

On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

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Charging falters

by Brian Mooney

The London Assembly's Transport Scrutiny Committee has expressed grave concern at the Mayor's plans to introduce congestion charging in London in a hard-hitting critique of the Mayor's proposals for congestion charging.

The report puts a major question mark over the Mayor's timetable for introducing the charge, identifying weaknesses in the proposed project management structure and risks in the way the contract will be put together. The Committee has also expressed severe doubts as to whether the promised improvements in public transport can be achieved before congestion charging is introduced.

If you're thinking this won't affect you because you're not London-based, remember this is the template for local authorities around the country to do the same thing.

Difficulties are also highlighted on exemptions from the charge and there is huge uncertainty over the social impact of the scheme. Key findings were:

⌘ The time-scale for introducing charging (by end of 2002) is over-optimistic. There is a need to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for consultation and the proper consideration of all representations, before implementation of the charging scheme is commenced

⌘ Evidence suggested a worsening of congestion at the border of the charged area and in parts of inner London beyond the charging area. Additional congestion could lead to adverse environmental and safety impacts. Transport For London has not been able to demonstrate it can avoid all such impacts

⌘ Livingstone attracted comment for apparently wanting to work around the need for a proper public consultation on the detail of the proposed scheme. He made it clear he found little merit in the traditional form of a public inquiry, saying public opinion polling is the most effective way of gauging views

news

⌘ The Transport for London Project Overview had as its priorities (in order): get it in by the end of 2002, make sure it works, then control costs

⌘ There are only two part-time transport planners to manage it all

⌘ Because of economic growth, congestion will increase again unless the charge is increased beyond £5

⌘ The overall costs of pursuing them can be justified unless they achieve at least a 10% reduction in traffic in central London

⌘ There is little information about the likely impact on businesses – further studies are required about the impact of congestion charging on businesses of different types (particularly smaller enterprises).

In order to demonstrate that the proposed scheme will benefit Londoners, the Panel requires fuller data on the impact of the proposed charge on different groups of employees, householders and individuals.

⌘ Charging must not be introduced until and unless complementary public transport improvements have been made. The Panel requires a detailed report about these improvements by the end of March 2001, at the latest

⌘ Targets must be set, and met, for the improvement of bus and Underground services in inner and outer, as well as central, London. (Bus lane enforcement must be radically improved, which will probably increase congestion, but bus performance must be improved end-to-end on routes, which magnifies the task for TFL)

⌘ Charging would make a small contribution, overall, to reducing air pollution and noise. However, there is a risk that by increasing the number of buses and taxis, certain emissions (noxious particulates) will be increased. The Panel requests a report on air quality impacts and effects, particularly in the areas within the charged area and immediately beyond it.

Third rate – part 1

According to official figures on the Home Office website, in 1998 the total number of deaths on the road attributable to motor vehicle drivers was 529. This is in the year that 3421 people were killed on UK roads, and the figure includes all factors and all vehicles, not just speeding, and not just cars. Sounds suspiciously like the 'one third of accidents are caused by speeding' is a figure plucked out of the air...

The figures are made up by such classifications as "pedestrian entered roadway without due attention", and the always mysterious "miscellaneous". For the whole report go to www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/motosupps98.pdf

Third rate – part 2

The 1999 Road Accident Review compiled by the West Midlands metropolitan authorities has revealed that there were 2311 accidents last year involving a car striking a pedestrian. Of these, excessive speed was to blame for just 13. The most common cause of death and injury to pedestrians was error by pedestrians themselves, accounting for 21 deaths, 338 serious injuries, and 941 slight injuries.

Speed caused just one fatality, four serious injury accidents, and eight slight ones. There were also 6,621 accidents not involving pedestrians. Of those, excess speed accounted for just 185 – less than 3% of the total. So are the national figures completely at odds with the Midlands picture? Where are the statistics showing the causes of road traffic accidents on a national basis? "They're not available," according to a spokesman at the DETR. "We don't have those figures."

Really? So where does the 'one third of accidents are caused by excess speed' come from?

IAM sees sense?

The IAM has called for a review of speed limits in the UK – upwards as well as down. It then calls for 20mph speed limits outside schools, backed up by speed cameras – choosing to emphasise the enforcement message rather than the education one! It's now calling for:

- ⌘ All speed limits to be reviewed, considering hazard density, frequency and seriousness. They will be relevant to the road and environment to which they apply
- ⌘ 20 mph zones to apply in the immediate

Global warning

Scientists have dismissed claims that taxing fuel will stop global warming, because evidence shows it is caused by the sun. The temperature rise, previously blamed on the burning of fossil fuels, results primarily from an increase in solar radiation. The research, some of it by the European Space Agency (ESA), uses satellite and other astronomical data to show that earlier models severely underestimated the sun's impact. The potential political impact is huge. Governments worldwide have accepted scientists' warnings that they must cut carbon dioxide emissions and used them to justify tax increases. Scientists measured a global average temperature rise of 0.6C over the past century.

The studies say the main reason is a solar energy surge and a big increase in ultraviolet (UV) light. This has coincided with a

vicinity of all schools during arrival, departure and lunchtime

- ⌘ Anybody convicted of a serious moving traffic offence will be required to pass a specially designated driving test within six months of the date of conviction, or face disqualification from holding a driving licence
- ⌘ Anyone convicted of driving without a driving licence, or driving while disqualified from holding a driving licence will face disqualification for life and a minimum of two years' imprisonment.

Who needs objectivity?

We've just encountered a report entitled *What Limits Speed?* Factors that affect how fast we drive by Ross Silcock Ltd in association with Social Research Associates, for the AA Foundation for Road Safety Research. SRA is run by Kristine Beuret who famously said: "The car is the last bastion of freedom, this must be overturned".

Very worrying that the AA are paying this company to produce a 'road safety' report for them.

doubling in strength of the sun's magnetic field.

Paul Brekke, one of the project's scientists, said: "Taxing carbon-based fuels may be good for other reasons but our evidence suggests it will not be much help in keeping the Earth cool".

It's a gas

Australian engineers have come up with a box of tricks that blasts engine emissions with microwaves, eliminating up to 70% of harmful emissions.

Called a microwave emissions converter, the gadget is the size of a wine bottle. It microwaves the exhaust gas, heating it to as much as 5000 kelvin – over three times the melting point of steel. At this temperature, molecular bonds in the gases break.

Under ideal lab conditions, up to a 90% reduction in carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and hydrocarbons is possible, falling to nearer 70% in the real world.

Although the converter works on diesel and petrol engines, and can be used downstream of a catalytic converter to further reduce emissions, it increases the number of tiny carbon particles spewed out in the exhaust.

But it's not the end of the world, because this surplus can be used – as industrial-grade diamond!

An electrostatic filter lining the exhaust pipe attracts the carbon particles and when the car is serviced, the filter is taken out and sent to the factory where it can be used to make industrial diamond.

The same technology could be used to clean up emissions from factories, chemicals plants and power stations.

Cars get even cleaner

On 1 January 2001 new emissions laws will come into force ensuring cars are cleaner than ever. The new EU3 laws supersede the EU2 ones in force since 1997, and will themselves be replaced by the EU4 rules from 2005.

The current rules allow 0.5g/km of hydrocarbons to be emitted, which falls to 0.2g/km from the start of January and 0.1g/km from the start of 2005. Nitrogen oxides

will also be cut from 0.5g/km to just 0.15g/km – and a mere 0.08g/km in four years' time. Although these figures are for petrol engines, diesel engines are also tightly regulated – leading to advances such as Peugeot's particulate trap filters that make their cars unbelievably clean.

A typical example of how clean cars now are is that of Volvo. Their 2.9-litre S80 is 240 times cleaner than a 1985 2.1-litre 240 saloon.

Or to put it another way, the new car will drive from London to Middlesborough producing the same amount of tailpipe emissions as the old car travelling just a mile.

And just because cars don't have to conform to EU4 standards for another four years doesn't mean they are any less clean than they can possibly be. Ford's new Mondeo already meets the EU4 standards, yet it's already on sale.

national contacts

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Down the tubes

A recent report by the Health & Safety Executive's Chief Inspector of Railways was so critical that John Prescott called an emergency meeting with the chief of London Underground. Highlighted were:

- ⌘ Poor standards of train driving
- ⌘ Station supervisors not being advised of safety rule breaches
- ⌘ Signals not being maintained properly
- ⌘ Cab radios that do not work
- ⌘ Missing safety barriers between tube carriages
- ⌘ Fire hazards due to litter accumulating in the absence of litter bins.

LUL will face an audit this autumn, and possibly legal action.

It never rains...

Do you reckon the recent British weather is unprecedented? Well think again...

⌘ The gale which hit southern England on 26 November 1703 takes some beating. Winds of up to 80mph killed 123 people. 8,000 sailors perished as the storm decimated the British fleet.

⌘ The UK's most deadly tornado hit on 27 October 1913, killing six residents of Edwardsville, a Glamorgan mining town.

⌘ October snows are a rare event, particularly away from exposed parts of Scotland. Heavy snows have not hit the East since 1836, when Newmarket was buried a foot deep.

⌘ Britons between 1550 and 1850 endured what was known as the Little Ice Age. The River Thames froze over 14 times, becoming the location for Frost Fair festivities. A rise in temperatures, as well as changes to the river, put paid to the tradition in 1814.

⌘ The people of Braemar, Aberdeenshire, may justly take 'southerners' moaning about the weather with a pinch of salt. The village holds the record for the lowest temperature in the UK. The mercury has twice dipped to -27.2C, once in 1895 and again in January 1982.

The future's black... 1

RoSPA is urging car and van fleet operators to follow the Metropolitan police and fit data recorders to their vehicles now – rather than wait for manufacturers to offer them as options. Black boxes as original equipment in mainstream cars is estimated to be only three years away, but RoSPA believes universal adoption should be brought forward. Most car manufacturers have trialled or are developing recorder systems, but none has announced a production launch date.

The future's black... 2

If you think Labour isn't committed to taxing drivers off the road, here's a summary of what they have planned for us. You might find this useful next May when you can't decide whether or not to give Tony your vote...

⌘ 2000: Proposals to make speeding a £1,000 offence and raise other motoring penalties are to be decided soon. Spread M25-style zero-tolerance, variable-speed cameras to other motorways from 2002-3

⌘ 2001: Graduated Vehicle Excise Duty (road tax) on new cars starting in March. Based on exhaust emissions, it will look harmless at first but from 2002-on, GVED will double or quadruple from today's £100-£155 to £350-£450 on upper mid-range cars and soar to £900 or £1,000 per year on executive cars, warn Whitehall insiders

⌘ 2002-4: Company car emissions-related 'benefit' tax begins in 2002. Its ratchet-up mechanism in 2003 and 2004 will hit cars registered this year. About half of the nation's 2.4million company car drivers are set to receive soaring benefit-in-kind tax bills. Some will rocket from £6,000 now to £14,000 by 2004.

⌘ 2002-3: Road pricing tolls of £5 or £7.50 (lorries £15) to enter town and city centres starting in London in 2003 or 2002 if Mayor Ken Livingstone has his way. John Prescott

ABD opens Midlands office

Russell Eden has opened the ABD's Midlands office, to tackle regional issues. Contact him at:

**Suite 60
97 High Street
Stourbridge DY8 1NY
Tel 0800 358 9996**

He continues to be supported by Alan Macey and Austin Rudd. After a very successful first meeting at Clent, there will be monthly meetings – contact Russell for more info (contact details below).

is now 'de-trunking' about a third of English A-roads so local authorities can toll as they please – up to 5p/mile is possible.

⌘ 2002-3: The £5 gallon, nearly £4 of it tax, is expected if it has not arrived sooner. Labour has stopped the fuel duty escalator introduced by the Conservatives but has not yet stopped escalating fuel taxation at above inflation.

⌘ 2003-6: Workplace parking levies of £2,000 a year wherever town councils wish – 24 councils are interested. It is planned to start in 2003 and be increased in 2006 from £8 per working day to £10, raising the annual levy to £2,500, say experts.

⌘ 2003-6: Parking meter and off-road parking charges raised in 2003 and again in 2006 to deter workplace parking dodgers and in-town driving. There are ideas also to levy off-road parking charges.

⌘ 2003-6: Motorway electronic speed cameras set at or near zero-tolerance on all motorways, automatically endorsing drivers' licences at the DVLA and fining offenders up to £1,000 a time. Some motorway cameras could appear in 2002 following Nottingham trials.

⌘ 2006-10: Motorway tolls of six pence per mile, meaning a £12 tax for a London-Birmingham round trip in return for a possible seven pence per litre cut or no rise in fuel duty.

news briefs

The Driving Standards Agency's schools road safety programme has been given £250,000, to be used to fund a roadshow that will visit 1000 secondary schools. Topics will include the theory and practical driving tests, vulnerable road users, speed (*quelle surprise*), anticipation & awareness and drink & drugs.

Elderly residents' calls for a bus service to return to a Devon town have been dashed by road humps. Stagecoach Devon stopped the service several years ago after traffic-calming measures were introduced by Devon County Council. Bus bosses have cited the humps for not putting the service back on the road.

The AA signed up its 10 millionth member at the recent Birmingham motorshow. Perhaps with that many members who use our underfunded road network they might start campaigning for their members' rights.

You no longer have to be French to be done for speeding in France. From now on, if you're caught breaking the limit by more than 40kmh (25mph) your licence will be endorsed.

Bus passengers in Ipswich have just faced fare rises of up to 18%. A regular user said: "If my family travels to town and back it now costs £7 for three adults and a child. As I can park all day for £5 why would I want the inconvenience of the bus?" Why indeed?

Ken Livingstone has unveiled his Draft Transport Strategy, which he reckons will solve London's transport problems. He aims to impose higher fines on people using bus lanes, remove lots of parking areas, encourage walking, bring in lots of new 20mph speed limits, and bring in charges to enter the city by road.

John Prescott has refused to order mainline trains and the Tube to run a full service for London's New Year's Eve celebrations. Train operators aim to halt all trains travelling into the capital between 5.30pm and 6pm – after that time only empty trains would enter central London to take out people already in the capital. The rail companies don't believe they can safely move three million people in one evening – don't they move more people than at rush hour twice a day?

Oxfordshire has secured £23m for the first year of its five-year local transport plan. It will fund cycle paths, traffic calming and 'speed management'. According to the local rag "even engineering work or signage put on the roads often has a knock-on casualty reduction benefit". Surely not!

The cost of breaking motoring laws has risen for the first time in six years. Drivers caught speeding now face a minimum fine of £60, as well as three points on their licence. Since 1994, the penalty has been £40. Parking fines will also be increased from £20 to £30.

Thames Valley Police caught 60,000 people breaking speed limits last year. It says it hopes to increase this to 120,000 by the end of the first year of the Safer Roads campaign in April 2001 and 180,000 in the second year of the campaign. Surely they shouldn't want to catch anyone breaking the limit, preferring to see everyone doing what they are told?

According to the DETR website, in 1987 there were 225,000 prosecutions for dangerous, careless or drunken driving – by 1997 this had fallen to 199,000. The corresponding figures for accident offences are 42,000 and 22,000. In the same period the number of speeding offences went from 458,000 to 881,000. In 1997 there were 40 speeding prosecutions for every accident offence prosecution! For the full report visit:

www.transtat.detr.gov.uk/tables/tsgb99/4/42199.htm

The TGWU has stated that: "Londoners would be shocked at the mechanical state of neglect of the buses they travel in". According to the engineers that work on them, hundreds of London buses commonly have oil & water leaks and defective brakes. Standards are so poor that many would fail a MOT according to one retired engineer. At one stage 8 out of 120 London buses at one garage were operating beyond the date of their annual safety inspection.

Opposition to city road tolls is hotting up with the news that local councils are setting aside funds to combat schemes. Local authorities were originally right behind congestion charging. But the City of Westminster has become the first to allocate money – £20,000 – to fight the proposed scheme. Two other London boroughs, Wandsworth and Kensington & Chelsea, are likely to follow the lead. Remember this is not their money – it's ours!

Residents in Horsham are protesting against traffic calming, demanding its removal, after "85% of them had asked for it to be installed". They claim the road is more dangerous with the traffic calming than without, as many drivers increase their speeds to reach pinch points before opposing traffic.

Traffic calming measures across Horsham could mean the difference between life and death according to a paramedic in the town, as ambulances virtually have to stop before they can negotiate road humps. He says the response times have also increased dramatically.

The Oxford Bus Company has increased fares on most of its routes as it claims the rounding up of fares makes it easier for driver and passengers alike, and makes for a quicker, more efficient service. The company recently reduced services because it was short of staff. It's claiming it has had to increase fares because with 140 buses, in October it spent £14,000 more on diesel compared with the same month last year.

The Highways Agency has awarded a four-year contract to extend the variable speed limits on the M25 to another 30km, including the section between the M4 and M40. The contract includes the development of second-generation camera enforcement equipment.

Peter Davies, vice president of BP Oil, has been lamenting bias in the school system.

"My daughter was recently set an essay entitled Why is the world running out of oil? I told her it was a lie and the world wasn't running out of oil. When she wrote an essay explaining this her school refused to mark it".

Gordon Brown should give a higher priority to cutting public transport fares than compensating motorists for high petrol prices, according to a new poll. 80% said at least half any money allocated to respond to the fuel crisis should be spent on public transport and alternative fuels.

Barnet council spent £400,000 installing a traffic calming scheme in North Finchley and Friern Barnet. Now they are to spend £20,000 removing it because the road is now one of the most dangerous in the borough – previously it was safe. They are also scrapping cycle lanes because nobody uses them and they've led to accidents...

The UK Independence Party has issued a provisional policy document for comment. Under the *environment* the draft states:

'In order to cut down on pollutants, we will abolish the road tax altogether for small-engined cars, but increase it on those with larger engines. Road and fuel taxes will be directed towards improving public transport'. That is the whole of their transport policy. Suggestions for improvement/expansion should be sent to mail@ukip.org or to their newsletter editor ukip@rodmell.prestel.co.uk

ignition

Returning from my holidays I was hoping to find the greens had been overturned and fuel was down to 15p a gallon, but sadly it wasn't to be. Far from it in fact – Greenpeace tried to persuade the protestors that they are being terribly irresponsible, the government is preparing to bring in any measures necessary to ensure it can continue to fleece us and the protestors are adamant they won't give in. Where to now?

You'll notice relatively little on fuel tax in this edition of OTR. With media coverage running so high for weeks, there's not a lot to say that you won't have read already. As usual, the bits that are contained within these pages are the bits that you won't have come across in your favourite newspaper.

Once again the ABD had a stand at the recent NEC classic car show. Several members either turned up to see us or helped out on the stand, for which we're all grateful. Several of them were interested to know how many members we have – current membership is hovering around the 1500 mark. This might not sound much (many of them were astonished that we achieve so much with so few members) but it's on a par with many of the groups we are working against. The Pedestrians' Association has been going for over 60 years, and they have no more members than us. Bearing in mind how many pedestrians there are in the UK, our hit rate isn't so bad after all... Read the report on page 8.

Longford Insurance Schemes, provider of mobility insurance scheme Chauffeurplan, has issued a press release on the new, stiffer penalties (see news brief opposite). They highlight the dire state of our train and bus networks pushing more and more people back into their cars, but facing ever tighter controls on their mobility.

The leaflet enclosed with this issue of OTR spells out the reasons and benefits of supporting them – in addition to these they are offering a 10% discount to ABD Members along with a weekend break for two. Don't forget to mention the ABD when you arrange cover.

For further details call 0800 242420 or visit www.chauffeurplan.co.uk

I recently had to drive to a car park in central London. I knew the way, so I merely had to drive the half mile from where I was staying (which had residents' parking only) to where I had to park the car.

Approaching the crossroads where I had to turn left I found that for no apparent reason I was only able to go straight ahead. In doing this I got stuck in a traffic jam – at 11.30pm. Unperturbed I merely had to turn right to get back onto the road that would allow me to get where I wanted to go. But I couldn't – it was now open to buses only.

So I carried straight on, to a roundabout where I could go all the way round and retrace my steps. Taking this detour I encountered no fewer than seven sets of traffic lights, three of which were pedestrian crossings. Four of them were on red.

At the original crossroads I was half a minute away from my destination, which was three hundred yards around the corner. In the event I did over a mile, taking a quarter of an hour. With road 'improvements' like this is it any wonder that congestion (rather than traffic levels) is on the increase?

Predictably John Prescott blamed car drivers for the recent floods, saying it was a warning sign and we have to look at what we are doing to the environment. Us of course, not him with his Jaguars. "These are the worst floods since 1625" he bleated. Is that so? If this is the case, what caused the floods nearly 400 years ago?

At the motorshow I stumbled across the Brake stand, and decided to engage some of the staff in conversation.

I asked them about the three Es, and what effect the concentration on enforcement was having on road safety. They claimed education and (less so) engineering were what they campaigned for the most, but I couldn't see much evidence. They had literature on using seatbelts, educating children on road safety issues as well as not driving while tired or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. But the opening line was: "The vast majority of

accidents are caused by speeding".

I asked for the evidence, and was told the DETR have it. When I queried this they floundered somewhat. Soon there were four of them standing round me, thinking there was safety in numbers and they could intimidate me into agreeing with them – it was clear that until now nobody had queried what they had been told.

After a very lengthy discussion I had a look at the questionnaire to find Brake was doing a 'quick survey'. Under the heading *One in three deaths on the road is caused by speeding would you welcome...* was a series of questions. Respondents were invited to ask for more speed cameras, more police checks and fixed penalties of £500 or more. Brake claims it's one of the most influential 'road safety' groups – is it any wonder we're in this mess?

Until recently I felt very strongly that the ABD needs more members – a lot more – and that we couldn't move forward without them. We definitely need more members, but to make a real difference we need more members who are active.

Having said this, thanks to work put in over the last eight years, we are now making a difference in ways that aren't immediately apparent.

Whereas the ecobabble perpetuated by a largely uninformed media would pass unquestioned, much of it is now being scrutinised far more closely. They are now approaching us rather than the other way round, and without being able to give too much away, several high-profile people have been in touch recently asking for information to help them in debates where they are taking a pro-car stance. The ABD might not get as much exposure as it would like, but our arguments are being used increasingly – and that is surely what counts.

The next ABD members' meeting at Gaydon will take place in March. Full details will be in the next issue.

Because of the Christmas and New Year breaks the next OTR will also be a 12-page extravaganza, covering December 2000 and January 2001. Apologies for having two bi-monthly issues in a row but it's been unavoidable – normal service will be resumed after the next issue.

As this is the last issue before the new year begins, I would (on behalf of the ABD committee) like to thank all members who have given us their support over the last year. 2000 has been a very important year for us, but as we said this time last year – next year will be even better. Thanks for supporting us – have a good Christmas.

Chris Medd

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campaigning

On the buses

by Bernard Abrams

The ABD uses the argument that a bus emits up to 128 times as many particulates as a car, and I have been criticised for doing so.

But this figure is legitimate in my view as a bus will not be kept on the road by its operator unless it can achieve astronomical mileages with fares attached, to pay for their investment in the form of one of a fleet of ageing, polluting death traps. In Cheltenham, Stagecoach kindly stopped operating a route as it was unprofitable and also withdrew from school services.

The University of Kyoto (and other centres of research) has found 3-nitrobenzthrene in diesel bus exhausts when the engine is under load, as of course it is when pulling away from your local High Street bus stop, in an otherwise pedestrianised area (of course). This chemical is the most carcinogenic chemical known to science.

Note the recent words of warning from

"Safety standards on buses have slipped to crisis levels"

TGWU no less, under the headline *It's crisis time on the buses*. The article, in *Auto Express*, says "Safety standards on buses have slipped to crisis levels - with many vehicles unable to pass a car MoT - Transport Union TGWU warns buses on London's roads are sent out without important maintenance and repair work done. Oil and water leaks and faulty brakes are 'common problems'. A spokesman said people would be shocked at the poor state of buses." (See page 2 for more on this - Ed)

Then there's the taped interview between John Prescott and Mike Rutherford in which Two-Jags acknowledges that buses are polluters and that it will be 2017 before the bus pollution problem is solved (no mention of how it will be solved - tax them off the road perhaps...)

Also don't forget that Transport Research Laboratory report TRL 431 concludes "widespread restrictions on cars on air

"it will be 2017 before the bus pollution problem is solved"

quality grounds have been shown not to be warranted by this study" also points out that buses are a far better target for the pollution police.

Finally I would imagine any Councillor or MP would be able to get hold of a copy of *All Aboard*, the report by the Audit Commission on public transport provision outside London. The report describes said provision as inflexible, unreliable, uncoordinated, costly - basically a shambles. To which we should add 'a risk to life and limb',

Given the TGWU warning on lack of maintenance and repair, and the many public service broadcasts on radio telling us that 'vulnerable' groups such as lone females, to sit near the driver when travelling at night, acknowledging the risk to personal safety as well as health and safety (TGWU).

Frankly bus travel is also usually so unpleasant that anyone who can afford to travel by car would and will do so - why not 'community taxis' as they have in parts of Florida where buses have been banned?

Fuel tax - the ABD line

by Tony Vickers

For the record, the ABD's proposals for changes to fuel taxation are as follows:

⌘ A reduction in fuel duty of 8p litre
⌘ A reduction in the price of fuel annually over the next 4-5 years until the levels reach an agreed maximum percentage of the actual fuel price - allowing the Treasury to adjust to the falling levels of car-related tax.

⌘ A significant proportion of money paid by motorists should be ring-fenced for improvements to the capacity and infrastructure of both public & private transport.

Transport who?

Curious about Transport 2000? An environmental and public transport pressure group, it is both a charity (carrying out transport policy research) and a limited company (the campaigning organisation). The president is Michael Palin (yes, the Michael Palin) and the director is Stephen Joseph.

Campaigning priorities are set by a 20-strong board of members, without direct reference to affiliates and subscribers. In the financial year 1998-1999 these included a huge number of private bus and railway companies, plus rail unions RMT and TSSA, several county and district councils, the public service union Unison, the white collar and finance sector union Unifi, a couple of cycling clubs, The Green Liberal Democrats, the Townswomen's Guilds, environmental groups such as the WWF and the Wildlife Trusts, the Pedestrians' Association, the Ramblers Association and the Youth Hostel Association. Not much in the way of drivers' groups then.

Classic success

by Chris Medd

Over the weekend of 4 & 5 November the ABD enjoyed another successful attendance at the NEC Classic & Sportscar show, signing up more new members than ever before.

It's always useful manning the stand, as we meet all sorts of people. This time we spoke to a bus driver from Grimsby, who works for Stagecoach. He informed us that despite the minimum legal tread depth for cars being set at 1.6mm, for buses and lorries it's set at an alarming 1mm all round! Bearing in mind emergency vehicles have their tyres replaced at 3mm, the prospect of vehicles the size of a 56-seater coach having all of 1mm of tread keeping them in place in rather worrying...

We were also visited by a London tube driver, who pointed out that the London underground has now officially reached saturation point. It's not possible to make the trains longer (platforms would need to be extended) and drivers can now (at times) see the back of the train in front. So if they can't put more trains or carriages on, how are they going to expand the capacity of the network?

Thanks are due to everybody who gave up their time to talk to show visitors - especially Trevor Maycock who lent his Jaguar E-type when he wasn't even a member! Of course he signed up very quickly... David Bridge once again did a great job of displaying and erecting our display boards and Mark Grinnall allowed us to display the only Scorpion IV in the world. It proved a great draw as it isn't on sale until next May!

ABD Action in Essex

by Nick Arden

If you would like to get involved with campaigning in Essex get down to The Plough & Sail pub on the A130 at Rettendon on the second Monday of each month starting at 8:00pm. The next one is 11th December.

With local people pulling together we can make a real difference to the weight of various campaign tasks. The idea is to action our own ideas - by supporting each other this will make it more effective.

If you have an idea on any ABD subject in Essex and/or want to help then please come along.

We are not going to make the action group tirelessly hard work or boring - there will be an element of fun but the prime reason is to make us more direct and effective. We have already organised a 14,000 leaflet campaign in two towns.

Contact me on 01245 226324 if you would like to know more.



Algarve holiday accommodation

- ⌘ Quinta do Largo near Albufeira
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- ⌘ An absolute must for any keen motorist
- ⌘ Information available on the drive down

Contact Hugh Bladon on 01934 628136

campaigning

Letters to the editor

by Alan Macey

I have been sending letters to the editor of my local newspaper for about six months and offer the following advice to get into print:

- ⌘ The letter must be newsworthy
- ⌘ It must be topical – especially locally
- ⌘ You should preferably name some unfortunate individual (preferably political) who has stuck their neck out
- ⌘ It should be absolutely truthful
- ⌘ You have a greater chance of publication if you add the ABD name
- ⌘ you have to ask the publisher to include the ABD's website address as it provides important reference information for the reader.
- ⌘ Instruct the editor to delete or alter any

Webmaster changes

Steve Dommett, who set up the ABD website in 1996 and has maintained it ever since, has handed over the reins to Chris Ward. Our thanks go to Steve for the effort he has put into developing the website over the years – it's been instrumental in recruiting new members.

Chris will be continuing to develop the website, but through a process of evolution not revolution. He would like to hear from anyone who has the technical knowledge to set up an on-line database for speed cameras, so visitors can submit speed

statement that may be considered libellous or defamatory

⌘ Email every newspaper in your area a copy and not disclose to any of them who you have sent the letters to.

⌘ Email the letters under different addresses and names with their approval on non-ABD letters with or without a pen name.

⌘ Pen names should be relevant to the subject i.e. 'over-taxed' 'anti-traffic calming' Using these methods two of us had 46 letters in the three local papers during one month.

On one evening we had 50% of one page of our local paper with our letters included under eight different names – our controlling local loony labour party now thinks that every motorist in town is against it!

camera details using a web-based form. Email him at chris-ward@blueyonder.co.uk The website represents a cost-effective means of publicising the ABD, and contains a wealth of material that is very helpful for campaigning efforts.

Recent additions include a factsheet on Asthma, and an analysis of Tony Blair's speech to greens & business leaders in October.

If you don't have internet access yourself, remember you can view the site at public libraries. The address you need is www.abd.org.uk

Opportunity knocks?

by Brian Hunter

Jonathan Lord, Secretary of The Royal Scottish Automobile Club, asked the ABD to provide a representative to attend one of their Motoring Policy Committee meetings in Glasgow to put the case of the ABD and to see whether there is any way we can work together.

The RSAC is Scotland's leading private Members' Club. The motorsport arm of the RSAC (run by Jonathan) organises the International Scottish Rally, the Scottish Hill Rally, the Scottish Thousand Mile Trial and the Scottish Veteran, Vintage and Classic Car run.

I had a pre-prepared presentation, and when I set up my notebook PC and portable projector which, coupled with my radio mouse, impressed the hell out of them before I even started!

They were mightily impressed that, for such a relatively small organisation, we are so well prepared. Comment was made by Bruce on the *Road safety: the Gatso myth* section of the presentation to the effect that it might draw some members of the committee into discussion!

Over the next 40 minutes or so, we found out a bit more about each other's organisation. I left them with copies of all the ABD Press

Releases to date this year, copies of the ABD promotional leaflet and copies of the BRF Facts '99 booklet.

The RSAC Motoring Policy Committee is focused on the same basic tenets as we are, with the interests of motorists at heart. Their particular interest is towards what affects Scottish motorists but the principles are much the same across the UK. They do appear to operate at a higher level than we do, with contacts at the highest levels in the RAC and the AA. With 7 million members, either of these organisations carries much more clout with the government than we can with our 1500, or the RSAC can with their 3000. With two senior policemen (one retired) on the Committee, they also have a direct line of communication and possible influence there too. That in itself must lend credence to views they have on road safety, for example. Using these contacts, and using the same kind of lobbying techniques as we do, they try to influence policy in much the same way as we do.

The introductory meeting was most useful and there is the possibility of our finding common ground to work on. In all, a worthwhile experience and one which should prove to be mutually beneficial.

Seeing the signs

by Malcolm Heymer

I have recently written to the DETR about the statutory requirements for notifying proposed changes to speed limits and, in reply, they kindly enclosed a copy of The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

Section 7, on publication of proposals, states that an order making authority shall, before making an order:

⌘ Publish at least once a notice ... in a newspaper circulating in the area...

⌘ in the case of an order under section 6 of the 1984 Act [the Road

Traffic Regulation Act 1984] publish a similar notice in the London Gazette;

⌘ take such steps as it may consider appropriate for ensuring that adequate publicity about the order is given to persons likely to be affected by its provisions and, without prejudice to the generality of this sub-paragraph, such other steps may include-

(i) in the case of an order to which sub-paragraph (b) does not apply, publication of a notice in the London Gazette;

(ii) the display of notices in roads or other places affected by the order;

(iii) the delivery of notices or letters to premises, or premises occupied by persons, appearing to the authority to be likely to be affected by any provision in the order.

Thus the only absolute requirement is for a notice to be published in a local newspaper. Note, however, that sub-paragraph (c) places a responsibility on a local authority to take steps to ensure that people likely to be affected by a traffic order are given notice of its implications. Some local authorities obviously take this to mean that notices on site are sufficient, others (including St Edmundsbury in Suffolk) believe they can get away with just the local newspaper advert alone.

Even a standard site notice is, of course, inadequate to warn passing drivers, who are unlikely to stop and read it – I see no reason why a sign with 50 or 75mm high lettering should not be displayed, readable by drivers of moving vehicles. It would be interesting to test these views in the High Court but the cost would be prohibitive – a factor that local authorities obviously bank on. There is no doubt, however, that some of them are being rather unfair.

campaigning

I say, I say, I say

by Bernard Abrams & Chris Ward

We've recently added a list of quotes to the ABD website (www.abd.org.uk). Here's a taster of some of the items included:

Economics & politics

All the following quotes are from professor Garel Rhys, head of automotive economics at Cardiff business School and parliamentary adviser on trade and industry:

Labour's plans to tax and penalise car use are leading Britain into a former Soviet-style regime

Labour is using the car as a milch cow in a most dishonest way

International

"A U.S. Government would have to increase gas taxes by more than 60 cents a gallon and double the price of heating oil just to hold carbon emissions at 1990 levels. Over the next 14 years more than 500,000 Americans annually would lose their jobs if proposed change commitments were implemented.

DRI / McGraw Hill Study on the Impact of Climate Change Policies

Implementing carbon taxes would risk several years of economic stagnation and high unemployment
US Congressional Budget Office

Global warming

"There is no convincing evidence that human release of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases is causing, or will cause in the future, catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere or disruption of the Earth's climate."

Oregon Petition, from the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine, signed by over 17,000 international scientists including more than 2000 of the world's leading climatologists, meteorologists and planetary /atmospheric scientists.

Green policies and politics

"Of course, there were always extreme, irrational and mystical elements within our movement, but they tended to be kept in their place during the early years. Then in the mid-Eighties the ultraleftists and extremists took over. After Greenham Common closed and the Berlin Wall came down these extremists were searching for a new cause and found it in environmentalism. The old agendas of class struggle and anti-corporatism are still

It would be wise of the Government to realise it is facing a tremendous public backlash to its next revenue raising attack on cars and road use. The outlook is alarming

The [Labour] Government's [anti-car] measures will take away what the car has given – mobility with freedom to travel as and when people please

Planned levies, tolls, charges, penalties and electronic speed cameras are, in reality, taxes. They are intended to raise revenue in addition to planned new and existing taxes on motoring

Motorway zero-tolerance speed limits, if introduced as promised, are a shameful excuse to raise more revenue

The urge to save humanity is almost always a false front for the urge to rule
H. L. Mencken

The answer to global warming is in the abolition of private property and production for human need. A socialist world would place an enormous priority on alternative energy sources. This is what ecologically-minded socialists have been exploring for quite some time now.
Louis Proyect, Columbia University

We urge the deliberate quest of poverty...reduced resource consumption
Maurice Strong, on achieving sustainability

"There is no consensus about the cause of the slight warming of the past century. We are disturbed that activists, anxious to stop energy and economic growth, are pushing ahead with drastic policies without taking notice of recent changes in the underlying science"
Statement of Principle, signed by 55 of the world's leading atmospheric scientists, issued prior to the Rio Summit 1992.

"The data don't matter. We're not basing our recommendations [for reductions in CO2 emissions] upon the data. We're basing them upon the climate models"
Chris Folland, UK Meteorological Office

there but now they are dressed up in environmental terminology.
Dr Patrick Moore, Co-founder of Greenpeace, Mail on Sunday, 07/05/00

We may get to the point where the only way of saving the world will be for industrial civilisation to collapse
Maurice Strong, Secretary General of the Rio Summit

Road tolls are threatening disaster, cutting off areas of the country and towns, because it will become too expensive to transport goods. The impact threatens to be very serious – there will be no-go areas

Electronic speed cameras are hiding behind a guise of pedestrian safety to raise money, and are planned for motorways where there are no pedestrians. The Government is blatantly dishonest

Graduated vehicle excise duty poses a threat to Jaguar, Bentley, Rolls Royce and Land Rover. If a nation does not have a healthy home market for the cars it produces, it faces a serious situation. How can its economy prosper?

What should be done? The ideal approach would be scrap the whole fossil fuel economy, lock stock and parking garage
Joseph Petulle, Emeritus Professor of Environmental Management, University of San Francisco

The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed – and hence clamorous to be led to safety – by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary"
H.L. Mencken

We reject the idea of private property
Peter Berle, US National Audubon Society

"No matter if the science is all phoney, there are collateral benefits ... climate change [provides] the greatest chance to bring about justice and equality in the world."
Christine Stewart, Canadian Environment Minister, Calgary Herald, 14 Dec 1998

"Even if the recent pollution-tackling agreement signed at Kyoto is fully implemented, that concerted action will reduce an expected one to two degree centigrade increase in average temperatures by 2050 by only around 0.06 of one degree."
University of East Anglia:

"This government encourages car ownership – it just discourages car use"
David Begg, Labour's transport adviser

I long to hear a politician speak passionately about the benefits of taxation
Jonathon Porritt, Personal Adviser to Tony Blair and Chairman of the Government Sustainable Development Commission, Daily Telegraph, 16 October 2000

letters

If you would like to write to OTR please address your letter to Chris Medd at Po Box 2228, Kenley, Surrey CR8 5ZT or email chrismedd75@yahoo.co.uk

First it was the environment, then public spending on schools and hospitals – the latest excuse from Number 10 is that fuel must be taxed at extortionate levels for our own good. We must continue to pay through the nozzle to prevent, allegedly, boom and bust returning to the economy.

Members of the hard-working class must remain poorer, and businesses less profitable, so that Government can 'prudently' store tens, then hundreds, of billions of pounds of our money for its own use, while urging everybody else to avoid storing anything.

HM treasury is awash with windfalls from oil exports, the auction of mobile telephone licences, and a plethora of stealth taxes.

Mindful of the Dome fiasco, secretive spending in preparation for the non-arrival of the Euro and other wasteful nonsense, there is little evidence that the Government has better financial acumen than the pensioners, motorists and corporations it is bleeding dry. To expect a forgive and forget attitude when a morsel of money is returned in the form of a pre-election bribe assumes that voters not only swallow environmentalist information pollution wholesale, but are green besides.

Since the price of petrol goes up when oil prices rise, but does not drop when crude oil is cheaper, accordingly there is little hope of receiving a tax handout when the going gets tough as a result of planned Government borrowing, revealed by accident in a knee-jerk reaction to the Shadow Chancellor. So this latest line in spin is no more convincing than earlier incarnations, and with support for fuel protests remaining stubbornly high at between 80% and 90% of the electorate, we are seeing panic at the top. The only answer is for Mr Blair to drop the level of fuel duty immediately, then apologise for insufferable arrogance and interminable spin.

Bernard Abrams

I had an interesting discussion recently, with a traffic cop who was 'on the job' as we spoke. He was a friendly chap – far too nice to be nicking his fellow citizens. He told me how the system can be changed to record cars coming towards or away from the unit and works from 18 - 156 mph. It was set to 40 in a 30 limit, so we got chatting about speed and enforcement.

He said he was there to encourage drivers to keep to the limit. 'Wouldn't they keep to the limit better if you painted the camera orange and had a big sign that said "Speed Camera?"' I asked? Ah, he replied, but then drivers would just slow down and speed up again. To him the idea of covert operation

and random positioning was to keep drivers mindful of the fact that there might be something out there, and hence keep to the limit just in case.

I said that when I was driving, I'd rather be mindful of children and dogs and not be distracted by the possibility of speed traps. I told him about Suffolk's blanket speed limits (he was Essex) and the straight bits of wide country road with 30 limit. He imagined that Suffolk Police wouldn't waste too much time there, and would concentrate somewhere more sensible.

He had caught nine people in two hours. I then went down the training route, saying that his time might be better spent teaching kids how to cross the road, to put lights on their bicycles at night, and teaching drivers how to use motorways etc. He agreed with the cycle lights part, but added that they didn't do road safety in schools any more – too far down the list to get attention. He'd done it as a 'young PC' but not now. Instead, parents were expected to teach their children how to cross the road.

He admitted to being rather cynical. He said 'We (the Police) live in a very politically correct area. One reason we're here (nicking motorists) is because it makes a lot of money. The money used to go to central government; now it goes to Essex County Council, of which we get some. The Council identifies 'blackspots' and tells us to go and police them. He who pays the piper...' I interjected 'Actually I pay the piper!'

'I don't think people really believe that low speed limits are there for safety any more' he added.

John Simpson

If the tax on petrol and diesel is 60%, we should all side with the protesters and demand an instant reduction to 30%. The cost of living would fall instantly.

The cost of delivering goods would fall; the cost of a building would fall; the cost of huge Government contracts would fall. Not only the man in the street, not only the nurses and the pensioners, would benefit, but every business.

There isn't a single business that doesn't depend upon transport. The costs of haulage, company cars, food and production would fall.

This is so obvious that one would have thought that it would have been seized upon

New contact details?

If your phone number or e-mail / postal addresses have changed since you joined the ABD, have you notified us? Please let us know straight away if your contact details have changed, as we sometimes need to get in touch with members.



instantly, particularly by opposition politicians like Hague, Portillo and Kennedy. Why are the politicians so blind to what is so obvious to every haulier, farmer and business man in the land? The reason is simple. We, the people, all deal in the form of mathematics called *simple arithmetic*, while politicians deal in a form of mathematics called *economics*.

Economics is the form of maths by which politicians cling to power. The power of politicians is the power over our money. Politicians attempt to cloud this issue by trying to bully the oil companies, trying to lay blame on them.

Does Tony Blair really imagine we are all so naive? The basic cost of crude oil depends on market forces, and the government actually profits enormously from the rise in North Sea crude. We also have the introduction of 'essential services'. Tell that to a farmer who is going broke or a small business man whose reps can't get out to make sales.

Why then do the politicians with their warped economics, not immediately comply with the will of the people? We all know the reason why – power.

Of course the politicians will argue, like Blair has already done, that the government needs the revenues from fuel tax to build hospitals, pay nurses etcetera, etcetera. That is typical of economics double-think. If the cost of living is contained, so will the wage demands be contained. If companies make bigger profits, they will pay bigger tax. If companies make bigger profits they will pay their employees more, and each and everyone will pay more tax that way. *Quod erat demonstrandum*.

Tony Bright-Paul

I have recently bought a Geodesy device from Morpheous Limited (www.morpheous.co.uk). It's a device that alerts you to speed camera locations and boy is it good. It's an excellent device, which reliably identifies the location of the cameras and provides both visual and audible alerts in advance of reaching the camera location. The locations are updated from a central server thus keeping the device up to date and it can also be configured remotely to provide warnings from a predetermined range.

This device is legal and will remain that way as it uses GPS data for identifying locations, not detection. It plays a positive role in alerting the driver to potential accident black spots, which is especially

letters

important in unfamiliar areas and allows the driver to concentrate on the driving rather than spending time trying to locate hidden speed cameras.

Michael Mather

As a motorist of 55 years' experience who has never hurt anyone I refer to the ACCUTTAFOOM (Anti-Car Cranks United To Take All Fun Out Of Motoring).

Is their motivation (a) fascism, (b) socialism, (c) being unable to drive competently, (d) sheer bile, spite, and misery, (e) further aggravation of taxation, or (f) Some combination of these? Please pick one answer.

I am now going out motoring, away from the GUBSIDCWOTAMP. (Answers on a postcard - Ed)

Alex Dick

To those who blame cars for climate change; 17,000 scientists, including climateologists and meteorologists have signed a statement initiated by the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine which says: "There is no convincing evidence that human release of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases is causing, or will cause in the future, catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere or disruption of the Earth's climate"

Alwyn Davies

I believe it is useful to know what opponents are up to. The Railway Development Society has just mailed its members asking them to be active in letter writing, (PM, MP, local paper) phone-ins etc, and to 'protest against the protestors' by turning up at protest sites and engaging peacefully in debate with the protestors.

Its arguments are:

☞ If fuel duty is lowered rail freight will find competition with road haulage even harder.

☞ The cost of motoring is not the real

scandal - since 1987 21% real termincrease in train fares is triple the increase in motoring costs.

☞ Protestors' comparisons with Europe are often flawed (exchange rate, road tolls)

☞ Fuel duty does have an impact on pollution (UK-purchased cars one third more efficient than US-purchased cars)

☞ Reducing the cost of petrol will not benefit the poorest rural dwellers (20% rural households have no car).

Copies of letters should be sent to alix@theRailCampaign.org.uk

Stay informed - visit www.realfuelcrisis.co.uk

According to my accountant, a chap in the *Telegraph* said that if Brown hadn't wasted £8billion propping up the Euro, we could have had 3p off a litre, free. Obviously propping up politically fashionable lame ducks (like the Dome as well) is more important than helping the basic British Taxpayer and Voter.

I was watching a history programme recently about Richard II and the Peasants' Revolt. Nothing changes I thought!

Final thought:

A tax is a fine you pay for being good.

A fine is a tax you pay for being bad.

John Simpson

Just a quick note to bring to everyone's attention the monthly meetings being held for Oxfordshire and Berkshire members. We've had a few meetings now, each one being a success.

If you'd like to support your local group, please come along and join us - we're aiming to do a few more social things as well as purely campaigning on local issues.

If you'd like to find out more about what we do and what we have planned, please give send Damon Green an email at damon.green2@virginnet.co.uk or give him a call on 01488 648 570.

Otherwise you can find us at the Swan in East Ilsley on the second Tuesday of each month - so the next meeting will be on 12 December. The Swan is situated on the A34 to the north of junction 13 of the M4. Kick off is 8pm - hope to see you there.

Simon Worby

The AA web site (www.theaa.co.uk) has a 'Forum' section where you may e-mail your comments on a small selection of issues. One is speed enforcement/gatsos. They claim all comments are passed to their policy division to ensure they are aware of public concerns and frustrations.

A sample of comments is

published on their web. I am not a member of the AA but have successfully contributed comment in this way. I would advise you all to do likewise. After all, it can do no harm!

Damon Green

The joys of motoring -

1. take driving lessons (taxed)
2. buy car (taxed)
3. insure car (taxed)
4. tax car (!)
5. park car off-street (taxed)
6. buy fuel (taxed, and how)
7. cross a toll bridge (taxed)
8. service car (taxed)
9. use car park (taxed)
10. park at work (taxed)

Then negotiate mini-islands, speed cameras, road humps, potholes, traffic wardens. Congestion charges? Motorway Charges? Happy motoring.

Vernon Fox

As Chairman of the Government Sustainable Development Commission, Jonathon Porritt has been active in the media harping about the Government's lack of green credentials. Mr Porridge, as Jeremy Clarkson would say, has clearly been hugging up the wrong tree in his new job.

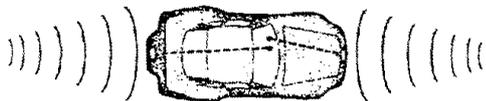
His use of the recent spell of bad weather to seek higher taxation levels on energy and mobility is blatant opportunism. Climate change has been happening throughout our planet's 4.7 billion year history, but there is as yet no convincing evidence that man-made influences are required to explain it. Like Porritt, inter-governmental panels fail to check data from the real world, which shows precious little warming - and that what's there is natural - preferring to base their phoney consensus on disreputable climate models which can barely predict which day of the week it is.

OTR readers will know that previous episodes of inter-glacial global warming (450BC - 350AD) and global cooling (1645 - 1715) are due to changes in the Sun's output, not mankind's, while the modest warming of the last century has a similar explanation and is now history. NASA announced in April 2000 that planet Earth entered a period of significant global cooling in March 1999, such that after only 12 months, 15% of the claimed warming for the last 100 years had been wiped out.

The consequences of following the Porritt Prescription for our country's transport policies have been spelled out by Professor Garel Rhys of Cardiff Business School, who warns that they are leading this country into a former-Soviet style regime.

Porritt complains that the public are no longer taken in by green scaremongering, while participating in more of the same. His continuing pleas for more stealth taxes on drivers show that Dr Moore of Greenpeace

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letters

**Opinions expressed in the letters pages are personal views and not necessarily those of the ABD
Letters may be shortened to allow the inclusion of as many contributions as possible**



was right when he stated that extremists hijacked the environmental movement in the 1980s as part of their desperate quest for tax-and-control policies, which had disappeared from our landscape along with loafers and tank tops. Now we have a 'leading environmentalist' arguing for more of the same, which just goes to show that recycling rubbish isn't always beneficial to society.

Ann Rigby

For those members who like to write letters, the search facility on egroups (abdml) is becoming a very useful knowledge base.

The archive includes all messages as far back as september 1998, and contains nearly 8700 messages and the search facility makes it very easy to find things.

Recently I was working on something and wanted to check quotes, find references, etc. Searching abdml came up with nearly everything I wanted, and I've so far only had to post one message asking for more information.

So if you're writing a letter or article, search abdml for the information you want. It's probably there! If it isn't, post a request for the information, then when someone answers it will be available in the archive for the next person.

With that in mind, if someone does ask for info, can anyone supplying it do so via abdml rather than answering off-list, so it goes in the archive. And when posting potentially useful information, can members make sure that relevant words are included in the message so it will show up on a search later (eg if you refer to "fatty two Jags", make sure you get 'Prescott' in as well). Even if it means just putting a line of keywords at the end of the message.

Finally, remember you can subscribe to abdml without receiving any emails. That way you can access the archive, but not be bombarded with info you don't want. Even better, you can set the mailing to daily digest then get just one mail each day with the various points made by members contained within.

Chris Lamb

The lentil-munchers on Bedford Borough Council have recently shot themselves in the foot with preparations for Controlled Parking Zones, encompassing the whole of the town centre – you know the sort of thing – you have to buy a permit to park your car on the road outside your own house.

The man going round with his pot of paint marking out all the CPZ parking bays has painted the dotted lines so that parking is apparently permitted across peoples' driveways. This includes my own ... so as you imagine I am seeing various shades of red.

The Borough Engineer was interviewed on

Jon Gaunt's programme on BBC 3 Counties and stated that this had deliberately been done to "maximise parking opportunity for all" and that if there was a problem with driveways being blocked the Council "have a removal vehicle that will lift up the offending car, allow the resident to get out, then put the car back again". But he is relying on people's common sense and good neighbourliness so that this doesn't happen.

The legal position is that what the Council is doing is illegal, but only the police can do anything about it, not the new parking attendants who have replaced the traffic wardens.

Naturally this has caused an absolute storm in Bedford. The scheme has been bulldozed through by the Lib-Dem/Labour coalition who have made such a mess of things that they didn't even get the paperwork to Gus McDonald in time for the appropriate Secretary of State approval.

The Labour/LibDem members are taking the view that everything is signed, sealed and delivered (despite not yet having central govt approval) and that there is nothing to discuss.

Peter Davies

I have seen many suggestions on how to force the government to recognise the problem of excessive fuel taxes, but the most obvious seems to have been missed. It's beautifully simple really and ironically attractive – do exactly what the government says it wants us to do!

One major thing that the fuel blockade revealed was the risk of relying too heavily on taxes on spending. The principle advantage of income tax is that payment is (for most anyway) unavoidable and revenue is predictable.

But indirect taxes offer a hostage to fortune in that people can choose not to spend! Of course, where transport is concerned, the government felt that a useless public transport system would ensure that we were trapped between a rock and a hard place while they set about mugging us.

But the fuel blockade forced great many drivers to use other means of transport to get to work, or they stayed at home. The hard reality of this must have hit the government like a bolt of lightning. What if we motorists could actually not use our cars? Can you imagine what it would do to the Treasury? This potential must have made Gordon Brown go weak at the knees. Certainly his unedifying, and ultimately futile, display of political machismo suggests that he was well rattled.

So we have the answer – organise periodic weeks when we use any means of transport other than our cars; and challenge the Government to introduce laws to beat this

form of protest...

David Britten

Dave Hammond said in October's OTR that campaigning as an individual can work very well. There are many ways the individual can make a difference. One of these is to check the local press for official notices of speed limit reductions, and to submit formal objections in appropriate cases.

In April 1999 the City of Leeds proposed a 50mph speed limit on an open road, which I felt was unjustified. Using the ABD's excellent Speed limits – how they are set and your right to object I submitted a detailed formal objection. Despite detailed replies from Leeds City Council I refused to withdraw, but they finally informed me in August 1999 that they were going ahead anyway. By September 2000 the new limit had still not been introduced – so perhaps they do take notice, but won't admit it!

On the back page of the same edition of OTR, it says letters to the press are more likely to be published if the ABD is mentioned. This hasn't necessarily been the case for me. All eight letters to my local newspaper have been published, when I haven't mentioned the ABD. Of another eight letters mentioning the group, only seven were published. But then that's not a bad hit rate over all...

Peter Horton

I've recently done a bit of letter writing to my local press, in an attempt to counter some of the anti-car letters they've been publishing.

Despite them giving prominence to some of the usual unsubstantiated claims of imminent death to the planet and all its inhabitants, they seem happy enough to publish arguments to counter these.

Perhaps I'm just lucky in having a local newspaper that likes to take a balanced view – or perhaps they're just desperate for material to fill their pages – but the important thing is that they will publish pro-car views.

If you see a letter or article in your local newspaper that's car-related (or even transport-related as a whole) it's worth either getting involved in a debate or trying to start one.

It's only by tackling some of the nonsense peddled in the media that perceptions can be changed – I know of several members who have joined us because they were interested in hearing the other side of the arguments they were constantly being subjected to, but couldn't get the information anywhere else. We have a powerful network of contacts (and thus information sources) within the ABD. Let's make sure we use it to our full advantage.

Richard Dredge

Press releases

Each week the ABD sends out press releases to over 240 media organisations. Does your local paper have an e-mail address? Do you know a journalist or politician involved in transport issues who has never heard of the ABD?

The ABD sends out press releases via e-mail, and we are always looking to increase our circulation. We already cover the main national and regional publications — but new e-mail addresses are coming out all the time.

If you know of anyone who you think would benefit from receiving our releases, please let Chris Lamb know their e-mail address (c.a.lamb@staffs.ac.uk) or ring the ABD press line on 0870 444 2535).

If you would like a copy of a press release please get in touch with Chris Medd. Once sent our press releases are put on the web-site — if you don't have the facility for this we will be happy to post you a copy.

19 November

Hot air in Holland

11 November

ABD highlights double standards

2 November

ABD condemns Red Ken's eco-disaster

31 October

Extreme weather and global cooling

30 October

Dome admits anti-car policy is a failure

28 October

ABD links rail disaster to pot hole Britain

23 October

ABD warns of slide into Soviet-style regime

19 October

Car Free Communities – a concept in crisis

28 September

ABD calls for road users to remain united

21 September

Fuel tax just the tip of anti-car measures

ABD in the media

Each week the ABD appears in the media. Sometimes it's because of our press releases, but increasingly we're the first port of call for media organisations who want the motorist's perspective. This list isn't exhaustive – these are some of the media appearances the ABD has made over the last month.

A more complete and up to date list of media appearances can be found by logging on to the ABD web-site. If you see the ABD mentioned in the press please let Chris Ward know about it (chris-ward@blueyonder.co.uk) or put them in the post to Chris Medd (contact details page 2). Please note that an email address will have the "@" symbol in it – many of the 'email addresses' given to us are actually website addresses.

BBC Radio Gloucestershire and the Daily Telegraph were the first to interview us about the second round of fuel tax protests.

Tony Vickers has had a very busy month talking to newspapers and various regional radio stations about all the issues surrounding fuel taxation levels. Tony is in touch with the Peoples' Fuel Lobby, who were behind the recent second wave of protests. He's already addressed its members and is advising the group on how it can best move forward.

The *Belfast Telegraph* has done two very favourable articles on the ABD. Considering we have no active members in Ireland, and tend not to cover its issues, came as a bit of a surprise!

Nigel Humphries talked on LBC Radio about the RAC Foundation study that showed people cared more about using their cars than about the environmental damage caused. He was pleased to be able to put their minds at rest that there was little trade off between the two!

Brian Gregory chatted to the Daily Record about the Geodesy GPS-based camera locating system (see letters). This is supposed to enable you to programme in

camera sites by push-button as you encounter them, then download the info via 'phone line (scope for sabotage, false sites and hacking etc.. there, then; not to mention complaints that they will distract drivers as per mobile 'phone usage). Brian suggested no-one could object to this technology, since speed cameras were only supposed to be at accident blackspots, weren't they? So anything warning motorised road users about the location of blackspots can only be good, can't it?

Web-sites worth visiting

Below are some of the websites we've either discovered recently or visit regularly because the content is interesting – if you know of others please let us know.

www.fsb.org.uk/fuel/

The Federation of Small Businesses has set up a fuel tax campaign where you can take part in a poll

www.privacy.org.uk/bigbrother/uk99/

Privacy International's site with some interesting stuff aimed at Jack Straw and RACAL for their number plate recognition

www.bestfootforward.com/carbonlife.htm

A CO2 calculator that tells you your emissions according to your lifestyle. Changing from 'I go everywhere by car' to 'I go everywhere on foot' makes one of the smallest differences of any behaviour change to one's CO2 output...

www.orbitproject.com

The government is seeking views on orbital transport around London – basically, the future of the M25 corridor. Please visit this site and follow the instructions for submitting your views.

www.ringroad.org.uk

Russell Eden's site, concentrating on issues relevant to the west Midlands.

Chauffeurplan

If you are unable to drive for any reason you may 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. If you would like to find out more please contact Hugh Bladon (details on page 2) who will send you a leaflet. Alternatively call Chauffeurplan on 0800 24 24 20.

OTR in cyberspace

Issues 31 onwards are now available as PDF files. If you'd like a copy of an issue please email chrismedd75@yahoo.co.uk and he'll send you a copy by return. You can then print off as many copies as you like or forward OTR to friends via email.

Do you have email?

When the ABD is asked to invite its members to respond to consultations we sometimes need to contact a lot of people in a short space of time. If you have an email address please subscribe to ABD Action, allowing us to save a lot of time and money in doing this. You can add your name to

Member services

the list by sending an email to abd-action-owner@egroups.com stating your full name and membership number.

ABD T-shirts

If you would like to help publicise the ABD, why not buy a T-shirt with our details on? The white only T-shirts are top quality with a small ABD logo on the front and the logo, web-site address and telephone number on the back, along with the slogan "Don't let them drive you out of your car".

You can order one from ABD member Colin Gardom, for £10 (£10.50 for an XXL) including P&P. Write to ABD T-shirts at

**39 St Mary's Gate
Chesterfield
Derbyshire S41 7TH
01246 230 005**

Legal representation

The ABD is currently compiling a database of solicitors who are prepared to represent drivers. If you know of somebody who is prepared to help our members please get in touch with Chris Medd, whose contact details are on page 2.

Breakdown recovery

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

ABD publicity material

If you would like copies of the ABD leaflet please get in touch with Susan Newby-Robson (details on page 2), and she'll send you what you need. She can also send you flyers, posters and car stickers.

Speed limits – how they are set and your right to object

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 (27p) to

**Steve Dommett
PO Box 3151
West Bergholt CO6 3JH**