

# On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

Issue 40 — October 2000

£2.00 — Free to ABD members



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## 'Minority' strikes

As the Government licks its wounds over the fuel tax protests, Blair and co. can hardly claim the writing wasn't on the wall. Yet incredibly, even now, they refuse to acknowledge why the picketing happened at all. Not only do they say that they won't cave in to the demands of such people (suggesting they are a minority) but that it's up to OPEC to cut the price of fuel. Yet their cut is less than 15%!

Blair said the action was causing "real damage to real people". Just like crippling tax rates on fuel.

Prescott said there was no support for the protest - but out of 157,000 who took part in a BBC poll, 91% were in favour of the action. And as we have come to expect, instead of them suggesting that maybe the millions of people angry with them had actually got a point, they blamed everyone except themselves. OPEC was guilty of charging too much, the public were guilty of not being fair, the demonstrators were guilty of being unreasonable and the oil companies were to blame for not forcing their drivers to go out with their tankers.

The demonstrators withdrew after five days before they lost public support. They've given the Government 60 days in which to offer a package that will reduce the tax rates on fuel, amongst other things. Predictably the Government has guaranteed nothing, but has said it will be better prepared next time.

The Government hasn't brought the environment into the equation - their line

## news

has been that education and health - not the environment - will suffer if fuel taxes are reduced. The greens have mainly been conspicuous by their absence, although when they have appeared they have accused the demonstrators of representing a minority or being unreasonable. Just like when they get upset. They bleat that there's been no debate, with people demonstrating at other peoples' inconvenience - something the anti-car brigade know all about. Apparently we should be speaking to the Government and issuing petitions - they seem to be unaware that these have been attempted, but the Government has chosen to ignore these approaches.

During the shortages Birmingham City Council stated that there had been no change in pollution levels at the city's monitoring stations and that they "may have overestimated the proportion of pollutants from traffic". But that didn't get much coverage.

Public transport also showed how well it can('t) cope with extra demand - but then as it can't cope with existing demand that's no surprise. Central Trains claims it is seeing annual growth of 12%, which they are struggling to cope with.

We currently have fuel costing up to 90p a litre when the cost of crude oil is around \$32 a barrel. There's talk of the cost of crude rising to over \$40 a barrel over the winter...

## Good news for some...

If you were caught speeding by a remote speed camera in a temporary speed restricted zone while passing through Bedfordshire in the last year, you may have cause to claim for damages against the Bedfordshire HQ Highways Agency.

It has been revealed that more than a year ago the the Highways Agency scrapped the Senior Executive Officer grade. This is the only grade that has authority to issue temporary speed limits on behalf of the Secretary of State. This means the Bedford

Highways Agency could not legally set any temporary speed limits. But senior staff at Bedford Highways Agency have continued to authorise orders for temporary speed limits despite being stripped of their legal powers more than a year ago.

If anyone wants to challenge a speeding conviction handed down within the last 12 - 14 months, they have a pretty good chance of overturning the conviction. There are over 800 convictions that are likely to be overturned.

## Traffic levels barely increase

Motor traffic in 1999 increased by 1.7% compared with 1998, about the same as the 1.5% rise the previous year according to estimates published recently.

Road Traffic Statistics: 1999 shows that:  
⌘ Car traffic rose 1% between 1998 and 1999, one of the lowest year-on-year increases in recent years

⌘ Two-wheeled motor vehicle traffic rose 16% between 1998 and 1999, a sharp increase following a six-year period of little change

⌘ Pedal cycle traffic rose 6% between 1998 and 1999, compared with an average fall of 4% per year from 1995 to 1998

⌘ Motorway traffic rose 3% between 1998 and 1999 - lower than the average rate of increase in recent years. Traffic on major built-up roads showed little change over the same period

⌘ Motorways in Great Britain carried 18% of total traffic and 39% of goods vehicle traffic in 1999, although they accounted for less than 1% of road length. Half of all articulated goods vehicles traffic was on motorways.

## Asleep at the wheel

According to figures from the DETR it's estimated that tiredness may be the principal factor in around 10% of all road vehicle accidents. On motorways, this figure climbs to around 20%. Must be all those unrealistically low speed limits sending drivers to sleep.

## Asthma cases fall

Cases of asthma have fallen by 25-30% since 1994, despite suggestions that the reverse is true. Cases peaked in the winter of 1993/4 then fell every subsequent quarter, regardless of the season.

The study, published in the journal Thorax, said the trend was seen across all age groups. The research was based on findings by 92 GPs across the country, representing 680,000 people. Not that asthma and transport-sourced pollution are linked of course.

## news briefs

**B**P is taking Friends of the Earth to court because the latter has published a global warming feature on its website which "makes false and misleading factual representations regarding the effects of CO2 emissions from the burning of fossil fuel. FoE's main avenues of attack are the use of apocalyptic predictions that have no reliable scientific support."

**In 1994 the University of Vienna compared pollution caused by cars on smooth and humped roads. They found a car over humps emits 10 times as much nitrogen oxide (NOx) and three times as much carbon monoxide (CO) as a car at a steady speed. Fuel consumption increased by 25%.**

Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy has recently published a book called *The future of politics*. In the chapter entitled *The road to Wellville* Kennedy states: "My priority is to get people out of cars and on to public transport".

**Gatsos could be painted bright orange following a pilot scheme in Plymouth. ACPO says it will advise every force in the country to go dayglo if high-visibility cameras lead to lower speeds than anonymous grey boxes. Maybe next they'll relocate them to accident blackspots. No mention of what happens if they get a reduction in casualties with no reduction in speed or vice versa.**

After Prescott's £100,000 refit of one of his four residences (that's after a £400,000 refit of one of his others), comes news of more Government extravagance. The new Portcullis building gives 230 MPs office space in Westminster. So far it's cost £230m - that's £1.1m per MP and 12 fig trees from Florida have been hired for five years - at a cost of £150,000. A spokesman said the project was being done "as economically as possible".

**The Australian Road Transport Commission has released a report into driver performance standards in Australia. The only method that had the potential to reduce accidents was hazard perception training. If you'd like the full report try [www.nrtc.gov.au](http://www.nrtc.gov.au)**

The Highways Agency has spelt out how £1.2 billion will be invested in new technology to improve traffic management, driver information and develop better services for drivers on national roads over the next ten years. Automatic warning systems and more motorway monitoring cameras are the focus. They obviously don't aim to cut congestion, just tell us it exists.

**Residents on a Leicestershire housing estate have had their bus services cut because the service isn't generating enough profit. Arriva, who ran the service, said the cuts will help them to run other routes more reliably. The residents now claim their links with vital services such as shops, post offices and health centres have been severed.**

A Staffordshire woman hired an electric saw and cut back newly installed traffic lights overhanging her front garden. She went to the police to check her rights and was told that the situation is the same as with an overhanging tree - chop off the offending bits and give them back.

**A parking attendant who works for Westminster city council has been fined £70 with £20 costs for attempting to remove a clamp from his own car. He told the magistrate he had "only left the car for a minute".**

Camden Council has lost an estimated £650,000 since it put parking enforcement in the hands of a private contractor. The company said it could issue 19,000 tickets a month but since April it has averaged 16,500.

**Rail travel costs 40% more in real terms than 30 years ago, a study for the Rail Passengers' Council shows. Since privatisation in 1996 the average cost of 'walk-on' tickets has risen 20% - pre-booked tickets have increased in cost by only 3% on average. Operators prefer advance booking because all the money goes to the individual operator. 'Turn up and go' revenue is shared between operators. Someone travelling between London and Liverpool in 1996 paid £35 for a SuperSaver. Now a passenger would pay £140 for the walk-on Standard Open Return, a 300% increase.**

A Norfolk woman whose son was knocked down and killed by a bus has won her campaign for a reduced speed limit on the A148 where the accident happened. The limit will be reduced from 60mph to 40mph and enforced by speed cameras. The bus driver was absolved of any blame for the accident, so instead of being hit by a bus at 60mph careless pedestrians will only have to endure a 40mph impact. That's progress.

**The House of Lords has ruled that Councils and the Highways Agency need not grit or clear the roads in winter.**

Fiat has produced a new diesel engine that is classed as a near-zero emissions vehicle. Lots of technology means more power and torque with fewer emissions - up to 60% fewer nitrogen oxides and particulates than will be allowed from 2005.

**Want to complain to Tony Blair about oppressive conditions for drivers? Write to this address and he'll even pay the postage:**

**The Prime Minister  
The Labour Party  
John Smith House  
FREEPOST 144-152 Walworth Road  
London SE17 1JT**

## national contacts

**On The Road** is published by Pro-Motor, a company limited by guarantee and registered in England under #2945728

Contributions deadline for **On The Road** is the second Friday of the month

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**The Association of British Drivers** is an operating name of Pro-Motor

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# ignition

**E**nclosed with this issue of *OTR* are a couple of posters and flyers. The latter have been designed so that if you want to produce your own copies (saving us a lot of postage) you can. But we've printed plenty of both, so if you need some fresh supplies contact me via the membership secretary or email and I'll post some to you.

**An increasing number of members are campaigning locally. Due to a lack of resources the ABD as a group can't often get involved in anything other than national campaigning, but we are here to help our members campaign as much as we can. To help do this we're working on a new range of fact sheets, which will be available towards the end of the year. With nearly two dozen to put together it's quite a job, but we'll soon be able to give you all the information you need on everything from transport and the environment to how to complain about an item you see or hear in the media.**

Speaking of local campaigning, a few local meets are being attempted. Dave Razzell has had limited success attracting members to his monthly pub meet, but Damon Green and Simon Worby have had a little more success. Now Nick Arden is setting up a

meeting for members in Essex. See page 6 for more info.

**I had to travel along the A419 recently – the dual carriageway that connects Cheltenham with Swindon. Being 11.30pm on a dry summer evening it was safe and comfortable travelling at 85mph, especially as the road is lit. Nearing Swindon was a queue of traffic in the nearside lane, sitting at 55mph. A marked police car headed the queue. It's amazing how many people think the speed limit for a car on a dual carriageway is 60mph. As I sailed past at 75mph, it was ridiculous that this mobile traffic calming was causing bunching that was more dangerous than for everybody to travel 15-20mph faster in a more alert state of mind.**

A friend staying in the London suburbs recently had to go to Piccadilly Circus. Being a fine evening he walked in, taking an hour and a quarter. Returning at 10.25pm he decided to catch the tube. Unfortunately the rest of London was also on the platform at Piccadilly Circus. The first train arrived at nearly 11.00, by which time less than half the assembled mass could fit on. He chose to walk part of the way to let things clear. Attempting to board at Oxford Circus he was greeted with an announcement that everything was held up because a train had been stuck in a tunnel for four hours. The

return journey by tube took half an hour more than when he'd walked in earlier.

**At a day out to the Heritage Museum at Gaydon recently I came across a road safety exhibition. Set up by Warwickshire County Council, the stand was aimed at children, especially under 14s – although there was information aimed at teenagers about to embark on learning to**

**drive. There was a full information pack on offer with leaflets galore – correct use of seatbelts, using fluorescent/luminous clothing, using pedestrian crossings correctly and using the Green Cross Code. There were even leaflets to inform parents how to teach road safety to their children. The children's highway code spelt out everything just like the 'normal' edition to which all us drivers should be adhering. What was refreshing was that nowhere in the pack was the slogan speed kills used. Considering the audience at which this pack was aimed that's maybe not surprising, but schoolchildren haven't been exempt from this propaganda before. Perhaps there's hope yet.**

I was recently on the phone to Susan Newby-Robson, our membership secretary. As usual she was snowed under with people enquiring about the ABD and its aims. It was 9.30am and she'd already done three hours' work for the ABD, writing emails, sending letters out and returning phone calls. Four or five hours a day working for the ABD is not uncommon for Susan – and for this she rarely gets any thanks. It's easy to dwell on how much more we would like to do, but for once let's think how much we are achieving with our resources.

**I went to Santa Pod recently to see the European drag racing finals. Cars were whizzing down the quarter-mile straight at speeds of 240mph+ with the bikes not far behind. I thought how great it would be to stand Lyn Sloman (of Transport 2000) or Ben Plowden (Pedestrians' Association) alongside the track. There wasn't an incident over two days of racing. Shows up their speed kills slogan for the fatuous statement that it is.**

The November issue of *OTR* will be merged with the December edition. I'm off for a couple of weeks' holiday so no *OTR* for two months.

**Chris Medd**

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6 PANEL		
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# campaigning

## Fuel tax update

by Tony Vickers

The ABD's official fuel tax campaign was launched on 14 September. Although originally intended to be put into effect during the Labour Party conference, it was decided to bring the date forward to coincide with the fuel tax protest by the hauliers and farmers. The campaign, named *Axe the Tax*, offers people the opportunity to sign a form pledging to withhold their vote from any politician who supports high fuel taxes. Effectively, a plea for strategic voting at the next election. Campaign packages were sent to 750 local papers and of course to the major dailies, radio stations and groups likely to be sympathetic to our views.

At the time of writing it is too early to say how successful the project will be. Inevitably, the media has focused on the more dramatic events at the refineries but as the heat drains from the crisis we hope that our own campaign will help to keep fuel tax in the news and on the public agenda.

Responses from a number of sources are beginning to come in. We are also trying to form alliances with other groups eager to see fuel duty reduced and are making every effort to co-operate with them. As one of the very few pro-motorist groups in the country, we feel that our extensive experience at arguing on behalf British drivers puts us in a unique position to represent the private motorist. Hopefully, when Greedy Gordon is tired of shooting himself in the foot, he will agree to talk to the protestors. The ABD would like to be there.

Whatever happens in the coming weeks and months, we can be sure that high fuel taxes will be close to the top of any political agenda. Every ABD member can help by contacting his or her local councillor and MP and demanding their views on the fuel tax issue.

The pledge form is available from the ABD website - please sign it if you can. You can also make photocopies and pass them on to acquaintances, work colleagues etc. Every pledge counts.

The ABD has a stand at the Classic & Sportscar show to be held at the NEC on November 4th and 5th. If you want to pick up some more of the new posters or flyers there'll be plenty there - as well as the leaflets we've been using for a while. If you'd like to help out, Tony Vickers would like to hear from you - his contact details are on page 2. Helping out doesn't mean giving up a whole day or even half

"The ABD is not interested in negotiating between freedom on one hand and safety on the other"

## Being heard

by Nigel Humphries

In last month's OTR there was a report on my day at the PACTS (Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Transport Safety) consensus seminar. The following letter to its chairman, Robert Gifford, explains the ABD's position and motives:

Thank you for organising the Consensus Seminar and for inviting me to participate. It was an excellent day, representing the right approach to the problem of airing differences

between parties. I was intrigued by your comments at the end about negotiation. I am aware of the importance of knowing everyone's bottom line, but first there has to be a negotiating arena.

Before this can happen, all parties need to be willing to make concessions and understand each other's starting points so they know what they are negotiating about. Since neither of these conditions are satisfied, I do not believe the ABD is in a negotiating situation. Those with whom the ABD disagrees have not been prepared to negotiate with us. They believe they are winning, and see no need to acknowledge us, let alone make concessions about issues they regard as closed. In this position they have been demanding unconditional surrender. Lord Whitty, for example, refused to meet with us to discuss matters. ACPO would not allow us to address or even meet the Traffic Committee. We cannot force others to take our views into account, or even to listen to them.

This is changing - we have been invited to speak to a number of conferences and to participate in both your seminar and the DETR's last year. We believe road safety policy would be much more effective if people worked with one another rather than the very damaging covert opposition that goes on at the moment.

The ABD is not interested in negotiating between freedom on one hand and safety on the other. We believe that all road users have both a right and a responsibility to use the public highway safely. Where we disagree is over the 'facts', assumptions and

"current road safety thinking fails to understand the process involved in driving a car safely"

principles that are used to formulate policy.

Our arguments are persuasive and compelling and, given a fair hearing, we can convince any open minded, reasonable person of our case. We are continually denied the opportunity to put our safety case forward, and, when we do, we find that the arguments against us switch onto something else (the law, the environment, the need to live life at a slower pace, the need to encourage a modal shift etc).

We are currently more interested in opening up debate than in negotiation, so that people have the opportunity to hear and to understand our arguments.

Despite our strong disagreement with current policy direction, we aren't looking to put a row of heads on spikes. We are interested in getting a result where road safety can improve more rapidly without our lives being made a misery - and we firmly believe it can.

Current road safety thinking fails completely to understand the process involved in driving a car safely. The research that is used to justify the speed reduction policy is flawed in its very essence. It asks the wrong questions, makes false associations, applies tests of statistical significance to variables that are not independent and comes up with oversimplified conclusions which are then misinterpreted by people who have never even read the original report into phrases which we regard as laughable but are nevertheless widely accepted as unquestioned fact.

If PACTS is to be a research based organisation, it needs to challenge all research - including that quoted by the ABD - by getting people with different perspectives and knowledge to ask searching and intelligent questions and then thrashing out the arguments until everyone at least understands where everyone else is coming from. This is the only way to move forward. We do this rigorously (and sometimes acrimoniously) within the ABD, and the arguments that come out in our communications represent those that have survived this process.

We also discuss things in detail with people who are opposed to us, and if some aspect of their argument wins through, then we accept that position and that becomes part of our policy. This compliment is not often reciprocated! We seek to put forward arguments that are true and which have integrity, and which lead to solutions which not only work but which are the best solutions for everyone.

I very much hope we can work as PACTS members to facilitate a road safety policy that stands a better chance of reaching the 2010 casualty target than the one we have at the moment.



of one - if you're going to the show anyway and would like to donate an hour or two chatting to show visitors about the ABD and its aims Tony would be most chuffed to hear from you... Even if you can't help out but would like to meet some of the people who give up so much of their time to move the ABD forward, please call in on the stand for a drink and a chat.

# campaigning

## London charging

by Tony Vickers

The following is part of an ABD letter sent to London's media before the 22 September deadline for submissions in response to Ken Livingstone's consultation on congestion charging. Although it relates specifically to our capital, it is relevant to towns and cities across the country:

As if there were not enough disincentives to drive into London, Ken Livingstone has championed a congestion charge as a further penalty for car owners using the roads for which they have paid many times over. Here are some facts that he would rather you did not know:

☼ Traffic pollution has been declining since 1990 and is forecast to continue to do so for at least the next ten years

☼ The Transport Research Laboratory (Report TRL 431) quotes "Restrictions on cars on air quality grounds have been shown not to be warranted by this study"

☼ Traffic on major urban routes has been declining since 1998. Increases in congestion are the result of road space being eroded by misguided local borough traffic schemes. Many of which are based more on political correctness than common sense

☼ Councils which do not produce a 'Green Transport Plan' (disincentives to private car use) suffer financial penalties by the Government.

Having aggravated London congestion by years of under-investment in roads and public transport, the authorities now seek to blame and penalise private car drivers for the consequences. If the GLA wants to make those responsible for congestion pay for improvements to public transport, perhaps they should charge the boroughs that reduce road space and withdraw parking facilities.

Driving in London is a stressful affair. People only do it because the alternatives are worse or impractical. Public transport is already overcrowded during the rush hours. If the GLA forces more motorists to use the system it will become even worse. However much money is spent on public transport, it can never replace the flexibility of a car.

The people most likely to be forced off the roads are the lowest income groups, exactly the social exclusion to which Ken Livingstone is opposed.

The GLA should learn from the example of the Millennium Dome. One reason for its failure is its hostility to private cars. Despite excellent public transport links, people have voted with their wheels and stayed away. Project this over the whole of central London and traders may well pay a higher price than motorists for congestion charging.

This scheme must be stopped. Selecting any particular group to fund the needs of another, regardless of their ability to pay and simply because they are unpopular with the authorities, is fundamentally unjust.

## Don't wait for others...

by Dave Hammond

There seems a general reluctance within the ABD membership to strike unilaterally - but campaigning as an individual rather than a group can actually work very well.

By getting stuck in locally I have been able to have a hand in modifying if not stopping a lot of the anti-car measures that are being proposed. I regularly attend meetings in relation to LTPs (local transport plans), road safety, LA21 etc.

In over five years of campaigning I have never met a motorist's campaigner at a meeting - with the exception of an ETA (Environmental Transport Association) man brought in to support the Cheshire CPRE.

The work can be somewhat time consuming and boring - but it works. If you're not there your views will not be heard.

My local council has put in a protest about fuel taxes. Take it to your local councillor, and ask him/her to get your local authority to do the same.

Staffordshire Moorlands district council says high fuel costs unfairly penalise rural areas and councillors hope other local authorities will follow their stance and fire off similar protests to Prime Minister Tony Blair. The motion - put forward by Cheadle councillor Ron Locker - was agreed at a full Council meeting.

"campaigning as an individual rather than a group can actually work very well"

## Member campaigning

While the ABD spends its time campaigning on national issues, due to pressure on resources the local work has to be done by members. If you've been doing any campaigning write to OTR and let the rest of the ABD's members know about it.

Dave Razzell has been complaining to his parish council about a traffic calming scheme installed in North Horsham resulting in two serious accidents. The parish council agrees with all of Dave's complaints - it has opposed the scheme since plans were first put forward. Unsurprisingly it's another case of the County Council knowing best, and the locals (who have to use the roads they are making more dangerous) supposedly not having a clue.

Alan Bridgman has been having a right old ding-dong with Surrey County Council. They want to reduce limits all over the place, mainly to 30mph. Unusually they seem to be doing some token research into appropriate speeds, although their surveys last just two hours on one day (when done at all) and involve fewer than 50 vehicles. The guidelines state that such surveys should be done 24 hours a day for seven days, although few authorities bother to do

## Opportunity knocks?

by Tony Vickers

Following on from Tony Blair's comments about listening to the fuel tax protestors' grievances, I presume that at some stage a delegation of interested parties will have the opportunity to be heard by a minister (and duly ignored).

With this in mind I have spoken to Charles Mann at the Marches Office and asked him to communicate to the protest leaders our desire to be the motorist's representative at any talks that might take place. Charles agrees with me that since the protest drew its strength from popular

support, the private car driver must be represented. I hope the farmers and hauliers feel the same way. It would also help to prevent them becoming marginalised by Government spin doctors as unrepresentative of the majority of the public.

I have also spoken to an ABD member who is close to Richard Burge of the Countryside Alliance. He has promised to press for the ABD to be put forward in any talks as the voice of the private car driver. Since the Countryside Alliance were closely associated with the protest, I hope they will have some influence.

This is a golden opportunity for us to establish ourselves as the leading pro-motorist group in the U.K., influence the outcome of the fuel tax issue and in due course perhaps much more.

surveys of any kind when reducing speed limits, as this is no longer a statutory requirement. Many of the roads affected have seen no accidents of any sort over the last three years. So why reduce speed limits?

Alan Dale continues to write unfeasibly large numbers of letters to the local media, constabulary, council and opposition campaigners. Alan runs the *Roadcraft Advisory Patrol Service*, primarily set up to campaign for more road user education but now also campaigning against the huge number of anti-car measures to which we are all being subjected. One of the areas into which he has diversified is transport and the environment, trying very hard to counter the eco-mythology that surrounds us.

Mike Arthur spent three days at the Grangemouth refinery while the fuel protests were taking place. Despite media reports to the contrary, there was no aggression or violence, simply reasoned discussion. The police were happy that no offences were being committed and it was clear that there was huge support for the actions - not least of all from the tanker drivers themselves. Being there enabled Mike to not only publicise the ABD but to take part in several interviews with the local media.

# 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](mailto:chrismedd75@yahoo.co.uk)**

**W**e frequently hear that "Pollution is believed by many scientists to be responsible for the onset of climate change."

Until its application in Government anti-car propaganda, the term pollution used to be restricted to substances causing chemical or biochemical damage – it was not used for substances whose effect was purely physical. CO<sub>2</sub> at forecast levels causes no chemical or biochemical damage to animals, and is a fertiliser for plants – indeed, plants and animals flourished over hundreds of millions of years with CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations more than 10 times higher than now. The significance of increasing CO<sub>2</sub> is confined to its effect upon the physics of the atmosphere – not its chemistry. I think that describing CO<sub>2</sub> as a pollutant is incorrect in terms of the common scientific usage of the word and should be challenged whenever used.

**Mike Arthur**

I wrote to the National Trust and RSPB (of which I am currently a member) a few months ago because both organisations are affiliated to T2000 – which presumably means that they are helping to finance it. The replies I received from their 'transport' officers were naive in the extreme – they affiliated to T2000 to take advantage of its 'expertise' on environmental issues. Relying on T2000 to obtain an objective view of environmental issues is like expecting to get an unbiased account of the history of Ireland from Sinn Fein!

The latest magazine from RSPB continues to peddle the hysteria about climate change and welcomes the success of four Green Party candidates in being elected to the Greater London Authority. It also supports Ken Livingstone's plans to cut traffic levels in London (all of it, not just the central area) by 15%. I will be terminating my membership!

**Malcolm Heymer**

The DETR is to be praised for its decision to introduce proper accident investigation but I haven't seen this new system discussed much. As a proper system of investigating accidents is long overdue we should ensure

## Local meetings

Damon Green organises a local meeting for members on the second Tuesday of each month at The Swan in East Ilsley (to the north of J13 M4, just off the A34) at 8pm.

Nick Arden is starting a monthly meeting in Essex at the Plough & Sail pub on the A130 at Rettendon on the second Monday of each month. First meeting is on 9 October at 8:30pm. Please support Nick if you possibly can.

See p3 for Damon and Nick's details.

it takes all factors into account. For example, will they be collating statistics on how many people are in the car and how many children (possibly distracting), whether drivers were smokers or smoking at the time of the crash, whether drivers had taken any driver training, whether the radio was on etc. All these things and many others are important in establishing accident causation for which there seem to be no statistics at present.

We should be very wary of any attempts to distort statistics blaming speed. The lack of proper investigation over the years is one reason why it has been easy for the authorities to do this.

**Dave Razzell**

I've just received a reply from my local MP (Martin Caton) in response to a letter from me pointing out the anti-car policies of the current Government. Being a Labour MP he's obviously in favour of the current administration's policies, but he does little to alleviate my anger.

He says fuel tax stands at only 73%, whereas it was 78% when they came to power. The recent rise in crude oil costs has given Labour an easy get out here – or so they think.

Having completely failed to change my mind he says: "the environmental threat posed by more and more car journeys cannot just be ignored. The Government has, therefore, introduced policies to encourage increased use of alternative means of travel for some journeys".

To cap it all Caton finishes with: "The Government accepts that it needs the tax take to provide quality services. That is not being anti-car. It's being pro-schools, pro-hospitals, pro-better public transport, pro-economic development and pro-jobs".

So there we have it. Labour won't raise income taxes – a means-tested method of income for them. Instead it chooses to target drivers to pay all its bills.

**F Morgan**

ABD members should be encouraged by the fact that many other people share their concerns about the way the Government is persecuting motorists – not only the Dump the Pump campaigners but the Conservative Party. By the middle of August their petition to have fuel taxes reduced had gathered over 100,000 signatures.

After the meltdown of 1997 the Conservatives have learnt, well and truly, that it must listen to its grass roots if it is ever to regain popular support. What it needs is plenty of people to tell it what is needed for Britain today, and on the subject of cars and drivers ABD members are in a strong position to do this.

We already have the ear of the DETR on

consultations, in order to balance the anti-car lobby, and we now have an open door to contribute to the Opposition's policy on cars, roads and taxes. I therefore urge all ABD members to get in touch with their local Conservatives and offer to help them build up their pro-driver voter appeal.

**Martin Young**

I recently had to do a chapter on transport and the environment for a GCSE book.

All the other text book writers churn out stuff like 'you should leave the car at home' or 'you should catch the bus' or 'you should walk more often'. Instead I decided to do a straight analysis of the energy-intensiveness of various forms of transport.

A full Fiat Multipla diesel (six passengers and 50 mpg) comes out best at 300mpg per passenger – it's close to a full long-distance bus, which is otherwise the least energy-intensive). It comfortably beats a train and leaves a plane for dead.

I found a website written by a Belgian scientist – he compares the energy used per passenger mile by train and ferry with that by plane – and the plane comes out worse by a factor of ten (short-haul flights are even worse, because the plane uses a lot of energy to take off and land, in relation to the journey length).

The Belgian bloke's website doesn't mention cars, but I have added as a footnote in my text book that the full Fiat Multipla diesel comfortably works out as the most environmentally friendly form of transport in terms of energy used and pollution caused. The Belgian guy's website is at:

[www.sgr.org.uk/kyoto/ecobal.html](http://www.sgr.org.uk/kyoto/ecobal.html)

**Alan Wesson**

I found the following on the DETR's website ([www.roads.detr.gov.uk](http://www.roads.detr.gov.uk))

"...the official purpose of deploying speed cameras, outlined in guidance issued by the Department of Transport (Circular 1/92), the Home Office (HON 38/1992) and the Welsh Office (Circular 22/92), is to maximise road safety benefits in a given area bearing in mind local road accident figures and whether alternative means of reducing them are more appropriate; i.e. speed cameras should be used after other potential solutions have been rejected, and only where there is an existing speed-related accident problem.

## 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.**

# 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**

"In fact research suggests that fixed-site cameras are not always deployed at sites with a known speed-related accident problem."

**Tim Lawrence**

Friends of the Earth have sent out a mailshot to subscribers stating that: "Climate change due to man's greenhouse gas emissions is probably the biggest environmental threat the world faces. In the UK, transport is responsible for over 23% of greenhouse gas emissions, and is the fastest-growing source of UK emissions."

Pro-motoring lobby groups are calling for lower fuel prices. Friends of the Earth believes that high prices are essential in encouraging rational use of fossil fuels and the switch to less polluting alternatives. Please urge the UK Government to stand firm on petrol prices by sending an email to the chancellor at: [gordon.brown@hm-treasury.gov.uk](mailto:gordon.brown@hm-treasury.gov.uk)

Perhaps ABD members might like to send a message to Mr Brown pointing out that transport accounts for less than 1% of CO2 emissions and that Earth is actually going through a period of global cooling. See the front page of last month's OTR for more.

**Martin Nicholas**

I went to Stansted Airport recently and on returning to the car park to pay for the ticket, noticed a sign on the ticket machine which said: "Stansted Airport/BAA supports sustainable transport and therefore adds 30p to your car park ticket to pay for public transport". To add insult to injury, because the machine wouldn't accept my credit card and I was fumbling for a different one, the time went over an hour and I got done for £3.50 instead of £2.20. A letter to the MD follows.

**John Simpson**

The Government will get around the issue of gatsos and self-incrimination (at least, I imagine that they will, because this is how they have been made legal in the USA, very recently).

They will decriminalise them, like parking in the West Midlands et al. Then the fine issued is for a civil misdemeanour, and the victim does not have to incriminate themselves because the offence is not a criminal one.

The bright spot in this is that it is therefore not possible to issue penalty points (because they imply criminality) but only a fine. In the USA, gatso-initiated convictions are going to have fines but be point-free – policeman-initiated convictions will carry both points and a fine.

While driving in America I realised where all the stupidly low speed limits are coming from. They might have got rid of the 55 on motorways (not in the North-Eastern states, though, and they are where the power is!) – but they have replaced them with 40s and 45s throughout the countryside (often on rural roads where there is nothing for miles) and most towns have 25 or 20 in the centre (in New England at least).

We should have known that T2000 and all their nasty friends weren't original enough to think like this themselves. But why can't they import the whole of the Americans' attitude towards cars, instead of being selective by picking and choosing like this...

**Alan Wesson**

Reading Dave Razzell's comments in the September OTR reminded me why I decided not to join the IAM. I became an associate member and spent some time having my driving monitored by a member. I 'passed' the mock examination but decided not to take the test and join – why?

During my associate membership I attended some local branch meetings and found a significant percentage of the membership to be as in favour of blanket reduced speed limits and other draconian measures as the environmental lobby. I also found that the attitude of Institute testers was ambivalent, at a personal level, to speed limits. It was implied that the 'mature' view was that a lot of speed limits, including the 70mph motorway limit were inappropriate, but I couldn't get any sense that the IAM was prepared to campaign against them officially.

Another thing that worried me about the IAM was that there seemed to be so many personal

views about the 'correct' way to approach different driving situations (my wife was an associate member too, so between us we got an amazing range of personal opinions). I had hoped to find an organization that would have an agreed view on things such as use of indicators, methods of joining and leaving motorways – after all, these are everyday driving details.

But the final clincher for me was to be told by my observer that he was sure I would pass the test so long as I didn't exceed the speed limit at any point. So, it just seemed to be an extension of the standard driving test.

**Bob Street**

**Those who would most benefit from extra driver training are not the ones who volunteer to do so. Having taken and passed the IAM test I would hesitate to call it 'advanced', but I found it useful in making my driving more relaxed, comfortable and safer – Ed.**

I was incensed by the recent news about Transport 2000's ability to cloud the judgement of the police in this country.

As far as I was aware, the Association of Chief Police Officers introduced guidelines in an attempt to unify the discretion shown by different police forces in deciding to prosecute those breaking the speed limit. They chose the 10% + 2mph figure in an attempt to balance the needs of safety with the requirement to *maintain public goodwill*. Transport 2000 accused them of exceeding their powers by implementing a de facto change in the law.

How can this ludicrous law be enforced anyway? Many cars have speedometers that are very inaccurate. Would the driver of a car with a speedo that says 30 mph (watching his speedo nervously instead of concentrating on the road ahead!) but is prosecuted for doing 31 mph have recourse to suing the car manufacturer?

Why are we constantly having these arguments about the car and the car user's right to use the highway that he has paid for in taxes? Have we all gone mad? Why can't we live in harmony with the car and not blame it for all life's ills? The Government and the police are walking on egg shells with the motoring public – one more wrong step and it is going to go very wrong for both of them.

**Roger McBroom**

**This letter was written before the fuel tax demonstrations, so Roger's prediction has already come true. But are those demonstrations the start of something bigger? Many people haven't been too adversely affected by anti-car measures so far. But once a few more people who have been driving for 20 years without an accident but with a clean licence lose their mobility, things could get very heated... – Ed**

## 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](mailto: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 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@waverider.co.uk](mailto:chris@waverider.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.

As you'd expect, the fuel tax protests gave the ABD quite a lot of publicity – although not as much as we would have liked. What was noticeable during the reporting period was that few spokespeople representing drivers were consulted – instead it was financial analysts, hauliers, politicians and 'people in the street' who were generally interviewed. Traditional drivers' groups such as the AA and RAC barely got a look in, so the interviews that Hugh Bladon, Bernard Abrams, Higel Humphries and Brian Gregory gave were all good going.

Bernard Abrams managed to secure a 15 minute slot on BBC Eastern Counties Radio, covering Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambs and bits of Northants and Essex. The topic was the EU car-free day plus the obligatory fuel duty protests. The usual points were made about air quality (improving), global cooling, real causes of urban congestion and also why the EU Car-Free Cities Network could explain why only ten UK authorities actioned the

event. Bernard mentioned the Copenhagen Declaration and the presenter found its contents impossible to believe! This is the treaty that says all authorities at local, regional and national level must play their part in forcing drivers out of their cars. Next the presenter tried to blame cars for the hole in the ozone layer and Bernard had to gently remind him that this was a different issue – he lost face a bit and his Paxman manner got worse. However as he didn't have anything to counter the ABD's position on any of it, we got a good airing which is what it's all about.

Tiff Needell produced a great column in the October issue of Top Gear. Having spoken to Bernard at length, his piece centred on air quality and how diesel-powered buses are its biggest threat. He also wrote about how NASA has discovered that Earth is going through a period of global cooling.

Various members write regularly to weekly and monthly periodicals, with very high hit rates in some cases. It's worth noting that by not mentioning the ABD a letter is more likely to be published – putting our arguments forward is the most important thing

## 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](mailto: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.

**20 September**

ABD launches fuel tax campaign

**12 September**

Fuel taxes are tip of iceberg

## 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.

<http://indigo.col-ed.org/mine/trojan.htm>

Global Warming: The Trojan Horse of Environmental Scars – lots of good quotes from greens admitting their real motives  
[www.transtat.detr.gov.uk/tables/2000/rts/rts00.pdf](http://www.transtat.detr.gov.uk/tables/2000/rts/rts00.pdf)

The results of the DETR's National Traffic Surveys for 1999 and updates the road traffic figures published last year

[www.enoughisenough.org.uk](http://www.enoughisenough.org.uk)

Online protest and petrol station finder. View protests that are taking place or add a protest which you are organising. Even if you are only thinking of an idea, it gives you a great opportunity to communicate with others. Also an online petition.

[www.lesstaxonfuel.co.uk](http://www.lesstaxonfuel.co.uk)

As you'd guess, an online petition aimed at persuading The Powers That Be that perhaps high fuel taxes aren't quite as popular as they'd like to think.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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 now ready – contact Chris Medd with your requirements.

## 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**