

On The Road

The journal of the Alliance of British Drivers

Issue 113

Autumn 2014

2014 members' meeting: be there

With a General Election looming we're likely to be softened up over the coming months, but here in the ABD we know that any gestures are likely to be of the empty variety as motoring continues to be marginalised on the grounds of air quality, sustainability, noise, social and economic costs – you name it, we've heard it as an excuse.

So if you're keen to see what the current threats are to your freedom, along with what you can do about it, you'll be wanting to come along to the ABD's next members' meeting. To be held at Heritage Motor Centre at Gaydon in Warwickshire on 27 September, it's your chance to catch up with other member plus many of the people on the ABD committee.

Things will be getting going around 10.30am and they're normally wrapped up by around 3.30 in the afternoon. As you'd expect, we've lined up an agenda which should be of interest to all licence holders with some great guest speakers, so please attend if you're able to do so. Here's how we see the day panning out:

10:30-11:00: AGM Proceedings

11:00-12:00: Yan Georgiou, of Avon & Somerset Police, on road accident investigation and getting roads re-opened again.

12:00-12:45: Mark Dollar, group convenor of the PCS Union at the Highways Agency, on the selling off of the Highway Agency.

12:45-13:45: Lunch

13.45-14:15: Derek Dishman, parking campaigner (Mr. Mustard blog) who you might have seen on BBC1's 'Parking Mad' series.

14:15-15:00: We will be announcing winners of our *Does your council give you the hump* competition and time permitting several other videos of interest. Finishing time may be 'flexible'

Please come along and contribute to the debate on the future of the ABD and remember your views are important. We want to hear from you – whatever you think.

New for this year, members will be supplied on entry a combination clipped name badge. It would be helpful if members filled in their first name and town of residence. This we feel will allow a more friendly meeting, rather than sitting with a room of like-minded strangers.

Whether you'd like to actively find out more, or just soak up the atmosphere on the day, I can guarantee that it will be worth you being there. Please do also invite your friends.

OTR 113

Highlights

- 2 Campaign 2015 Q&A
- 4 The ABD in the media
- 7 Infrastructure bill: a trojan horse?
- 8 The ABD goes to the polls
- 12 Road casualties hit all-time low
- 15 Caught in the web

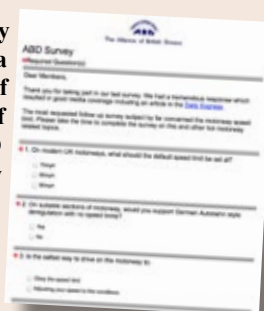
Regulars

- 10-11 Letters
- 11 Abbreviations glossary
- 12-14 News
- 15 Soapbox
- 16 Get involved
- 16 National & regional contacts

The next issue of *On The Road* goes to press on Monday 15 December. Contributions deadline is Monday 1 December.

The ABD survey: have your say

The ABD has recently achieved a lot of media coverage on the strength of a couple of surveys, one of which was completed by ABD members while the other saw 1500 members of the public taking part. When it comes to writing news stories, opinions matter hugely, so it's crucial that the ABD gauges where the weight of public opinion lies on a wide array of motoring topics – whether that's driving standards, the cost of driving,



the availability of parking. Basically, anything that the ABD campaigns on.

Having enjoyed such success in the media with these recent surveys, we're now running another – and we'd like you to take part. This one is all about motorway driving and it includes 10 questions on how we use these key routes. The survey takes just

a few minutes to complete, so if you reckon you can spare those few minutes, please go to tinyurl.com/kpj9s7u to take part.

To join the ABD
call us now on
0161 408 7070



The ABD campaigns for:

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

Campaign 2015: your questions answered

Why Campaign 2015 (C2015)?

We recognised the importance of lobbying in 2009, just before the last General Election. Whereas it's fair to say that we learned in hindsight that party policy was drafted well in advance, 'Motorway Man' was recognised as a key voter and the Conservatives felt compelled to make promises over speed cameras.

Isn't that kind of lobbying what ABD has been doing anyway?

Campaign 2015 is far more sustained and systematic than our previous forays. We've experimented successfully with initiatives such as getting an article onto influential website *Conservative Home*, running our first ever national opinion poll and running a publicity-winning competition *Does Your Council Give You The Hump?*

How else has the approach been different?

As an example, in 2006, we considered running a high-profile road safety conference. A great idea, but the scale of organising it meant it was overtaken by events, and we had to divert resources into fighting Labour's threat of road pricing. Last summer we identified 20 smaller and more manageable initiatives, with some flexibility over timing. I'm pleased to say we are consistently hitting our targets.

Has the current government made much difference?

The journalist Mike Rutherford wrote about how disappointing previous ministers like Mike Penning and Justine Greening were. The latter

seemed so keen to impress the Treasury that she called for increasing fuel duty at a time when virtually everyone else (apart from the anti-car lobby) was against it. I suspect that newly-arrived Ministers become dependent on their civil servants and end up being run by them – which explains why we've been stuck with the same failed policies.

How are things affected by the July DFT Ministerial reshuffle?

The new Minister of State, John Hayes, at least has an independent streak – he was moved from DECC after his opposition to various green policies. He has been asked to produce a transport strategy, so we lost no time in sending him our Motorists' Charter and policy papers and the offer of a meeting.

Another new Transport Minister, Claire Perry, has at least announced that speed limits for certain lorries on A-roads will be increased to 50mph. It's taken the government only four years... at least somebody's twigged there's an election looming.

How else can you directly influence the government?

We know that our Fair Deal policy paper has been circulated to all 10 MPs working with the Downing St Policy Unit. The Conservatives also have back bench policy committees. Transport seems to fit best under John Redwood's on the economy. This summer, his website appealed for policy suggestions. You might say virtually all of those supplied could have come from ABD members!

...and indirectly?

We've had our policy suggestions well received by Labour's Richard Burden and also UKIP, a party that seems to be rapidly gaining support. A bit of competition is more likely to produce a policy shift. The next General Election looks like being the most unpredictable ever.

What other opportunities are there?

Several. This summer we've done the groundwork to talk to several interests, commercial and otherwise, who will lose from anti-driver policies. Our resources can get stretched, so we're keen to help drivers stand up for themselves. It's important to make contact with like-minded individuals with a bit of 'go'. This summer, local people in Cumbria have been faced with the imposition of parking charges in what looks like a money grab. Peter Morgan and Brian Mooney have earned thanks by pointing out the law! We've also made contact with a disabled motorist unfairly penalised by a local authority after residents helped him to fix a puncture, and a newspaper letter-writer who called for an independent pro-driver group! And we've just had an offer of help from an internet 'blogger' who shares our concerns in London.

C2015 is clearly important - how can ABD members help?

A. In the past we've asked members to become contact for a key area such as a county or a city. That level of responsibility might not appeal to everyone, but given the importance of the next six months, we can find something for everyone.

For instance, tipping us off over any local motoring campaigns or hotspots you see in the press. In the run-up to a General Election, any letters you send to candidates or get published can count double. Remember – you get out of life what you put into it! You can contact fairdeal@abd.org.uk or 0207 385 9757 to discuss without obligation.

How can I find out more?

Come to our AGM on 27 Sept, where you'll be welcome to ask any questions.

Driver courses: a licence to print money?

The ABD has long championed better road user education. However, it's also been extremely suspicious of awareness courses, especially Speed Awareness Courses as an alternative to fines and penalty points. One reason for this is because unlike fines, money paid for these courses goes to the people running them and the organisations that refer motorists to them, not the Treasury. They can then spend profits as they wish – expanding their empires.

There's a band of organisations involved that includes the police, safety partnerships (for which read "scamera"), ACPO, even

the AA is in on it. The whole set-up reeks of vested interest. Some have even suggested that the system represents a perversion of the cause of justice. Then there is the question of course content. How much of it is genuine useful information and how much slogan-pushing propaganda?

However bad courses may be, the ABD recognises that many drivers will prefer them as a means of protecting their licences from penalty points.

This has come to the fore with the online publication of one blogger's experience. Andrew Sercombe was subjected to a day

of outright bullying and at the hands of what can only be described as sadists, who were even prepared to reinterpret bits of the Highway Code. His story can be read at tinyurl.com/pmm5pep.

What we want to know is: how widespread is this sort of behaviour by those running courses? Have you been on a speed awareness course? How was it, and how useful or effective to think it was? Please write in and tell us, we'll publish your results: otr@abd.org.uk

If this sort of abuse is widespread, we'll campaign against it.

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

The latest presentation organised by Repeal The Act at the Houses of Parliament (and sponsored by ABD patron Sammy Wilson MP) took place on 9 July and was given by Professor Richard Toll, a Nobel prize winner and IPCC scientist who doesn't go along with the 'consensus'. The ABD's Ian Taylor attended and found himself sitting alongside well-known MPs David Davies and Peter Lilley.

Prof Toll opened by saying the economic (GDP) forecasts of climate change have been revised in this year's IPCC Fifth Assessment Report and in UK climate policy. The new estimates are far more optimistic: the worst case might be a 1% income drop over 50 years or more; a small problem compared with recent economic crises.

Industrial emissions rose between 1970 and 2010 but carbon and energy intensity fell. Decarbonisation occurred because of energy efficiency and changes in fuels. That was a normal trend that will continue – few use or want to pay for more energy than they need, without government intervention. Climate change policies cost and greenhouse emission costs are no big deal. The latest IPCC cost forecasts contradict the UK's Stern Review. He spoke about the relationships between emissions, carbon in the atmosphere and taxation, and emphasised that subsidies (which he described as negative taxation) must be in the equation. Decarbonisation could possibly become the biggest state expenditure, ahead of even health, welfare and pensions.

If carbon trading systems have a binding cap, other policies such as renewables subsidies, would have no further impact on reducing emissions – so embarrassing to the IPCC and many governments that the item was omitted from the initial German translation. Carbon taxes make emissions more expensive in the taxing countries; the emissions "moved out"; therefore no overall reduction.

Prof Toll then spoke about EU policy, emissions trading, their binding renewables targets, fuel efficiency standards, product laws and targeted subsidies. Then the UK's policies, which are all of the EU ones, plus household subsidies (efficiency and renewables), nuclear subsidy, fuel duty, support for electric and sustainable local transport – however, the fuel tax escalator has gone. All these policies were inefficient.

The idea of 'Climate Leadership' is both UK and EU policy, but few other countries are following their lead.

All the latest from Repeal the Act



There followed a discussion. Terri Jackson said that all arguments still assume man-made CO2 emissions are the problem. Satellite data from the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency proved otherwise – there are moisture-induced releases from equatorial and southern regions not released from northern industrial nations. Another speaker challenged the assumption that CO2 increases are man-made. Mankind's emissions are but a tiny proportion of atmospheric CO2; termites produce more. David Davies MP asked: Should we not expect warming as we have come out of the Little Ice Age? Prof Toll replied that there's a lot of uncertainty and nobody can explain why warming has now stopped. The climate system is not behaving as predicted by climate scientists. Sea level rise has been occurring since the end of the Ice Age, with local variations. Some land sinks from subsidence, and we can cope with "some rise". Mitigation and adaptation is the best way to spend money rather than "prevention". He quoted as an example the Netherlands' dyke building since 1850, adding that Bangladesh is about as well off as the Netherlands was then and has better technology, so could do more.

Peter Lilley MP asked about energy prices

and taxation. Tax causes energy price rises but so can unexpected events; tax is a gradual but deliberate "ramping up" which could cause money to exit a country.

Carbon intensity increases were also discussed: in countries like China this is down to coal, but it's also becoming the case in Germany because of policy changes against nuclear. In the USA it has decreased, despite little climate legislation, due to shale gas.

Prof Toll said climate change concern diverted attention from other real problems like the pressure on natural resources from raising expenditure and living standards across the world. Arguments failed to take into account the "engineering learning curve". He added that over-generous subsidies in the EU for the likes of wind turbines have caused price increases and had economic consequences for some countries.

The meeting ended with a short contribution from alternative weather forecaster Piers Corbyn, complete with his blow-up globe and model jet stream, about the link between solar activity and movements of the jet stream – the real drivers of climate and weather. He warned that there will be more "extreme" weather events for the next 20 years, emphasising that we are not responsible for that.

Want to get more involved? There are plenty of ways you can help the ABD to move forward. Just check out page 16 to find out how

Without getting our case across to the wider public via the media there would be no ABD. This brings us to the attention of members of the public, including, we hope, potential new members, and ensures that existing members see we're out there doing something for their subscriptions. The last three months have been as busy as ever for our spokesmen. Ian Taylor reviews activity over the last three months.

Nationally there have been five press releases. The first announced the launch of the Motorists' Charter, which was followed-up in August by *If road problems won't go away, neither will driver discontent*, further drawing attention to the Charter, and which also gave another last minute push for our Bristol video and *Does your council give you the hump?* competition. *Road casualty increase – the medicine isn't working, so increasing the dose won't work* was our response to the latest casualty figures that have got the road safety industry in a frenzy. August saw two more milestones: *Drivers' poll shows red light to road pricing plans* came from our first ever commissioned independent opinion poll (of which more elsewhere) which also highlighted the backdoor privatisation of the Highways Agency as part of the Infrastructure Bill going through parliament. Lastly, we also ran our own internal members' online opinion poll (not, we hope the last) about 20 mph speed limits in which you, the members, gave them an overwhelming thumbs down. This went out as *Survey results: ABD members call for halt to reckless 20mph roll out*, in which we called for a moratorium on any new 20mph zones until the government investigation into their efficacy has issued its findings.

Now to the activity, starting in June. My first radio interview was on BBC Radio Kent, discussing Kent's increased casualty figures alongside a cycling activist, who said the figures didn't make him feel less safe. We agreed about road sharing and the bad state of many roads. I gave the message "don't panic" at one set of worse figures, which the county council themselves put down to special circumstances and one bad major accident (Sheppey Bridge). We did have an argument over declining cycle-to-work journeys and whether roads would be better places with fewer cars. The council defended its record on pothole fixing. The radio station also recorded me for the following day about average speed camera fines (increased) at the Dartford Crossing – I questioned if the limits were the right ones and speculated whether they might be raised when the toll booths were gone and traffic more free-flowing. Brian Macdowall

The ABD's media onslaught continues

was on BBC Radio Essex on the same subject.

Hugh Bladon was quoted in a large *Sunday Times* magazine article about texting while driving and other driver distractions, following another university study that wasn't quite as extensive or original as made out. BBC Radio 5 Live quoted us on the subject and also a suggestion for half-mile no parking zones around schools – someone hadn't thought through the practicalities. The texting issue was also covered the next day by the *Daily Mail*. This led me into another radio marathon.

Alerted on our press line I took the precaution of popping out to buy a *Sunday Times*. Good thing I did – it was a major article with detailed figures on all sorts of driver distractions – and one of Hugh's more colourful quotes: that anyone caught texting at the wheel deserved to have their hands cut off! I don't think he meant that literally. I spent the whole morning in a BBC radio studio talking about it, one station after another. BBC Radios Solent, Berkshire, York, Gloucestershire, Kent, Coventry & Warwickshire, Sussex & Surrey, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Somerset, Cornwall and BBC Radio Scotland – eight live interviews and four pre-recordings. Finally, a live interview on BBC World Service. That's a new record – beating Hugh's previous record by one station. Every interview was a little different but the main points I got across were to back Hugh's quote (minus the hand chopping!) that taking one's eyes off the road to text was serious enough to be on a par with drink driving, though I defended hands-free phone use. How would that be enforced anyway? You can spot a hand-held phone but not hands-free. When someone said even pushing a button was a distraction I replied that the odd button push was part of driving (they'd soon lose audience if you couldn't push the radio buttons – that has a remarkable tendency to get presenters on side. I

pointed out that anything can potentially distract a driver – the trick is not to let it. I questioned whether all the distractions research was from real-life scenario or from simulators – or just extrapolation from other studies. Part of it was exclusively done with 17-24 year olds. I said we must keep a sense of perspective because large as the percentages quoted appeared, they were all tiny fractions of a second.

Driving home from the studio I tuned the radio to BBC Radio Kent. The mid-day news featured me as lead item: a much edited bit of what I'd said was used to announce *Kent ABD calls for bans for drivers who text on Radio Kent*. Pushing it a bit, but I suppose that's what headline writers do.

The next topic was soaring council car park profits – the *Daily Mail* quoted Hugh Bladon. He was also quoted (along with an NMAG spokesman) in the *Bristol Post* about raising the maximum speeding fine to £10,000. Brian Mooney did a spot on the Mark Forrest Show (networked evening BBC local stations) on road safety and driving skills. Brian Gregory gave an interview to the *Newham Recorder* (East London) about unregulated exploitation of ANPR and CCTV.

Our Motorists' Charter launch got mentioned online by *Motoring4Media* and *Parking Review* along with several BBC radio mentions. I was

quoted in the *Kent & Sussex Courier* criticising bad driving and parking following a bus stop demolition, lorry stuck under low bridge and another stuck attempting a three-point turn in the narrow High Street in Tonbridge.

I took a call from the BBC in Cambridge about people who post pictures of bad parkers on the internet – whom I dubbed 'verge vigilantes' because they're on the verge of the road and their actions border on vigilantism, because they presume to judge

and publicly shame. Our discussion led on to the way councils restrict parking to discourage car use, use motorists to raise revenue and the widespread use of cameras for enforcement. I was told that in some parts of the USA police pay



Check out the members' website at www.members.abd.org.uk, for info on the ABD's structure, key contact details, campaigning info and much more

people to send them such pictures; I dismissed this as bounty hunting and said we didn't want it here. The story appeared on the BBC News website and later was picked up by BBC WM (West Midlands) on which I appeared.

On to July, which opened with Brian Gregory on *BBC Three Counties Radio* (Bucks, Berks & Herts) with a cyclist spokesman who complained that drivers who hit cyclists got lesser sentences than those who hit pedestrians. Hugh Bladon was quoted in the *Independent* about safety aspects of 20mph zones. He also had his say in the *Daily Express* about Scottish drivers facing city centre congestion charges.

This was the month when our Bristol video at last paid publicity dividends. The *Bristol Post* used our video and *Does your council give you the hump?* competition for an article asking if Bristol was the country's worst, quoting Brian Macdowall. They also spoke to me on the phone. That started something. *ITV Westcountry* in Bristol picked up the story and ran it a few days later, complete with extracts from our video, and Bob Bull was interviewed. He later did an interview with a journalist from *The Economist* – our video has finally sparked concern over the negative business impact of the Bristol Mayor's anti-traffic policies.

Next up was a proposal from a green group (who else?) to make Canterbury a car-free city – Brian Macdowall spoke on *BBC Radio Kent*. Our opinion poll on road pricing plans and privatisation of the Highways Agency was featured on the web by *Motoring4Media* and also *CarSite.co.uk*. Hugh Bladon was in various Scottish newspapers commenting on the DVLA making a loss from selling driver details to private companies – he said they shouldn't be doing that anyway, without good reason. Hugh was next on *BBC Radio Wiltshire* about Shrewton, where residents complaining of too many drivers "speeding" through have mocked up their own dummy speed camera (not legal by the way). This is a knock-on effect of not upgrading the A303 and the closure of one main-ish road near Stonehenge.

I took a call from a journalist who works for Blackball Media and AOL Cars. He had fallen asleep in his car at an M3 service area and fallen foul of the ANPR camera-enforced time limit. He wondered if some sort of facility might be provided that didn't risk turning the place into a campsite. I suggested he contact the site to enquire if sleeping facilities existed for truckers, and if so, to suggest something similar for other drivers.

The end of July saw National Cycle Week. *BBC Radio Kent* marked this with broadcasts from The Velo House, a cycle café and shop in

Tunbridge Wells. They invited me to speak for drivers, so I entered the lion's den of the lycra-clad. In the event we all got on well, without much argument. At one point I was asked if, despite me saying the roads must be shared by different users, didn't I get annoyed when stuck behind slow cyclists? The only honest answer to that was yes, but not just cyclists – anything very slow. The conversation ended with the presenter, the cyclist and I all agreeing that we hated getting stuck behind tractors and farm machinery.

I stayed on for a coffee on the house and a second interview on the following show. This time I was asked about cycle infrastructure and reducing car use to provide more travel choice. I said that any choice must include the car and queried when providing choice actually became coercion. The taking of road space for cyclists (or anyone else) is unacceptable.

August may be the holiday month, but not for our spokesmen. The Press Association picked up on our road pricing opinion poll, which spread to some motoring media websites such as the *Yahoo Motoring Portal*. On *RAC Online News* there was a quote from Nigel Humphries. The Bristol publicity continued to have effects in the media. Online Betabeat repeated a story from the *Independent* that all crashes are to see drivers' phones confiscated by police – with an ABD quote. The Motorists' Charter got a mention in *Parking Review*, Bob Bull got a live spot on BBC Radio 2's Jeremy Vine Show about the diesel pollution fuss, against a 'scientist' and a woman from Islington Council. Bob resisted efforts to shout him down when he produced proof that the dangers of particulates were known 20 years ago but no action taken because CO2 was public enemy number one then. Bob was also on BBC Radio Ulster on that subject.

I had a television interview with a difference, with *Cayman 27*, a TV station in the Cayman Islands. The Royal Cayman Island Police is pushing to introduce the colony's first ever speed cameras – which being British territory, would operate similarly to ours, minus the partnerships. Their population is around 60,000 and they kill about 16 people per year on the roads, which all have a 50mph limit. Extracts went out on *Cayman 27*'s Six O'clock News, which is midnight here, so I watched it later online. The result was reasonable; my line was the one we are all familiar with: cameras are not the answer to road safety, and I described their operation as

automated and indiscriminate penalising – "Big Brother Meets Robocop". The video clip is online at tinyurl.com/pyvgawn.

A second press mailshot went out to reinforce the Motorists' Charter and the last month of the *Does your council give you the hump?* competition with the Bristol video. This letter, in my name, has started appearing in regional and local papers, including Brighton, Bolton, Cardiff, Plymouth – and got a mention in the *Manchester Evening News* which did a feature on more new 20mph zones. In an article in the *Nottingham Post* a reader recommended us. *Motoring4Media* publicised the Motorists' Charter. BBC WM featured Hugh Bladon about the use of motorway screens after accidents.

The end of August drew reaction to our Press Release about our 20mph limit members' survey. Hugh Bladon spoke to the *Coventry Telegraph* and did a recorded interview for commercial station *Free Radio* (Birmingham) about Coventry's proposed extension of 20mph zones to become virtually city-wide. Sean Corker went on BBC Radio Merseyside. We also had an enquiry from *Road Safety News*. The story was then taken up by the *Sunday Express* with a quote from Sean plus new information from the IAM that serious accidents in 20mph zones are up again by 26% and slight ones by 17%, while they fell in 30 and 40mph zones during the same period. The same story was carried, indeed headlined, on the *bt.com* motoring website.

This review is not a complete one – some media encounters go unreported, so apologies to anyone I've left out. As well as national activity, there are

always local issues and letters to local papers from members. Please don't be shy of doing this – it all helps to spread the ABD word.

I'll finish with a story of my own. The A20 through Dover was resurfaced, at great inconvenience, in 2008. The work was so shoddy that the road was breaking up and badly potholed – so now we face another series of closures to enable another resurface job. The only good thing is that the Highways Agency has recognised the situation and is insisting its contractors are in breach of their 2008 contract, and

must do the job again at their own expense. I was asked to comment by one of our local newspapers, the *Dover Express*, which also wanted a picture. So off I went one afternoon to meet their photographer, who took a series of shots of me by the roadside with HGVs going past and with my umbrella stuck into potholes to demonstrate their depth. The next week I walked into my local shop to buy a copy, to have it waved at me by the lady behind the counter with the words: "You're on the front page". Indeed I was – they made it their front page headline story complete with picture.



Birmingham City Council (BCC) has long had a reputation for political correctness and unfriendliness towards drivers. A proposal for London-style road pricing for the West Midlands was abandoned in 2008 after councils realised it would be impossible to get business backing and it would be difficult to implement. However in August, the *Express and Star* paper reported how the idea had been resurrected.

BCC claims a rise in vehicles will accompany an expected population surge in the period to 2031 and wants to slash the number of car journeys in the city centre by 200,000 a year to compensate. As a result, BCC has released a draft 'Birmingham Mobility Action Plan' (BMAP), floating some viciously anti-driver measures:

▶ Taxing businesses providing parking spaces for their staff. BCC expects it could make as much as £8m a year. The move would copy Nottingham which imposed a £334 [now £362] charge per parking space for car parks with 11 spaces or more.

▶ Asking the Government for permission to impose a French-style transport tax on firms with more than nine employees, using the money raised to 'improve' infrastructure.

▶ Increasing long-stay parking charges in Birmingham city centre to deter commuters from using their cars.

▶ Making driving less convenient. Making changes to many major roads in the name of "promoting sustainable transport and developing a fairer transport system". Citing the aim of "moving people, not cars". Some road capacity will be shifted from cars to public and active transport (walking and cycling). Public transport is to get priority on specific routes so that it becomes "quicker and more convenient than driving".

▶ More than tweaking capacity. Moving towards a zero emissions system. BCC would gradually allow only zero-emissions public transport to exist in a car-free city centre.

▶ Forcing six job creation areas to become Green Travel Zones, each having its own targets for public and active transport use (walking and cycling). Tough targets for car use would see no more than 50% of of commuters coming by car. Whereas BCC would "help provide alternatives to the car", developers would reduce car-parking provision; provide facilities for walkers and cyclists; and aim to reduce freight movements and emissions.

▶ Road pricing is also being promoted in the name of cutting pollution. BCC claims that road transport emissions account for 630 premature deaths each year in the West Midlands, with diesel vehicles providing the greatest contribution. So a diesel tax is under consideration.

Sally Gilson, a spokesman for the FTA responded to BCC's vision. In a beggar-thy-neighbour attitude towards car drivers, she backed modal shift from private cars to public

Birmingham declares war on the motorist



transport, but was however concerned that plans for low emission zones would impose substantial costs upon industry and businesses in the city centre. With regards to any possible city road pricing, she felt freight was an "essential road movement" and should therefore be exempt.

Consultation on the draft Plan found that only 12% supported road pricing, with the vast majority instead calling for cheaper and better connected trains, trams and buses. Punitive city centre car park charges or workplace car parking taxes were also rejected.

No wonder BCC is considering Stockholm-style road pricing without a referendum before introduction; any referendum would be on whether or not to scrap it. Those familiar with Stockholm will recall the stitch-up whereby the votes of 14 districts that opposed it were ignored in favour of one district that voted for. BCC is leading an inquiry on behalf of the seven authorities of the West Midlands - including Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall, Coventry and Solihull.

However Sandwell Council's leader Councillor Darren Cooper said: "I don't think the answer is to hit motorists again...". Dudley's leader Councillor David Sparks, chairman of the LGA, felt "Congestion charging like the London scheme is totally impractical for places like Dudley and the Black Country. "

One of the strongest opponents has been John Spellar, a former Transport Minister and MP for Warley. He has attacked road pricing as "a tax on going to work" and been critical of a diesel tax

"There are 9.4 million diesel cars in the UK and their drivers will be outraged at Barmy Boris's diesel tax. Taxi drivers in particular will go ballistic.... It may go down well with his trendy society friends in London, but it will get the thumbs down everywhere else."

BCC's consultation document confirms that the BMAP is its response to an EU demand that all cities develop a 'Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan' and a chance to set a new direction, although "challenging the car culture" is hardly new" !

Councillor James McKay (Cabinet Member for a Green, Safe and Smart City and Chair of Birmingham's Green Commission) claimed that BMAP is vital towards reducing dependency on cars to meet targets, it would also require residents and businesses to change their travel behaviour.

A formal decision on BMAP will be taken this autumn. However this hasn't stopped BCC already advertising contracts to support a Behaviour Change Campaign and Brand Identity Development.

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- http://birmingham.gov.uk/bmap
- tinyurl.com/njx34j6

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

The coalition government claims that it "has ruled out national road pricing for cars on existing roads, and any preparation for such a scheme, for the duration of this Parliament".

Those who have followed developments since the Cook Report have cause to be cynical. In April, Transcom published a report *Better roads: Improving England's Strategic Road Network (SRN)*. It identified a whole raft of objections to the proposed hive-off of the Highways Agency (HA), which is responsible for major routes like the M5 and the A12.

"We are not convinced by the case for establishing the HA as a GoCo (Government-owned, contractor-operated)... The proposed benefits, including the implementation of the five-year funding plans, seem achievable through better management of the existing HA."

Other industry bodies were quite scathing over detail points. The National Audit Office has recently warned that the HA proposals will not guarantee settled funding. Roads Minister Robert Goodwill emphatically told Transcom that the DfT "has no plans to introduce charging on the strategic road network, with the exception of major bridges and tunnels... There is no secret plan in the Department that after the election we are going to do a U-turn and announce that we are going to start charging people to use the roads they have already paid for."

As to openly go for road pricing is seen as political suicide, and privatisation is hardly a vote-winner, critics see a step-by-step approach ("enabling legislation") as being under the radar.

On 6 June, the government launched the blandly-named Infrastructure Bill in the House of Lords. This controversial Bill covers several other topics – e.g. fracking, so is being comprehensively scrutinised. The points of most concern to drivers include:

▶ Creating a 'Go-Co' will incur extra costs and bureaucracy.

▶ It might in time be replaced by separate (competing?) companies for different areas.

Infrastructure Bill: a trojan horse for road pricing?

▶ Such companies would gain powers over speed limits and traffic signs.

▶ Privatisation is effectively enabled.

▶ Tolling is enabled.

▶ Although focused on the SRN, some roads in Wales or managed by the GLA in London might be affected.

▶ A supervisory body/watchdog will be appointed, provisionally from rail bodies with no experience of standing up for drivers.

The creeping privatisation of the HA is opposed by two public sector unions, PCS, and Prospect. PCS has produced a briefing with more information (www.fairdealforthemotorist.org.uk/hapcs.pdf). This also notes that the HA has recently appointed two board members – one from the loss-making M6T Toll Road company, and another with expertise in rail privatisation.

Mark Dollar, convenor of PCS's HA action group, argues: "Instead of making our roads more efficient, the legacy we risk leaving by carving up our road network is one of inevitable disputes between private interests, and the equally inevitable tolling. Not only would this be catastrophic for tourism, industry and other road users, it would mean curtailing freedom of movement... But there is still time to prevent it from happening."

Claims of 'cross party support' for the hive-off are breaking down. Shadow roads minister, Richard Burden MP, has stressed that:

▶ 'Labour remains unconvinced' by the case to make the HA a GoCo, and he sees it as a "policy without purpose"

▶ A Labour peer, Lord Davies, has tabled an amendment to stop the GoCo change.

Independent reviewers warn that the Bill's proposals are far from mature or settled, and therefore subject to a lot of change. This might increase the chances of the Bill being dropped due to a lack of Parliamentary time or simply being voted down.

The unions mentioned are at loggerheads with the government over other matters. It has been noticed that in education matters, the government has taken a step back to reduce conflict with the unions before the General Election. So anything could happen – definitely one to watch.

• Mark Dollar will be a guest speaker at the ABD members' meeting on 27 Sept. He will cover more on what the Bill means for drivers and our roads, and how it can be defeated. You'll get the chance to ask questions.

Brian Mooney

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50 limit for HGVs finally gets the thumbs up

In OTR 112 I reported that the DfT was still undecided whether to go ahead with raising the 40 mph heavy goods vehicle speed limit on single-carriageway roads to 50 mph. This was despite the consultation having closed more than a year earlier. That dithering continued until July when, just a few days after the Government reshuffle, new transport minister Claire Perry announced that the increased speed limit will go ahead in early 2015. This was despite strong opposition from the usual suspects – the announcement stated that "The consultation was not designed to be a poll."

Whether the ABD's response to the consultation contributed to her decision

to go ahead is impossible to say, but the announcement also stated that the move will reduce the 20mph speed differential between cars and lorries, reducing the need to overtake. This point was made very strongly in the ABD's response, together with evidence of the danger of large speed differentials.

The DfT also announced that a consultation will be held on raising the HGV speed limit on dual carriageways from 50 to 60mph. One of the justifications for the proposal was to legitimise what the vast majority of drivers are doing already. By the time this edition of OTR is published, the ABD will have responded positively to the consultation

and will have taken the opportunity to point out the problems caused by the speed limiters fitted to HGVs. We will also make a renewed call for the motorway limit for cars to be raised to 80 mph. This would also, of course, legitimise what a majority of drivers are doing now.

While Claire Perry's main responsibilities within the DfT are rail, freight and logistics, she seems to have been able to overcome any concerns by the minister responsible for road safety, Robert Goodwill. A decisive minister within the DfT, not afraid of upsetting the road safety industry, could make for interesting times ahead.

Malcolm Heymer

The ABD goes to the polls

It would be fair to say that media coverage of the Infrastructure Bill has not been high. Such were the issues raised by the Bill and the related Cook Report on the future of England's major roads (SRN) that the ABD decided to test public opinion.

After donor support was obtained in July, Opinium Research was commissioned to run a poll. Using a professional polling firm ensures credibility – a large sample of drivers to carry weight, experience to ensure the questions are fair and unbiased, a detailed breakdown of responses and some help with compiling a suitable press release.

The poll showed that over three-quarters (78%) of drivers are unaware of the proposed changes to managing these roads.

Road pricing concerns

We decided to keep the questions focused on the road pricing and driver representation aspects. When over 1.8 million people signed Peter Roberts' famous petition against road pricing, they were as concerned about journey tracking and privacy as their pockets. Our poll found similar concerns where main roads might be run by a company:

- ▶ 64% felt that if they had to pay tolls on roads that are currently free, it would affect their standard of living, and only 13% disagreed.

- ▶ 77% would respond to tolls by changing their journeys to untolled roads, which might be less suitable. Only 6% would not.

- ▶ By 64% to 17%, drivers had concerns about their private journeys being recorded by a new roads management company.

- ▶ By 62% to 18%, drivers might object to their personal data being used to target them with advertising. (This was not explicitly proposed in the Cook Report, but might be an example of asset-sweating.)

- ▶ By 53% to 25%, drivers would not want transport ministers to offload responsibilities for our vital main roads to such a company, as hinted by the Cook Report.

- ▶ Undue weight should not be attached to voting intentions, but by way of illustration, 71% felt they would be less likely to vote for a party that allowed roads that are currently not tolled to become tolled. Only 7% disagreed.

This begs the question as to whether the government would really wish to go against the grain of public opinion in the year before another election...

Government misrepresenting drivers?

Despite the fact that 5 of every 6 journeys are made by car or van, the government is preoccupied with rail, not least the costly white elephant HS2 – another indication that



Table 1	Trust%	Distrust%	Net%
An independent motorists' group	67	6	61
A motoring breakdown company	49	15	34
A Chief Police Officers' group	30	31	-1
A railways passengers' group	26	30	-4
A campaign to stop road building	22	34	-12
A group promoting speed cameras	24	40	-16
Insurance companies	21	47	-26

it's detached from the concerns of Britain's 33 million drivers. A proposal in the Bill is to have a rail passengers' group look after drivers' interests, something in which it has no experience whatsoever.

The independent poll asked drivers to indicate which groups they might be inclined to trust or distrust to represent them; the results are shown in table 1 – and it's fair to say that there are no surprises...

Ironically, the one option that the government has not seriously considered to represent drivers is an independent motorists' group. When the

Table 2	Yes%	No%	Don't Know
All drivers, UK based	36	40	24
Drivers in England	38	44	19
Drivers in England, but outside London	31	50	20

(Figures rounded)

ABD applied to join the government's Motorists' Forum, the latter responded that it already had enough members...

The Motorists' Forum includes representatives of insurance companies, a group promoting speed cameras, a campaign to stop road building, a Chief Police Officers' group, and a company providing breakdown services (and owned by an insurance company)! The government is equally out of touch in suggesting a rail passengers' group.

Driver satisfaction and awareness

Before answering any other questions, drivers were asked if they were satisfied with England's main roads; the results are shown in table 2. Two-thirds (67%) were unaware that in broad terms, drivers pay about £50bn a year in taxes, whereas about £10bn a year is spent on roads.

Conclusions

It took only 11 days between enquiry and sending out a PR on the results. Even in the slow-moving summer, the PR was picked up by several motoring websites, a main news agency

and even one daily paper. The findings were also quoted on the website of the PCS union which has 270,000 members, and is already of interest to its newsletter, ensuring the ABD valuable exposure.

Conducting the poll early gives a solid foundation for opposing the Infrastructure Bill when it becomes higher profile. Even the government would find it difficult to argue against these results.

• Detailed survey results are available online at www.fairdealforthemotorist.org.uk/abdop1.pdf

The ABD needs more active members. Whatever time or skills you can offer, you can be of use. Contact Brian MacDowall (details on p16) if you can help

Fair Fuel UK: a hidden agenda?

Many drivers support FairFuel UK's (FFUK) campaign to cut fuel prices, but I wondered if any driver campaign set up by a LibDem (Peter Carroll) was too good to be true. When I tried to complete FFUK's poll (fairfueluk.com/summerpoll2014.html), I couldn't submit my response unless I answered a particular question with a 'yes'. It asked whether I supported FFUK to represent UK road users on the Government's new Passenger Focus watchdog.

FFUK also seemed to be hinting that the quango's brief should go well beyond its basic remit, to monitor the HA. It made me ask – is there another agenda? FFUK's leading supporters include the RAC, which is part of US-based asset sweaters the Carlyle Group, whose interests include road pricing, and which also bid for a scammer manufacturer (tinyurl.com/olvn57r and tinyurl.com/omgcnre). RAC Motoring Services' Technical Director, David Bizley confirmed that "the RAC is not opposed to the principle of road pricing... Any attempt to introduce road pricing will need to be explained carefully so that people understand the benefits (tinyurl.com/pmolrzy)." Another leading supporter, Robert Halfon MP, has pushed for a 'debate' on funding roads.

Quentin Willson seems to be the main FFUK frontman. On 20 February 2014 his blog featured a *Commercial Motor* article. For 'balance', it had Jeremy Desmond clearly for road pricing, and

Peter Barber "against" - with reservations about additional costs, but otherwise believing it was "a great idea" and "the fairest way". Get the picture?

It also noted Howard Cox (FFUK co-founder and business associate of Carroll) was for road pricing "in principle so long as fuel duty was abolished" (tinyurl.com/ke9fnfa).

In June, FFUK's leading duo, Willson and Cox, had a photo-op with Danny Alexander MP, the LibDem Chief Secretary to the Treasury. His party wants road pricing, his department wants additional sources of revenue from drivers. By pure coincidence, Carroll's LinkedIn profile revealed that he has been working as a Special Advisor to Alexander since November! (tinyurl.com/lh75l4v, full profile at tinyurl.com/qj47297).

After the IPPR think tank published a road pricing promo report, on 22 Jun 2014 Willson blogged:

More validation of FairFuelUK's campaigning this month from The Institute for Public Policy Research. In their new report, The Long Road to Ruin, the IPPR say that 'the current system of UK motor taxation is unfair and fiscally unsustainable... we can't carry on relying on fuel duty to supply nearly 2% of annual UK GDP in tax receipts and that serious reform is needed. I've always maintained that we need a fairer Pay As You Go taxation system which will have

to include some form of road charging..." (tinyurl.com/nnw5vwo).

Europe has made its road system of tolls work remarkably well and we could too. But that's going to take real political strength. The report concludes that any sea change to the current road taxation status quo 'will require a great deal of political courage', but those who oppose any reform 'can validly be accused of wilful fiscal irresponsibility'. The Big Change will happen, the only question is how soon? FairFuelUK is emboldened by the growing view of policymakers that we've been right all along..."

So hard-pushed drivers are "irresponsible" for objecting to being taxed for using the road five times over, and potentially even more? For some reason, FFUK's main webpage only sticks to less controversial open objectives (fairfueluk.com).

Whereas its luminaries have the right to their own opinions, no way are they representative of Britain's 33 million drivers on this vital issue. We let them represent us at our peril, and if they try to do so, their spokesmen should be firmly put on the spot. The webpage admits: "It's only because of the pressure from you through the campaign that we now have this historic tax U-turn".

Driver pressure may again need to prevail.

Brian Mooney

Transport's silent revolution

The Coalition government promised greater freedom of information, to extend transparency to every area of public life, and a radical devolution of power to communities and individuals. But the Government has made accountability tougher by making changes to how it works while also increasing complexity. So spare a thought for John Hayes, the new Transport Minister, who has been asked to come up with a transport strategy. This will have to span the local transport matters covered below, a mess of uncertainties in the HA, HS2 and other non-roads transport.

A bit of context behind recent developments. To promote business growth, the Coalition replaced the old English Regional Development Agencies with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), which are supposed to be predominantly business-led but involve councils with interests in a catchment area. Local transport bodies (LTBs) are typically partnerships of local authorities outside Greater London, with some representation from LEPs and other official transport bodies. There are 38 LTBs, which cover similar areas to LEPs, but are not allowed to overlap each other.

Decision making for major transport infrastructure spending is being devolved to

these bodies from the DfT. From April 2015, the government will provide direct funding to LTBs.

This year ABD researchers have carried out a cursory scan of what LEPs/LTBs have been up to. Websites haven't always given a lot of information, but the pace of developments seems to be quickening. In some areas e.g. 'Greater Lincolnshire', roads proposals seem to be quite straightforward, but in other areas e.g. 'Greater Cambridge, Greater Peterborough' there seem to be concerted moves towards road pricing based on runaway economic growth predictions. In some areas, companies with interests in road pricing are represented on LEPs.

Two anti-car groups, Sustrans and CfBT, recently reviewed a selection of local economic development plans for commitment to politically-correct 'sustainable travel'. However, in spite of plenty of lip service, they found that less than half of plans submitted featured it in a strong way.

The transport landscape is changing fast in wider areas such as roads investment and managing major routes, and the ABD needs to be on top of developments. We've decided to concentrate on nine LEP areas based on risk (anti-car authorities, historic interest in road pricing). The areas are:

- ▶ Greater Birmingham and Solihull (involving neighbouring W. Midlands authorities)
- ▶ D2N2 (Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Notts)
- ▶ Oxfordshire
- ▶ Thames Valley Berkshire (Berks)
- ▶ West of England (Bristol, BANES, N. Somerset, S. Gloucs)
- ▶ Coast to Capital (Brighton and Hove, W. Sussex, Surrey, Croydon)
- ▶ South East (aka 'SELEP'; E. Sussex, Kent, Essex)
- ▶ New Anglia (Norfolk and Suffolk)
- ▶ Greater Cambridge & Greater Peterborough (mainly Cambridge, Cambs, Hunts)

If you're local to any of these areas and could help keep an eye on coverage, it would be a great help. Any help beyond this, such as doing a bit of delving, would be a real plus. Other areas are important too, but as resources will be stretched, it might be more of a case of following through where needed. Obviously similar offers of help would be appreciated. If you might be in a position to help, even as a one-off, please contact fairdeal@abd.org.uk or ring 0207 385 9757 without obligation.

letters

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

Write to OTR: Chris Medd, PO Box 248, Manchester M41 4BW or send an email to otr@abd.org.uk

Having parked neatly in a bona fide space and bought/displayed a ticket for two hours, I returned half an hour or so later to find a penalty charge notice on my windscreen for allegedly being parked beyond the bay markings.

It seems I am not alone – only this week a 12-fold surge in ticket appeals to 600 per week has been reported in the press, with almost half upheld, resulting in 10,000 penalties being quashed up to the end of March. These are just the ones that bother to appeal. Indeed, the official parking appeals website of POPLA lists only four grounds for appeal, the suspicion being that the list is deficient in order to put off motorists with genuine cases.

Clearly, we need fewer tickets to be issued, not more. Illegal parking shouldn't be open to interpretation or opinion. Laws weren't designed for mass prosecution or to provide profits for private companies. When thousands or millions of people are being targeted, then

Give us a quote

**"When transport slows, everything slows."
Robert Goodwill MP, Roads Minister**

there is clearly something seriously wrong with a system that is entirely motivated by profit. Let's go back to the good old days when salaried council employed traffic wardens had no financial incentive to issue tickets 'willy-nilly' due to targets or quotas.

My own case was only resolved when I threatened to give my story to the local paper and report the parking company to a councillor friend who is on the local council's parking committee. A letter of apology soon landed on my door step, after I had initially been told to 'go forth'. I guess they didn't want any adverse publicity with the local council that might lose them their licence to print money!

Paul Biggs

Kent has the dubious distinction of being one of the places the very first 20 mph limit zones were trialled. The location was Sandwich and the reason given was the narrow streets, the number of old historic buildings and the threat to them from traffic vibrations. The campaign was publicised with the slogan "Twenty's Plenty In Sandwich", I think before that got taken up as a national campaign slogan. Because Sandwich does have very narrow streets and is a delightful place with historic and protected buildings and the average measured speed (the natural speed) was 25mph, little opposition was raised at the time. If only we had realised what it was leading to.

Now, Kent, like most if not all areas, has new housing developments built to a 20 limit, and most towns have many residential areas with the limit, plus many individual side streets, some justified, some not.

Twenty's Plenty For Us campaign groups have

In May 2014 Transport-Watch lodged a complaint against an advert placed by Renault, which claimed that the official fuel consumption for the Renault ZOE range of electric cars was "not applicable" and that the official carbon dioxide emissions were zero, but (strangely) that the latter may vary according to driving conditions.

Both claims seem ludicrous since the electricity consumption is known along with the carbon emission per kW hour of power supplied. Hence, we were astonished when our complaint was summarily rejected by the ASA. We then pointed out that a similar advert by BMW, placed in 2010, had suffered a similar complaint and that the ASA had told BMW not to repeat the zero emission claim.

It took the ASA a year to respond, but when it did it again rejected our complaint, concluding with the words: "We investigated the ad under CAP Code (Edition 12) rules 3.1 and 3.3 (Misleading advertising), 3.9 (Qualification), 11.1, 11.4 and 11.7 (Environmental claims), but did not find it in breach"

Well, here is what that guidance says:

3.1 Marketing communications must not materially mislead or be likely to do so

3.3 Marketing communications must not mislead the consumer by omitting material

3.9 Marketing communications must state significant limitations and qualifications

11.1 The basis of environmental claims must be clear. Unqualified claims could mislead if they omit significant information

11.4 Marketers must base environmental claims on the full life cycle of the advertised product, unless the marketing communication states otherwise, and must make clear the limits of the life cycle. If a general claim cannot be justified, a more limited claim about specific aspects of a product might be justifiable. Marketers must ensure claims that are based on only part of the advertised product's life cycle do not mislead consumers about the product's total environmental impact.



11.7: Marketing communications must not mislead consumers about the environmental benefit etc.

We were bemused. It could not be more obvious that a claim of zero emissions breaks every one of those guidelines. Hence we appealed. In that appeal we showed that the energy burnt in power stations and used to power the ZOE provided a fuel consumption equivalent to only 56mpg and that the carbon emission amounted to 79gm/km of CO₂ if the energy used in battery manufacture is ignored, and up to 118gm/km if the latter is taken into account.

It seemed obvious to us at that point that no one could deny us the appeal. How wrong we were. Instead the independent adjudicator, Sir Hayden Phillips, wrote that the ASA had acted entirely properly and within the legal framework. Among other he provides:

I see from your review request that you attached an email response from the Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA), which says: 'Following the 2013 amendment to the regulation, it became necessary to display the CO₂ and fuel consumption figures for all vehicles – including electric vehicles, albeit that the results will be '0' for CO₂ emissions and 'N/A' (not applicable) for fuel consumption.' The advertisement you

complain of follows this guidance precisely and I cannot see how you can reasonably expect the ASA not to follow the guidance of the responsible authority in this area. For them not to have done so could well have been a substantial flaw; but to do so was both defensible and reasonable and therefore not flawed."

The fact that we had pointed out the VCA Guidelines were (a) not binding, and (b) in contradiction to the engineering reality; and that the ASA's own guidance was being contradicted; as was similar guidance in the Green Claims Code published by the Government (DEFRA and BIS), did not carry any weight. Instead Sir Hayden stood firmly behind the non-binding VCA guidance, a stance we find incredible.

We conclude that the ASA and the adjudicator are not fit for purpose. At any rate it is clear that this extraordinarily misleading advert will continue until someone in a high place forces the VCA to bring its guidelines into line with reality.

Alternatively, could it be that the ASA lacks scientific expertise, in which case the adjudicator should have access to some in such cases? Or are we in the grip of corruption driven by politics and by vested interests, such as car manufacturers paid to promote electric cars on the false premise that they will reduce carbon emissions?

Paul Withrington

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

Re the PACTS reference to the speaker Honor Byford as mentioned in Malcolm's piece in *OTR 112*. I have been investigating this company. It's run by a bloke who sells advertising, websites and

road safety packages to local councils from his own company at the same registered address and indeed his home address too.

Profiteering in road safety and false prosecution of many thousands of safe drivers, also for profit, can only exist if we allow every Tom, Dick & Harry to have a say on this life and death issue.

I have been enquiring of all so-called 'road safety officers' of their actual professional background in the central issues. Driving,

sprung up everywhere. They are particularly vociferous in Canterbury and Deal. In Deal, which to be fair does have a few very narrow streets in its conservation zone where slower speeds are natural, they want to go further with 10mph limits.

The latest place to face a campaign for town-wide residential road 20mph limits is the county town, Maidstone. A Labour district councillor, who is also a keen cyclist, Paul Harper, is the driving force. In a newspaper interview he trotted out the usual dubious publicity about the evidence of the last 16 years of 20 limits for improved safety and the encouragement of more cycling.

Ian Taylor

My local newspaper recently ran a story on speed camera vigilantes – or Community Speed Watch volunteers as it prefers to call them. Turns out there are loads of these schemes running across the country and there's even a website that sets out how it works (speed-watch.org).

We all know that when busybodies bleat that they want reduced speed limits past their doors and lots of enforcement because nobody pays any attention to the (by now) stupidly low limit, it's often the locals who are caught first. The very people who demanded such sanctions be introduced.

I'm guessing that where these people are concerned, and where there's no history of accidents or casualties, the police will just leave the locals to it, on the basis that they'll be happy that "something is being done". What I want to know though, is what stops these volunteers from shopping whoever they want – potentially because of some kind of grudge. The rules say that there must be at least six people in these



dealing with accidents, prosecution and providing police stats. From the responses, I now know that road safety in our town halls and propaganda of our school children, is largely based on profit and anti-driver ideology because these people are being

propagandised themselves.

So training in schools? Whose mantra? Whose expertise? Just this week school kids were out badgering drivers on school runs. So let's ensure that before we talk about training, it isn't anti-driver propaganda or that based on profit as it currently is. Let's attack the basics. The town halls and the school trainers as much of what the driver is against is fermented there.

Keith Peat

schemes and at least three of them must work together at the same time. But what's to stop them from adding a number plate or two to their lists, of neighbours who have held a noisy party or refused to lend a cup of sugar?

Ian Craft

The DfT is to commission research into the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits in order to "support and inform future policy development on 20mph speed limits and zones". In the tender document, the DfT says: "While there is evidence suggesting that 20mph zones are effective in reducing collisions and speeds (as well as leading to other

benefits), there is an evidence gap on the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits".

The new research will set out to "establish the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits, in a range of settings, which is robust enough to attribute any impacts to the scheme".

In the tender, the DfT says that while monitoring data from 20mph speed limit schemes in Portsmouth and Bristol "indicate potential

benefits, the evidence from these studies is inconclusive". The study is a three-year project with a final report anticipated in early 2017.

With all this in mind, how can supposed road safety groups be clamouring for the country to be covered in 20mph limits when their effectiveness is far from proven? And what happens in 2017 if it turns out that casualties generally increase when a 20mph zone is installed? Do we then have to spend millions of pounds undoing all of the 20mph zones that will have been introduced nationwide by then?

Tom Beadle

OTR glossary

- ACPO: Association of Chief Police Officers
- 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
- DVSA: Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency
- EC: European Commission
- ECHR: European Court of Human Rights
- FoI: Freedom of Information (Act)
- FTA: Freight Transport Association
- 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

Helsinki has announced plans to transform its existing public transport network into a comprehensive, point-to-point "mobility on demand" system by 2025 – one that, in theory, would be so good nobody would have any reason to own a car.

Helsinki aims to transcend conventional public transport by allowing people to purchase mobility in real time, straight from their smartphones. The hope is to furnish travellers with an array of options so cheap, flexible and well-coordinated that it becomes competitive with private car ownership not merely on cost, but on convenience and ease of use.

Subscribers would specify an origin and a destination, and perhaps a few preferences. The app would then function as both journey planner and universal payment platform, knitting everything from driverless cars and nimble little buses to shared bikes and ferries into a single, supple mesh of mobility.

It sounds like a great idea to me, but could you imagine this coming to the UK? It would probably be privatised and the owner would want to extract billions from it each year, ensuring that it would never get off the ground because it would be too costly for anybody to actually use it...

Janet Ferguson

in brief...

▶ Ashford Borough Council in Kent is to introduce free car parking in some council-owned car parks serving Ashford and Tenterden town centres after 3pm and all day on Sundays. The policy is expected to reduce council revenues by £35,000 a year.

▶ Large numbers of lone drivers are using the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes in South Gloucestershire, according to council monitoring. A survey in April of the HOV lane on the A4174 ring road at Bromley Heath found only 33% of AM peak users had the required two or more occupants in the vehicle. At Frenchay, outside the University of West of England, the percentage of compliant vehicles was 54%. When the lanes were surveyed in 2007 the rates at the two locations were 59% and 75.3% respectively.

UK sales of electric and other ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs) increased 44% in 2013/14, according to the DfT. New ULEV registrations were 5,451 in 2013/14, up from 3,782 in 2012/13.

▶ TfL has released data on the locations and collision histories for cameras across the capital. The data covers the period 1990 to 2012 for about 1000 cameras. The coalition government has ordered transport authorities to publish their statistics and TfL has undertaken an extensive validation exercise "to ensure that once the data is published, it is accurate and can be relied upon as a data source that adds value". The data is available at <http://data.london.gov.uk>

▶ The speed limit for lorries on single carriageway roads in England and Wales will be raised from 40 to 50mph early next year, the Government has announced. The increase, for goods vehicles over 7.5 tonnes, will be made despite strong opposition to the change in a consultation held last year. The DfT has also launched a consultation on increasing the speed limit for goods vehicles from 50 to 60mph on dual carriageways. It said that, depending on consultation responses, this change would come into effect at the same time as the single carriageway limit is raised.

▶ Hundreds of drivers have had their licences revoked in the West Midlands because their eyesight was too poor, according to figures from the DVLA. In 2011/12, 115 motorists lost licences as they could not read a registration plate from 20m (65ft) away. That rose to 139 in 2012/13 and 226 in the past year.

▶ Plans to impose a 60mph speed limit on parts of the M3 and M1 motorways to cut air pollution have been put on hold. Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin has given the HA 18 months to devise alternative methods to tackle pollution on a 32 mile stretch of the M1 in Derbyshire and South Yorkshire and 2.8 miles of the M3 in Surrey. If none can be found a 60mph limit could still be imposed at peak times. It is also looking at alternative methods of cutting pollution, such as erecting high barriers or banning heavily-polluting vehicles at certain times.

Parking: have your say

Residents and businesses in England are to be given a right to challenge local authority parking policies under reforms published for consultation this week by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The DCLG plans to amend statutory parking guidance to introduce a system whereby a petition can trigger a local authority review of any aspect of parking policy. A minimum of 50 council tax payers' signatures or at least 10% of residents of businesses in the affected area is proposed. Local authorities would have to issue a public statement of how any challenges to their parking policies will be managed. The consultation closes on 10 October.

UK road deaths hit all-time low

The number of deaths on Britain's roads fell to a record low in 2013, according to figures released by the DfT. There were 1713 deaths – a 2% fall on 2012. Fatalities are now 39% below the 2005-2009 average.

The total number of casualties in road accidents reported to the police in 2013 was 183,670 – down 6% from the total in 2012. Reported serious injuries dropped by 6% to 21,657. Reported slight injuries fell 6% to 160,300.

Of the fatalities, 785 were car occupants, 398 pedestrians, 331 motorcyclists, 109 cyclists, and 90 other.

Pedestrian serious injuries fell 10% to 4,998 and total pedestrian casualties fell 5% to 24,033.

The number of cyclists killed was down 8% on the 119 recorded in 2012. But the

Diesels: the new pariahs

The Government has commissioned a study into the air quality benefits of a scrappage scheme for older vehicles and low emission zones. The DEFRA study, titled *Exploring and appraising proposed measures to improve air quality*, focuses specifically on nitrogen dioxide. The UK is facing infraction proceedings from the European Commission for failing to achieve limit values for NO2 by the commission's deadline. Diesel cars are a contributor to the problem (alongside buses, trains and lorries) and *The Sun* has launched a campaign calling on ministers to give drivers of older diesel cars £2000 if they scrap their existing car and buy a new one with lower emissions.



DfT says the number of cyclist fatalities has fluctuated between 100 and 120 for the last six years.

The number of seriously injured cyclists recorded fell 2% to 3143 – the first decrease recorded since 2004. Reported slight injuries to cyclists rose 3% to 16,186. Child road accident fatalities fell to 48 from 61.

More charging schemes for London?

London's next mayor should introduce more road pricing schemes, says business lobby group London First. The organisation suggests three ways in which road pricing could be developed in the capital:

▶ by introducing congestion charging in new areas, such as suburban areas or around Heathrow, as the airport's owner has suggested.

▶ by replacing the existing central London congestion charge with a more sophisticated scheme covering a larger area. This could include, says London First, charging on the North and South circular roads during rush hour

▶ introducing charging on new road capacity, such as the mayor's plan for a tunnelled circular road and river crossings.

London First says the mayor should instruct TfL to study the experiences of cities such as Singapore and Stockholm that have introduced congestion charging schemes. *Jams today, jams tomorrow* is available at tinyurl.com/o9zrmfn

London fines exceed five million

Five million penalty charge notices were issued in London last year for parking, bus lane and moving traffic offences, according to figures released by London Councils.

Just over three million higher level PCNs were issued for parking offences, with just under one million issued for the lower level offences. A further 650,000 PCNs were issued for moving traffic offences, such as obstructing a yellow box junction, and almost 255,000 were issued for driving in bus lanes during their operational hours.

TfL issued the most PCNs (571,917), followed by Westminster City Council (449,139). Three other boroughs issued more than 200,000: Camden (277,906), Hammersmith & Fulham (269,773), and Islington (209,964).

The smallest number of PCNs were issued by Havering (36,011), Sutton (35,946), and Greenwich (30,596).

Scottish deaths at a low

The number of people killed and injured on Scotland's roads fell by 10% last year thanks to a reduction in pedestrian fatalities. But there was an increase in the number of cyclists, motorcyclists and car users killed. Total casualties were down from 12,722 to 11,493 - the lowest since records began - according to Transport Scotland Statisticians.

Fatalities fell by 3% from 178 to 172 and serious injuries by 16% to 1667. Of the nine children killed, five were walking, two were cycling and two were travelling by car. Overall, 1062 children were injured or killed on the roads, a fall of 9%.

Casualty numbers for all modes of transport fell, including 12% for pedestrians, 11% for motorcyclists and 3% for cyclists.

No to mway 60 limits

Transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin has rejected the Highways Agency's plan to operate a 60mph speed limit all day on smart motorway sections of the M1 and M3. Concern about the air quality impacts of the smart motorways prompted the HA to propose the lower limit between 7am and 7pm seven days a week on the M1 between junctions 28 in Derbyshire and 35a in South Yorkshire, and the M3 between junctions 2 and 4a in Surrey. These sections of motorway (with the exception of the M1 J31-32) are being upgraded to smart motorways, with the hard shoulder converted to a permanent additional running lane and mandatory variable speed limits supported by speed cameras.

McLoughlin has ordered the HA to investigate alternative methods for managing air quality problems. "Let me be absolutely clear, I want all motorways to run at 70mph. While it sometimes makes sense to use variable limits to keep people moving, blanket reductions are not acceptable."

York CC to pay back Lendal Bridge fines

Thousands of drivers can claim back fines incurred for driving over a city centre bridge in York, the city council has announced. In April the Traffic Penalty Tribunal ruled that the council had no powers to conduct civil enforcement of the experimental Lendal Bridge traffic restriction. York requested a review of the ruling but has now dropped its challenge (*OTR 111* p12).

The Traffic Penalty Tribunal ruled the council didn't have the power to enforce the Lendal Bridge scheme or another restriction on Coppergate in the city centre. Traffic authorities outside London have the power to enforce bus lane infringements but do not have the power to carry out civil enforcement of moving traffic offences more generally.

In his ruling, Stephen Knapp of the Tribunal, said: "In my judgment, notwithstanding the designation in the traffic order, neither

Tailgating to be targeted

The Highways Agency is investigating technologies to enforce the offence of tailgating, whereby drivers follow each other too closely. Tailgating traditionally had to be dealt with in the courts but the Government last year introduced reforms to make careless driving ? including tailgating ? a fixed penalty offence. The police can now issue £100 fixed penalties and three penalty points or offer remedial training.

The HA has just awarded a £79,000 contract to a joint venture of consultants Arup and URS to advise on ?close following enforcement?. The project will ?test equipment that could be used to warn drivers of their behaviour and used by police for enforcement?.

ASA falls out with JLR

The Advertising Standards Authority has banned a car advert for promoting "irresponsible driving" in an urban area. Jaguar Land Rover's advert featured actor Tom Hiddleston as a suave villain driving in an underground car park and then on the public road.

Significant speed was suggested when the car accelerated on the public road after the character said "Now brace yourselves" and again when the car exited a tunnel and sped away from other cars on the road" said the ASA.

Jaguar said the speed limit had not been broken during filming of the advert and pointed out the ad also included text stating "Professional driver. Closed course. Always obey speed limits." But the ASA said the text would not negate the impression that the car was being driven on a public road at speed with other cars present.

Coppergate nor Lendal Bridge can be sensibly described as a bus lane, street, or gate but rather the roads are part of a general traffic scheme from which non-exempt vehicles are restricted at certain times and where buses are just one of the excepted categories or classes of vehicle."

The council asked the tribunal's chief adjudicator to review the ruling, saying it had legal advice that the decision was incorrect. But York's cabinet has decided to end its challenge of the Lendal Bridge ruling.

The council will not actively seek out drivers who paid a PCN. "Where a motorist does not make an application for a refund and thereby is not disputing the council's position the council will not be proactively seeking them out as no dispute existings between the parties" said a spokesman. A large proportion of the PCNs were issued to visitors to York and so many drivers are unlikely to be aware of the council's decision.

in brief..

► TfL has launched a digital speed limit map for the capital, which will be of use to satnav firms, mobile phone app developers and pave the way for planned driver assist trials, in which bus drivers will be alerted when they are exceeding the posted limit. TfL's map, which is the first open source version to be prepared, has been released alongside the final version of its Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, which was published for consultation in March; it's available at tinyurl.com/qxguw2w

► Liverpool City Council plans to extend its nine-month trial of suspending bus lanes by a further four months. The trial, which affects all 26 of the city's lanes, was introduced on 28 October last year and had been due to end on 28 July. It has now been extended to 28 November.

► The volume of traffic on the M6 Toll road in the West Midlands in April-June was 7.2% above the corresponding period of 2013. Average daily weekday traffic rose 7.3% from 44,939 to 48,252 and weekend traffic rose 8.4% from 29,765 to 32,265. The operator attributes the rise to the recovering UK economy and the continued presence of roadworks on the parallel toll-free M6. M6 Toll chief executive Tom Fanning said: "We had a bad patch in 2009, 2010 and 2011. But 2013 and 2014 have been spectacular. There have been roadworks but the economy has picked up and our customers have stayed loyal".

► A step-by-step guide to help local councillors in Scotland prevent road crashes has been published by RoSPA. The charity has joined forces with Transport Scotland to publish *Road safety: A Guide for Local Councillors in Scotland*, which includes all the information an elected member will need to develop road safety within their ward. Download your copy from tinyurl.com/k76fhav

► A new restriction on cars in Glasgow has earned the city council at least £800,000 in its first two months. Since the end of June cars have been banned from going through Nelson Mandela Place for much of the day. Drivers who break the restriction get a minimum £30 fine - rising to £60 if unpaid within 14 days. By 1 September, at least 28,000 drivers had gone through the bus gate. So far, £477,000 in fines has been paid. The Nelson Mandela Place bus gate has earned Glasgow City Council roughly the same amount in two months as Edinburgh and Aberdeen Councils receive from all bus lane transgressions in a year.

► 20mph signs have been put up outside 40 of Flintshire's 83 schools, with the remainder due to be complete by October. Flintshire councillor Bernie Attridge said it was "a major step forward in protecting the safety children". The move will cost about £50,000.

► Only two drivers were issued fines for breaching Commonwealth Games lane restrictions in Glasgow. Both were car drivers and each fined £50 after using the Clydeside Expressway lane, near the SSE Hydro and SECC venues. The data also shows no vehicles parked on the routes. Any parked cars would have been towed away, incurring a cost of £150 for the vehicle's release.

in brief...

▶ The London Borough of Ealing is to trial the use of illuminated chevrons on the entrance to bus lanes to inform drivers when they are open for general traffic. The trial is expected to be launched soon on the Mandeville Road in Northolt, a borough road that is part of the capital's strategic road network. Units are embedded into the carriageway in chevron formation. Each has a small array of orange light emitting diodes, which flash outside of the bus lane enforcement hours, which are 7-10am and 4-7pm Monday to Friday.

▶ Ealing's trial comes as councillors in Edinburgh heard that Transport Scotland and the DfT had rejected the council's proposal to trial a 'collar' of flashing white lights around blue bus lanes signs, which would have informed motorists when the lanes were operational.

▶ The city of Edinburgh Council is to let motorcyclists use the city's bus lanes and is to convert 14 miles of all-day bus lanes into peak hour-only operation. The initiatives will be implemented initially on a trial basis and were agreed following a review of the city's 40-mile bus lane network. The changes will be implemented next June, initially on a trial basis using 18-month experimental traffic regulation orders. The council plans to run the trials for nine months, to March 2016, when a decision will be taken on making the changes permanent.

▶ Traffic on a new dual carriageway between the M6 and Manchester is to be restricted to 60mph, rather than 70, on air quality grounds. Transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin has granted powers for the proposed 4.7-mile A556 trunk road improvement between M6 junction 19, near Knutsford, and the M56 junction 7, near Bowdon in Greater Manchester. The existing single carriageway road carries about 50,000 vehicles a day and is the only section of non-motorway road between Birmingham and Manchester.

▶ Cambridgeshire County Council looks set to reject a request by the city council to implement a 20mph speed limit on an A road in the city. Cambridge City Council has a policy to implement 20mph limits across residential streets in the city but this spring it consulted on introducing a 20mph limit on Victoria Road, an A road in the north of the city. Andrew Preston, Cambridge's project delivery and environment manager, reminded city councillors this month that Cambridgeshire's speed limit policy "clearly states that 20mph limits should not be introduced on the A and B road network".

▶ A motorist caught speeding on the A55 in north Wales at more than 130mph told a court he was late for a garage appointment and had put his foot down. Electrician Neil Edwards, 24, admitted speeding in a Vauxhall Corsa at Ewloe in February. He was banned from driving for 12 weeks and fined £300 with £115 costs.

Hackney pushes for power to enforce 20 limits

Councils should be given the power to enforce 20mph speed limits, according to the London Borough of Hackney. A list of proposed actions in the council's new draft transport strategy includes: "Lobby the mayor of London and central government to give boroughs the powers to enforce speed limits through both mobile camera enforcement and average speed cameras, particularly when enforcing 20mph limits on principal roads."

Labour-controlled Hackney plans to have a 20mph limit on all borough roads by 2016 and is lobbying Boris Johnson to implement 20mph limits on the TfL road network in the borough too.

Hackney also wants the Government to introduce strict liability in civil law for road accidents. Under strict liability a driver would be liable for an accident involving a cyclist –

even if the cyclist was at fault. "Lobby central government and the mayor of London to adopt the principles of strict liability in the UK" says the draft transport strategy.

Hackney has a huge population of cyclists. Census data suggests that residents' commuting trips by bicycle increased from 4.2% in 1991, to 6.8% in 2001, and 15.4% in 2011. The proportion of Hackney commuters who travel to work by car has fallen from 28.7% in 1991 to just 12.7%. An RAC Foundation report recently concluded that Hackney has the fewest cars per 1000 head of population of all 348 local authorities in England and Wales. The number of zero car-owning households rose from 56% to 64.6% over the Census 2001 to 2011 period.

The draft transport strategy also includes the novel pledge to "facilitate options for communal food growing in our streets and public spaces!"

New Forest gives up on cycle hire scheme

The New Forest National Park Authority has killed-off plans for the UK's first mass public bike hire scheme in a rural area, citing anti-cycling views in the local community as a contributory factor. The decision has angered pro-cycling groups and the company, B-cycle, which had been selected to run the scheme. It said ministers should prevent the National Park Authority from reallocating the £2m DfT grant for the project to other cycling schemes.

The self-service scheme would have seen up to 250 bikes provided for hire at about 20 locations in the south-east of the National Park including at railway stations, accommodation, and businesses. Park Authority chairman Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre said: "We felt we simply could not justify spending a considerable amount of government money on a system that might not be able to survive at this time, and which seems to have insufficient support in the key locations



of the Forest where it needs to operate from."

John Lynn, the park's cycling projects manager, told the park authority meeting: "In the New Forest a major anti-cycling sentiment has come to the fore in the wake of large-scale cycle sportive events that have impacted on local people. A fresh wave of concern exists about the safety of on-road cycling."

Hospital parking costs to be cut?

Hospitals in England have been told to cut the cost of parking for certain groups under new government guidelines. Ministers said relatives of people who are seriously ill or have to stay in hospital for a long time should be given free or cut-price parking. Concessions should also be offered to people with disabilities and NHS staff whose shift patterns mean they can't use public transport. The guidelines also recommend hospitals should use pay-on-exit schemes so motorists pay only for the time they use in a hospital car park. And they say trusts should waive fines if a visitor or patient overstays through no fault of their own, for example because treatment took longer than planned, or when staff have to work beyond their scheduled shift.

20 limits lead to an increase in casualties

The number of serious accidents on 20mph roads has increased by a hefty 26% last year, according to analysis of government data by the IAM. Slight accidents on 20mph roads also increased by 17%. In the same year, there was a decrease in the number of serious and slight accidents on 30mph roads and 40mph roads. Serious accidents went down 9% on 30mph roads and 7% on 40mph roads. There was a 5% reduction in slight accidents on 30mph roads and a 3% decrease on 40mph roads.

Casualties in 20mph zones also saw a rise. Serious casualties increased by 29% while slight casualties went up by 19%.

Cumbria County Council is consulting on raising speed limits on more than 15 miles of road. The proposals cover roads in the Allerdale area on the Cumbrian Coast, which includes towns such as Workington, Maryport, Flimby, and Cockermouth. Following a review of speed limits using DfT guidance, 15 increases and decreases are proposed. The limit on some sections of road will be raised from 30 to 40mph because Cumbria says mean speeds currently exceed 30mph.

According to a spokesman: "This shows that vehicles are driving faster than the posted speed limit, indicating that road users do not see 30mph as the most appropriate speed to travel." A 4.5-mile and a 7.5-mile length of two B-roads will have their speed limit raised from 40mph to 60mph, although mean speeds are currently below 40mph. "The geometry of the road keeps traffic speeds low" says Cumbria. Removing the 40mph limit will reduce sign clutter in the Lake District National Park, it adds.

Why is it that other local authorities in the UK can't see that if the great majority of drivers are travelling above the speed limit, the limit is almost certainly wrong?

According to the DfT, raising the speed limit for lorries on dual carriageways in England from 50 to 60mph will have hardly any impact on actual speeds because the vast majority of lorry drivers currently break the law.

As a result, the DfT has launched a consultation on raising the limit for HGVs over 7.5 tonnes on sections of dual carriageway where the limit for cars is 60 or 70mph. "The current speed limit just does not work" says transport minister Claire Perry in the foreword to the consultation. "It is broken by about 80% of HGV drivers [in free flow conditions] at any particular time when they are not constrained by other traffic or the road layout. It is implausible that it could readily be made to work without a disproportionate effort".

The DfT says the average speed of lorries on dual carriageways in free flow conditions is about 53mph; most have speed limiters that limit their speed to 56mph.

Sadly, common sense doesn't always prevail which is why Richard Bacon, MP for South Norfolk, has been given a national road safety award by Brake and Direct Line Group for his campaign to give local residents the power to reduce speed limits in their own communities.

In a letter to transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin in August, Bacon urged the government to introduce a 'community right to reduce speed', giving local residents the right to request their local highway authority lower the speed limit on any named road by 10mph - with a presumption in favour, unless local police have reason to object.

The proposals are short on specifics, such as

how many residents – or what proportion of residents – would have to pipe up before such decreases were to take place. It would appear though that as long as some people request the cuts, nobody is allowed to object unless they represent the local police force. Welcome to democracy, UK style.

Bristol residents are angry at a £200m "white elephant" bus scheme that has won narrow approval at a council meeting. Residents gathered from the north of the city to protest outside Bristol City Hall holding white elephant placards to protest at the huge, largely unwanted expenditure of taxpayers' money. The scheme, which involves building a bridge cutting into much-loved Stoke Park, is profoundly unpopular locally.

"We've got to take this city into the 21st century," said a local transport campaigner at a packed Council meeting. But during the decision-making session, protestors found the real reason for Bristol City Council wanting to proceed with the expensive project. If they didn't approve the application, the route would lose its allocation of Government (taxpayer) funding. What is it with local authorities that when offered some cash for a project, they just have to accept it regardless? Why are they so obsessed with spending huge sums of precious cash, even if nobody benefits as a result?

Chris Medd

Caught in the web

There's never enough space to fit everything into each issue of OTR, so in a bid to cram even more in than usual, here's a run down of some of the online articles that I think are worth a look if you get a few minutes:

► The *Daily Telegraph* on why 20mph zones are a waste of time: tinyurl.com/neotunr

► *Big Brother Watch* on the EC's plans for the mandatory fitment of data recorders in all new cars: tinyurl.com/q4b6ezr

► Guide Dogs for the Blind says many blind people are afraid to go out in case they get knocked over by a cyclist: tinyurl.com/pr2tt9h

► If you're confused by the new rules on the abolition of the tax disc, the gov.uk website is here to help: tinyurl.com/l6ndnmw

► Research by Kings College London, and Camden Council claims that those who travel by car can experience five times higher pollution levels than those who cycle: tinyurl.com/mfx46m5

► The ABD's Malcolm Heymer features in an article on *Transport Extra*, on how support for 20mph limits isn't as widespread as some might



suggest: tinyurl.com/ohk2u58

► Arizona has given up on speed cameras, having decided that they do nothing for road safety – but a lot (financially) for those who manufacture them: tinyurl.com/nsesz16

► The Telegraph reports on how Police Scotland caught 37% more speeders than they were supposed to, after getting over-zealous in hitting their targets: tinyurl.com/ko53dlk

► *Wales Online* reports on how children as young as 12 are among the 230 children under 17 who have been disqualified from driving, according to figures released by the DVLA: tinyurl.com/pwyazvl

► The *Daily Mail* on how Watlington in Oxfordshire is the speeding points capital of the UK. It's also where Midsomer Murders was filmed: tinyurl.com/otu4wlu

► The *Telegraph* on whether Community Speed Watch schemes and their volunteers have any useful effect: tinyurl.com/msxwor5

► An article in the *Irish Independent* about a judge in Ireland who has hit out at speed camera operator GoSafe, which has failed to secure one prosecution after another. The company also changed its status so it would no longer have to show the scale of its profits: tinyurl.com/m9oscxr

► There's a fascinating article in the *Telegraph* by Owen Paterson, on the power – and apparent immunity – enjoyed by green groups and individuals. As he puts it: "This tangled triangle of unelected busybodies claims to have the interests of the planet and the countryside at heart, but it is increasingly clear that it is focusing on the wrong issues and doing real harm while profiting handsomely". It really is required reading: tinyurl.com/or8v8es

► The *Daily Mail* covers the story of 'the great diesel scandal' – how UK drivers have been bullied into buying diesel cars, for which they're now being penalised: tinyurl.com/klh49r8



Stay informed

OTR on iPad

If you have an iPad and want to read OTR on it, it's easy. Once you've downloaded OTR from the members' site, just drag the OTR file to the 'Books' Library in iTunes, then sync your iPad. OTR will appear on the 'PDFs' collections page in iBooks.

Forum

Discuss issues with other members by registering on our online forum. It's split into topics and regions, so whether your concern is a particular issue, or something in your area, you can find other members to advise and assist you. Details of how to register are 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 find out more or email the ABD webmaster – Chris Ward – at website@abd.org.uk

Social media

Keep abreast of ABD-related news, and what the ABD is up to on a daily basis, by following us on Twitter (twitter.com/TheABD) or Facebook (www.facebook.com/associationofbritishdrivers). Please retweet or share our updates to help promote us to your followers or friends.

OTR in cyberspace

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

Speed limit objection packs

The ABD offers an informative action pack which sets out in detail the process by which local authorities set speed limits, and the rights you have to object to new or reduced limits. The pack costs £5 to non-members, but is free to current members. Please send a large SAE to:

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Help out

ABD publicity material

If you'd like copies of any ABD literature please contact Sean Corker (details right), 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. If you're a member of an organisation which you think should support the ABD, please let Terry Hudson 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. Please contact the membership secretary for more information; he'll send you the relevant form.

Twitter

Follow us at <http://twitter.com/TheABD>, to stay up to date on what's happening. Find out about press articles 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; we've got numerous local Twitter accounts too: <http://twitter.com/TheABD/local>

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...

National committee

The ABD's committee needs more members to get involved. If you reckon you could help out, contact Brian Gregory (brian.gregory@abd.org.uk), Brian MacDowall (brian.macdowall@abd.org.uk) or Bob Dennish (national@abd.org.uk).

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