

On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

Issue 102

Winter 2011/12

Driver backlash forces concessions

For many drivers 2011 has brought ever tougher conditions, but nationwide there have also been a lot of successes, which it's been all too easy to miss. Those successes have been fought by pro-driver groups including the ABD, and as our influence grows, next year is set to be even busier for us; drivers have always been seen as a soft target for cash-strapped local authorities.

In November, the Fair Fuel UK petition attracted over 100,000 signatures, urging January's fuel duty rise to be called off. A parliamentary debate was won, with 100 MPs (including ABD patrons) signing a motion. Many Tory MPs defied a party whip to stand up for their constituents and no MP spoke against. January's fuel duty rise of 3p/litre was duly put back to August with the planned summer rise cancelled. The government also pressured the EU to allow motorists in remote island communities a 5p/litre fuel discount from March.

Central government has also been forced to listen to drivers over tolls on the Dartford Crossing and Humber Bridge. Although the government had refused to scrap the Dartford toll, such was the protest that the planned toll rises have been scrapped. A Treasury review concluded that reducing tolls on the Humber Bridge would have a positive economic impact both locally and for the UK. The government has offered a deal to the Bridge Board and local authorities that would allow the toll for cars to be reduced from £3 to £1.50 as soon as possible.

OTR has already reported on the scale of the



parking charges backlash in Surrey, where the county council has been forced to revisit its plans. Several other places have seen protests.

On-street parking plans for 30 Northern Ireland towns were axed after a vigorous campaign led by the *Belfast Telegraph* and a change of a minister. Incoming Regional Development Minister Danny Kennedy recognised the tough economic conditions facing town centre businesses; instead he proposes to make £2m in efficiency savings.

In Essex, Braintree District Council was inundated by hundreds of calls for free parking, and has cut parking charges to just 10p in some of its car parks for an experimental period.

Opposition to Barnet Council's rises in parking charges has been so great that a fund-raising event run by the CPZ Action campaign sold out. The campaign has been well-run, with plenty of national and local media coverage – most recently BBC TV's *Inside Out* – and an ABD contact is keen to feature them on *Rip Off Britain*. Teams of leafleters regularly went out, even in the summer heatwave, and found that local leafleting with their own poster plus a wider ABD leaflet produced some good donations. Their application for a judicial review is now going to a personal hearing.

In the highest profile case, Westminster City Council (WCC) moved to end free parking between 6pm and midnight on weekdays and at weekends. The moves have met with widespread opposition from West End businesses, including shops, restaurants and theatres; Lord Young, The Prime Minister's business adviser, felt charges of up to £4.80 an hour would "destroy the West End".

OTR 102

Highlights

- 2 *Our busy media autumn*
- 3 *Behind the scenes*
- 4 *A new membership secretary*
- 5 *New blood for the ABD*
- 7 *Lobbying for speed sense*

Regulars

- 8 *Soapbox*
- 9-11 *Letters*
- 11 *Abbreviations glossary*
- 12-14 *News*
- 15 *Get involved*
- 16 *National & regional contacts*

The next issue of *On The Road* goes to press on Monday 12 March. Contributions deadline is Monday 27 February.

The Churches Together campaign representing 47 churches called on parishioners to stand against councillors in the next local elections in protest. After a letter from the Bishop of London, WCC scaled down the charging hours on Sundays. Not to be satisfied, another local group is threatening to field independent candidates. One member, the Earl of Bradford, promises to withhold £140,000 of business rates on his restaurant.

Over 2500 people have signed a petition to drop the proposals. Sensing rising opposition, some councillors in the ruling Conservative party are now talking about deselecting those supporting the charges – assuming a High Court judicial review hasn't declared them illegal. A leaked councillor's email has allegedly admitted that the charges are about making money. Despite already making more on parking than in council tax, WCC seeks an extra £7m a year from drivers.

WCC has argued that the charges are needed to tackle congestion, a legal justification. However Ian Dix, of transport consultants Vectos quoted

Continued on page 4

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The ABD campaigns for:

- Improved road user training
- Real transport choices
- Investment in Britain's roads
- Honesty on transport issues

The ABD is in great demand for media slots all year round. Over the past quarter, these are just some of the key slots our spokesmen have filled.

The ABD's busy media autumn

This autumn, the ABD media team has been in serious demand. In little over two months, no fewer than 64 media slots were notched up by 12 different spokesmen – and those are just the appearances they had time to tell us about. Here's a selection from the ABD's Campaign Director, Brian Macdowall, that shows just how hard we are fighting for drivers' interests:

Radio Kent: breakfast time interview on potholes on motorways and trunk roads in the county.

Oxford Mail: removal of parking spaces to accommodate a cycle lane: 200-word article requested and submitted: this has produced feedback from readers.

Radio Humberside: lunchtime slot on 20mph limits in Hull.

Radio Kent: special day-long feature on transport in the county. Kent regional organiser Terry Hudson contributed drivers' views during a phone-in.

Radio Sheffield: breakfast-time interview on new speed humps in Barnsley; also covered as a special feature by the station, with many critical comments from residents.

Autocar: gave in-depth comment on top ten earning speed cameras in the UK.

Nottingham Evening Post: Strong condemnation of council's plans to introduce blanket 20mph zones.

Southampton Daily Echo: on a church using clampers to stop illegal parking.

Radio Sheffield: on the BMA's proposed ban on smoking in all vehicles.

The Scotsman: comment on high fuel prices.

Lancashire Evening Post: provided reaction to moves by Lancs Police to have a camera blitz on drivers without using signs to warn of their presence. (The *Lancashire Telegraph* also contacted Ian Taylor over the same issue).

Radio Somerset: Hugh Bladon commented on disqualified drivers (drivers reaching 12 points not necessarily losing licences).

Radio Birmingham, Radio 5 Live, 3 Counties Radio: Hugh Bladon commented on the state of the UK's roads, and the Chancellor's hint at toll roads.

We had to decline a request from **BBC Look North** on speed humps, as it couldn't be fitted

into our media reps' schedule. During the party conference season, we tried to interest two national newspapers in a feature on how much the 'war on the motorist' had actually been ended, but the conferences seemed to be so low-key that they probably fell asleep. Fortunately, as an insurance, we sent a letter from Brian Macdowall to local newspapers across the country (pictured). It was published in 13 major local newspaper groups.

Suddenly, the media was buzzing at the leaked report of a consultation on raising motorway speed limits to 80mph; we were snowed under with requests. On a Friday evening, London media spokesman Brian Mooney had to rush into town for a Channel 4 live interview at short notice. His Greenpeace opponent stuck to how it might deplete fuel stocks – good job she didn't touch on road safety, otherwise she might have been asked about Greenpeace condoning the vandalism of 36 BP petrol stations in the capital and the threat to public safety.

Using points from Martin Kicks' AGM presentation, Brian responded that, in 1980, we were warned that there was only 30 years' oil left. Now, according to a scientist at the UK Energy Research Centre, there are over 50 years' worth of economically exploitable oil.

No sooner had Brian started on his way home, he was approached for morning slots by **BBC Breakfast TV**, **Radio Belfast** and **Radio Merseyside**. The early shift saw a live TV debate with Stephen Joseph (Campaign for Better Transport) and followed by a Merseyside phone-in. Radio Belfast pulled out after discovering that the proposal was England-only.

The tragic M5 accident also led to massive interest, but also so-called 'road safety charities' trying to cash in, and oppose a higher motorway speed limit. This was despite the causes of the accident being unknown, and smoke drifting over from a firework display being suspected. The ABD's thoughtful but hard-hitting PR referred to supposed road safety groups being like 'vultures circling the M5 casualties' – as such it attracted widespread comment.

Sign of The Times

In early October, after the Government's announcement that it plans to consult on raising the motorway speed limit to 80mph, The Times contacted Malcolm Heymer to ask if he would provide a 500-word article on behalf of the ABD in favour of the speed limit increase. This was to be printed alongside the opposing view.

Malcolm's article focused on the fact that the measured 85th percentile speed was already 79 mph, so raising the limit to 80 mph would bring it into line with the 85th percentile. This is the safest level at which to set speed limits, as it produces the smoothest traffic flow and fewest conflicts between vehicles, hence a minimum accident risk. Since the majority of drivers who wish to travel at 80 mph are already doing so, changes in actual speeds are likely to be small. Raising the limit would legitimise the actions of the majority of drivers.

Both articles were published on 7 October, the contrary view provided by Stephen Joseph of the Campaign for Better Transport (formerly Transport 2000). He concentrated almost entirely on the increase in fuel consumption and hence CO2 emissions that would be created, ignoring the fact that even the Government is now giving the economy a higher priority than cutting emissions.

It's a feather in the ABD's cap that a leading newspaper would ask the ABD, rather than the AA or RAC, to make the case for the speed limit increase. Our influence is growing.

We also managed a fast response to a manipulative *Evening Standard* feature urging blanket 20mph zones as children apparently can't judge speeds over 25mph, and need to be 'safe' when they step out in front of traffic. Our reply pointed out the dangers of encouraging children to just step out, pointing out that is against the Highway Code/Green Cross Code, and that parents should instead teach them to find a safe place to cross.

Should the speed limit be 80mph?



Scrap anti-motorist measures at once

THE government has admitted 84 per cent of journeys are made by drivers, but targets undue investment at high-speed rail, which is only a priority for about three per cent of the public.

Meanwhile, under-investment in fixing potholes persists. While we are pleased to see concerns expressed over the rocketing level of parking charges, some action to stop this would have been preferred.

Our roads minister deserves some credit for noticing that where speed camera partnerships published data, most cameras seemed to be cash cows rather than safety measures, and even highlighted a possible cause of accidents.

However, it is now two years since his predecessor promised to abolish the camera quangos and champion better and more cost-effective approaches to road safety, like vehicle activated signs.

Little wonder that this summer, an RAC survey recorded 99 per cent of drivers as feeling that the war on the motorist was still very much going on.

Many anti-motorist measures are still in place, and the government must announce a clear timetable for scrapping them.

We are taxed five times over for the services we get. With many families under financial pressure, next year's potentially above-inflation rise in fuel duty should be the first to go.

BRIAN MACDOWALL
Campaign director
Association of British Drivers
Kerley

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You can donate any amount to the ABD's fighting fund at any time. Just contact the membership secretary (see p16) for more information...

Behind the scenes...

An important part of the ABD's work that goes on behind the scenes is responding to Government consultations and to inquiries instigated by the House of Commons Transport Committee. More often than not this work is delegated to Malcolm Heymer because of his highway engineering and local government background.

Most consultations to which the ABD responds originate from the Department for Transport, although consultations by other Government departments are sometimes relevant to the ABD's remit, such as the recent one on the National Planning Policy Framework, which was instigated by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The ABD is made aware of forthcoming consultations by a variety of means, including receipt of press releases, monitoring departmental websites, or reports in the general or specialist press.

The first stage in dealing with a consultation is to download the consultation document from the departmental website. This document sets out the background to the consultation, what changes the Government is considering and the reasons for them. It will also ask specific questions to which consultees are asked to respond. The consultation document can run from just a few pages to hundreds, depending on the complexity of the issues, but most

are in the 50-100-page range. Reading through the document and considering how to respond to the questions can thus take many hours.

The next stage is to draft a response document, which will reproduce each of the questions and the ABD's response to them. It is not always appropriate for the ABD to answer every question and the document needs to explain why this is so. The draft is then circulated to the rest of the ABD committee for comment, after which the document is finalised and submitted before the closing date.

A similar process is followed when preparing written evidence to a Transport Committee inquiry, although in this case there is no consultation document, just a list of points on which the committee is seeking views. The challenge in drafting evidence is to get across all the points the ABD would like to make within the committee's limit of around six pages or 3000 words. Sometimes the submission of written evidence leads to a request for the ABD to give oral evidence to the committee, and Malcolm has done so on several occasions.

Consultation responses and written evidence to Transport Committee inquiries are ultimately uploaded to the ABD's website and can be found from Resources and then Documents (for a shortcut go to tinyurl.com/7dthnda). For a fuller picture of what Transcom is all about, log on to www.parliament.uk/transcom

Scotch missed?

Back in February the ABD submitted a response to Highland Council's consultation on the Inverness West Link, a new road intended to take traffic away from the city centre by linking the A82 and A9 across the River Ness and Caledonian Canal.

We pointed out that none of the five options presented by the council would actually solve the problem, because the absurdly convoluted routes (one of which included a swing bridge over the canal) were longer and would take more time to traverse, than going through the city centre.

Amazingly the council seems to have listened. In phase 2 of the consultation they have added three more options, one of which (Option 7) proposes doing the job properly by building a new high-level bridge over the river and canal.

We will be responding to this consultation as well, but we urge any members who live in, or drive through Inverness, to do likewise. The consultation closes on 16 January 2012. Details can be found via www.highland.gov.uk



ABD spreads the word to China

ABD Chairman Brian Gregory gave a presentation on UK road user taxation vs road infrastructure investment in September, to a 21-strong delegation from the Chinese Ministry of Transport Department of Finance. The event was facilitated by SINO-UK Link, a British-based organisation promoting exchanges between the People's Republic of China and the UK. Its aim is to encourage business opportunities between Chinese and British organisations.

Brian's presentation focused on the fact that British road users get a poor return on the £1bn per week communally levied on them through road user taxes of one form or another. He pointed out that what's really required is:

- A shift in the current, unsustainable transport investment bias away from uneconomic rail towards efficient roads.
- Areinstatement of a 'Roads to Prosperity'-style motorway, A-road- and bottleneck by-pass/dualling programme.



- Safer, more efficient roads, and to maximise their economic benefits, speed management policies based on 85th percentile principles.

The presentation was interspersed with a number of searching and intelligent questions, the most notable querying whether there's any relief mechanism for UK road users when oil prices spike. It was implied that such a thing exists in China, even down to support by road user class (hauliers, taxi drivers, etc).

Dover chaos averted

Kent ABD has a seat on the Port of Dover's Consultative Committee, which meets each quarter; Ian Taylor is our representative. At the last meeting the subject of roadworks on port approaches came up. There has been months of congestion on the A20 at the Roundhill Tunnels, Folkestone caused by the failure of bridge joints. A temporary ramp has meant a 30mph limit (from 70), reduced lanes, and cameras. Work is now proceeding but won't be completed until the end of January. It was revealed that the HA planned resurfacing of the A2 just outside Dover, commencing January – overlapping the other work and severely restricting access to the port of Dover simultaneously on both main roads to Europe. The Port of Dover was unhappy, so was a representative from the RHA, while Ian found the plan unbelievable. The HA rep was faced with a barrage of criticism, forcing him to back down, so he made a public promise that the resurfacing would be delayed until the other work was finished. Definitely a result for on-the-spot local participation!

Want to get more involved? There are plenty of ways you can help the ABD to move forward. Just check out page 15 to find out how

The end of an era for the ABD's admin department – and the start of a new one. Plus the ABD welcomes some new faces to help it move forward.

Climate Fools Day

Ian Taylor and I attended Climate Fools Day in October. It 'celebrated' the third anniversary of the Climate Change Act and took place in Portcullis House, courtesy of Sammy Wilson MP, one of the ABD's patrons. It was great to have a meeting of climate realists within the seat of government! Sammy was only able to attend for part of the meeting, so we didn't have a chance to talk to him afterwards, but he has since been invited to speak at the 2012 AGM; we've yet to receive confirmation that he will be there, but hopefully it will happen.

Matthew Sinclair of the TPA was the first speaker. He admitted he knows little about the science of climate change, but his focus is on the crazy economics of the obligations arising from the Climate Change Act. He believes we need to push the scientific and economic cases separately, not together, as few people understand the scientific issues but most are capable of grasping the stupidity of Britain acting alone in reducing emissions and pushing expensive renewable sources of electricity, thus pushing up energy bills at a time when living standards are already under threat from the recession. In addition, unilateral action will have no impact on global emissions, as high-emitting industries will simply relocate to less regulated countries, further damaging the

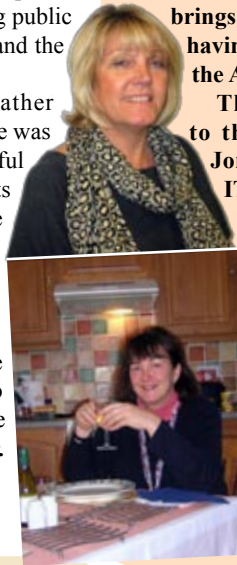
economy. Attacking the Climate Change Act on these grounds is thus a no-brainer.

Sammy Wilson, who had not arrived when Matthew was speaking, also made the case for giving priority to concentrating on the glaring economic flaws in the Act, for the same reasons as Matthew had explained. There appears to be the beginnings of a shift in policy, as some members of the government (excluding Chris Huhne!) are starting to grasp the real impact of the Act's requirements and the growing public backlash against rising energy prices and the blight of wind turbines.

Piers Corbyn described how Weather Action's Solar Lunar Action Technique was developing and proving very successful in predicting extreme weather events around the world. He also made a few predictions for the coming winter, which sound like almost a rerun of last year. Philip Foster also spoke about the science of climate change and the campaign to repeal the Climate Change Act. For anyone who hasn't already done so, please sign the petition at www.epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/2035.

Malcolm Heymer

<http://climatefoolsday.com>



A new face...

After 15 years of looking after ABD members and enquirers, Susan Newby-Robson (left, above) has handed over the membership secretary reins. The ABD is fortunate both to retain Susan as a director and an active committee member, and also to welcome on board Felicity Mawson (left, below) who picks up the baton for the busy renewals period.

'Flissie' looks after our new admin address: PO Box 11125, Witham, Essex, CM8 9BG. She brings useful campaigning experience, having been active in NO2ID, to which the ABD is affiliated.

The ABD committee would like to thank Susan and her husband Jonathan, who has supported her IT systems, for all their hard work and looks forward to working with Flissie.

From 2012, Fighting Fund donations by standing order can count towards your annual subs. To keep rates down, we will be sending out renewal acknowledgements on request only. We would also prefer to issue receipts by email, so providing an up-to-date email address will help us.

Driver concessions (contd from p1)

WCC's own research against them over evening parking, showing traffic levels only peaked in a minority of roads, claiming they had quoted figures selectively. WCC is looking more and more isolated as its plans receive cross-party opposition. Politicians hitting out include Mayor Boris Johnson, former Olympics minister Tessa Jowell and even Ken Livingstone!

Parking Minister Norman Baker has previously expressed concern that councils might be profiting from parking (without taking any action), but has now branded WCC's move as "a war on motorists". The new Transport Secretary Justine Greening is also querying the legality. Westminster Labour MP Karen Buck has challenged the government over whether it will support WCC or intervene.

In other places, resident frustration has led to drastic measures. In his home area, Lewes, Norman Baker will have noticed more than 200 parking meters have been set on fire, causing £300,000 worth of damage. In Leyton and Walthamstow, a whole set of signs in a new CPZ has been defaced with spray paint. Residents feared that the charges were going to 'kill local businesses in these difficult economic times'.

Waltham Forest Council said it only introduced CPZs in areas where the majority of residents

gave their support. One blogger alleges that when it 'consulted' residents in two areas, a CPZ was opposed by 60% - so the council changed the rules...

Previously docile drivers are wising up and taking a stand by writing to the local press. Letters slated Merton Council, which claimed that it had had several petitions from members of the public asking for a CPZ. When questioned, the council was at first reluctant to reveal how many people had signed these petitions, but eventually admitted that the total number of signatories on all three petitions was just 19 (and none of them in the particular area). That area had a small majority opposed to a CPZ but it still got one. Another area which had a 60% majority against a CPZ, got one too after a second consultation - the council held a meeting with just three residents and used their unrepresentative decision to justify introduction!

Another letter claimed that the council concealed the available options in a consultation.

Fortunately, there are some councils that recognise the benefits that drivers and parking bring, but for those tempted to see drivers as a cash cow, the evidence is that they can expect a tough 2012!

Repeal the Act

The ABD has affiliated to the Campaign to Repeal the Climate Change Act 2008. The Act set a legally binding target to cut the UK's carbon dioxide emissions by 80% by 2050. No other country has made such a commitment and the MPs who voted for it had not the slightest idea how it could be achieved or how much it would cost. In reality, without a major technological breakthrough, the target could only be achieved by shutting down most of the UK's economy. The costs have been estimated as £750bn or more.

There are indications that at least some members of the Government are waking up to reality, with helping the economy now seen as a greater priority than reducing CO2 emissions. Pressure needs to be maintained, however, to have this ludicrous and destructive piece of legislation repealed. The Repeal the Act campaign (www.repealtheact.org.uk) is trying to raise awareness of the impact the Act's provisions will have on the economy and society, and it has also organised an e-petition (<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/2035>) to have the Act repealed. The campaign needs funds and the ABD has made a donation. Individuals can also do so at www.repealtheact.org.uk/how-you-can-help-us

Southend success

Our efforts to involve Essex members this year produced a pay-off when Southend member Rob Moore, aided by Essex coordinator Rowland Pantling, took the initiative to lobby Southend Council on its decision to install average speed cameras on the seafront. The latter, also known as the City Beach, is part of a shared space upgrade to the seafront; Kent members will be relieved to hear that, at only 150 yards long, there is no attempt to emulate the disastrous shared space scheme at Ashford, so often held up as a model for town centres.

Rob lobbied his local councillor who also sits on the Council's transport executive, and made approaches to the Council for the ABD to become more involved in planning decisions affecting road schemes in the area. Having drafted an objection letter, Rob and I worked on a speech to present to the relevant council committee meeting. Despite some frantic last minute revisions, Rob gave an impressive speech; at the meeting showing we were much better informed than most councillors.

We lost that argument, but a subsequent letter to the committee chairman produced a request for us to present ideas in a private meeting with him. We only realised later the chairman is also the cabinet member for transport in Southend, so we would be speaking to the top man!

The chairman explained ideas for road schemes can come from anyone; members of the public officers, councillors, developers, etc. This gives ABD members a chance to suggest new or alternative schemes, however small, and on any issue, giving a means of being proactive instead

of always being on the defensive.

Rob then questioned and received a lengthy explanation of how decisions are made by councils. Basically, the executive of the ruling group hold the aces: the earlier you respond to any proposal, the better.

The meeting resulted in the ABD being put on the list of statutory consultees, and a meeting has been arranged in January between one or more of the senior officers and the ABD to discuss ideas. This was progress indeed! Rob's initiative, following our approach of offering constructive suggestions to the Council in a spirit of cooperation meant that our views will be taken more seriously in this area.

The only bugbear so far was that we didn't get any joy on our complaint of being told accident data stats are available but only at a charge of £100! This is plainly unfair but that is an argument for another day.



Rob Moore, (left) and Rowland Pantling outside Southend Civic Centre prior to their meeting with cabinet member for transport

Brian MacDowall

New blood in Southend

Further to the Essex story above we can report Rob Moore has now agreed to become the new coordinator for Southend unitary authority.

Says Rob: "I now live in Southend-on-Sea, having previously lived in some of the most congested areas of the country including Portsmouth, Rochester and Dunstable. This has given me a keen sense for the issues facing drivers on the roads today, and where improvements can be made in our traffic and road systems.

"It was a relief to find the ABD a few years ago; here was an organisation that supported drivers who think for themselves and I wanted to support them. In 1991 I was the youngest person in Essex to pass the IAM Advanced test.

"I took the RoSPA test in October 2011 and achieved a Gold pass. While this is not a qualification for the ABD per se, I feel it does allow me to speak for the thinking driver and this is one of the reasons I wanted to represent

the ABD in my home town of Southend.

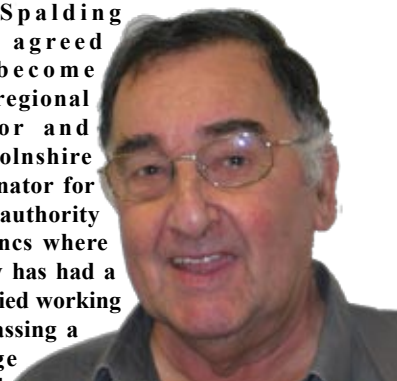
"I believe many of the systems being implemented on our roads are over-authoritarian, and dangerous with many schemes now causing more danger to vehicle owners and pedestrians. I intend to campaign locally for:

- Re-consideration of some local dangerous traffic control systems
- Increased throughput at junctions by more 'intelligent' traffic signals
- Revision of the disastrous Victoria Gateway junction and
- Attempt to get the Council to invest taxpayer money in some road user education as an alternative to more bumps, kerbs, bollards and lights.

If you would like to work with Rob in achieving any of these aims, he'd be delighted to hear from you with your ideas; his details are on the back page.

Ray of light

Ray Spalding has agreed to become Yorkshire regional coordinator and North Lincolnshire local coordinator for the unitary authority of North Lincs where he lives. Ray has had a long and varied working life encompassing a whole range of jobs and employers. Of interest to ABD members he has worked for Ford as a production controller, armed services driving specialised vehicles (including a spell as an RAF ambulance driver), holds HGV licences, is a RoSPA gold star member and taught motor maintenance for 10 years.



Ray is a disabled driver and would love to hear from fellow ABD members who want to promote disabled drivers' interests. He has a strong interest in road safety using, like Rob Moore (see left), the ABD slogan *drivers who can think for themselves*. To this end he has also gained necessary qualifications to allow him to teach driving instruction in schools and has approached a local school with a view to getting this vital, under-appreciated skill on the agenda.

Ray comments: "Starting with youngsters whilst they are still at school is a sure way to increasing their confidence prior to driving on the road. I intend getting the region's MPs backing for this initiative as well as local councillors and even camera partnerships! It's got to be the way forward. I'm also looking at getting a training day sponsored by motor dealerships arranged and look forward to promoting the interests of drivers in this region".

Over time Ray has developed contacts with various IAM local groups, (which he intends to pursue), Safer Roads Humber and a local driving school; in the case of the latter Ray would like to negotiate group discounts for entries from schools. Ray has also contacted the PA to the Chief Constable of Humber and various traffic officers both serving and retired.

As you can see, Ray has a lot on his plate and would appreciate input from members in his area. So if you feel you're able to help Ray in any way, please drop him a line; his contact details are on the back page. Ray knows that he needs to harness other members' ideas, skills and enthusiasm, and it's only by doing this that we can all take the ABD forward as the group to promote drivers' interests.

Road Safety GB Conference 2011

Road Safety GB, a national organisation representing local authority road safety teams, held its annual conference over two days in November. I was invited to attend as a panellist in a *Question Time* session on the issue of speed. The other panellists were Richard Allsop (author of the RAC Foundation report in favour of speed cameras), Adrian Walsh (a director of RoadSafe), John Smart (of the Institution of Highways and Transportation), Ian Shannon (Deputy Chief Constable for North Wales Police and ACPO lead on police driver training) plus Duncan Price of the DfT's Road User Licensing, Insurance and Safety division, with whom the ABD has already established contact through our meetings with Mike Penning.

The session lasted an hour and the questions had been circulated to the panellists in advance. With six panellists it was not practical for each to be asked to respond to every question, so the chairman, Robert Gifford of PACTS, selected the panellist he thought would be the most appropriate to answer first. After that, others could chip in if they had different points to make, or to respond to supplementary questions from the audience.

This system worked fairly well, although it did not allow me to make every point I would have wished to raise. This was especially the case with a question on raising the motorway speed limit, where Richard Allsop was able to answer first and, while acknowledging that raising speed limits can sometimes lead to fewer accidents, claimed that generally the opposite was true. Ian Shannon believed that drivers who currently travel at 80 would drive at 90 mph instead, which is contrary to all the evidence.

I was able, however, to answer a separate question on whether drivers would need extra training if the limit were raised to 80 mph. I said I didn't think this would be necessary under normal conditions, since most drivers who would want to drive at that speed are already doing so, albeit illegally, and many British drivers have experience of European motorways with their higher limits. I took the opportunity, however, to push the need for training in how to use motorways safely when visibility was limited by fog, as the tragic M5 crash had happened only a couple of weeks before.

I pointed out that drivers do not think in terms of miles per hour when adjusting their speed, but by subconsciously observing the rate at which the scenery is passing by and the changing hazard density. This works well most of the time, including on motorways, but it is a different story in fog. The nature of motorways, with their wide carriageways and hard shoulders, means that the visual clues to either side of a driver are lost as the visibility reduces. This just leaves the carriageway ahead and the lane markings as their only guide. While they may think they can stop within the length of carriageway they can see, the reality is that if a



shape starts to appear out of the fog, by the time they realise it is a stationary vehicle it is too late to stop. Every time there is a multi-vehicle pile-up in fog, the press screams about lunatic drivers going too fast, but the reality is they are caught out by this optical-psychological trap, which they have never been trained to avoid. I said we need more research into the phenomenon, leading to specific training on motorway driving in reduced visibility. I hope someone took note.

Another question was on the future role of speed cameras and I made the point that, even where a camera may be sited to slow drivers approaching a potential hazard, an alternative solution might be more effective. I gave as an example the siting of a camera 100-150 metres before a junction on a 70mph dual carriageway, where oncoming vehicles might turn right across the central reservation. I pointed out that there are three types of driver in terms of observational ability. There are the observant drivers, who spot both the camera and the junction, make the link between them and see the need to slow down. Then there are the somewhat less observant, who spot the camera and slow down for it, but do not notice the junction so accelerate after the camera, which is actually more dangerous than if they hadn't slowed down at all, as it could confuse a right-turning driver waiting at the junction. Finally, there are the non-observant drivers, who spot neither the camera nor the junction so continue at unabated speed. If they were over the threshold enforcement speed they might get a notice of intended prosecution two weeks later, but the camera had done nothing to alter their behaviour when it mattered.

I suggested that a vehicle-activated sign, which would light up to provide a junction-ahead warning if a driver was approaching too fast, would be more noticeable to the less observant drivers as well as explaining the nature of the hazard for which they need to slow down. In responding, Richard Allsop agreed that vehicle-activated signs can be very effective at isolated hazards such as junctions or bends, but insisted they don't work to encourage drivers to obey speed limits, so cameras are still

needed. If I had had the chance to respond to that I would have pointed out that no amount of signing will succeed in getting drivers to observe speed limits that are too low, which is usually where cameras are situated.

Another important point I managed to get across was in response to a question on the role of speed in accidents. I agreed that speed could be a contributory factor, but it was relative speed (for the conditions) that was important, not absolute speed in miles per hour. I also said that, excluding drivers who are drunk, drugged or engaged in other criminal activity, if a driver arrives at a hazard at too high a speed it is because they have either failed to spot the hazard or have not realised that the correct response is to slow down. In turn, this failure may well be due to inattention or distraction. Thus the inappropriate speed is a symptom of one of these underlying failures, which is where remedial action needs to be targeted rather than on speed itself. I gave the analogy of a doctor prescribing a pain killer to a patient without investigating the cause of the pain.

There was a question on 20mph speed limits, to which I did not get the opportunity to respond. On this occasion, however, Richard Allsop actually made a contribution with which I agreed, by warning that 20mph limits should not be applied to roads where a reasonable driver would expect the limit to be 30mph, as the limit would not be complied with.

As well as being a *Question Time* panellist, Duncan Price of the DfT gave a presentation on progress with the Government's drug-driving strategy, which seemed mostly sensible. He also announced that, as well as the forthcoming consultation on raising the motorway speed limit, the Government will be consulting separately on raising the HGV limit on single-carriageway roads from 40 to 50 mph. This is a long overdue measure and the ABD will, of course, be responding favourably. It looks like a busy few months ahead!

All of the presentations from the conference are available online at tinyurl.com/bvh9el9

Malcom Heymer

Cooking the books on road pricing

David Cameron shocked everybody last year when he hailed the M6 toll road (M6T) a big success. As the evidence is much to the contrary, he has clearly been badly advised. Its operator has lost over £26m a year in the first six years of operation and traffic volumes have fallen so much that it attracts only about half the expected level of traffic. According to Centro, the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive, the M6T has failed to provide the relief to the West Midlands motorway network that many people expected before it was built. Meanwhile, the main M6 continues to operate at near twice design capacity.

There has recently been media speculation about extra tolled capacity on the busy A14. However, the government has already dropped plans for extra lanes because the cost (£1.3bn) was seen as uneconomic. Widening is supposed to take a minimum of eight years.

Although Roads Minister Mike Penning has

recently told Parliament that the government had no plans for general road pricing (i.e. other than for freight), the Treasury has been revising its investment appraisal guidelines, 'the Green Book'. It recommends that 'demand management options should be an integral part of transport project appraisals'.

Two recent reports have opened up speculation. One is an 'independent' review of the strategic road network (SRN) – the major roads in England, managed by the Highways Agency (HA). This so-called 'independent' report is from Alan Cook, a Board Member of DfT and the HA. In the other, the RAC Foundation slammed the government for discouraging Cook from considering any form of road pricing. However the Cook report, to which the RAC Foundation contributed, recommends 'consideration' of tolling, both for new connections and existing major roads that are currently free.

Using the euphemism 'developing route-based

strategies' (RBS), it recommends that tolling plans are co-ordinated with 'equivalent plans' for local road infrastructure. This would fit in with the EU vision of tolling main roads first, then local roads that take displaced traffic – removing chances of avoidance. Its White Paper seeks the gradual imposition of charges on all vehicles and on the whole road network to prop up its financially-challenged Galileo satellite.

The Cook report is quite blatant in suggesting that the government makes as much money as possible out of drivers. It regrets a current lack of means of 'delivering maximum economic value from the asset' and suggests 'attractive new investment options for ministers'.

It suggests making the HA into a new body, separate from the DfT, with an independent Board. Its 'commercial freedom' would involve outsourcing practically everything to contractors, including possibly even local authorities, for cash. The 'independent Board' might be flooded with new Non-Executive Directors from outside who could outvote the existing HA Executive Directors, and there is talk of appropriate perks.

The new body sounds little more than a holding company, as traffic management may be outsourced with 'asset management'. It recommends that the Transport Secretary should consider transferring ownership of the network after five years. It seems little short of privatisation of the roads that the public has paid for as a national asset. Under Labour, drivers paid about £400bn in taxes, so morally, future investment has been paid for several times over. There is no reason for adding to the tax burden on drivers.

The new body would provide information about the network (e.g. traffic levels) not to drivers but to third parties to exploit commercially (which would fit into the EU blueprint for control of drivers and vehicles – 'Intelligent Transport Systems' or ITS). Other opportunities might include advertising (mentioned) and the resale of data based on tracking personal movements; not mentioned, but an aspiration of the previous government with its ID card surveillance project.

There is a danger of long leases of parts of the network being offered. If road pricing were to be introduced by one government on such a contract, like the tie-ups between TFL and Capita/IBM for the London Congestion Charge, it could be difficult and expensive for a future government to unpick the arrangement.

Another danger is that ministers would 'no longer accept responsibility or accountability for specific incidents or local issues', and the public would be expected to deal mainly with the contractors over complaints.

This is an abridged version of an article taken from www.fairdealabd.org.uk/notolls.htm

Lobbying for speed sense

Brian Gregory, Brian Macdowall and Malcolm Heymer met Duncan Price of the DfT on 1 December. Duncan is head of the DfT section responsible, among other things, for road safety policy. The meeting was arranged following our visit to see Mike Penning on 17 October and the purpose was to provide input to the DfT's review of Circular Roads 1/2006 on setting local speed limits.

The main points we wanted to get across were the need to set speed limits at realistic levels (i.e. the 85th percentile) and have consistency in speed limit setting across the country. To that end we produced and supplied to the DfT a document making the case for reverting to the 85th percentile speed as the basis of setting speed limits; you can download that document from the members' website.

We went through the points in the document with Duncan and he was sympathetic to many of them. He said, however, that the review of the speed limit circular was intended to give highway authorities greater flexibility to decide their own road safety policies (the localism agenda), which is the opposite of what we would like to see in the case of speed limits. He also said that the DfT is developing a 'tool' to help highway authorities make more rational, evidence-based decisions on speed limits. This will almost certainly be a computerised system into which parameters such as road geometry, frontage density, etc would be fed, as well as trying to assess 'quality of life' issues. The latter is potentially worrying, as such issues are largely subjective. The speed limit tool will, however, forecast the effects of speed limit changes, which will hopefully show local councillors the ineffectiveness of lowering

limits in terms of actual speed reduction.

Duncan also said that local authorities will be given more flexibility in the introduction of 20mph speed limits, without the requirement to make them self-enforcing through traffic calming. There will also be more options for signing 20mph speed limits, such as the use of carriageway roundels in place of vertical repeater signs. We expressed concern that these changes could lead to larger areas covered by 20mph limits, including main roads, leading to widespread non-compliance. There could also be a negative effect on road safety, as drivers would have to devote more concentration to the speed limit than the road. Duncan acknowledged that some inappropriate 20mph limits could be introduced, but he believed that these would be studied by other highway authorities, who would learn from the experience and hopefully not repeat the same mistakes. We shall see. Brian Macdowall asked that the DfT should consider providing some form of training to local councillors in understanding how speed limits should be set, but there seems little possibility that this will be acted upon.

Duncan concluded it was unlikely that the revised circular will revert to the 85th percentile, although there will probably be a consultation on the draft revisions and on the speed limit tool itself. This may be some months away as the DfT is currently at the stage of procuring consultants to carry out the work.

Although the outcome of the meeting was somewhat disappointing it was hardly unexpected. The ABD will be responding robustly to the consultation in due course.

What's on the mind of Chris Medd, OTR editor. This issue; a warm welcome to a new patron, plus madness from Norfolk and Bristol.

The ABD's patrons now include Sammy Wilson (pictured right), MP for East Antrim. Sammy is a keen motorcyclist and recently stood up for drivers in the Parliamentary debate on fuel prices, noting how quiet the 'green zealots' had gone. A courageous climate realist (see p4), the ABD is pleased to invite Sammy to address our AGM on 14 July, and hopes to be able to confirm the slot nearer to this date.



a road closure up to once a week, for up to three hours. Residents will have to consult in writing all properties located on or accessed by the street to be closed. Residents will be responsible for erecting 'Road closed' signs and a barrier at each end of the street as well as diversion signs. People who live in the closed streets will still be able to drive to or from their homes, guided at walking pace by stewards. It'll be interesting to see how many of these closures take place...

Environmental groups are pressing ministers to reject Norfolk County Council's £67.5m funding bid for the Norwich Northern Distributor Road. Norfolk has submitted a best and final bid for the scheme to link the A47 to the east of Norwich with the A140 to the north. It's one of 45 projects vying for funding from the DfT's local authority major scheme pot. Consultant MTRU has been commissioned to review the bid by local action group the Norwich and Norfolk Transport Action Group, the CPRE, and the CfBT. MTRU criticises Norfolk's submission, saying the project is at odds with health and climate change objectives and that the council has failed to test the project against a reasonable alternative. It suggests this should be based on a package of 'smarter choice' travel behaviour change measures. Hmm; how can offering a bus twice a week ever be a greener, more efficient or remotely palatable alternative to the private car in a rural county like Norfolk?

Bristol City Council is simplifying the process for local neighbourhoods to temporarily close streets to through traffic, in an effort to encourage more children to play in the street. Until now, residents could apply for three formal road closures a year. But, under the year-long trial, they'll be able to make one annual application for Temporary Play Street Orders, enabling

Deputy chief constable Suzette Davenport (right), Northamptonshire Police, has been appointed ACPO's lead for roads policing. Unfortunately it hasn't taken Davenport long to start coming up with some rather left-field suggestions, not least of all a zero blood/alcohol level. Another suggestion is the implementation of graduated licences, which on the face of it doesn't seem that crazy, but how such a measure would be policed is a real can of worms. But then in theory, Davenport should know a thing or two about policing. One would hope.



An interesting snippet from Brian Mooney, on professor Stephen Glaister (right), who heads up the RAC Foundation. Turns out he's been the director of the Railway Technology Strategy Centre, Imperial College London since 1998, and was awarded the CBE for services to public transport in 1998. Which obviously makes him well qualified to be heading the RACF and looking after drivers' interests...



According to Ali Claburn, founder of journey matching service liftshare, venture capitalists are already "getting excited" about the idea of car owners renting out their vehicles when

they're not in use – and thereby generating income. Such a scheme effectively creates a car club without the need to purchase a fleet of new vehicles, but if you take any pride in your car, would you want to hire it out to someone, whether you know them or not? And more to the point, would you hire a car from someone, not knowing how well maintained it was?

At last some common sense from the Government, which has decided to defer January's fuel duty rise of 3p a litre to 1 August. Meanwhile, the inflation increase of 1.9ppl planned for August has been cancelled. As if those things aren't enough, regulated rail fares and TfL fares will rise by only RPI+1% in January, rather than the RPI+3% previously announced. On top of this, motorists in remote island communities will benefit from a 5p a litre fuel discount from next March. The EU has given clearance to the Government to operate a fuel duty rebate scheme in the Inner and Outer Hebrides, Northern Isles, the islands in the Clyde and the Isles of Scilly.

It's that time once more when we say goodbye to one year and await another, to see what it brings. While you could be forgiven for assuming there isn't much for drivers to look forward to in 2012, there are some glimmers of hope on the horizon – some of them no doubt because of the lobbying the ABD has undertaken over the past 18 months, since the new administration gained power. You can read more about these successes, big and small, on the front cover and also on page 2. As an ABD member you've played a part in that, so many thanks for your support and best wishes for 2012 from the ABD committee.

Chris Medd

With relatively few pages of editorial available just four times each year, it's not easy trying to keep ABD members informed via *On The Road* of everything the group does to protect UK drivers' interests. In this issue we've gone the extra mile to offer a run down of the key things the ABD has been doing over the past quarter, but there's a load of stuff that we simply couldn't fit in.

For this reason it's worth ensuring you get your copy of *OTR Live*, which comes out in electronic form only between the quarterly issues of the main *On The Road*. There's sometimes a bit of duplication of content, as *OTR Live* might expand on some of the articles published in the quarterly newsletter,



but you'll get a fuller picture of what the ABD is up to on your behalf. To make sure you receive your copy of *OTR Live*, you can be added to the list by sending an email to fairdeal@abd.org.uk – the latest issue can be downloaded from www.fairdealabd.org.uk/OTRL6.pdf

While you're at it, if you're based in the London area you might want to regularly look at www.freedomfordrivers.org, which is the website run by the ABD's London contact Roger Lawson. He and his team always have plenty of things on the go; find out what they are and get involved by logging on to the website. It doesn't end there though, as there's also the main ABD website to consider, along with the members' website. Both



of these have a massive amount of information and resources available, such as facts and figures, contact details (both internal and external) and all our latest press releases. It's this latter section, on the main website (www.abd.org.uk), which can prove the most valuable. Not only does it have the ABD's

standpoint on key issues, but you can also discover a whole load of useful information for your own campaigning, both local and national. And as if all this isn't enough, the members' forum is the perfect place to interact with fellow ABDers on key topics, while also discovering more about what the ABD is up to; see p15 for more information on how to access these resources.



letters

The majority of the road safety industry does not seem to understand that drivers do not choose their speed numerically, i.e. at Xmph, but according to their perception of the speed at which they are passing features alongside the road and whether that is a comfortable speed for the hazard density. They do this without any reference to the speedometer, which is why speed limits have a very small impact on actual speeds.

This intuitive method of speed selection works well on motorways too - in good visibility. In fog, however, the relative lack of features on either side of the carriageway distorts their perception of speed and they may feel they are travelling slower than they really are.

Since they have never received any training to deal with this situation, it is hardly surprising that multiple pile-ups can occur, such as on the M5 recently.

Instead of Brake, the BBC, et al ranting about lunatic drivers travelling too fast in fog, they should instead be asking why driver training does not include assessing safe speeds on multi-lane roads in poor visibility.

Brian MacDowall



Hard shoulders should remain as hard shoulders for safety reasons. If the Government wants four lanes it should build another one and not steal the hard shoulder from us. As for 'managed motorways', I remain unconvinced that they improve traffic flow. I have a suspicion that they're an excuse to lower the speed limits on our motorways and enforce those limits with average speed cameras. The Slower Speeds Initiative must be delighted, as in a few years most of our major motorways will have 50mph limits, ruthlessly enforced by cameras.

They will also push people away from motorways; I no longer go via the M42 on my way to the M5, I've returned to the old route to join the M5 via junction 7 of the M6.

Chris Lamb

I noticed in *OTR101* that two more councils are now using transfers of the fees paid to the operators of speed awareness courses - namely Suffolk and Merseyside, to subsidise speed camera operations. That's in addition to Thames Valley which we already knew about. In my view this is simply illegal. It's surely a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice if the police obtain funds to protect their own jobs by these means from the course providers.

My borough, LB Hammersmith & Fulham, is said to be the worst congested in London. Fortunately the council (LBHF) is mostly real-world and has even launched a Driver's Charter, promising a fair deal for motorists. This pledges to review bus lanes to improve traffic flow, and reduce unnecessary traffic lights and road signs. It will also fix 'dangerous' potholes within 24 hours and consult over removing speed bumps. While committing to give residents parking priority, it also promises to create more parking spaces if possible.

Although I was not delighted that LBHF has increased parking charges, my permit rise has at least been covered by a 3% reduction in council tax, and charges are now being frozen.

In November, LBHF put on a well-attended Transport Summit. This was a public meeting where you could question council and TFL managers (and unlike GLA Mayoral meetings, the questions were not pre-vetted).

LBHF has been proactive in pushing for road alterations that will improve traffic throughput e.g. adding an extra road lane at the Hammersmith Broadway blackspot, with the largest grant, £2.7m, from TFL.

It is also looking at filters elsewhere to stop traffic queuing, and working with the Police, TFL and other authorities to minimise disruption from roadworks. Plating over is favoured, but there are Health & Safety issues where large vehicles (e.g. buses, HGVs) would pass over.

Lane rental is being considered as an incentive for utilities to speed up works, although London

I have already complained to my MP on this subject who is looking into the matter; I've also complained to the Thames Valley Police Authority (and the IPCC) about this issue, and I urge all ABD members who live in any of those police authority areas to do the same.

The Government stopped the subsidy of safety camera operations from speeding fines for good reason, and now we have this backdoor arrangement which has been invented to circumvent the will of Parliament. It needs to be stopped.

Roger Lawson

Celebrate the 1995 repeal of the 55mph federal speed limit by taking a liberal for an 80mph spin through Texas and Utah - the highest speeds currently allowed anywhere in the United States, though of course there really should be no limits at all. As the wind blows through your hair, laughingly quote Ralph Nader who said at the time of the repeal: "History will never forgive

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

Councils warn that this might just pass on costs to consumers. LBHF already fines contractors for over-runs where reasonable attempts are not made to mitigate delays.

I got in the first question of the night, on TFL's planned Cycle Superhighway 9 (Hounslow to Hyde Park Corner) - an engineer replied that it shouldn't take road space away from drivers.

The PC lobby had turned up, but their questions were gently dealt with. Requests for 'banning 4x4s' were 'probably illegal' and LBHF had declined to go for 20mph zones 'as much of the time we're lucky if traffic does 20mph'. As for having 'less cars and wider pavements', they were reminded that traffic was linked to economic activity and they should decide if they wanted to preserve jobs. By then, much of the audience

was in stitches at the local LibDems, who looked a sorry bunch.

Other questions covered cycling, public transport, and a controversial aviation initiative, Operational Freedoms. A BAA rep remarked in passing that the previous government had insisted on an approach for flights ('Continuous Descent') as policy was to save carbon rather than noise. This did not go down well with the audience - another nail in the warmist coffin.

Transport events are always good for making contacts, and I met the cyclists' rep, the new borough highways manager (quite approachable) and a new local paper journalist. Some ABD leaflets were given out, and we got publicity on the LBHF website and in their residents' magazine.

Brian Mooney

Congress for this assault on the sanctity of human life." In fact, as Stephen Moore of the Cato Institute demonstrated, the average fatality rate dropped, even in states that raised speed limits. In 1997, there were 66,000 fewer road injuries than in 1995. So in fact it's not speed that kills; it's ignorant safety Nazis like Nader.

Bryan Jones

The M6 Toll is losing £1m per week according to operator Midland Expressway, who reported pre-tax annual losses of £49m, raising concerns as to the six-lane motorway's viability. The 27 miles of road were opened in 2002 to ease congestion on the existing M6 stretch, but Midland Expressway has blamed economic conditions for recent falling usage. Despite the gloom, the operator's parent company, Macquarie Motorways Group, claimed that adequate resources are available for the operator to continue in business for the foreseeable future.

Tom Fanning, Midland Expressway's Chief

Executive, says the M6 Toll was constructed at no cost or risk to taxpayers at a cost of close to £1bn and that without private investment, the M6 Toll would not exist and its customers would be adding to the existing congestion on the M6.

A huge multi-national company like Macquarie can easily withstand heavy losses. I think they were hoping for national road pricing, but the ABD helped to put the brakes on that!

The high cost of using the road is paid for mostly by those with business expense accounts, while the cost of maintaining the road is reduced by pricing lorries off the road. Meanwhile, the M6 gets ATM; the Hints bypass plus the A5 improvements around Cannock provide an alternative route.

The M6 Toll will never make enough money to cover the £1bn building cost and the accompanying loan interest repayments, let alone the operating costs. I'm betting that if Macquarie knew before what they know now, they'd never have built this white elephant road – it will always be a white elephant until it becomes part of the toll-free national road network.

Paul Biggs

One immediately noticeable effect of the coalition's Localism Bill is that local councillors have started passing more anti-car measures in response to NIMBYS, including more traffic calming, more 20mph zones and ever more decreased speed limits on main roads. The Transport Minister has compounded this situation by making it easier and cheaper to bring in 20mph limits. Localism has become parochialism of the worst kind; many requests for these schemes originate from parish councils. Councillors rush to oblige, presumably thinking they'll pick up votes. All this runs contrary to the ABD's long-standing policy that speed limits should be set consistently and nationally by people who know what they're doing – and not by local authorities.

In Kent last year the county council introduced

This letter was written to *Local Transport Today*, in response to a series of letters which had appeared in the previous edition. You don't need to read them to guess what they were like...

It came as no surprise to see the anti-car/anti-driver cult use the proposed 80mph motorway limit to hold yet another coven meeting in the letters pages of LTT. Their favourite myths about speed and carbon dioxide combined to raise the level of hysteria to unprecedented levels. The media has been filled with 80mph drivel, not just from the usual 'fake charities' whose real aims are far from charitable, but from the likes of the increasingly out of touch AA and RAC Foundation. At least the RAC Foundation's Stephen Glaister seems to have withdrawn his "20% increase in car fuel consumption"

Give us a quote

"The only power any government has is the power to crack down on criminals. Well, when there aren't enough criminals, one makes them. One declares so many things to be a crime that it becomes impossible for men to live without breaking laws."

Ayn Rand

a Members' Highway Fund; £25,000 per year that each councillor may use in their own ward for local highway projects. There are 84 county councillors, so this represents over £2m of our money per year. Some of it goes on good causes like resurfacing, but it's also used to bring in speed limit and 20mph schemes "demanded" by residents, which would not otherwise have sufficient priority for the expenditure.

The Taxpayers' Alliance has taken a look at the scheme and wants to know if other councils are doing anything similar. To date we know for certain of just one other authority with a similar scheme – Cheshire west & Chester Council – but only to the tune of £10,000 a year. The TA is concerned about misuse of public funds for any purpose by any public body, so if it happens in your area, please get in touch, initially with the ABD in Kent (details on p16) – with a link to the relevant page on your council's website.

Ian Taylor

Sometime in the 1970s there was a book entitled *Just off the Motorway*. It gave locations of filling stations which sold petrol cheaper than the official motorway service areas. The prices in the book quickly dated, but it still told you where the stations were, and they usually still sold at competitive prices. Even on journeys off the motorway prices vary enormously, and you can make big savings if you know where to fill up.

claim when challenged by the Association of British Drivers via email. Anyway, petrol and diesel aren't given free to drivers – two-thirds of the high price we pay at the pumps is tax and VAT – so it's the driver's choice as to how he or she burns it.

Congestion, deliberate congestion-causing measures, and the likes of speed humps, are much bigger fuel consumers than motorway speeds. I can't, however, help feeling that raising the motorway limit to 80 is something of a red-herring given the bigger problem of so many inappropriately lowered limits in urban and rural areas. Also, let's not forget the inappropriate use of ATM (Active Traffic Management) by the increasingly incompetent Highways Agency, which frequently results in motorway speed limits of 60mph or less on the M6 and M42 when there is clearly no need. Yes, here on the West Midlands motorways



I tried Googling 'Filling stations, St. Andrews' (St. Andrews is where I live) and got a map showing a number of filling stations within 20 miles of here, but no indication of prices. It showed the company which owned them but not every filling station was shown, so this would be of limited use if you were nearly out of petrol.

I tried Googling 'Petrol prices, St. Andrews' and got a list of filling stations with prices and dates, some of which were two months old; I was invited to report the prices I paid so it clearly relies on customers for its information.

A driver planning a journey from London to Glasgow may decide that he will have to fill up somewhere between Birmingham and Carlisle, but it will not matter to him where. What he wants is the cheapest petrol between those two places, within a reasonable distance of the M6. What's needed is a website with up to date prices, and the ability to search a route for the lowest prices. Filling stations must be connected to the web for credit card transactions, so it should be possible for a website to query the garages at regular intervals and maintain its database of prices. It would require software, but it's reasonable to expect that owners of filling stations would be keen to cooperate. Those which were not, are unlikely to be the ones selling at low prices.

Google Maps already plots routes between two points, often giving alternatives, estimating times and indicating traffic congestion. It would be a simple matter to indicate cheap filling stations near the route, stating the extra distance if a diversion is required. Those sat-navs which receive up to date information by the cell-phone network should also be able to do this.

Colin MacDonald

would be grateful for a 70mph limit!

George Osborne has learnt the harsh lesson that the UK's legally binding, unilateral, hugely expensive, futile and unachievable carbon dioxide reduction targets for our miniscule contribution to global emissions (of the harmless, naturally occurring aerial plant food gas) are the path to certain bankruptcy.

Already bankrupt is the argument that other countries will follow our demonstrable stupidity known as the 2008 Climate Change Act. Our industry and its emissions will simply transfer to developing countries because of lower costs and the absence of environmental legislation. This is the UN's wealth redistribution agenda facilitated by the demonisation of carbon dioxide by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Paul Biggs

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

Given that Brake has a Parliamentary of the Month award, which it has given to Karl Turner MP because he wants drivers jailed for seven years on mere inexpert perception, we have decided to do something similar and you will note how difficult it is to disagree with its aims compared to those of Brake. There's nothing to stop other groups doing similar and I would seriously suggest ABD should consider it.

Our Top Parliamentary Award is for those who promote altruistic, expert, road safety, with no unnecessary punishment or delays to 30,000,000 drivers and taxpayers. Our first award goes to Ken Clarke MP for over-ruling Karl Turner's Bill. We will write to Mr Clarke to inform him.

Keith Peat
Drive East Midlands
(www.driveeastmidlands.com)
Drivers' Protest Union
(www.youdrive.org.uk)

The book is still available, but nowadays this information is available via a website such as www.petroprices.com or a smartphone; there are numerous apps available that do exactly what you're after. Because a smartphone has GPS it's possible to find all the filling stations near where you are, or along a pre-set route. But there's a flaw of course; the data can be unreliable as prices change constantly. However, these apps are the best way of getting such information on the move, even if they're far from fool-proof. The other flaw is that you need a smartphone to access the data. Ed.

There have recently been numerous incidents of pedestrians being struck by vehicles (and dying) while negotiating fast-moving busy roads. Only very recently, the M1 was closed for several hours because a pedestrian was killed after being hit by a van. I've yet to discover what closing a motorway for several hours tells the investigating officers; what do they actually achieve by causing chaos for tens of thousands of drivers? Does anybody out there know?

Alison Everard

I recently received a leaflet from Lancashire County Council, which I presume will be produced in one form or another nationally. The leaflet states the case for introducing large numbers of 20mph zones throughout the county; the cost of the leaflet alone will not be cheap, and the installation of the 20mph signs throughout Morecambe and Lancaster is bound to run into six figures. Where is the money coming from?

The slogans are very familiar, such as 'Working together for safer communities' and 'making



our streets safer for walking and cycling'. Three times I have been run into by cyclists whilst walking on paths – paths that were clearly signed 'no cycling'. I've also had a narrow escape with a cyclist whilst crossing the road on a pedestrian-controlled crossing to the bus station. The traffic had stopped but the cyclist came through without stopping – on another occasion they even shouted 'coming through' as they did so!

My local one-way system is frequently ignored by cyclists, although the council seems to have got over this by making two-way lanes for cyclists. What's intriguing though is the line frequently trotted out about the council 'working with communities and motorists'. I have yet to meet anybody who the council has been working with.

DC Gregory



We're constantly told that speed cameras can reduce fatalities by whatever number you care to choose, but what we don't hear is that they can actually increase the likelihood of a crash. To get a fuller picture, I'd recommend a read of the Telegraph's recent story on how cameras have often failed to cut crash rates; you can read it online at tinyurl.com/3e8dsu3

Perry Ward

Dave Razzell is right to question what proportion of speed-related crashes involve drivers who are sober, insured and carry a current driving licence (OTR101). Whenever I read a news story that focuses on a speed-related crash, the speed is invariably just one factor; there's typically drink and/or drugs involved too, and those are hardly going to help the driver judge things better.

Just recently I was reading about a driver who struck a pedestrian at 68mph in a 30mph zone, resulting in an instant death; I'd agree that anybody who drives at such reckless speeds deserves whatever punishment they get. But this driver was also unlicensed and uninsured – and because he failed to stop at the scene of the crime, who is to say that he wasn't also high on drugs or off his face on booze at the time of the incident? By the time police caught up with him several weeks later, it would have been too late to know how much alcohol or drugs were in his system. You can read more about this terrible incident at tinyurl.com/7jmgkn5.

OTR glossary

- ACPO: Association of Chief Police Officers
- ALG: Association of London Government
- ANPR: Automatic Number Plate Recognition
- Brake: Vocal anti-car group
- CfBT: Campaign for Better Transport (previously Transport 2000)
- CPRE: Campaign to Protect Rural England
- CPS: Crown Prosecution Service
- DfT: Department for Transport
- DVLA: Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency
- EC: European Commission
- ECHR: European Court of Human Rights
- FoI: Freedom of Information (Act)
- Gatso: Speed camera that measures a car's speed at a single fixed point.
- IAM: Institute of Advanced Motorists
- IPCC: Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (pushes man-made CC view)
- ISA: Intelligent Speed Adaptation
- KSI: Killed or Seriously Injured
- LTP: Local Transport Plan
- MART: Manchester Against Road Tolls
- NAAT: National Alliance Against Tolls
- NIP: Notice of Intended Prosecution (usually a speeding ticket)
- RHA: Road Haulage Association
- PACTS: Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety (of which the ABD is a member)
- PCN: Penalty Charge Notice
- Scamera: Speed camera
- SPECS: Speed camera that measures a car's average speed between two or more points.
- TfL: Transport for London
- VAS: Vehicle-activated sign

What concerns me is that it's crashes like these which lead to calls for reduced speed limits and speed cameras all over the place. We're often told that hitting a child at 35mph will kill them and at 30mph they'll be largely OK, but when a fatal crash does occur, how often is it because the driver is just a whisker over the speed limit? Fatalities involving pedestrians only ever seem to occur because those pedestrians are doing daft things like walking in the middle of the road at night, or crossing without looking – or because the driver is so far outside the law that no amount of regulation or enforcement could ever make the difference.

What's worse is that to write what I just have, is seen by the anti-car brigade as callous and unfeeling, because – they'll say – pedestrians are vulnerable road users. I couldn't agree more, and as that's the case, why can't they take more care? I know that when I'm walking rather than driving, I do everything I can to make sure that I don't get mown down by a driver, who is driving legally or otherwise.

Tim Mason

in brief...

▶ Local authorities are doing very little to promote the uptake of electric or other low carbon vehicles, according to the RAC Foundation. The Foundation surveyed all 207 councils in England, Scotland and Wales. Of the 58 councils that participated, only 20 had installed public charging points and the Foundation says the use of other policies, such as 'green' parking charges and low emission zones, was "sporadic".

▶ Take-up of Government grants for electric vehicles fell in the last quarter, with just 106 successful applications made. The Plug-in car grant was launched on 1 January and offers a 25% discount on an ultra-low emission car, up to £5000. The Government allocated £43m to the grant up to 31 March 2012, but there were just 465 grants awarded in the first quarter of the year, 215 in the second and 106 in the third. Even if each award was for £5000, the 786 awards would total just £3.9m. Cars with emissions of 75g/km or less are eligible.

▶ A radical plan to reform motoring taxation and raise more funds for road improvements has been unveiled by a new lobbying body, the Road Ahead Group. The plan would see a proportion of VED ring-fenced for relieving congestion hotspots on the trunk road network. The idea has been developed by Brian Wadsworth, a former director of strategic roads, planning and national networks at the DfT. Wadsworth now works for public affairs group Interel Consulting UK and is director of the Road Ahead Group, which aims to boost investment in the road network and promote private financing of road infrastructure.

▶ Boris Johnson's pledge to remove redundant traffic signals has so far resulted in their removal from 20 locations. TfL identified 145 locations last summer where it believed signals could potentially be removed. Transport commissioner Peter Hendy said that signals would be removed from a further seven of the sites, 66 would not be progressed, and 52 were still under discussion. "In addition, a further 24 sites have been added to the list for investigation and potential removal," he said.

▶ The number of fixed site speed cameras in Wales looks likely to dramatically fall as existing wet film cameras become obsolete. The Wales Road Safety Casualty Reduction Partnership is close to completing the conversion of 27 of the country's 152 sites from wet film to digital. They complied with the DfT's former site selection casualty criteria, with the £36,000 conversion cost of each site paid for by the Welsh Government. There are four options for each of the remaining 125 sites: removal; removal and replacement with a speed indicator device, enforcement using mobile cameras, or leaving the camera in situ until it reaches its life expiry. Wales also has 46 red light cameras, 36 camera vans and eight motorcycles that cover 431 mobile sites.

Be green - take the car

Employers seeking to cut their CO₂ emissions could be better off encouraging staff to drive rather than take the bus, according to Government emissions data. Buses outside London emit 221g of CO₂ equivalent (CO₂e) per passenger kilometre; more than a small petrol car (201g) and a small (172g) or medium (215g) diesel car. The car figures are per vehicle mile, so the per passenger mile figure would be even lower if more than one person was in the car.

Per passenger km emissions for London buses are much lower, at 102g, because of higher average ridership figures for buses in London. The motorised modes with the lowest per passenger km emissions are coaches (36g) and national rail services (65g).

The emissions data has been compiled by the departments for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and Energy and Climate Change. It



is intended for use by employers who want to calculate their greenhouse gas emissions. The emissions calculations cover direct emissions and also indirect emissions such as refining, distribution, storage and retail, and electricity generation. The data comes from a variety of sources including: DfT, consultant AEA, TfL and National Express.

Road deaths fall further than ever

The recession and two heavy winters may have contributed to the sharp fall in fatalities on Britain's roads last year, according to the DfT. Figures for 2010 show that 1850 people were killed on Britain's roads – a drop of 17% in a single year. Car occupant, pedestrian and motorcycle fatalities all fell but pedal cyclist fatalities rose, from 104 to 111.

The DfT suggests a number of possible factors to explain the sharp drop in fatalities of recent years, on top of long-term trends of improved vehicle safety and road safety engineering. "The economic downturn, falling traffic levels for the last three years, and continued reduction in free-flow speeds have played a part," it says. "Similar large falls in fatalities were seen in the recession in the early 1990s."

Heavy snowfalls and consequent lower traffic levels at the beginning and end of 2010 may also have contributed to the fall in fatalities. The Department suggests a drop in young driver casualties may be partly explained by fewer young drivers on the road, with the proportion of young men (17-20) holding a driving licence falling from 41% in 2007 to 35% in 2010.

The DfT believes the 208,648 casualties reported last year to the police significantly

underestimates the actual number of casualties. Its best estimate, based on National Travel Survey data, is that there were 660,000-800,000 non-fatal accidents on Britain's roads in 2010.

The number of pedal cycle admissions to hospital is more than three times higher than recorded in police data. Accidents involving no other vehicle account for the majority of this discrepancy.

2010 was the final year of the previous Government's road safety strategy, which used the 1994-98 casualty average as a baseline for measuring performance. The figures show that between 1994-98 and 2010:

- fatalities fell 48%
- killed and serious injuries fell 49%
- the slight casualty rate fell 32%
- traffic levels have risen 13%

The most frequently reported contributory factor to accidents recorded by the police last year was 'failure to look properly', reported in 40% of accidents. 'Pedestrian failed to look properly' was recorded in 60% of accidents in which a pedestrian was killed or injured. Exceeding the speed limit was recorded in 5% of accidents but these accidents involved 14% of fatalities.

Osborne talks (some) sense on CO₂

The Chancellor, George Osborne, has raised questions about Britain's long-term target to cut CO₂ emissions by 80% by 2050 (against 1990 levels). Osborne told the Conservative Party conference in Manchester that Britain would not cut CO₂ any faster than its European counterparts. The EU currently only has a target to cut emissions 20% by 2020 (against 1990 levels). "Yes, climate change is a man-made disaster... but Britain makes up less than 2% of the world's carbon emissions," said

the Chancellor. "We're not going to save the planet by putting our country out of business. So let's at the very least resolve that we're going to cut carbon emissions no slower but also no faster than our fellow countries in Europe. That's what I've insisted on in the recent carbon budget." The Government's fourth carbon budget published in May pledged a 50% emissions cut by 2025, but said the Government would review the pledge in light of EU progress on climate negotiations in 2014.

KSI disparities arise

A huge variation between the best and the worst local authority areas in England for road casualty reductions has been revealed in data released by the DfT. Analysis of the figures shows that the top-performing area – Halton on Merseyside – has recorded a 70% reduction in KSI over the last 15 years, but KSIs haven't fallen at all in Doncaster.

The average number of KSIs recorded by the police in each local authority area during 2006-2010 were compared with the average recorded in 1994-98. The reduction for England as a whole is 40%, but eight areas have experienced falls of 60% or more while nine have seen reductions of less than 20%. Intriguingly, while the figures cover KSIs recorded by the police, the DfT believes the actual number of road accident casualties is much higher than the police figures.

Northumberland's costly PR stunt

Northumberland County Council is planning to introduce further 20mph speed limits even though monitoring of trial sites suggests they have had no impact on vehicle speeds. The council introduced six trial 20mph signed-only speed limits last April at a cost of £6000 per scheme.

"Analysis of the data indicates that speeds have increased in as many instances as they reduced, which suggests random fluctuation rather than any underlying trend," Mike Scott, Northumberland's head of sustainable transport, told councillors. It is therefore

Greening sets out stall

New transport secretary Justine Greening has backed high-speed rail and confirmed a consultation on raising the motorway speed limit. The former Treasury minister outlined her initial thoughts about transport policy to the House of Commons transport committee just days after replacing Philip Hammond who has moved to become defence secretary in the wake of Liam Fox's resignation.

Greening identified getting the transport system to support economic growth as a key priority in the near-term. She spoke favourably about high-speed rail but acknowledged the plans are controversial. "I will take great care over this decision over the coming weeks and months," she said. The MP for Putney in South West London confirmed that she would take forward a consultation on 80mph speed limits. She said her long-standing opposition to Heathrow Airport expansion put her "fundamentally at one with Government policy".

difficult to conclude that the introduction of the 20mph speed limit signs has had a significant impact on vehicle speeds."

Despite the results, Scott said customer satisfaction surveys of local residents suggested that the lower limits were popular. Northumberland's new policy states that streets will be considered suitable for 20mph limits if 70% of residents on the street(s) are in favour of the proposal and at least one speed-related non-fatal personal injury accident has been recorded on the street in the preceding three years.

Baker vetoes more traffic enforcement

English local authorities outside London will not be given the powers to enforce moving traffic contraventions such as banned turns, and boxed junction infringements, transport minister Norman Baker has revealed. London boroughs and TfL already have the powers to enforce moving traffic contraventions. The powers to allow authorities outside the capital to conduct the enforcement are contained in part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004. Last year the Department consulted on laying the regulations to enact this part of the legislation. But, reflecting on the outcome of the consultation, Baker said: "It is my view that the demand for these powers from local politicians in the sorts of authorities I would expect to be among the first to use these powers is far from overwhelming. I have therefore concluded that there can be no case for devoting scarce resources to this matter at the moment."

The DfT's consultation generated responses from 13 highway authorities – Birmingham, Brighton and Hove, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Plymouth, Reading, Salford, Sheffield, and Southampton. All but one supported the powers being introduced

and most said they would use them. Birmingham said they would "greatly assist in carrying out the Network Management Duty"; Nottingham said it would be "enthusiastic to use these new powers"; and Reading said the powers were needed "as soon as possible".

The Local Government Technical Advisers Group (TAG) expressed surprise and disappointment at the DfT's decision. A spokesman commented: "Local authorities need these powers to deliver the obligations of the Traffic Management Act and it's important for movement in our big cities".

Media coverage of the powers in London has frequently focused on the high number of penalty charge notices issued, particularly for yellow box junction infringements.

The House of Commons transport committee's recent report on traffic management said: "We can see no reason why Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 should not be fully commenced to enable local authorities to deal more effectively with moving traffic contraventions and we recommend that the Government bring this part of the Act into force, by 2013."

in brief..

► The Highways Agency has cancelled a road safety trial on the A47 in Norfolk that would have seen water-filled ditches relocated away from the roadside. The trial was to have been implemented on the Acle Straight, a five-mile stretch of single carriageway across the Norfolk Broads between Acle and Great Yarmouth, which is built on an embankment about one metre above the surrounding ground and surrounded on both sides by open, water-filled ditches. Road safety campaigners have said the ditches are a safety hazard if drivers leave the road in an accident. Under the trial, the HA planned to move 1km of dykes further away from the road, but it has now announced that project has been scrapped, following a review of spending priorities.

► Speed cameras in Newcastle have been made operational for the first time in years, after councillors reacted angrily to discovering they were all out of use. No one has received a NIP in the last three financial years; four camera boxes on the A1058 were not even connected to an electricity supply. Meanwhile, advisory signs to comply with Government guidance had not been erected at the other sites. The council has undertaken an internal investigation and the spokesman said some officers could face disciplinary action.

► Council leaders in the West Midlands have been asked by West Midlands Police for funding to keep fixed site speed cameras operating. The police force wants £380,000 to help cover the operating and maintenance costs of cameras. This would supplement the income from speed awareness courses. District council leaders withdrew their contribution to the cost of camera enforcement in April, following Government cuts. The West Midlands has about 300 fixed camera sites but fewer than 100 are believed to be in active service. West Midlands Police says the existing wet film cameras have a maximum life left of two years.

► Official figures have shown which speed cameras in south Wales have been catching the most drivers. More than 24,000 speeding offences were recorded by 89 cameras in 2009, with 6657 of them caught by average speed cameras on the M4 J30 (Cardiff East). A further 2114 drivers were caught on the M4 eastbound at J40 (Port Talbot). But two separate Cardiff cameras, on Rhiwbina Hill and Greenway Road, Rumney, were triggered just once during the year.

► A motorist in Lancashire is still driving with 30 points on their licence, it has been revealed. The information was obtained from the DVLA via an FoI request from the BBC, which found that 436 people in Lancashire and south Cumbria have 12 or more points on their licences but have not been banned from driving. One driver, from Blackburn, is driving with 30 points on his or her licence.

in brief...

► Liverpool's Primary Care Trust is to part-fund the implementation of 20mph speed limits across residential roads in the city. The PCT will contribute £400,000 towards the £1.4m anticipated cost of the council programme to implement 20mph signed-only limits over the next four years. The Trust will also fund a £265,000 programme of perception surveys and community engagement work. Currently, 31% of residential roads in Liverpool are subject to 20mph speed limits. The plans would extend this by a further 39% – 367 miles of roads. The city council wants to include as many roads as possible, with the exception of those with limits of 40mph or more, A and B-roads, plus major through routes that aren't primarily residential.

► The London Borough of Islington could become the first authority in the country to implement 20mph speed limits across most of its main roads. Islington has already installed extensive 20mph zones with traffic calming in residential areas and last year implemented signed-only 20mph limits on all remaining residential streets that still had a 30mph limit. But now the Labour-controlled council has approved plans to cut main road limits from 30 to 20mph, subject to funding. Neighbouring borough Camden is following Islington's plan with interest and may follow suit.

► Plans to increase the tolls on the Dartford crossings twice within the space of six months have been dropped by the Government. Tolls were to have increased in November and next April but roads minister Mike Penning said the proposals were being reconsidered in the light of opposition raised during the public consultation. He said a response to the consultation would, subject to Cabinet clearance, be published early in 2012.

► Motorists bought one billion fewer litres of petrol and diesel in the first three months of this year compared with the pre-credit crunch January-March 2008 period, figures from the AA show. Service stations sold 835m fewer litres of petrol and 247m fewer litres of diesel in January to March 2011 than in the same period three years earlier. The AA said the 15.2% dip in petrol sales and the 6% fall in diesel sales compared with 2008 was caused by austerity and the record fuel prices, which saw petrol increase by 7.9p a litre and diesel go up by 10.5p a litre in the first three months of this year. The drop in sales deprived the Treasury of more than £637m in tax during the first three months of 2011.

A man spotted using two mobile phones while behind the wheel of his car has been banned from driving for 12 months. Norwich magistrates heard David Secker, 34, was seen talking on one phone while holding the other as if texting. He was sentenced for using a mobile phone while driving and having no insurance. Secker was also fined £150 and given 14 penalty points.

Private sector buys Southend scameras

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is installing an average speed camera system to enforce the 20mph limit along the seafront on Marine Parade and Western Esplanade. A shared space treatment of the streets was completed in March 2011, which has seen guardrailling and Pelican crossing points removed, with paving, lighting and water features used to enhance the public space. Southend says the scheme has received a mixed reception, with the local press saying it has created confusion and needs to be changed. The council is in the process of commissioning an independent review of the scheme.

Intriguingly, Paul Mathieson, Southend's special projects manager for transportation, said the cameras weren't part of the original scheme but councillors had accepted an offer from local employer, Olympus Keymed, a medical and industrial instrument company, to fund the camera system. Speed monitoring by the council has shown that the 85th percentile speed of traffic in the area is 22-23mph.

• In 2009 TfL selected four boroughs – Camden, Waltham Forest, Hackney and Southwark – for a trial of 20mph limit average speed camera enforcement. But the plan was scrapped.

Lane rental "impractical"

Local authorities have raised concerns about the DfT's lane rental plan, questioning its ability to cut congestion and saying the plan for highway authorities to impose charges on their own works is impractical. The Department is currently consulting on powers to allow highway authorities in England to introduce daily charges for works carried out in the road. Charges would have to be targeted at the worst congestion hotspots and must have time exemptions to encourage works to take place during less disruptive times of day.

London Councils, which represents the capital's boroughs, says it is "very concerned" that utility companies will simply pass the lane rental charges on to consumers. "If this is allowed, the scheme would be rendered completely ineffective," it says. "It is our understanding that the regulator has the power to exclude these charges from the price capping agreements with utility providers. If they cannot, or will not, there doesn't seem much point in running the scheme."

The DfT says highway authorities should pay



the same charges for their own roadworks as utility companies pay, though this will not be a legal requirement.

London Councils supports the idea but the West Yorkshire conurbation authorities say it is impractical. "Whilst it makes sense it is not practical to charge ourselves and is fraught with difficulties such as financial regulations," says the response of the conurbation's local transport plan team. Jeff English, assistant director of integrated transport at Metro, the West Yorkshire PTE, said the charges would be paid by highway authorities from the highways budgets and recycled into highways budgets.

Scots see sense on limit cuts

Plans to reduce the speed limit on two of Scotland's most dangerous roads have been dropped after facing stiff opposition from residents. The Scottish Borders Council had proposed lowering the speed limit from 60mph to 50mph on the A708 between Selkirk and the council boundary with Dumfries and Galloway and the A6088 between Hawick and the English border. However, it faced complaints from residents that the regular signs required to enforce the limit would be a scar on the landscape, with councillors attacking the proposals as unpopular and unworkable.

The A708, together with the southern section of the A6088, are among only seven roads in Scotland identified in the most dangerous category by the Road Safety Foundation, based on the probability of being killed or suffering a serious injury in an accident. Both routes were

identified as suitable for a lower speed limit in a review of all the council's A and B-roads ordered by the then Scottish Executive in 2006.

However, the council has said it will not proceed with implementing a 50mph limit on either road, despite the police expressing support for the 10mph reduction. A consultation on changing the limit found that 53% of residents were opposed to plans for the A708 and 50% opposed to those for the A6088, with 37% expressing support for both routes. There was particular opposition to the use of repeater signs, which the consultation said would be required every 500 metres to remind motorists of the lower speed limit.

Councillors complained that ordinary motorists were being punished for the behaviour of motorcyclists who regularly break the existing speed limit on the A708.

Stay informed

Email groups

Keep abreast of what the ABD is up to by subscribing to the ABD Action mailing list. Join the list by emailing abd-action-owner@yahoogroups.com with your name and membership number. Get even faster updates via Twitter (twitter.com/TheABD) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/associationofbritishdrivers)

Forum

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

Website

The main ABD website (www.abd.org.uk) is available to everyone, and there's a members' site at members.abd.org.uk – both contain mountains of information on a diverse range of subjects, with dozens of links to other websites which may help you in your research. Log on to to find out more or email the ABD webmaster – Chris Ward – at website@abd.org.uk

OTR – go electronic

You can save the ABD lots of money if you opt to receive each issue of *On The Road* electronically, rather than as a hard copy – you'll also see it far quicker. To go electronic please email membership@abd.org.uk using the subject header **electronic OTR**. Please use this header and no other to ensure your email isn't binned as spam.

OTR in cyberspace

OTR31 onwards are now available as PDFs, which you can obtain from Chris Medd or download from the ABD website.

Speed limit objection packs

The ABD has prepared an informative action pack which sets out in detail the process by which local authorities set speed limits, and the rights that every member of the public has to object to the imposition of new or reduced limits. The pack costs £5 to non-members, but is available free to current members. Please send a large SAE (30p) to:

**3 Wheatcroft Way
Dereham
Norfolk NR20 3SS
malcolm.heymer@abd.org.uk**

Help out

ABD publicity material

If you'd like copies of any ABD literature please contact Felicity Mawson (details overleaf), but please don't over-order as printing costs are high.

Affiliated organisations

The ABD runs an affiliation scheme, allowing groups which support the ABD to formally recognise the work we do. Overleaf is a list of the groups currently affiliated, along with contact details for Terry Hudson, the affiliations contact. If you're a member of an organisation which you think should support the ABD, please let Terry know and we'll endeavour to sign them up.

Complain

Object about proposals for traffic calming and speed limit reductions. Few people do, which is why they happen.

Facebook

Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/associationofbritishdrivers where you can comment on posted articles, find out about press articles you can comment on, and by sharing some of our updates, encourage your friends to support us too.

Fighting fund

The ABD has a fighting fund to which you can donate any amount at any time. You can also donate by standing order if you wish to give a regular sum. Please contact the membership secretary for more information; she'll send you the relevant form to fill out.

Joint memberships

These are free and help us to increase the size of the group easily. If your partner/spouse isn't a joint member, please sign them up if you can – just contact the membership secretary to do so.

Local/regional contacts

Have you been in touch with your local co-ordinator recently? Advise them of anything local you see, find out how you can help campaign locally. You can find out their details on the members site (<http://members.abd.org.uk>). If there's no local co-ordinator for your area, perhaps you can take on the role – more details on what is involved can be found on the members site.

National committee

The ABD's national committee is always keen to increase its effectiveness, which means getting more members involved. An ability to function effectively and diplomatically in committee email discussions across a wide range of issues is essential, and ideally, after an acclimatisation period, new recruits would eventually become a media spokesman too. There are usually around four committee plus (up to) two members' meetings each year, which you'd ideally be able to attend. If you reckon you could get involved, just contact Brian Gregory (brian.gregory@abd.org.uk), Brian MacDowall (brian.macdowall@abd.org.uk) or Bob Dennish (national@abd.org.uk) and they'll do the rest.

Twitter

Follow us at <http://twitter.com/TheABD>, where you can stay up to date on what's happening. Find out about press articles you can comment on and retweet our posts to spread the word. You can also use Twitter to update us on things you see, if you make sure we're following you. If you're in Birmingham, Essex, Herefordshire, Kent, North West, Rutland, Scotland, Staffs, Surrey or Warwickshire we have a local Twitter account too: <http://twitter.com/TheABD/local>

Write to the press

Take the time to reply to anti-car articles and letters in the local press. Not only do you get to respond to information already published, but you may be able to get a debate going – and could even become a local point of contact.

Contact your MP

Write to your MP regularly, reminding them of their duty to stand up for drivers. MPs are listed by name & constituency on the Parliament site (parliament.uk/directories/directories.cfm). Many MPs have their own email, but if you use the Parliament webpage to email them, it's involved. It's often better to check their constituency website (if they have one) for contact info. Make sure you state clearly you're a constituent to get priority in a reply. Conservative ministers are listed at conservatives.com

national & regional contacts

We are always pleased to hear from members who can offer support or need help. But remember that the ABD is a voluntary organisation – funded only by its members' subscriptions – and is staffed by unpaid volunteers who do their best to help members. **So please, no phone calls after 9pm!**

Affiliated organisations

- ▶ American Automobile Club
- ▶ BMW Car Club
- ▶ CIPS (Choice in Personal Safety)
- ▶ Citroen Car Club
- ▶ Driver Awareness
- ▶ Jaguar Drivers' Club
- ▶ NO2ID
- ▶ Parkingticket.co.uk
- ▶ Professional Drivers' Association
- ▶ Renault ClioSport Club
- ▶ Repeal the Act
- ▶ Safe Speed (safespeed.org.uk)
- ▶ South East Lotus Owners' Club
- ▶ Subaru Impreza Drivers' Club
- ▶ The Independent Porsche Enthusiasts' Club
- ▶ Triumph Stag Enthusiasts' Club

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