of predictive models available. In predominantly urban areas, traffic contributes a significant (but falling) proportion of the only two pollutants likely to be in excess of the targets by 2005 - oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and particulates (PM10s). In the latter case, there are likely to be relatively high levels of 'background' emissions from far afield, outside the local authority's control and largely dependent on meteorological conditions. What transport component there is comes mainly from heavy goods vehicles and buses. Nevertheless, high traffic levels could cause localised exceedences of the target.

The accuracy of any model which attempts to predict future outcomes of highly complex systems is always debatable. No matter how good a model is, however, its predictions can only be as good as the raw data it is fed, i.e.

The Association of British Drivers

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For contact details see:
www.abd.org.uk/contacts.htm

'rubbish in, rubbish out'. One critical area of input to air quality models is traffic flow. It has come to the ABD's attention that, in one major conurbation, the air quality modelling work has been undertaken across the whole of that conurbation by a single body, using 2005 traffic flow forecasts that have also been developed from a model of the whole area. That model uses a representation of the highway network which is relatively coarse for use within individual local authority areas in the conurbation. Consequently, with many of the minor and residential roads omitted, the model often loads unrealistically high traffic flows onto individual links in the main road network.

**If you see
emotive headlines ...
ask some
pointed questions**

The output of the air quality model for that conurbation has shown pollution 'hot spots' which, on closer examination, are largely alongside roads where the traffic model has predicted flows up to double or even treble current levels! The air quality model will have to be run again, therefore, with the traffic flows adjusted to be more in line with reality. In this instance, the grossest inaccuracies of the modelling process have been spotted and adjustments will be made, but how confident can we be that such major errors will not occur elsewhere? ABD members are urged to keep an eye on their local press for announcements about the results of air quality reviews and the declaration of AQMAs. If you see emotive headlines about the dire consequences of traffic on future air quality, ask some pointed questions of your local council - how were the forecasts arrived at?; what traffic forecasts

did they use and how accurately did the traffic model replicate current traffic flows, before it was used in predictive mode?; have they even bothered to check or just accepted the model output uncritically? You might be surprised at the answers you get!

There is no doubt that environmental groups will seize on the results of air quality assessments to demand more stringent controls on car use. We need to be prepared to challenge those assessments and encourage others to do the same, especially developers (who could be hard hit financially if planning permission is denied on the basis of an unfavourable air quality assessment). There could be some interesting public inquiries coming up in the next year or two!

**A transport policy based
on Common Sense?**

Steve Westbury brings a breath of fresh air to the scene.

When are Governments finally going to accept that technology cannot be reversed? The Atomic Bomb cannot be un-invented, and neither can the Car. The Luddites failed and we should not waste time with their ideological descendants today! Having experienced the freedom and security provided by personal transport, Man is not going to simply give it up. Can those who pontificate about there being "too many cars on the road" provide any historical examples of Mankind giving up something which benefited the way he lives? I think not, particularly when most of those doing the talking are only too happy to have the advantages themselves - whilst everyone else should use Public Transport (Tony Blair and John Prescott are really leading by example here, and are repeatedly proving the nonsense of their rhetoric! When did either of them last travel alone on a bus, tram or subway train, or cycle even five miles in the rain?). Continually increasing the Tax burden may be an easy way of raising revenue, but the costs simply flow through to make our businesses less competitive than those of other countries. Our fuel is already more than five times as expensive as in the US, but is our economy growing faster?. As in so many aspects of modern life, the old concept of "Common Sense" is currently not Politically Correct, and so we get proposals to ever-increase parking charges, to levy tolls on Motorways, and now to set a blanket 40mph rural speed limit. Is it conceivable that these measures might bring about the decline of our cities, drive traffic off the most efficient and safest roads we have, and create yet more frustration in drivers leading to more accidents, not less?

It is high time we accepted the car, and learned that it will, in one form or another, be with us for the foreseeable future.

Only once this has sunk-in will we start to think of practical solutions to the problems

that Technology brings, along with its far greater benefits. Let us try to keep the issues in perspective, and stop sensationalising the unsubstantiated claims of a variety of vocal extremist groups. The two supposedly key issues are usually touted as being those of the protection of the environment and the increasing gridlock on Motorways and in Cities. Let us look at these issues realistically, remembering that we are about to enter the next millennium, and considering the acceleration of technology in the last century compared with the previous nineteen.

Fact - the motor car's effect on Global Warming is insignificant in proportion to that of Mother Nature herself; even if there were no cars at all the rate of change would scarcely be affected! Cars running catalytic converters are now incredibly clean, whereas the Politicians and Vocal Groups seem conveniently oblivious to the majority of traffic pollution in our cities being exhaled by buses, taxis and trucks all belching out diesel soot, which has been proven to be far more dangerous to health, quite apart from the coating it provides to the urban environment - which is then simplistically blamed on "the car". The impact of the global airline industry has a disproportionate effect in terms of exhaust on the environment, but, rightly, no-one is suggesting we stop world travel.

Motorway gridlock. Drive out of London north up the M1 any evening you care and the problem is graphically displayed. The outside lane is full of cars as far as the eye can see, interspersed by Coaches, and many miles further ahead the queue is being lead by a driver doing 70 mph in deference to a Police Range Rover doing 65mph in the nearside lane. Once this driver has crawled past the Police Car at an overtaking speed of 5mph, and is sufficiently far ahead, he gradually increases his speed to about 80mph - but behind him the exercise has to be repeated many hundreds of times until the police car turns off the motorway. Is this effective use of a police force (sorry, "Service") in a society with ever increasing levels of crime? [Respect for the Police is now at an all time low, as older generations are tired of years being targeted as motorists whilst their property and personal safety count for nothing, and the younger generations grow up seeing this, and react accordingly]. Meanwhile the middle lane is about 50% empty, and the traffic there consists of trains of Trucks usually tailgating about 20 feet apart in a mixture of frustration at the occasional car driver who leads each train oblivious of any form of lane or speed discipline, and the ever-increasing desire to minimise consumption of a fuel that successive Governments simply see as the perfect revenue-generating device, in that it is easy to defend as "social responsibility". Is this sensible? Finally, in the inside lane there are virtually no vehicles at all, just the occasional truck or car. What is the most

common cause of accidents on the Motorways? "Speed Kills" is the Luddite reaction, yet has vehicle technology progressed since the 70mph limit was introduced 30 years ago? Or could it possibly be the fact that drivers are travelling, not too fast, but too close, and with insufficient attention? Do our current policies indirectly encourage this behaviour?.

In Germany, on the unrestricted Autobahns, no-one sits in the outside lane. They use it to overtake and then move back in. It is amazing how the possibility of a Porsche coming up behind you at 175mph focuses the mind on lane-discipline. In America, on the Freeways, the ability to pass legally on either side not only spreads the traffic over all lanes thereby moving a far greater mass of traffic within a far shorter length of road, but again forces drivers to be alert to all of what is going on around them. If these policies work elsewhere, and they do, then why are we not learning from them - is it because "Speed Kills", and that's that? How about some intelligent thinking rather than simplistic slogans?

"There are just too many cars on the road". On any stretch of Motorway, what is the percentage of cars to trucks? Now ask yourself, what is the percentage of road used by cars versus that used by trucks? Which is the more relevant question? How many trucks do you see carrying "containers" - remember the universal logistics unit that could easily be transferred between ships, trains and road freight? Think back twenty years - did you see more?

Anyone who travels regularly between the North and South of England, and the North of England and Scotland, knows the quantity of trucks moving goods long distance by road. Why? Because the Road Transport Lobby is Politically powerful - there is no other logical reason! What is the Government doing to support and expand brave initiatives like Eddie Stobart's Rail Freight Terminal? Of all the people who ought to be last in line for something like this, he seems to see far further than any of our Politicians, but it needs real Political courage and huge Government investment to get the container concept back up and running and really making a difference. That basic concept could still be fundamental to a real 21st Century National Distribution Network.

City Gridlock. I live near Manchester but often have to attend meetings in London. I have a Company Car. Here is a clear case of a journey that should obviously be by train, removing one vehicle for eight hours from our Motorways and Cities. Do current Government policies encourage me to go by train? Firstly the pricing policy of the railway company that I would have to use (in common I suspect with all the others) charges three to four times as much for the journey if I am to get there and leave at times to match by business meeting when compared to travelling later and leaving earlier. This differential would cost my company some £60-70 extra

per meeting over and above the fuel cost to travel by car, and eventually someone has to pay for that. Secondly, if I use my car for less than 18,000 business miles per year, I pay more Income Tax - that's a great incentive! Surely it would make more sense to base the Tax not on how many business miles a person does, but on the "benefit", which is how many Private miles he does? No-one then will do more business miles than they have to, and people would consciously limit their Private miles to keep down their Income Tax bill - remembering that home to office is classed as private mileage! Isn't this just too obvious? How many people do you know who share exactly these circumstances? How many Car-Hours could that be removed from our roads?

Surely, civilisations designed roads to provide vital communications networks, and provided parks for children to play in.

Finally, the latest PC catchphrase to start emerging is "making the streets safer for our children to play in". This I find absolutely astonishing, perhaps as I was brought-up to believe that streets were *not* the place to play. Surely, civilisations designed and constructed roads to provide vital communications networks, and provided parks for children to play in, or am I missing something here? We are already seeing the outcome of generations growing up with no acceptance that, as pedestrians or cyclists, they too have responsibilities when using the road network; what logic is there for reducing speed limits that have been in place for thirty years or more. If involved in an accident at a given speed, is a 1999 car likely to create more or less injury to passengers and other road users than one from the 1960's? Are newer cars less likely to be able to stop from a specific speed than cars of the 1960's? The answer to each of these questions is obvious, so we must conclude that the only logic for reducing existing limits is that other road users are more likely to cause accidents in the first place! Should we then not concentrate on improving education and a sense of responsibility in all road-users rather than, once again, just going for the simplistic "sound-bite"? If we bring up children to believe that the streets are for them to play in, then do they somehow automatically draw the line at the main road, or the dual carriageway, or the motorway? The latest game around Manchester involves children and motorways; they gather on bridges over the carriageways and drop bricks to see who can hit the moving cars.

Transport Policy? How about having the courage and determination to create one based

upon the reality of what technology offers us on the eve of the 21st Century, rather than some Politically Correct idealism that threatens to turn this once great country into a quaint antiquity?

Let Britain enter the new millennium not as King Canute, but with a return to the value of good old-fashioned Common Sense!

S.K.Westbury.

Ladbroke Grove Lessons

The Ladbroke Grove rail disaster in which 31 people died is symptomatic of the state of the entire transport system. Both road and rail have suffered from decades of under investment and poor planning. It's not simply a matter of privatisation vs. nationalisation; before privatisation the railways were run for the benefit of the railway workers, now they are run for the benefit of the shareholders. It's about time they were run for the benefit of the people.

One of the ways of bringing this about is to create a situation where road transport provides the railways with some very real competition. For this to happen the road infrastructure has to be improved immensely, and the anti-car mindset has to be nipped in the bud.

In the wake of disasters such as this, we don't hear people clamouring for strictly enforced 30mph speed limits for trains, nobody says that the trains are overcrowded because too many people use them, we don't hear arguments that more train lines would create more congestion, that they cut communities in half, etc. Yet these are precisely the arguments they level against cars and roads. It is time for politicians to recognise that the anti-car nonsense peddled by the extremists is precisely that - nonsense - and henceforth treat it with the contempt it deserves.

Letters

Road to police state - we're on it

Sir - I am not a member of your organisation yet! But I feel a comment about the new digital cameras may be worthwhile. I have just watched a very biased programme on the TV, The Tonight programme, where the subject was discussed. There is no doubt that the actual Government agenda appears to be revenue driven, this borne out by the fact that the fines will go straight into the Treasury.

As a technician by trade I can see a number of possible, probably illegal, methods of beating the system and have a number of points I think are worth mentioning..

1) The systems, UK wide will probably use the PAKNET system, already used by Traffic Master and a number of Home/Industrial Security Services. This system is reasonably interference proof, but not totally. It would not take much for an enterprising electronics company to create a jamming device which would effectively scramble the

captured digital image for say 1 mile around your vehicle.

2) It would appear that the system will be PC network based in some way or form. This, unless the system is to military spec, is wide open to hacking, viruses etc. It is also possible to interfere with the communications across the network carrier system which from PAKNET's regional sites is of course probably going to be via the normal telephone or leased lines.

3) If the system is linked, as is suggested, into the DVLC to enable rapid issue, so say in milliseconds, of an NIP (Notice of Intended Prosecution) then one hopes that the DVLC Database is a bit more accurate than it is at the moment as the Police are aware of many duplicate registrations, but cannot yet get a list from the DVLC.

4) The programme indicated that in a recent test on the M1, some 4,300 motorists were caught, but not prosecuted, in one day. If this system does start to operate in the near future, then it is quite possible that 20,000 motorists could be caught each day in the UK. If a reasonable proportion of these offenders opt for court rather than just pay the fine, it should result in a substantial amount of chaos and cost to the taxpayer in the courts.

5) It was pointed out that it would theoretically be possible to be banned in one day's driving. This could result in a rather rapid clearing of Britain's roads. As people lose their jobs because they can no longer get to work, the dole queues go up, the demands on the already stretched public transport system go up and the revenue from road tax goes down. The use of petrol declines and so the tax revenue from that declines etc.

6) As speeds on the motorways decline, fuel usage declines further. Costs for goods delivery go up as it takes longer to get things from A to B and this means higher labour costs. As fewer people can drive, fewer cars are sold and the motor industry starts to suffer. As delivery costs go up it becomes non cost

effective for car companies to manufacture here in the UK so more jobs are lost etc.

7) Finally we end up in a totally green, non industrialised society, with only Government Ministers and similar important people driving whilst the rest of us cycle into oblivion.

Whilst there are those who will applaud this new initiative, I feel that this is one more step towards the police state that this country is rapidly becoming.

Bob Dobbs.

Congestion double standards

Sir - It has been said that congestion is a serious problem and that some restraint with car use will be necessary

This is a total non sequiter, I spent most of the last two years commuting by tube and I can assure you that overcrowding on tube trains is far more of a problem than congestion on the roads. But nobody suggests "restraints" on the use of public transport, no politician tells complaining passengers that it is their own fault the trains are crowded, nobody patronises them by saying "we must all learn to use our trains a little more selectively".

So why should they get away with treating car commuters like this? People must be allowed to make their own decisions, if public transport is a viable alternative they will use it voluntarily. If anyone doubts this, consider the fact that whenever London underground holds one of its strikes traffic increases dramatically, what are these drivers doing with their cars the rest of the time?

Andrew Bent

Gasto danger

Sir - On a recent trip on the A68 in Scotland I noticed how many cars were staying out an inordinate amount of time while overtaking due to the presence of speed cameras at every safe overtaking point. This has got to be a danger causing the bunching behind slower moving traffic.

C Scott

ABD way ahead

Sir - I fully support the actions of ABD in trying to put over the motorists point of view to politicians. Regretably the Association seems to be a small voice in the wilderness and we currently seem to have Government policy dictated by opposing minority views which suits political dogma and the Treasury in particular.

One area where we have seen a more co-ordinated approach has been in the countryside where there has been an alliance of interested parties. This does appear to have had some impact. As far as representing the motorist I think we need an alliance with the motor trade and other affiliated bodies such as the Association of Petroleum Retailers.

If the Government achieves its aim of curtailing car usage it will ironically restrict its own revenue and the objective will be self defeating. The point which I feel no one gets over is the massive loss of jobs that will ensue. I work on the very fringes of the motor trade and I can see the fleet market severely damaged if taxation continues at the current punitive level. Even given continuing fleet sales, the private motorist is already beginning to shun the practice of replacing the car at regular intervals and the time scales are being stretched. This will create bottle necks of used vehicles on the second hand market and lower prices. In the short term this may be good but inevitably new car production will need to adjust to lower demands as can already be witnessed by the recent Nissan cutbacks. Cutting the price of new cars will go some way to redressing lower demand but running costs and usage restrictions are an even increasing burden.

Similarly we have seen the demise of the local filling station. Less choice means less competition and can in itself lead ultimately to higher prices. Fewer cars on the road means fewer garages needed for servicing and repairs. The components and tyre industries will soon feel the effects too.

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Chaufferplan offer

A question which often arises when people enquire about membership is "What do I get for my money?" The answer is that, apart from a monthly newsletter, you get a lot of hard work by a dedicated group of volunteers speaking up for the motorist. It is difficult to quantify the benefits of membership in any other terms.

The ABD does not wish to go down the AA route of selling insurance and holidays but an opportunity has arisen for our members to take up a special offer from Chaufferplan. This is an insurance against losing the mobility you enjoy by having your car and licence, the loss of either of which could have serious consequences far beyond the inconvenience involved.

Details of the scheme are included with this edition of OTR. It is not our job to persuade members to take up such a scheme but the offer for members more than covers the annual subscription to the ABD. It could mean the difference between keeping mobile or throwing yourself at the mercy of public transport!

The West Midlands relies heavily on car manufacture and there are many jobs in the ancillary trades which are threatened by present Government policy. Job losses and a threat to livelihoods is a strong message to get over to politicians and one they are more likely to acknowledge than the constant (justified) moan about stinging the motorist.

If we are to have an impact we need a strong and effective voice and we need to broaden the base of the argument and get other interested bodies on board with us.

John Pugh, Edgbaston

Time for action

Sir - To stop this insane "speed kills" policy of the Government I feel the only thing that is going to get results is for mass demonstrations. I believe the Government thinks that providing it disguises speeding fines as a safety measure and not tax raising, it can get away with it. Time to act now my friends!

Jim Gough

Campaigning

Media Report

In the period June to October the ABD was represented or featured in the media on numerous occasions:

Radio interviews:

BBC Thames Valley FM - on the Oxford Transport Strategy

BBC Three Counties Radio - Speed limiters

BBC Radio Wiltshire - Pollution and traffic

BBC Radio Suffolk - 30mph speed limits

BBC Thames Valley FM - 30mph speed limits

BBC Radio Bristol - town centre congestion tax

BBC Thames Valley FM - speed limits and "speeding drivers"

BBC Radio Wiltshire - Labour's transport policy

BBC Thames Valley FM - Car insurance and NHS charges

BBC Radio 4 PM - new cameras

BBC Three Counties Radio - new police charges for towing vehicles away after breakdowns

BBC Radio 4 You and Yours - fuel prices (recorded but not broadcast)

BBC Thames Valley FM - Bus lanes

BBC Thames Valley FM - CPRE survey on speeds and rural roads

New address, tel. no. or email? Make sure you tell us!

And be sure to use the correct addresses and telephone numbers when contacting the ABD. Always consult page 2 of OTR. These details are subject to frequent change.

BBC Radio Essex (fuel duty, cars and the environment)

BBC Radio Scotland (speed cameras, road tolls, general motoring issues)

BBC Radio Gloucestershire (road tax)

BBC Three Counties Radio - Motorway service station car parking charges

BBC Radio Humberside - J2J's "250 yard dash"

BBC Radio 4 "Today" - J2J's "250 yard dash" and Labour transport policy

A planned discussion on BBC Radio 4 on green propaganda in the school curriculum was aborted by the broadcaster.

Television:

BBC News 24 - new speed cameras

Sky news - new speed cameras

BBC Midlands Report - Speed and "speeding drivers"

Central TV, three items (mobile phones; fuel duty; road tax)

Granada TV "Tonight" - Labour transport policy

Granada TV "Tonight" - Speed cameras on the WWW (recorded but not broadcast)

The press, letters and quotes:

The Times - letter on speed limits (letter)

Autocar - quote about speed limits (letter)

The Times - letter on integrated transport policy (letter)

Auto Express - Rip off prices at ferry ports (the ABD - now Consumers' Champion too!) (Quoted)

EVO - stealth cameras (Quoted)

Time Out - London pedestrianisation (quoted)

The Oxford Times - speed cameras on the increase (quoted)

The Daily Mail - zero tolerance and "snitcher's charter" (quoted)

The Daily Mail - fuel prices (quoted)

EVO - speed kills (letter)

The press, articles:

EVO - the history of the Gatso camera (last page, October issue)

Top Gear - speed and safety (November issue)

A personal campaign

Steve Westbury's article on page 3 was individually posted to 625 MPs, e-mailed to car magazines, motoring organisations, national newspapers and broadcasters.

He has so far received 111 replies from MPs, mostly side-stepping the matter and hiding behind the Parliamentary Convention of not responding to issues from non-constituents, but he has also received several encouraging responses. Replies continue to arrive at a rate of about six per day.

Scottish Motor Show

Richard Dredge reports:

The ABD had a stand at the recent Scottish Motor Festival held near Edinburgh, and as it was the first event of this type, it was an unknown quantity for us. As we were specifically asked by the exhibitors to attend we potentially had a good opportunity to get a lot of exposure for not much money.

20,000 people were hoped for, which puts it on a par with the NEC show in May, which we also attended. At that event we signed up many new members in the two days - a feat that was repeated at the Scottish Motor Festival.

Unsurprisingly we had a very positive response at the show, and I'm sure we'll get some more membership applications once people have looked at our web-site. Although many people we spoke to were pretty unhappy about the taxation levels, it didn't take much prompting to make them think about the civil liberties issues as well - Scotland has more than its fair share of Gatsos!

Amongst those who joined were a reporter for the Daily Record, a chap who runs a car club and is a member of another two, and a gent who hails from Northumberland and is setting up his own group to campaign against the high fuel taxes. Several people took small piles of leaflets to distribute from shops and garages - the word is spreading!

Thanks to Richard and all the other ABD volunteers who helped make this a success.

Web sites

Iceland

A drivers' group in Iceland has a site, most of it's in Icelandic, but there's one page in English which is well worth checking out:

<http://home.islandia.is/h110/h110english.htm>

It's well argued, and with some interesting stats. Like following their version of Operation Victoria, fatalities went up 170%!

United States

One site worth visiting is

<http://www.bts.gov/smart/cat/ase.html>

It reports on trials of speed cameras in the US. Some of it deals with constitutional issues, but there is some useful info, such as the maximum inaccuracy from poor alignment which is +9mph with one brand. Gatsometer is one of only 2 brands which generally gives a high reading. Guess why they were chosen.

The Last Laugh

What is the difference between John Prescott and a clanger? Very little really, both are blue in the face, rotund and ramble incoherently. At least the clangers are a long way away in space and can do next to no damage. Sadly, Prescott is all too close and is doing enormous damage.