

On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

Issue 38 — August 2000

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Fuelling the fire

We knew it *would* happen, but not *when*. Now the drivers' backlash has started. It's hard to state exactly who or what started the ball rolling, but Chris Longhurst's site at www.boycott-the-pumps.com must certainly take a fair bit of the credit.

Self-styled road safety groups have stood their ground and insisted on remaining out of touch with not only reality but the majority.

Lynn Sloman of Transport 2000 is happy to state publicly: "We're fed up with extreme motorist groups whinging about high petrol prices. The cheaper petrol they are campaigning for will mean more traffic and worse pollution." It seems that the AA and RAC, with their combined membership of nearly 18 million, are extreme pressure groups. But Transport 2000, with its membership not even into five figures, is not an extreme group representing a minority. If you'd like to give her your support you can send her an email at transport2000@transport2000.demon.co.uk

The price of a litre of petrol has gone up at the pump by 44% since Labour came to power, 34% of which is down to increases

news

in tax. If a first class stamp was taxed at the same rate it would cost £1.48.

In 1995 the pre-tax price of a litre of unleaded was 53.5p, the post-tax price being 14p. The pre-tax price is now 22.8p, but the cost once the Government has taken its cut is a whopping 84.2p.

The situation has now got so bad that farmers in Leicestershire are being robbed of their fuel. Their fuel tanks containing red diesel are being siphoned during the night, presumably to be sold on the black market.

One garage in Yorkshire has been selling unleaded fuel at 99.9p a litre. If the display wasn't restricted to that the price would be even higher.

As *OTR* went to press, BP Amoco were about to announce record profits of nearly £11bn – three months ago they forecast £6bn. Despite this the company claims it isn't profiteering.

☞ See page 4 for information on how you can get involved in protesting about the way drivers are treated in this country.

Speed humps illegal...?

David Prior, a Sheffield taxi driver has fought for a judicial review of speed humps – and won. The outcome is expected in 2-3 months. His case stems from DETR Leaflet 796 which states: "*No road hump shall be placed within 25 metres of a tunnel, bridge or culvert*".

He is challenging the interpretation of the word 'culvert'. By his definition this includes sub-surface pipes carrying sewers, drains, electric cables, telephone cables etc, and therefore *all* humps contravene the regulations and are illegal. When a vehicle hits a hump a seismic shock is transmitted through the ground locally and will, in time, fracture any 'culverts'. There is a public health issue if sewers are breached (cholera etc), and the humps themselves are pointless. The council has argued that humps reduce accidents by 60%. Prior showed they had reduced traffic flows by 60% and that increased numbers of accidents were occurring on surrounding humpless streets. He also mentioned they were causing exasperation to road users. If he wins, and there is a very real chance, it will cost Sheffield Council £25 million.

...and gatsos too?

In a repeat of a Scottish ruling in February, two Birmingham men have been told they will not be prosecuted for speeding after they were caught by gatsos. As with the earlier ruling, they were forced to incriminate themselves by being denied the right to silence – contravening Article Six of the European Convention on Human Rights. But despite the February decision, police forces in Scotland are continuing to prosecute drivers by using fixed speed cameras. They are hoping the verdict will be over-ruled on appeal, allowing them to continue to fleece drivers.

There is now talk of using front-facing speed cameras instead of the current rear-facing ones. These were originally ruled out on safety grounds (drivers being dazzled), but the Government needs our money so safety may have to take a back seat.

Cars are bad – shock!

Tony Blair has gone on the offensive (has a word ever been more apt?) by stating that the money from fuel taxes is needed to finance health and education. No mention of saving the environment though – we're no longer deemed stupid enough to fall for that one.

But members of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution claim fuel prices are necessary to tackle global warming. Prof Sir Tom Blundell has urged the Government not to respond to media pressure for a cut in road fuel tax. He said: "The press coverage rarely makes any connection between Government policy on combating climate change and the high level of taxation on road fuels in Britain. Disappointingly, the Government does not seem to be making much of this connection either."

"We particularly regret that successive governments did not devote more of the revenues from the fuel duty escalator to improving the alternatives to cars that produce less carbon dioxide. We hope significant changes in public transport investment will be announced in the near future."

But when a national newspaper investigated fuel prices, a spokesman for the Treasury said Government tax on petrol was set at 72% to protect the environment and the public health. He said: "We have reasons for setting fuel duty rates. It is at the current rate to encourage motorists to use their cars only when they have to. The tax system helps them to change their behaviour. But there are also situations such as rural areas where people depend on the car." Correct – and what is the Government doing about that?

news briefs

In exchange for scrapping their old vehicle, car owners will receive a year's free bus travel worth up to £1,000 from bus company FirstGroup. In Glasgow last year 65 drivers traded in their cars for annual bus season tickets. FirstGroup hopes to remove and scrap 500 old cars in the nationwide scheme.

Safety checks on 20 buses in Sutton Coldfield showed that 16 were defective in some way – four had to be taken off the road immediately. A spokesman for Travel West Midlands, the area's largest bus operator, which had 2 of its 12 buses prohibited, and 7 notices of minor defects, said: "We have a very good engineering record and constantly out-perform the industry average." So 2 out of 12 buses prohibited is better than average? Does this mean that at least 17% of all buses are not safe to be on the road?

Councillors on the environmental services committee of Buckinghamshire County Council paid the price of driving their cars to County Hall during Green Transport Week. They were supposed to cycle, walk or catch buses – any who didn't were expected to donate money to charity. So that's another way to improve road safety and help the environment then. Just give money to charity – or take the car.

Railtrack is to shut part of the west coast mainline between London and Glasgow from 11pm on December 23 to January 2. Inter-city services between London, Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester and Liverpool will come to a virtual halt. Railtrack claims this will cause minimum inconvenience to rail users. Perhaps they mean no more than usual.

Bucks County Council has revealed that only three out of 25 bus stops in Marlow have timetable boards. It says it might be two years before it can supply them because it can't afford the £40 it will cost to supply a board at each stop.

A study by Southampton University has concluded that the high proportion of British homes with fitted carpets is directly responsible for the high asthma rate in this country. Around 98% of UK homes have fitted carpets, compared with just 16% in France and 2% in Italy. Up to 100,000 dust mites can live in just one square metre.

You may remember the Scottish driver who is taking the police to court for denying her the right to silence, throwing the legality of speed cameras into doubt. Her case has been adjourned until November, causing a huge backlog of cases. Other drivers are going to court rather than paying up, and the system is in danger of being overloaded. Tragic.

Wiltshire's public health director Philip Milner, is calling for speed limits on residential roads to be cut to 20mph. The death rate for one to four-year-olds in accidents is 6.2 in west Wiltshire – way above the national average of 1.3 per 100,000. None of his 18 recommendations included educating anyone, least of all children.

50,000 drivers in London may have their £80 fines refunded after it was found five Local Authorities did not have the power to enforce the fines. The problem applies to the City of London, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Croydon, and Newham, where fines were issued by the LA instead of the police. The Association of London Government said drivers who had paid had admitted liability and it would be improper to refund fines. How convenient.

It's the turn of Sussex police to help our poverty-stricken Government. It has announced a zero tolerance campaign against motorists who exceed a 30mph speed limit or fail to belt up. The clampdown is about saving lives, say police. Aah, that old chestnut.

Figures from the Commission for Integrated Transport say road congestion is set to grow by 65% by 2010, while motorway congestion is set to grow by 268% by the same date. Note this is congestion, not traffic levels. With road closures, reduced speed limits, pedestrianisation, one way schemes, etc, congestion will increase even if traffic levels don't.

Derby City Council is to introduce either road tolls or a workplace parking levy. It says: "Public perception will be that a further tax is being added to using a car, and additional transport costs may act as a disincentive to businesses locating in Derby." But it is the council's intention to introduce one of the schemes anyway. Sharp.

Thanks to the backlash over drivers being fleeced already, the Government has announced that motorway tolls will not be implemented for at least 10 years. And have you ever known this Government to break a promise?

Disabled drivers have been banned from using special parking bays in Ripon town centre so school buses can use them to pick up and drop off children. The ban is in place 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But the school buses don't run that often...

A delegation from New Delhi has looked at the Oxford Transport Strategy in operation. They say they are trying to combat pollution and congestion, and may adopt such a scheme for their own city. God help them.

Protesters blocked the A69 at Haydon Bridge to demand the bypass first promised 60 years ago. So much for Transport 2000's statement that more road building would cause a civil war.

Hampshire County Council is to offer a new air quality forecast service. It says it wants to tell people when to leave their cars at home and use alternative transport. That'll be when the air quality deteriorates because of all the buses then.

national contacts

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ignition

The timing of the last issue of OTR was unfortunate – no sooner had it been sent to the printer than the media went into overdrive over fuel taxation. For months we have pointed out the 600% taxation rate of fuel, but it's mainly fallen on deaf ears. Now the chickens have come home to roost as the media carry banner headlines on a daily basis proclaiming the driver is being ripped off.

At the recent open meeting it was decided that the ABD should do more to tackle the fuel price issue. Tony Vickers has volunteered to chair the group, but he needs support – see overleaf for more. As a precursor to something much bigger we have launched our Show the tax campaign.

While most people will know by now just how much the Government is ripping them off, this campaign will alert to them to the existence of the ABD. With this issue of OTR is a copy of the Show the tax poster and letter we have produced. If you need them in electronic format everything is on the website. Please copy them and distribute them where you can.

Mark McArthur-Christie has had to stand down as Roads and traffic spokesman due to pressures of work.

The ABD committee would like to thank him publicly for all the work he has put in over the years. It leaves a large hole in the ABD committee – one that needs to be filled. If you'd like to become more active see overleaf for how you can help the ABD move forward.

I think somebody was trying to wind me up when I was sent an email publicising a book called Cutting your car use. Predictably it's endorsed by Friends of the Earth and the Environmental Transport Association.

Containing such gems as "For under 8,000 miles per year, being car-free is cheaper", the book completely fails to take into account individual circumstances. I could do 2000 miles a year and the fact that there is no public transport at all where I live wouldn't change. How does having no car then save me money? I can't think of a better way of wasting £6, so if you'd like a copy (!) take a look at www.greenbooks.co.uk

With the introduction of digital speed cameras, the number of fixed penalties for speeding issued in Nottingham is expected to rise from 3,000 a year to 20,000 – providing an additional £800,000 income. Council chiefs believe the cameras will cut accidents by

around a third. But if no such decrease is seen, will heads roll?

The AA says Nottingham City Council should be "applauded for taking such a bold step". The AA Foundation for Road Safety Research discovered speed has a very small part to play in accident causation (just 4.3%), yet it continually ignores this.

Gloucester City Council claims 50 people have been

saved from death or injury each year since their Safer City project began calming traffic on Gloucester's roads. Yet the total number of road accidents in the city has increased – from an average of 479 a year between 1991 and 1995 to 487 last year. Despite the rise in road accidents, the local penpushers claim the accident rate has actually gone down – it's just that people are reporting a greater proportion of them.

It's claimed 240 road humps installed since April 1996 have saved seven people from death and serious injury and 43 people from slight injury in road accidents in Gloucester each year.

The Council says some streets have seen a reduction in accidents of up to 89%. But figures like these have to be taken with a pinch of salt because often the traffic levels decrease by a similar amount (it takes alternative, less obstructed routes) or traffic calming measures are installed at the same time as other ones. The third reason is that accident rates vary from one year to another, as evidenced by several roads that saw increases in the number of people injured despite traffic calming measures, new road markings and speed cameras.

Over the years the ABD has sent out many press releases and done countless interviews, putting the motorist's point of view forward. We've frequently been written off as a bunch of selfish nutters who care not one jot about road safety or the environment. Now it seems we weren't so wrong after all. All sorts of magazines and newspapers are now carrying ABD-sourced information in articles to do with eco-mythology and the abuse of technology that is the speed camera. Everybody from the Yorkshire Post via the Federation of Small Businesses (with 100,000 members) to the Daily Mail is using information sent by us to put articles together. The blue touch paper has been lit.

Chris Medd

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campaigning

The ABD needs YOU

Recent media attention over fuel price issues has proved to be a golden opportunity for us – not only to show we should be taken seriously but also to demonstrate that we are not interested only in speed limits.

While the ABD has received a lot of media coverage thanks to this, we could have received even more if we had more people willing and able to represent us. The ABD's committee members have all run out of holiday allowance due to the number of days taken for media appearances and conference attendances – we are now at the stage where we are having to turn down the chance to take part in TV programmes such as Trevor McDonald's *Tonight*. If you would like to help the organisation progress by speaking on its behalf we need to hear from you.

The ABD is in danger of being unable to move forward unless more people get involved. With a finite number of hours available and an increasing demand for those hours, we need more people to give up some time for the group. Remember, everybody who currently gives their time for the ABD is doing so around their own personal commitments. If you think we could (or should) be doing better, why not get involved, for the benefit of everyone?

As well as speaking on behalf of the group we need somebody who can help reply to enquirers – whether it's via the post or (as is more usual) via email. The job would entail nothing more than replying to specific questions posed by people reading our literature or visiting the ABD website (www.abd.org.uk)

We also need somebody to help with fundraising. Our only income is from our members' subscriptions, and the sponsorship seeking we have done so far has produced no extra income. If you think you can change that please give Hugh Bladon a ring – his details are on page 2.

Tony Vickers has set up a fuel price group, dedicated to campaigning action on this issue. It's not a separate group, but is aimed at tackling this sensitive issue and formulating a strategy to take some form of action. The *Show the tax* campaign is our opening gambit – there's more information on page 3 about how you can help to publicise the ABD, while putting pressure on the Government to reduce fuel prices. Ring Tony if you can get involved – details on page 3.

It's likely there will be some form of protest during September. Due to lead times for *OTR*, by the time you receive this a decision will have been made over how to deal with this issue. It will probably be in the form of a demonstration in Westminster, although details will be released during August. Anybody on ABD-Action (see page 8 for information on subscribing) will receive notification. If you're not on ABD-Action there will be full details in the next issue of *On The Road*.

Cooking the books

by Nigel Humphries

The ABD has regularly quoted Transport Research Laboratory report 323 in relation to the part that speed has to play in the causation of accidents. This report looked at individual accidents and got the attending officer to go through a sensible process of establishing causal factors. This showed that excessive speed was the primary factor in 4.3% of accidents and accounted for 7.1% of the total number of factors. Because there are up to four factors allowed in each accident, speed could be said to be a contributory factor in about 25% of accidents – not too different from what the DETR has always said. It's just that what they said has been corrupted – speed is not the main factor. This is therefore a sensible and credible piece of research which illustrates how the main causes of accidents are not addressed by current policy.

"The ABD is in danger of being unable to move forward unless more people get involved"

The ABD will have a stand at the NEC Classic & Sports car show, on 4/5 November. We're okay for cars, but if you'd like to help out on the stand on either (or both) days please let Chris Medd or Tony Vickers know. Contact details on pages 2/3.



PACTS report

by Hugh Bladon

I recently attended a PACTS (Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety) meeting, in which the ABD takes part. The first report, from the Road Environment working party (WP), contained the following:

"Other issues monitored during the year included the Speed Camera Pilot Scheme in eight areas and the Gloucester Safer City project. Each of these will be followed up further when the trials are complete. The relationship between maintenance and road accidents continued to be discussed and the Working Party awaits further proposals to quantify the problem."

I pointed out that our roads must make a contribution to accidents as they're a disgrace through lack of investment. I then asked:

1. How long was the camera scheme to last?
2. How long is the Gloucester project to last?
3. What data was being collected?
4. Who was collecting it?
5. What did the final sentence mean?

I got a lot of waffle but the two schemes were scheduled to last for two years. The working party didn't know the answer to Q3 or Q4 and had a problem with Q5. Situation normal but I didn't need to

TRL421 is an attempt to justify the previous report claiming that a 1mph change in average speed causes a 5% change in accidents – by the same authors. The original report is analysed (by me) on the ABD website. Check this out if you are interested. TRL421 basically takes a lot of different roads and compares the average speed with the number of accidents and plots a graph – splitting up the roads in such a way that their original conclusion is supported. They also set up a covert camera on a road near the TRL and took pictures of cars and then sent questionnaires to the drivers. They claim to find a correlation between the accident record and the speed.

Anyone with any knowledge of statistics and operational research will be having a seizure about now if they are reading this. This is totally invalid and is a blatant attempt to shore up anti-speed policy by questionable academic practice.

The Daily Mail has produced a sticker with "End this highway robbery - Cut the tax in my tank" on it. You can get one by sending a stamped self-addressed envelope (at least 10" x 8") to:

Daily Mail Highway Robbery Car Sticker Offer, PO Box 111, Chatham, Kent ME4 4LS
The sticker is 9" by 3" and depicts Gordon Brown as a highwayman.

press as I had made the point.

Interestingly a member from Gloucester said the people of that city are up in arms about the Safer City scheme and are getting really irate with the endless humps and other so-called traffic calming measures. There's ill feeling on a par with the current sentiments about fuel prices.

We then went on to the Road User Behaviour WP report which contained the same sentence in two separate paragraphs, as follows: '...drivers do not know the speed limits and so do not understand the rationale for them'.

That they do not understand the rationale for them is perfectly understandable as there are a lot of limits which are completely inappropriate. Oliver Carsten (an anti-car PACTS leading light) shot himself in the foot when he said there are always times when limits are inappropriate!

The only other thing of note was that there was a piece about speed limiters in the Vehicle Design WP report which read 'Potentially a speed limiting system, which is fair to all road users, is the best way of reducing road accidents'. I had written 'Nonsense' in the margin. The lady sitting next to me spotted this and expressed her total agreement with me. Since she was older even than me, this came as quite a surprise!

campaigning

Car Free Day 2000

by Russell Eden

As a precursor to having your car removed altogether, the Environmental Transport Association (ETA) is organising a car free day in September. The intention is to have a day when it's entirely free to use your car – free fuel, parking and that sort of thing. No, just kidding – the idea (believe it or not) is to have a day when drivers' lives are made a misery. Can you imagine? Whatever next? If you live in any of the towns listed below, you may like to complain to your council.

100% confirmed participation:

Deal (Kent)
Sittingbourne (Kent)
Kingsbridge (South Devon)

90% confirmed participation:

Bath
London Borough of Camden
LB Lambeth (may be combined event with LB Southwark)

Thinking seriously about it:

London Boroughs of Brent, Bromley, Ealing, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Merton, Richmond, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest

Ashford (Kent)	Birmingham
Brighton	Bristol
Canterbury	Edinburgh
Greenwich Park	Guildford
Lancashire	Liverpool
Newcastle	North Tyneside
Pickering (N Yorks)	Richmond Park
Sedgefield	Southampton
Sunderland	Torbay
Welwyn Garden City	Winchester

Choice In Personal Safety

by Gordon Read

As announced in OTR 37, the ABD is now affiliated to Choice in Personal Safety. If you would like to find out more about us please contact me (CIPS chairman) at

Fir Tree Cottage
Lower Chase Road
Waltham Chase
Southampton SO32 2LH

CIPS was founded in the 1980s to

"Freedom doesn't mean what some politicians imply – only doing what busybodies approve of"

oppose the introduction of seatbelt compulsion. From that start we have developed into an independent voluntary research organisation which tries to put the results of its work into the hands of those in power.

We believe that more safety laws and devices, including motorcycle and cycle helmets, are not the way to safety. Nearly 95% of casualties are due to perfectly sober drivers doing silly things. Safety laws and devices won't change that.

When people see themselves as safe in an activity they behave more dangerously. So safety devices tend to be self-defeating. The DETR don't believe that, but the Home Office does – in Research Report 124.

Nobody wants casualties. All the heat goes on road users although accidents in the home cause more carnage. So what's the answer? We say it's simple. Put the responsibility where it belongs – in the



hands of road users. Use every means to persuade road users (all of them) to behave responsibly. At the same time, repeal laws like seatbelt

compulsion to emphasise the point that safety devices don't prevent accidents. The idea that they allow folk to crash in comfort has to end.

Some think you can't change human behaviour. Nonsense – publicity about drunken driving did just that even though drink was never a major casualty cause. Done once, it can be done again.

CIPS believes in the freedom of the individual within reasonable limits. So what are those limits? To act in ways which don't hurt others. Freedom doesn't mean what some politicians imply – only doing what busybodies approve of. Sure there have to be traffic laws, but they should be the minimum required to do the job of controlling the lunatic fringe of road users. That's not the case right now.

CIPS isn't anti-safety. It's not a wild-fringe outfit. We're on the list of bodies consulted by the DETR. Where we differ from some is that we say the present way of running road traffic isn't the most effective in making it safe. People don't like restrictions. They prefer to act from individual choice. They want to judge for themselves what's best for their personal safety. We support that.

Speeding

by Steve Fraser

As a former police traffic officer, I have dealt with my fair share of road accidents. And as a result I firmly believe that bad driving coupled with police forces' and the Government's attitude to the speeding issue, have a lot to answer for.

There are increasing calls for tougher enforcement of speed limits as the police and Government seek to place the blame for all motoring evils upon this one offence. The self-serving hypocrisy of the Government and of police management becomes apparent when the facts are considered.

What are the statistics for numbers of eyesight tests conducted, prosecutions for overtaking on the nearside, or tailgating (offences I see many times each day on the motorway)? Very few. These offences are far more dangerous. The police response will inevitably be insufficient manpower. This is no excuse for using their limited resources to gain extra income for the Government, and status for themselves by appearing to prove that they are "doing something".

A senior officer was recently interviewed on the radio about the police approach to

speeding. It was revealed that German police have very effective measures against tailgating drivers on motorways. His response was: "It's probably easier for them to introduce new technology."

Senior police point to the number of tickets issued as if this is some indication of success, when the goal should be the reduction of accidents. They claim this success because of the need to attain goals to prove their worth. The answer appears to be to set goals that are easily reached.

A woman has gained fame and even released a record solely upon her inability to learn to drive. She can only be an accident waiting to happen.

Another octogenarian got completely lost, ending his journey after hundreds of miles and a great many hours parking across the carriageway of a main road and then driving into the car of an off duty policeman. The magistrates failed to disqualify him until he took a test, but suggested he stick to shorter journeys.

OK to be a hazard in your own locality, just not in my back yard. Failure to resolve this situation does not lie exclusively with the police, but also a legal system that is floundering.

"Senior police point to the number of tickets issued as if this is some indication of success"

I am by no means against the prosecution of speeding motorists in locations where speed is wholly inappropriate, but the police should examine their traffic management policies, which seem to be based almost entirely upon expediency and self-enhancing media spin. What other benefit is there in prosecuting hundreds of motorists for speeding on a motorway during a one-off event, given great publicity, when the very next day cars will be driving at the same speeds, ignored and totally undeterred?

It is facile to remark that if drivers slowed down then injuries at accidents would be less severe. Better driving would prevent these accidents in the first place.

Rigorous prosecution of bad driving offences would deter such practices. It would also remove from the road persistent offenders and those who are dangerous, whether through old age, youth, stupidity or ineptitude.

Speeders should be actively sought out and prosecuted only where it would make a difference, instead of at locations where catching speeders is, to use a phrase common amongst traffic officers, "like shelling peas".

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

Why does this Government not appreciate the fact that the cost of petrol is not serving any practical purpose whatsoever – apart from seriously lowering the quality of living and reducing business in rural areas?

It doesn't matter how much money they pour into public transport, it will never be more convenient than the car outside major cities. The prosperity and growth of business in rural areas is due solely to the car, and taxing fuel beyond acceptable levels is a thoughtless method of raising revenue for weak spots in the economy.

Haven't we had enough of this "I rule, not represent" attitude? We have to fight much harder for a tax reduction on petrol, and start getting results – now. I enclose a flyer I've produced to hand out where I can.

Brian Wilcox

Watching GMTV the other morning I was appalled to see that petrol has increased by nearly 50p per gallon since the eve of the last budget. When I was to find that in fact the price of the petrol is only 20% of the price (the other 80% being tax), alarm bells started to ring.

It has been cleverly planned by our Government, using public ignorance, fluctuation of crude oil prices, environmental issues, & converting from gallons to litres. I asked a few people in my town how much they thought an imperial gallon of four-star petrol was and most thought about £3.00 per gallon. This confirms public ignorance. I asked them how many litres is in an imperial gallon. Of the 20 people I asked one person was correct. Most thought it was about three litres.

I'm not a financial analyst but even I can work out that the present increases are not in line with inflation.

The Government raised £36 billion in motorist-sourced taxes last year – plenty for them to invest in road improvements, park & ride schemes and public transport. This would result in fewer cars on the road and fewer traffic jams. However the Government invested only £6 billion.

The Government could have spent £36 billion on 4500 new trains, 3600 miles of widened motorway or more than 2 million miles of cycle routes.

Where did the missing £30 billion go? I think our Government is guilty of extorting the people and trying to control freedom of movement. Why are we paying so much for our petrol when we are buying it in at one of the lowest rates in Europe? The public should wake up and start pointing the finger at our Government – not the fuel companies.

N Sykes



John Squires makes a spirited defence of the concept of decriminalised parking (OTR 36) which I had attacked in the previous issue. I did not, as he asserts, claim the object of such schemes is to make money out of parking fines.

On the contrary, I made it very clear that the financial viability of a decriminalised parking scheme depends principally on revenue raised from the introduction of new charges for on street parking and on improved utilisation of council car parks through the removal of on-street parking - new yellow lines and residents' zones. This is a different matter entirely. It is bad enough for the council to make money from enforcing its own laws, a situation guaranteed to foster abuse of power. A direct and immediate incentive to bring in new restrictions and charges "because they can be enforced" can only accelerate this abuse. The fact that there is a political framework in which restrictions on motorists are deemed desirable for their own sake only cements this inevitable reality.

Proponents of such schemes always defend them by quoting genuine cases where restrictions are required in order to facilitate the flow of traffic, promote safety, improve turnover to help shoppers and businesses or to allow residents to park near their homes. John Squires is no exception. The reality is very different. I was in Edinburgh recently and heard how the council is to introduce a blanket residents' zone in an area where all the houses have ample off road parking "because people park there and walk into town".

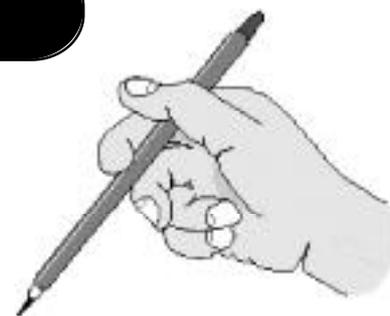
John is to be congratulated on his efforts to inform drivers of their rights and to help protect them from the worst excesses of council anti-car policy. But he should do more to expose the blatant abuses of council power that are facilitated by the decriminalised regimes he supports.

Nigel Humphries

I recently had the opportunity to appear on a Channel 4 news show, representing the ordinary motorist. Although not used to being in front of a TV camera I didn't appear as nervous as I felt! The (limited) questions I could get away with asking managed to

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.



come out alright. The staff were friendly and helpful, and tried hard to put myself and the other participants at ease. I think at least three of us were intensely nervous.

The woman sat behind me representing cyclists was also a driver, and when I chatted to her she was quite happy to share bus lanes with motorcycles. Many (though certainly not all) of those who speak for other groups are eminently sensible. If you have the chance to enter a public discussion with them, brush up the basic facts and figures – and go for it.

Keith Walker

Once again the Government's advisers are shown to be out of step with public opinion. I refer to a recent article in the *Wilts & Glos Standard*, about Transport 2000's advice on dealing with a dangerous stretch of road near me.

Nettleton Bottom has been the scene of several accidents, one fatal, in recent times. It's the only stretch of non-dualled A417/A419 between Swindon and Cheltenham – a road that links the M5 with the M4. Proposals to link the two stretches of dual carriageway so it's non-single carriageway for its entire length have been laughed at by T2000.

As usual the group is advocating spending the money on buses and trains "because that's what they want". Do they? Has anybody asked them? T2000's plan to prevent accidents at this blackspot is to introduce traffic lights and reduced speed limits. If you don't know the road I'm talking about, let's just say this suggestion would cause more accidents than it would solve.

The worrying thing (one of many in fact) is that Transport 2000 is a statutory consultee to the Government. So not only does it get to speak, but the Government listens.

At least the organisation acknowledges that a problem exists. But its solution is nonsensical. It says the answer is to reduce the amount of traffic using the road. T2000 is quoted as saying that "it wants to work with the county council in a bid to reduce the volume of through traffic using the dual carriageway. That way the area can again become a pleasant place in which local people are able to use the roads safely".

So after spending £112m on building an arterial road, create a bottleneck/accident blackspot then use it as an excuse to prevent people using it. Or force them onto public transport because that's what they want – they just don't know it yet!

Bob Dennish

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



My daughter brought the following piece of work home the other day, which she had pinched(!) from one of the other kids in the class. She brought it for me because she knew I would be shocked by it – and I was. It comprises a summary by the other child of what the class has 'learnt' this term. It shows, I think, the dangers of trying to propagandise and misinform a whole population of schoolchildren.

"Wetlands are becoming endangered because all the gases and petrol gases are polluting the water. If we stopped using cars and transport for a while and used buses and then we could fit 32 people on a bus and more cars more pollution is damaging the ozone layer. Pollution is making holes in the ozone layer and the sun is beaming (sic) through and drying up"

The girl who wrote it is driven the quarter of a mile to school every day by her mum in a Discovery...

Alan Wesson

Further to the recent publicity around 'Boycott The Pumps', why is the tax always hidden on the receipt? Is there no law to ensure that taxes extracted are clearly indicated? Yet, (uniquely?) the tax on petrol is not shown separately – if it was many more people would wake up to the sheer scale of tax being charged each time we fill-up. Is there someone out there who knows the definitive answer on this?

Steve Westbury

I recently found a forum on the internet, on which people were discussing fuel prices. Under a heading entitled *I love petrol Rises, it saves our planet (sic)!* was the following message "from the members of Transport 2000":

"I totally (sic) agree with the petrol rises, I hope you all have to take out a second mortgage to pay for your petrol, if you pollute you must pay."

YOU ARE ALL BAD DRIVERS ANYWAY!

If you carry on strangling our planet you should pay the price. I have no sympathy for all of you with your big flash high horse power cars that swallow more petrol in a day than you lot can moan about petrol prices going up. I hope Mr Brown screws the lot of you!"

I've responded with the fact that the recent TRL report 421 states quite categorically that buses – not cars – are the ones guilty of chucking out harmful pollution. And if they want to save the 'planet' they should learn to spell it first...

Andrew Howlett

Following ABD Thames' recent meeting at West Ilsley, we will be changing the venue to a pub called The Harrow, also in West Ilsley. This is a village just off the A34 some 8 minutes north of Chieveley (J13 of the M4). It's very easy to find and everyone is welcome at our next meeting on 8 August at 8pm. Please e-mail/call Damon Green or me (simon@lestac.demon.co.uk) if you have any queries. Meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of the month.

Simon Worby

An average modern car takes 9.5 metres to stop from 30mph and 12.9m to stop from 35. If you include 0.5 seconds reaction time, the total stopping distances are 16.2m and 20.7m respectively – a difference of 4.5m.

At 30mph, a 0.5 second distraction would take you 6.7m which is far more than the 4.5m you would gain by slowing down to 30.

This illustrates that, particularly at low speeds, attentiveness is far more important than going 5mph slower.

Peter Hattingh

Looking at all the funding and media exposure given to those who are anti-car, perhaps we should re-invent ourselves. If we were to separate the rip-off aspect of our activities from the speed/accident bit we could then portray ourselves as a road safety organisation (which we are anyway) while still using our existing arguments. This way none of the speed kills lobby could denounce us as 'child killers' and we could force the facts to get in the way of a good story. Unfortunately this would mean a separate organisation and name (and another membership fee). We could all be members of both organisations without being seen to have a conflict of interests as the arguments are the same. Such an organisation should find

it easier to get backing as it would be politically correct.

How about DAD (Drivers Against Death)? Let's see them argue against that!

Gary Heywood

When I was at college I did a lot of work on the human side of hazard analysis and assessment/quantification of risk, both real and perceived. Without any doubt, the safer someone feels, the lower risk-rating they give to a hazard. Thus put a driver in a new Volvo and he/she will present a greater risk to others than in a clapped-out Mini. It really is as simple as that.

It is the wholesale lack of use of these proven assessment techniques which offends me when the anti-speed lobbies start whingeing.

Tim Lawrence

The BBC (Ceefax) and ITV (Teletext) both publish viewers' letters. You can air your views on hot issues such as fuel prices as the news breaks and get through to millions of people quickly. Write to:

BBC Ceefax Room 7540, TV Centre, Wood Lane, London W12 7RJ fax: 020 8749 6734
ceefax@bbc.co.uk
and for **Teletext**

The Editor, Write On, PO Box 297, London SW6 1XT fax: 020 7386 5618

letters@teletext.co.uk

Selected letters can be found on page 145 BBC1 (Ceefax) and page 327 ITV (Teletext). Keep contributions to within 60 words, and give your name, telephone no. and full postal address – although if they publish, they will abbreviate this.

Brian Mooney

Saw a caption on the back of a bus claiming that 'More is less'. Over the 'more' was a speed camera symbol, over the 'less' was a picture of some teddy bears (representing dead children of course).

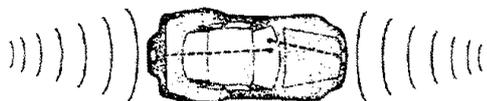
Underneath, in writing so small you had to get quite close: 'More safety cameras in Essex mean fewer accidents and fewer casualties'. There was also the 'Think' logo.

So they are now suddenly called safety cameras! They are also now advertising speed cameras to us! And the money for the campaign is coming from us – it's not being spent on road safety, or teaching kids how to cross the roads, or to put lights on their bikes, or to sponsor evening classes for adults who would like to be better and safer drivers.

I wonder why the powers that be feel the need to justify cameras to us? Do they detect a groundswell of anti-camera opinion? If so, they should listen to it, not simply hit us over the head with the same rubbish.

John Simpson

Radar defence systems



For the very best advice on purchasing a portable or installed radar/laser detector, speak to the experts...
For a free information pack contact Networx Ltd at

20 Hillhouse Farm Gate
Lanark
Lanarkshire ML11 9HT

Tel 01555 666 444
Fax 01555 66 33 44

networx.ltd@dial.pipex.com

20% discount for ABD members!



ABD in the media

Each week the ABD appears in the media. Sometimes it's because of our press releases, but increasingly it's because we are the first port of call for media organisations who want the motorist's perspective. While this list is far from 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@waverider.co.uk) or put them in the post to Chris Medd (see page 3 for contact details). Please note that an email address will have the "@" symbol in it – many of the 'email addresses' given to us are actually web-site addresses.

The fuel tax outcry has given us a lot of interview opportunities. Hugh Bladon has had a busy month talking to journalists. BBC Radios Cambridgeshire, Leeds, 3 Counties and Humberside along with LBC (London-based) all interviewed Hugh about fuel prices. Nigel Humphries spoke to BBC Radio Scotland while Hugh dealt with the mass of clamouring journalists! Hugh also secured a whole quarter of an hour (which is about 14 minutes more than anyone normally gets!) talking to ex-pats in Spain and CBS even did an interview for America. The Sunday Times, Daily Mail, Telegraph and various local newspapers also used the ABD as a source to represent the driver's point of view, with a lot of information on several occasions.

Meanwhile Bernard Abrams took part in a debate with BBC Radio Gloucester before

doing the same for BBC Radio Wales.

What's been proving useful for us is this increased exposure at a local level introducing more and more people to our existence. Many are phoning in with support while our spokesmen are on air, but some of the presenters aren't always keen to give our contact details out – even privately! What a shame there's so much blatant bias in our media. These presenters would probably be quite happy to divulge details of Friends of the Earth, Transport 2000, et al.

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.

26 July

ABD urges police to target enforcement on dangerous behaviour

24 July

Prescott pledges £180 billion bribe

19 July

Poll on transport issues reveals scale of public deception

17 July

ABD blasts out of touch Transport 2000's attitude to fuel tax protests

14 July

Britain's top 10 misuses of speed cameras revealed

5 July

Fuel tax campaign launched by drivers' group

4 July

Livingstone tax hypocrisy condemned

3 July

Blair fuel tax outburst is emotional blackmail

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.tory.org.uk/

Tory party home page with contacts listing. We can't harass Tony Blair directly, but the Tories can.

hfatransaction.8k.com

The Hauliers & Farmers Alliance was formed in February. It incorporates hauliers from Trans-Action (North East) group and local farmers with the aim of pressurising ministers into creating tax and subsidy harmonisation across the E.U. Note there's no www after the //

www.parkingticket.co.uk

Normally sites are mentioned only once, but ABD member John Squires has written to plug his excellent site. It's well worth a visit if you need to find out anything about the rules and regulations governing parking.

Member services

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 4) 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 e-mail?

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

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
Tel: 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. There's also a limited stock of car stickers available. Flyers and posters are due soon.

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