

On The Road

The journal of the Alliance of British Drivers

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Free course: how to lobby more effectively

Have you had enough of drivers being ripped off by government and the green lobby? Have you had enough of paying through the nose to run a vehicle? Can you not find somewhere reasonably priced to park? Writing effectively is the constructive way to fight back, which is why you're invited to join the ABD's free short course which will show you how to:

- ▶ Be short, sharp and effective with words
- ▶ Make the case for a better deal for drivers
- ▶ Write persuasively to influence opinions

Professional journalist Neil Cardwell, who was part of the successful ABD campaign to stop road pricing in Manchester, will show you how to write for maximum effect. This short seminar is your chance to gain valuable skills

and tips in a fun, relaxed atmosphere.

This will also be a chance for you to have your say on how the ABD is run; what its priorities should be and how it can serve drivers better. Following the effective writing course, you can also be a part of our next ABD committee meeting and contribute to our effective running with your ideas, contributions & suggestions.

So don't wait for the ABD committee to do everything; get stuck in and be involved in helping the ABD achieve a better deal for all drivers. You can do all or just part of the day, which will be held at the Heritage Motor Centre, Gaydon, in Warwickshire – it's just off junction 12 of the M40.

It's all taking place on Saturday 24 January 2015, starting at 10.45; expect everything to

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The next issue of *On The Road* goes to press on Monday 17 March. Contributions deadline is Monday 3 March.

finish by around 2.30pm. To confirm your attendance or for more information, contact our membership secretary Sean Corker on 0161 408 7070 or email membership@abd.org.uk by 12 January 2015. See you there!

Road deaths hit new low

Once again, road deaths have fallen to the lowest level since official records began in 1926. 1713 people were killed in road accidents reported to the police in 2013, which was 2% down on 2012 and half the number reported in 2000. Car occupants accounted for 785 fatalities in 2013, or 46% of all fatalities (down 2% on the previous year); next came 398 pedestrians (down 5%); 331 motorcyclists (up 1%); 109 pedal cyclists (down 8%); and 90 in the catch-all 'other' category (up 3%).

Pedal cyclist deaths continue to fall (following the long-term trend) but the number has roughly fluctuated between 100 and 120 over the last

six years. The highest annual figure for cycle fatalities was 1536 back in 1934, and the lowest recorded number of fatalities was 104 in 2009.

The number of deaths attributed to drink driving on the part of one or more of the participants was put at 230 in 2012, a total not significantly different from the two previous years.

21,657 people were seriously injured in 2013, 6% less than in 2012, and 43% lower than 2000. The number of serious injuries has steadily declined since 2000 (apart from 2010/11). 160,300 people were slightly injured in 2013, 6% down on the previous year.

The total number of reported casualties was

also down: There were 183,670 cases in 2013, 6% less than 2012. The total number of all casualties in Great Britain, including those not reported to the police, fell within the 630,000 to 800,000 range and is estimated to be around 720,000.

Vehicle traffic levels remain broadly stable but slightly increased by 0.4% between 2012 and 2013. The general downward trend in casualty statistics is partly attributed by the DfT to meteorological factors – the extended snowfall in 2010 and the heavy rainfall in 2012 are, for example, believed to have deterred more vulnerable road users from taking to the streets.

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

Every autumn the ABD holds its members' meeting at the Heritage Motor Centre in Gaydon, and while it's billed as an AGM, the day is much more than that. We always find a load of engaging speakers who take the time to explain an array of fascinating topics, and this year was no different.

While there is an AGM element to the proceedings, it's soon despatched so we can get on with what everybody really comes for; the talks from our guests. This year the event took place on Saturday 27 September.

Before we launched into the talks at this year's meeting, Brian Macdowall was delighted to give the member of the year award to Brian Mooney, for his outstanding work on improving the campaign profile of the ABD.

Brian took the initiative to organise a stream of media articles promoting the ABD and acted as the liaison with NMAG (National Motorists Action Group) and DMUK (Disabled Motoring UK), with whom we now work on areas of mutual interest. Brian Mooney thanked everyone, saying in his 16 years of membership, things have never been so positive.

Brian Macdowall also put out a call for greater membership involvement especially with a general election next year, where motoring issues needed to be pushed further up the political ladder. Your continued support of the ABD is appreciated, but as a voluntary organisation we're dependent on as many members pitching in as possible, so if you can spare some time, please contact our membership secretary Sean Corker (details on p16) to see how you can help. Other points of interest that arose from the day include:

▶ Local coordinator Peter Morganis asking for a more national campaign against 20mph speed limits, which seems to be consuming every road with a house on it!

▶ Malcolm Heymer has arranged a meeting with Atkins (a company the DfT uses for much of its research), which is undertaking a three-year study into the effectiveness of 20mph limits. We've also asked that until the results are known there should be a halt on the imposition of 20 mph zones.

▶ Brian Mooney sent a mailshot to 6000 councillors on this subject and Hugh Bladon said he has had a large volume of phone calls and emails as a result.

The first speaker was Chief Inspector Yan Georgiou, who heads up serious accident investigation for Somerset & Avon, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Police. They only get involved where death or serious injury occurs, often entailing lengthy road closures.

He gave a very informative presentation detailing all the various departments involved at

AGM 2014: another success



Derek Dishman

accident scenes, with of course forensics taking an ever more prominent part.

One very interesting point was that suicide through vehicle use remains a threat; the police also now have more accurate information available to determine actual causes of death or injury in accidents.

Originally established in 1993 to take a more CID approach to accident investigation, he said that "every fatal collision is investigated as an unlawful killing until proved otherwise".

The above quote is one of the reasons the ABD would like to see the establishment of an independent road accident investigation board.

He quoted an example

of an accident in which a vehicle skidded off a single carriageway A-road at night; two passengers died and the driver was badly injured. The latter had drugs in his system, the tyres were over-inflated (he didn't say by how much) and the driver was possibly driving at 100mph. But in all this scientific data, there was no mention of the speed camera that stood at this point. When questioned why this was not mentioned in the causes shown, it was dismissed as it was not a full list of possible causes!

Cathy Cross and Mark Dollar of the PCS Union spoke about taking the Highway Agency

away from the Civil Service and under the control of stand alone government agency. The Infrastructure Bill now going through Parliament opens the way for private companies, including foreign investors, to run our strategic road network. Very similar to the rail network, it could be split up into different regions, bringing road tolling a step nearer, allowing investors to make profits. Mark Dollar emphasised that once again an asset, owned by the British people, and paid for over generations is to be sold off.

Our last speaker was Derek Dishman who gave a light-hearted talk (with a serious message) on parking problems. Derek, also known as Mr Mustard, appeared on the recent BBC series *Parking Mad*. In 2011 he was "rather annoyed" his parking permit from Barnet Council in North London went from an annual £40 to £100. So on 10 March 2011, Mr. Mustard was 'born' to fight alleged parking infringements in his borough and with great success. His thorough search of rules and regulations has made him a local hero in getting people off their parking fines.

It's amazing how, when stirred, ordinary people can become so fired up into helping others – to see what he's been up to, take a look at his website at <http://lbbspending.blogspot.co.uk>.

To finish off the AGM, Ian Taylor spoke about the winners of the *Does your council give you the hump* competition that the ABD recently ran. You can find out much more about this on page 6 of this issue.

Ian also spoke about our recent affiliation with NMAG and The Motorists Charter that resulted from this relationship. The Charter was officially launched recently in a room at the Houses of Parliament with Lord Lucas in attendance; there was full coverage of this in OTR112.

The meeting finished on this high note and as usual, there seemed to be a consensus that this had been another excellent members' meeting. If you couldn't be there, make sure you don't miss the 2015 event – and

also try to get to the event which will take place at Gaydon on 24 January, details of which are on the front cover of this issue.



Mark Dollar



Yan Georgiou

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

ABD and DMUK join forces

The ABD and Disabled Motoring UK (DMUK) have concluded a mutual affiliation agreement; a flexible arrangement that respects the independence of both parties. We envisage selective co-operation where the opportunity arises, consistent with DMUK's charitable status. Thanks go to Dr Adrian Stokes, OBE, an ABD member and Treasurer of DMUK for his part in setting up the introduction.

DMUK is an established organisation whose roots go back to 1922. Under the name *Mobilise*, it gained recognition on the previous government's Motorists' Forum. It has a proud heritage of campaigning and representation, with achievements ranging from the Blue Badge and Motability schemes to gaining exemptions from VAT, VED and Congestion Charging.

Thanks to the work of DMUK, decision makers have had to recognise that for many the car is not a luxury - it's a necessity.

Whereas the ABD is pleased to support the work of DMUK towards highlighting the difficulties faced by a significant number of Britain's drivers, we can also share with DMUK members the wider issues affecting everyone's mobility, finances and privacy. If unchecked, anti-car authorities will drive us all off the road.

There is an encouraging trend towards motoring groups working together. Neil Herron (NMAG) has been a good friend of the ABD's over the years, and runs the Assist-MI venture which helps drivers to find scarce parking spaces. ABD representatives recently met up with DMUK's Graham Macfarlane at a forum organised by Neil.

Brian Mooney

Disabled Motoring UK

Do you struggle putting fuel in your car? Get frustrated by people parking in Blue Badge bays without a valid badge or are concerned by the new disability benefit changes? If so we are an organisation that could help you.

Disabled Motoring UK is the campaigning charity for disabled drivers, passengers and Blue Badge holders. We lobby government and business across the UK in order to improve parking, refuelling and access provision for disabled people, so they can access the goods and services they need.

DMUK is not just an organisation for disabled drivers. We also campaign for and support passengers, scooter and wheelchair users, families and carers. It's because of the hard work



of DMUK that disabled people have the Blue Badge, the Motability Scheme and are exempt from the London Congestion Charge. There is still plenty more to be done and we are currently working on many more campaigns.

The Blue Badge Scheme

After years of campaigning and calling for improvements to the Blue Badge scheme, the reforms have finally been rolled out. But our work doesn't stop here. We have to ensure the changes are properly implemented by local authorities, which must also take action against those found using stolen, fake or 'borrowed' badges. We're encouraging our members to write to their MP asking why there's no Blue Badge enforcement in their area.

Parking Charges

Many local authorities are scrapping concessionary parking charges for Blue Badge holders. Since disabled people take considerably longer to do their shopping we believe not allowing any extra time is discriminatory. Having successfully brought a case against Norwich City Council using the Equality Act 2010, DMUK is working with its members to bring similar cases.

Refuelling

The most common way for unaccompanied disabled drivers who can't get out of their vehicles to get help at a petrol station is by sounding their horn. Where there's only one assistant on duty, help is rarely offered, and disabled drivers are unable to

refuel their vehicles. The introduction of chip and pin has also made paying very difficult for some drivers. Another worrying trend is that many petrol stations tend to be totally automated for customer self-service, either at all times or at less busy times. DMUK is working with the major supermarkets to try to find solutions to these problems.

Barrier Access at Car Parks

The advancement of electronic and hydraulic driving controls means more severely disabled people are able to drive, but in many cases are unable to enter car parks with entry barriers. Having a Blue Badge allows disabled people to park on the road without the problem of getting through a barrier, but many new shopping centres have no provision for on-street parking and everyone must use the car parks provided. The majority of these car parks require a ticket to be taken on entry, paid for at a pay machine, and a ticket put in a slot at a barrier to exit. As technology improves a greater number of disabled people can drive, but they won't be able to go anywhere alone because of problems with accessing car parking facilities. Disabled Motoring UK is working closely with the British Parking Association (BPA), local authorities and car park providers to resolve this difficult issue.

Membership

DMUK will only be successful at campaigning on these issues as long as it has a strong membership. Campaigning on the behalf of so many disabled people is how our voice is heard.

Joining DMUK is free. Simply go to our website disabledmotoring.org and sign up using our online form. Once registered as an online member you'll receive an electronic newsletter once a month keeping you up to date on our current campaign and will be able to access our members' only area of the website. Most importantly you'll be lending your voice to our vital campaigns.

If you want to be kept more informed you can sign up as a full member of DMUK. As well as receiving the benefits which online members have you'll also get a monthly magazine packed with news, member letters, features and road tests, access to our information service and discounts on a variety of goods and services. Full membership is £24 per year, you can even pay by monthly direct debit which makes it just £2 per month.

Helen Dolphin, DMUK

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

20mph zones: get campaigning now

The 20's Plenty mob is determined to cover the country in one-size-fits-all 20mph zones; it boasts that over 12 million residents have had such zones imposed upon them. Inner London is quite fertile territory, with some very PC Labour boroughs such as Camden and Islington taking the lead. However Conservative-run boroughs such as Westminster have so far been resistant to the hype.

This autumn, three London boroughs have declared intentions for wide-area 20mph zones. The most noticeable is LB Tower Hamlets, which has since been put under central government management after maladministration. ABD London coordinator Roger Lawson has made representation. Meanwhile, LB Croydon coordinator Peter Morgan has been generating local opposition to his council's plans. He's set up an evolving website (20notneeded.org.uk) and written a good article for Roger's newsletter (freedomfordrivers.org/ABD_London_News041.pdf) – he'd welcome any help.

The home front

My own local authority, London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (LBHF) announced that it would be holding a consultation next April. This would seek approval for a strangely-named 'feasibility design'. The joint cost would be a massive £200,000.

Although I've helped the Worthing campaign build support, I've never had to fight a local campaign like this before. With time on my side, I've come up with a few ideas.

As other ABD members have asked for tips in stopping 20mph zones locally, I've decided to share mine. A comforting thought is that whereas it might seem quite a challenge at first, it can become a lot easier than you imagine once you get underway – particularly if someone else in ABD circles can help you.

Find out more

LBHF's news page featured local resident reactions – a balance against bodes well for a campaign. It linked into the council document, which wasn't difficult to read. The council employee responsible was only too happy to chat about the issues, although the detail is still to come.

For more general info on 20mph zones, fairdealforthemotorist.org.uk/20tooslow.htm



links to some presentations and webpages from the ABD and 20's Pointless.

Understand the case for/against

At first, the idea seems daft. Much of my borough crawls in the rush hour and near the Hammersmith roundabout. In residential roads, an incentive to keep your speed down is not losing your wing mirror as you pass another vehicle! And you should always be adjusting your speed to the conditions near schools.

A quick search on the LBHF website revealed opposition to the idea when raised in 2010. A key factor was that the police weren't willing to enforce a borough-wide scheme with any priority. This meant that any zone would have to be self-enforcing.

Cue traffic calming, probably road humps, which cost a fortune and can damage buildings through vibrations as well as tyres and suspension systems. They're unpopular with ambulances as it slows them down and can jar patients being carried. These factors alone are likely to tip a consultation against the idea.

There's no real road safety case – a relatively low base of road casualties doesn't justify measures. LBHF was helpful, but couldn't provide me with local statistics, although the police might have them. While STATS19 statistics aren't an exact science, a sample on the DFT website (gov.uk) indicates that only 4% of casualties involve excess speed and in total 8% excessive speed for the conditions.

There are often other factors, such as wet

conditions or pedestrian behaviour. As accidents are also more likely to happen through driver misjudgement, inattention or tiredness, 20mph zones are about solving the wrong 'problem'.

It's interesting that the 'case' for 20mph zones is sometimes put in vague terms like 'making areas more walkable or cyclable' or 'quality of life'. We can counter that the easiest way to 'make people feel safer' is not to scaremonger about safe speed in the first place!

There will always be local issues, but better solutions will lie in education, engineering or enforcement. For instance, street posters or vehicle-activated signs near schools. Point out a better solution and support for 20mph zones can disappear.

Look for opportunities

There are often plenty of factors that will support your position. A bit of delving pays dividends. In my area, the main agitators seem to be the local branch of the London Cycling Campaign, which has swallowed the 20mph dogma. Residents might resent outside attempts to impose a one-size-fits-all scheme.

In May, my council went Labour. The claim that the 20mph proposal was a manifesto commitment doesn't wash, as the manifesto only slipped out online less than 48 hours before polling day.

The administration says it'll draw on the experience of other LBs – especially Camden and Islington. However only a minority of LBs actually want wide-area 20mph zones. LBs

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

Harrow and Redbridge also went Labour in May. The first seems more concerned with abandoned supermarket trolleys. For Redbridge, I could find no mention on 20mph at all. Of longer-standing Labour councils, LB Hounslow is more concerned with offering car maintenance courses for women, LB Ealing tackles 20mph limits piecemeal, and LB Enfield is non-committal and says it will listen to the police. LB Merton experimented with some 20mph zones, but with very mixed results, and has not gone ahead with plans for others.

Then there's the money angle. Although in London, most of the money might come from TfL, this is still money added to our council tax demand. Residents might prefer a lower demand, the money spent on services that people actually want like policing, or for TfL to keep bus and tube fares down!

Look for allies

Ironically LBHF says it's committed to cutting council tax and waste. This was of interest to the Taxpayers' Alliance, which has experience in opposing 20mph zones. TPA grassroots coordinator Jennifer Salisbury-



Jones might be able to give us a newsletter mention or even help set up a joint local day of action next year. I might also be able to draw on support from past contacts who helped to get the West London Congestion Charge removed.

Local interest websites might indicate other allies. There's always some if you look; for example, the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association came out against the idea, and LBHF has previously made available a list of resident and community groups, and lists may also be found in libraries.

Sign clutter and traffic calming will not appeal to those with a strong sense of civic pride. Objections might be more likely in wards where the council is not popular, so no harm in contacting opposition councillors – those on the transport scrutiny panel were receptive.

Make a stand

Just talking to people generates ideas. I was asked to produce a local website forum article. Apart from demonstrating early opposition, it gives the ABD extra presence online, so is more likely to be found by those seeking more information.

I also learned that LBHF allows members of the public to put a question to cabinet members at selected council meetings. You don't have to do this in person, but if you do, you can ask a follow-up question.

So I put a cynical question to my local Cabinet Member for Transport in front of the full council. I received a hearty reply about reduced casualties. Fortunately, it mentioned Portsmouth, which (to cut a long story short) 20's Pointless has shown reversed a decline in casualty figures, so I made my response count!

With assistance if needed, most ABD members should be able to write a letter to the local press. Other possibilities might include setting up a campaign webpage or even local leaflets; the ABD might be prepared to support well-considered proposals, and the 20's Pointless team has offered to share the secrets of their success in Worthing.

20mph zones are not inevitable, especially if we all do our bit.

Brian Mooney

20 limits get a mixed reception across the UK

► The ASA has banned council publicity claiming that 20mph speed limits increase walking and cycling, deliver health benefits, and reduce congestion. The ASA ruled that the statements in a Brighton & Hove City Council brochure were too definite and couldn't be substantiated.

Campaign group **Unchain the Motorist** complained to the ASA about the leaflet, prepared to support the council's continued roll-out of 20mph speed limits. The leaflet said: "...national and international research clearly shows that a 20mph speed limit encourages more walking and cycling for local trips, which in turn would bring significant health benefits and reduce congestion".

But the ASA ruled: "We considered the findings were less conclusive than the definite wording of the claim suggested... and were [therefore] misleading. Future complaints about information in council leaflets will no longer be considered by the ASA though, because they now fall outside the Committee of Advertising Practice code.

► Worthing residents have voted overwhelmingly to reject the implementation of signed-only 20mph speed limits on residential streets. West Sussex County Council consulted on the idea of a town-wide 20mph speed limit on residential streets in response to a campaign by local group 20's Plenty for Worthing, which said the lower limit

would improve road safety and enhance the local environment for walking and cycling.

The pro-20mph campaign prompted the formation of an anti-20mph limit group, 20's Pointless. It said lower limits would have little impact on accidents, would not be enforced, would add to congestion, threaten bus routes, and were a waste of public money.

Councillors agreed not to proceed with the lower limit after hearing that over 13,000 (69%) of the almost 19,000 respondents to a consultation had voted against the proposal. West Sussex says a "significant number of comments" expressed the view that the scheme would be a waste of money and the lower limits would be ignored. One respondent wrote: "What a complete waste of money. It is not long since we were asked what services we wished to cut as the council was short of money. Now we are asked to support the waste of £400,000 to install signs which will be largely ignored."

20's Plenty for Worthing has criticised the consultation process. "No other public consultation on 20mph limits anywhere in the UK has returned such a negative result as Worthing's so how did this happen?" said the group. It has blamed defeat on "scaremongering, threats of bus cuts and the failure of the council to properly explain the benefits and cost effectiveness of 20mph limits".

► Birmingham City Council has approved plans for signed-only 20mph limits on residential streets and in local centres in a large part of the south of the city including Moseley, Kings Heath and Sparkbrook. Of 627 consultation responses, 56% supported the plans, 30% were opposed and 11% gave a 'mixed' response. The estimated cost of the works is £386,000, which will be funded by the council's Cycle City Ambition Grant award from the DfT. Works should be completed by summer 2015. This is the first part of a £1.025m 20mph pilot programme that should also see the lower limit implemented within the city's ring road and in much of east Birmingham. The majority of funding – £800,000 – will come from the Cycle City Ambition Grant with the remaining £225,000 from the council's integrated transport block.

► Argyll and Bute Council has ruled out signed-only 20mph speed limits on roads with already low speeds. "It is not considered that best value can be demonstrated by introducing mandatory 20mph speed limits in areas where speeds are already low simply to provide a 'feel good' factor," says the council's new speed limit policy. The council also says 20mph limits should only be implemented where 85th percentile speeds are no higher than 24mph.

Bristol nominated UK's worst city for drivers

Our competition *Does your council give you the hump?* closed at the end of August. It was run in conjunction with our video shot in Bristol. This has generated publicity and debate, especially in Bristol, and it's still available to view on the ABD website. Ian Taylor announced the results at the AGM and members' meeting in September. Every single entry was for the worst treatment of drivers; there wasn't a single nomination for the best, which doesn't say much for the prevailing attitudes in local authorities.

On both quantity and quality of entries Bristol won first place as Britain's worst. Submissions included mentions of parking provision and cost, including both city centre parking and the roll-out of resident parking zones, traffic flow deliberately restricted to cause additional congestion, blanket 20mph speed limits plus unreliability and inconvenience of alternative travel by public transport (despite the proliferation of bus lanes) – made worse by preferential treatment for cyclists.

The £200 first prize was awarded to Carol Quinn, who now lives in Chepstow; she moved there from Bristol because driving had been made so difficult and frustrating. She was scathing about Bristol's Mayor Ferguson, of whom she said: "He hates cars, has always said so and is making life a misery for any car owner in Bristol. He always said he was going to get the car driver and it's incorrect for him to say that there are 45,000 fewer car journeys now, because companies have moved out. For my job I have to drive all over the UK including London, and Bristol is by far the worst." She also mentioned stupid road planning and narrowing, badly placed bike and bus lanes, plus bus stops, and street closures.

Second prize (£50) went to Jacki Clarke who nominated Brighton & Hove. She highlighted roadworks along with under-used bus and cycle lanes, all contributing to congestion. She also spoke about excessive parking charges and bus fares, along with the now-discontinued Park & Ride scheme. She also said that traffic lights are unsynchronised, and life is made more difficult by widespread 20mph speed limits and speed humps. She ended by saying "RIP Brighton".



Carol Quinn

Third prize (also £50) went to Tom McClean of Belfast. His bugbear is speed humps everywhere, and he highlighted this with videos on YouTube featuring Lower Braniel Road. He said: "Try driving around some of the roads in the Castlereagh area of Belfast. The roads are akin to assault courses due to the totally unnecessary proliferation of road ramps." There are 17 on a one-mile stretch. Tom's entry was accompanied

by a link to his own YouTube video, which you can view at tinyurl.com/msaw3qd.

Several other entries came close to winning a prize, and they're worthy of a mention:

- ▶ Grimsby, North & North East Lincolnshire: poor road surfaces, parking charges and reduced speed limits
- ▶ Several Greater Manchester councils: reduction of road space
- ▶ Warwickshire County Council: traffic flow changes in Kenilworth
- ▶ Coventry: bus lanes which are designed to raise the council thousands of pounds
- ▶ London Borough of Camden: oppressive parking policies, humps everywhere and generally very anti-car
- ▶ West Norfolk, Kings Lynn & Norfolk County: poor state of the roads
- ▶ Surrey County: speed humps, chicanes and inappropriately lowered speed limits
- ▶ Cambridge: "the most car unfriendly city" (this from someone who'd tried Bristol too)

Thanks to everyone who entered the competition. It's something we hadn't tried before, but which we might do again thanks to its popularity. We'll probably also run something similar to our recent member surveys and even the outside opinion poll (though they come with a much higher price tag) will probably be tried again, especially if it helps get our causes into the public arena in election year.



Hands off our highways

The controversial Infrastructure Bill has completed its first review in the House of Lords, and is now to be debated by MPs. As letters received may be influential, please briefly write to your MP (parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps) – even if you live outside England. Some key points about the Bill:

- It raises the prospect of worse service for drivers on England's major routes (the Strategic Road Network, or SRN)
- It opens the way for road pricing on roads that have already been paid for by the public
- The Transport Select Committee has stated that there is no case for making

the Highways Agency into a (government-owned) company.

Please use your own words. For more information, including our opinion poll that points to the Bill being a real vote-loser, see OTR113 or take a look at fairdealforthemotorist.org.uk.

The PCS union has set up a *Hands off our highways* campaign, which will outline an alternative to give drivers better service. For updates, see the 'Fair Deal' website or pcs.org.uk/en/department_for_transport_group

Brian Mooney
fairdeal@abd.org.uk
07976 414913

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

A Sherman tank being driven in protest against a Residents' Parking Zone (RPZ). Residents barricading a street to stop the imposition of a permit-only zone. A parking meter covered in paint. And residents of an upmarket square threatening to do the same. Bristol's Mayor George Ferguson is on a mission to make life as difficult as possible for car drivers, and now things are starting to heat up, with Bristol residents fighting back.

The proposed RPZs have been postponed until March to avoid interfering with the run-up to Christmas, or so we are told. It's no wonder residents were up in arms. "Some people didn't realise you had to pay for the permit... Bristol City Council didn't do a proper consultation."

An incensed square resident complained that "they want to put the signs on the railings and if we say no they will put them on top of poles in front of our homes – Grade II listed buildings. We might even see if we can bring back the tank."

A *Bristol Post* reader's online comment revealed that the Council voted 49-2 against the scheme in Clifton in the first place.

The paper reported that, according to official figures, formal consultations in five of the nine proposed RPZ areas showed objections outweighing support by ten to one. On releasing statistics, the Council said it was "unable to provide details of all nine of the areas requested" and claimed that the figures were "misleading... formal consultations only invite objections and not comments of support"

Local self-made billionaire Peter Hargreaves attacked the crazy parking schemes as almost anti-business, and regretted that the sight of businesses coming to Bristol is now becoming rare. Controversial Mayor George Ferguson denied this, claiming the city is thriving and that his policy of essentially discouraging motorists will lead to the city being less congested and business reaping the benefit.

After a girl was almost knocked down outside a school a year ago, there was a petition for a zebra crossing. However it still hasn't been built and the Council is unable to clarify when it will be – one councillor claims that the planned RPZs are getting priority, Ferguson's brainchild in his war on commuter parking.

The West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is a business collaboration with the local authority areas of Bristol, BANES, North Somerset and South Glos. Transport consultancy GVA produced a report for it in 2012, which noted that "Public transport provision is currently felt to be poor in terms of reliability and coverage of service, with many believing that it does not overall [offer] a viable alternative to the car."

Bristol residents fight back

Ben Collins aka 'The Stig', is a Bristolian and criticised Ferguson's calming measures as "rubbish...stop-start the whole time. So much for being green...it uses more fuel". He also attacked the proliferation of signs and variations of speed limits as diverting drivers' attention, increasing the danger of hitting pedestrians. He also predicted that the RPZs would push people out of the city.

Bristol successfully bid to be European Green Capital for 2015, which might account for some of their flat-Earth policies. For instance, in St George's Ward alone, there were nearly 50 examples of 20mph zones in cul-de-sacs, lock-up garages, and narrow streets where it would be impossible to drive at 20mph.

Another LEP report in 2011 stated that "parking controls will be structured to support short-stay trips... All-day parking controlled in a way to discourage users who could transfer to lower carbon travel choices... Residential parking controls will be extended..."

It hinted that charges could provide a financial incentive for employers to manage the demand for travel of their employees and a revenue stream which could be used towards developing the four authorities' joint local transport plan (JLTP3).

There were the usual platitudes about "encouraging cycling and walking through wider pavements, cycle lanes, traffic calming, etc." By 2013, there were plans to control all-day parking in a way to discourage users who "don't need" to use cars. Parking charges would be structured to "support local needs" and "ensure that Park and Ride maintains a competitive advantage".

Other plans included considering traffic-free historic towns, villages and city centres and the development of European-style "car free" new neighbourhoods in areas "well served by public transport" – something of a fantasy.

Plans for the Old City area included an experimental traffic system, suspending parking bays and removing through traffic to create



"a more pedestrian-friendly, continental-style environment and encourage more on-street activity".

Ferguson said in 2013 that he wanted to make the city the most welcoming in Europe, which would include five traffic-free Sundays as part of his *Make Sunday Special* campaign. In reality holding traffic-free Sundays was part of Bristol's European

Green Capital bid.

Ferguson 'liberated' at least half the central area by introducing road closures to coincide with Bristol's Big Green Week. Artists, dancers and musicians performed in the street and some people even brought sofas to sit on in the middle of the road. When some local traders and taxi drivers complained, Ferguson's response was: "They will come around to it. I love the taxi drivers, but they love to have a moan. I'm not too worried about that." Ferguson hopes to run the scheme again in future years.

Meanwhile, in South Gloucestershire...

South Gloucestershire Council also faced a backlash after a busy commuter route was converted to a two-way bus lane, causing 53 drivers to be fined in one day. A council meeting to discuss the move had to be cancelled when 200 protesters stormed their building. A petition calling on councillors to reverse plans to permanently close the road soon gathered 800 signatures.

Patchway residents felt compelled to take action after feeling stitched up - attending



meetings where councillors have just not listened. They also claimed that the move has forced more traffic onto neighbouring roads, causing new congestion.

When a dual-carriageway was removed, residents queried the 'results' indicating no more traffic than before and accused the Council of 'having an agenda'.

When challenged on the *Politics Show* that 20mph speed limits cause more pollution (proved by a university-based test), the Mayor ignored the comment. Which just about sums him up. He holds anybody in contempt, who doesn't share his own views.

Thanks to Mark Taylor for his research for this article.

One of the reasons for being in the ABD is that it's a ready source of information so that when you want to do your own campaigning, you've got the information at your fingertips to do it as effectively as possible. To that end, occasionally we reproduce members' campaigning letters so that, frankly, you can nick the information they contain, to make your own missives more compelling.

This is a letter that committee member Malcolm Heymer recently sent to *Local Transport Today* (LTT), in response to a correspondent who is keen to stick with the current policy of reducing speed limits then enforcing them with cameras – on the basis that it can't really do any harm...

Without wishing to add to Iain Reeve's boredom with the speed camera debate (LTT, 31 October), I feel that he is rather missing the point.

He starts off well by saying that over 90% of accidents are caused by human error, a figure with which I agree. Unfortunately, he suggests this is proof of the need to reduce speeds, to save people from their mistakes. I believe it would have the opposite effect.

While some mistakes by road users are due to inexperience, the root cause of the majority of mistakes is giving insufficient attention to the job in hand. For a driver this may be due to an obvious distraction such as using a mobile phone or tuning the radio, but the most serious and long-lasting inattentiveness is due to drivers allowing their minds to wander and think about things other than their driving.

Most drivers will have experienced the situation where, after travelling in slow-moving traffic for a prolonged period, they will have no recall of several miles of their journey. This is because the lack of stimulation will have caused them to enter auto-pilot mode, with their mind on other things. In these circumstances, their ability to spot hazards, let alone react to them in time, will be seriously impaired. Contrary to Mr Reeve's assertion, therefore, forcing people to drive at unnaturally low speeds will reduce their ability to avoid accidents and may not even result in lower impact speeds.

There is clear evidence from research in the USA that the relationship between drivers' speed and accident risk follows a U-shaped curve (the 'Solomon' curve), where drivers with the lowest accident involvement are those who travel about 5mph above the mean speed of traffic. Accident involvement increases sharply at both ends of the speed range.

The most likely explanation for this distribution is that the safest drivers have a well developed sense of the appropriate speed for different hazard densities, and adjust their speed accordingly. The fastest drivers will either lack that sense of speed or be over-confident, resulting in them driving

Cameras and low limits; why they don't work



too fast for the conditions. At the other end of the curve, slow drivers are often nervous or have never developed the necessary skill to adjust their speed properly, so are unable or unwilling to keep up with the flow of traffic. This causes frustration and impatience in others, which can lead to poorly judged manoeuvres, such as risky overtakes.

I cannot agree with Mr Reeve, therefore, that reducing speed is a good thing, or that it saves lives. What is needed instead is to ensure that speed limits are set at levels that the majority of drivers would never wish to exceed, even in ideal conditions. This generally means setting limits as close as possible to the 85th percentile speed. Drivers would then vary their speed within that limit as conditions dictate, without having to constantly refer to their speedometers for fear of straying above an arbitrary and unnecessarily low restriction. If speed limits were set properly, most speed cameras would be redundant.

The problem with low speed limits is that drivers come to regard them as a minimum or target speed, and they no longer feel they have the responsibility to assess a safe speed for themselves. Thus a core skill required for safe driving is belittled and in danger of being lost.

Whenever increases in speed limits are proposed they are always resisted vigorously by doom mongers prophesying carnage on the roads. They are invariably proved wrong. In 1931, the archaic 20mph speed limit applying to all public roads in Britain was abolished, resulting in a complete absence of speed limits (except for commercial vehicles). Both total and pedestrian fatalities fell in 1931 compared with 1930. Indeed, it is worth noting that the number of pedestrians killed in 1930, the last year with the 20mph limit, was the highest ever recorded in peacetime Britain. This should be food for thought for those advocating the

claimed safety benefits of a 20mph urban speed limit today!

Of course, it is not necessarily the case that the abolition of the 20mph limit was the cause of the casualty reductions in 1931, since the economic situation at that time would undoubtedly have played a part. But the fact that fatalities did not rise suggests that speed limits do not have as significant an impact on road safety as most people believe.

More recently, following the repeal of the federal 55mph national speed limit, many US states raised their limits, often against strong opposition. In many cases the states that raised their limits saw fatalities fall as fast or faster than those that did not. The trend is continuing in the USA today, with some states raising speed limits to 80 or even 85mph on individual highways, without a detrimental effect on safety.

Another area where I disagree with Mr Reeve is his assertion that driving on motorways with average speed cameras is safer or more pleasant than without them. On the contrary, I find the experience more stressful, as the ability to maintain a safe space around oneself is impeded. A driver's safety zone is not just fore-and-aft, but to the sides as well. Where traffic is heavy and flowing at about the same speed in all lanes, it is often difficult to avoid travelling alongside another vehicle for prolonged periods, with the attendant danger if the other driver drifts out of lane.

A fundamental rule of safe driving is to complete any overtaking manoeuvre as quickly as possible, to minimise the length of time in the danger zone. The reason for this is obvious on single carriageways, but it is also important on dual carriageways and motorways, to minimise the danger from vehicles being overtaken. While very large speed differentials are undesirable, it is important that there should be a reasonable minimum difference between speeds in adjacent lanes.

The most positive suggestion in Mr Reeve's letter is for what he calls 'stupidity cameras'. In fact, I have seen reports of research into the development of in-car cameras that monitor a driver's face and eye movements, to detect when the driver may be on the verge of falling asleep or is being unduly distracted. A warning buzzer or flashing message would then be deployed to regain the driver's attention. This has the potential to be a very positive use of technology, addressing the root cause of most accidents. It is greatly to be preferred to speed cameras.

Malcolm Heymer

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

It's been another busy quarter for the ABD, working with the media. Things kicked off with a second national press release from our members' survey: *ABD members reject spurious 20mph "quality of life" claim*. Following the results of our *Does your council give you the hump* competition, details were released to national and selected regional and local outlets. We called for a cancellation of penalties imposed on drivers fooled by false speed limit signs put up by pranksters (p12) and sent out another communiqué on the Infrastructure Bill and the threat contained in its small print for road privatisation and tolling. This was picked up by the *Yorkshire Post*, *Bolton News*, *Darlington & Stockton Times* and the *Stroud News & Journal*.

In September, *roadsafety.org* mentioned our PR on 20 limits, provoking an online row with 20's Plenty supremo Rod King. *carsite.co.uk* also picked up on our PR calling for an end to ineffective 20 zones, and *Motoring4Media* (a news aggregator) on the 20mph *Quality of life* one.

Sean Corker was in an evening slot on BBC Radio 5 Live on car ownership, why people want it and how necessary it is. Brian Mooney was in a morning slot on BBC Radio Wales – 20 limits again, against a spokesman from 20's Plenty. Hugh Bladon was on BBC Radio Dorset about caravans and the wider issue of slow vehicles. He also gave a quote to *Auto Express* on the validity of car manufacturers' claims on fuel economy. *Motoring4Media* picked up on our (now quite old) road pricing PR. An ABD Op-Ed appeared in the *Derby Telegraph*.

October opened with Hugh Bladon on BBC Radio Bristol against more 20 zones. Nigel Humphries was on BBC Radio Humberside about a speed limit being raised (yes, you read that right) from 30 to 40, following petitioning.

Devonshire's proposal for DIY pothole filling got us on BBC Breakfast (Sean Corker) and BBC Radio 5 Live (Hugh Bladon) plus BBC Radio Belfast and BBC Radio 2's Jeremy Vine Show – also in the *Daily Telegraph*, *Western Daily Press* and local websites. Bristol 'winning' our competition as the city that most annoys drivers featured in the *Bristol Post* and *Western Daily Press*. Scotland's cut in the drink drive limit was in the *Courier* with a quote from Brian Macdowall. Killer potholes was the subject of a *Bolton News* article which also covered speed limits, cycles and mobile phones.

The *Hammersmith & Fulham Forum* published a personal piece by Brian Mooney on 20 zone proposals (tinyurl.com/obc2gzj). We had a blog by Brian Macdowall on the same subject published on the *Conservative Home*

Media log

local government website (tinyurl.com/ofy8hw5). The PR on the sign-changing pranksters was mentioned on *Motoring4Media*. Hugh Bladon was heard on BBC Radio Lincolnshire about speed awareness courses. He was in print again about roadworks misery in the *Sunday Times*.

Our PR on the Bristol

video and competition was mentioned on Twitter courtesy of Ben Collins, the Top Gear Stig, and re-tweeted to his 107,000 followers. The Mayor of Bristol is reported as replying that he "doesn't care what Ben Collins thinks" – well, we already guessed that he doesn't much care what anyone thinks.

Brian Macdowall was next quoted in the *Nottingham Post* on the end of the paper driving licence. Following the Mayor of Liverpool's decision to permanently do away with all but four of the city's bus lanes (p14),

Hugh Bladon talked about bus lanes on BBC WM (West Midlands). The *Liverpool Echo* carried a survey (at the behest of bus operators) which purported to show that no bus lanes meant longer journeys for both buses and cars – at variance with others' findings – with a quote from the ABD. It was 20 zones again for Hugh on BBC Radio Stoke, then he was back in the *Bristol Post* on that city switching back on its speed cameras.

Sean Corker got on the *Mancunian Matters* website about the huge number of fines generated by Stockport's M60 speed cameras. *Kent On Sunday* carried a major article on "carmaggedon" - Kent's choked road network – which included a fair-sized comment from Terry Hudson.

To November, and the *Daily Telegraph* had a front page feature on the return of speed cameras – Hugh Bladon "gave them both barrels" (his words). Brian Macdowall had an "exchange" of views with Guardian journalist Christian Wolmar

on stricter speed limits in the pages of the *Sunday Observer* – prompted by the Mayor of New York's imposition of a city-wide 25mph speed limit. This was also mentioned in *USA Today*. Brian also appeared in the *Belfast Telegraph* which published a list of the top 60 places in Northern Ireland where you're likely to get caught by speed cameras. Cameras in Wolverhampton featured in the *Express & Star* with a quote from Hugh Bladon.

We were also mentioned in a reader's letter to the *Bristol Post* saying that "Bristol's Mayor wants to bring the city to a standstill".

One in three disputed parking penalties are overturned in Manchester, said *Mancunian Matters* – with an ABD comment from Sean Corker. Hugh Bladon was in the *Nottingham Post* about the number of fixed penalty notices issued. Birmingham has decided (among other anti-car measures) to expand (in stages, using pilots) its 20 zones until they cover nearly all the city. That got me a live slot breakfast interview on BBC WM. Bob Bull appeared on the *BBC Politics Show* on BBC One TV – west of England only – speaking against the Mayor of Bristol and his planned 20 zone expansion. Hugh Bladon was in

the news again when a survey 'found' caravan owners to be the UK's least favourite road users. UKNetGuide featured; then it was taken up (prominently) by the *Daily Express* – lead story, at least online). Our Hugh doesn't like caravans and said so – while also saying that he thought the criticism implied in the survey wasn't fair, and had a go at inconsiderate driving in general.

As always, apologies to anyone overlooked here. This round-up does not include contributions members make to local paper letters pages. Both Terry Hudson and myself have featured in our own local letters pages on events in Canterbury, Dover, Deal, Folkestone and Hythe. Writing this I've noticed that I've received fewer calls than usual. That's the way the cookie crumbles I guess – may be partly due to a storm causing tree damage to a telegraph pole that deprived me of telephone landline and broadband connections for a week. Keep writing to the press and mentioning us on social media – that's what keeps us in view to the wider public.

Ian Taylor



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

I get abused by dozens of the 'cycling fascisti' on Twitter every time I make a comment about cycling policy - I block them because there's no point trying to argue with them - Carlton Reid is one of the few who has actually been polite, but, given that he is a cycling figurehead he can't really afford to do otherwise. As I said - they are a lost cause - they think the economy can and is run by bike and the negatives of motorised transport far outweigh the economic and social benefits. £58 billion in motoring taxes, £120 billion added value to the economy, 720,000 manufacturing jobs, 11% of exports plus a further £29 billion added value to the economy is lost on them. They don't just want to share the roads - they want them re-designed, lorries re-designed and drivers slowed down unnecessarily and prosecuted off the roads.

Paul Biggs

Four inner-London councils have joined forces to lobby TfL to dramatically expand and advance its proposals to improve air quality in the capital and see off possible fines from the EU. TfL plans to create an Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) across central London, to reduce exhaust fumes to improve health and avoid a projected £300million EU fine. This all sounds fair enough, but among these proposals are plans to charge vehicles that don't meet new ULEZ emissions standards upon entering the ULEZ - which follows the current congestion charge boundary - from 2020.

But Hackney, Camden, Lambeth and Southwark councils say these proposals don't

Give us a quote

"Road pricing and the further taxation of motorists is an inefficient and unproductive solution as it will not reduce pollution or lower congestion. It will just further punish those who are already paying with their time and fuel in traffic jams."

Jacob Bangsgaard, an FIA director general, to European Parliament Transport Committee, Nov 2014.

go far enough in creating cleaner air and will not result in London avoiding heavy fines. The councils also fear that the charge may lead to polluting vehicles diverting around the ULEZ, resulting in potentially worse air quality around the zone's fringes. They're also worried that taxis, some of the most polluting vehicles in London, will be exempt and that there are no scrappage schemes, or other incentives, to get rid of non-compliant vehicles - they also want the zone brought in sooner.

As a result, the four councils want TfL to increase the size of the zone and tighten standards even further. Other requests include a 'progressive charging structure', which would include higher levies against more polluting vehicles, and to gradually phase out diesel engines. They also want a scrappage scheme and to increase the scope of the existing Low Emission Zone (LEZ) so that it applies to all vehicles by 2025. Better air quality is a laudable aim, but can we afford these measures?

Tim Rose

Having read Andrew Sercombe's blog (OTR113), I'm not entirely convinced by it. He mentions being caught doing 72 mph in a 60 limit. This is not a minor infraction; it's a serious misdemeanour. If he was clocked at 72 his speedometer would have been reading 78 - 80 (*modern speedos tend to be more accurate than that - Ed*).

Also, it's my understanding that this excess speed is more than that allowed for speed awareness courses. Plus, he mentions that another participant was clocked at 32 in a 30 limit when, again it is my understanding that most constabularies do not seek to prosecute or offer courses for speeds less than 10% plus 2 mph over the limit (as per ACPO guidelines).

About a year ago I attended a Driver Awareness Course conducted in Dorset, which was subcontracted to a private company. It was presented by a woman whom I had seen speaking before at a RoSPARODAR meeting; I'm a member and Gold Advanced Driving Certificate holder.

I consider myself to be a professional driver having been involved in the motor trade for 40 years until retirement in 2000, and during which time I only ever got one conviction for having a faulty rear lamp for which I was fined 10/-.

I attended the course having passed a fixed camera at 36 mph in a 30 limit (at quarter to midnight with not a soul in sight). Not an excuse, and I do not exceed the speed limits normally - it

was a momentary lapse of concentration.

My experience was that the Dorset course was very laid back and overall a very pleasant experience. There were certainly no bullying tactics, although some graphic pictures were shown of the results of pedestrians being hit by cars at speeds not much in excess of the 30 limit.

My only complaint was that the instructor made the usual statement that you should use third gear when driving at 30mph. I challenged this as it is now RoSPA and IAM policy to relax this requirement in their 'system'. I said it uses more fuel. "No it doesn't", she said.

I decided to shut up as the rest of the 20 participants were only interested in getting this over as soon as possible. But there are plenty of studies that show that driving in third gear does use more fuel - in fact about 3% more - and if it were not true why do some cars have an indicator telling you to change into fourth to improve economy?

In this instance we all went our separate ways after three hours or so, some wiser, and certainly all merrier than when they arrived. I'm still against speed cameras as they are only there to reduce police numbers, and a police traffic officer has discretion whereas a speed camera does not. They are also there to put money into the pockets of private companies who are largely run by redundant police officers laughing all the way to the bank.

Nigel Hargreaves

I was recently travelling on the A9, northbound from Perth to Inverness, for the first time since the average speed cameras were installed. Traffic was moving reasonably well, but despite many of the electronic displays stating clearly that the ASCs weren't in operation, some drivers were slowing down markedly as they passed them. This highlights two things: they weren't paying attention to the signs, and they have no idea how ASCs work.

The authorities have obviously felt the need to inform drivers that the ASCs aren't yet operational, but why? If speed is such an issue that millions of pounds is being spent on this project, surely any reduction in speed should be seen as a good thing. Yet it would appear that someone must feel these ASCs, while not operational, are causing a traffic problem, and the public must be told. If this is the case, what do they expect will happen when the system goes live? (*It's now live - Ed*). This has to be the worst example of mixed messages from a public authority that I have seen in recent years.

Jonathan Cullen



Recently I was aggressively tailgated by a woman in a Mercedes G-class, most of the way from Bampton to Witney - and I wasn't exactly hanging about. Once we got to Witney, into the 30mph limit, she finally overtook. Next to a school. And she definitely wasn't hanging about either. And there, proudly displayed in her rear window, was the sticker reproduced above...

Mark McArthur-Christie

Speeding fines are clearly nothing to do with safety but are instead a source of income. I've been a driver for almost 40 years but only in the last six months have I been caught speeding; not once but now three times. I've just been sent a summons for doing 58mph on the M6 at 07:30 am on a Sunday when there wasn't another car in sight. Yesterday I was going down my local dual carriageway; going through a set of lights (on green), not speeding, but still found myself flashed by a new camera.

Just what the hell is going on? I've lived in this area all my life and now another speed camera pops up. Further to this just what did I do wrong?

I have now just paid £95 to go on a road safety course (for my second offence). It rankles with me on several levels. First of all I did not drive dangerously or irresponsibly; I'm 58 years of age and haven't suddenly turned into a boy racer. Secondly, the fine is wholly disproportionate to the so-called offence. I routinely read my local paper and find serious offenders fined considerably less for their misdemeanours.

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

I recently went to the Road Safety GB conference, which was held in Brighton. Things didn't get off to a good start in the car park; the fact that the Greens are in power in Brighton is obvious before you even get out of your car. They're intent on trying to dissuade drivers from going into the town; it seems many shoppers are dissuaded too, going by the local newspapers' letters pages. Park for up to six hours and the car park I used charged a tenner, which didn't seem too bad. But suddenly it leaps to £25 after that - I pay less to park in central London!



The conference itself was as interesting as usual, with the stage given over to the usual academics and people in non-jobs intent on imposing ever more restrictions on drivers.

What was most interesting though was the opportunity to chat informally to those visiting the event - road safety officers and police officers from across the country. It's clear that most of them have views that are very much at odds with the speakers - and their employers too. Several I spoke to off the record are concerned that targets are clearly being set for speeding tickets, to keep the awareness course gravy train in motion. I spoke to several road safety officers

Finally, I'm being pursued not by (Preston) local Council in league with a private company. Looking at their website it's clear that they're expecting huge numbers of people on their Speed Awareness Courses evidenced by the number already available. This is powerful evidence that this is nothing more than an industry dressed up as road safety. Shameful.

Bob Craven

Michael Dugher MP has become Shadow Transport Secretary after growing worries that Labour is failing to connect with voters. He's long thought that Labour's transport policy has underplayed the interests of motorists while his predecessor Mary Creagh has been moved to Shadow International Development.

"Go easy on the Crown Prosecution Service. They are having a tough time of it." We've been told by one of our barristers that the court service has been sent a letter by a government minister asking them to cut the CPS some slack because they're understaffed and overworked. This apparently includes agreeing not to kick cases out if the CPS has failed to comply with directions in relation to critical evidence being served on time and well in advance of trial dates.

Needless to say defence lawyers would never be afforded the same tolerance by the courts if they didn't prepare their cases properly and well in advance of trial dates.

It seems the court service and the CPS are on

(RSOs) who are convinced that some of the most vociferous campaigning organisations are part of the problem - rather than the solution - in the road safety sphere. These include Brake and 20's Plenty; many RSOs reckon widespread 20mph limits are a terrible idea.

When I asked RSOs what the most common issues are that they have to deal with, most homed in on cyclists and pedestrians first, with drivers some way behind. Most interestingly though, they generally seemed uncertain of how to make our roads safer; most hold the view that crashes are so random and relatively rare that we're now at a point where making a difference is getting really tricky. Those who kill and maim (themselves or others) are unlikely to respond to any kind of educational campaign, while enforcement often fails to target the right people.

Just as interesting though is what they said about those who want ever tougher restrictions on drivers. While some take a pride in being a good driver, many don't - while there are those who are positively contemptuous of the law. As ABD members we're firmly in the former group - but it's easy to forget that not everybody is as conscientious as us.

James Hayward

Creagh attracted criticism after calling for nationwide 20mph zones so children were "safe to roam wild". She cited "40 fewer dead people" in Islington as a result of their speed policy. The only problem with this statement was that Islington's blanket 20mph zone, costing taxpayers half a million pounds, was found to result in higher average speeds, with widespread non-compliance!

Meanwhile, Shadow Roads Minister Richard Burden MP responded to his local authority (Birmingham)'s consultation on 20mph speed limits. His response called for proper safety assessments in context to determine how best to make roads safer. He felt 20mph zones are not a 'silver bullet' for improving road safety. "The goal of

the same side these days, which is a shocking state of affairs.

Luckily, here at Patterson Law we're so good at what we do that we don't need to be cut any slack by anyone, but what about the perception of justice and equality? Should the defence and prosecution be treated different by the courts? Surely the court should be completely independent and treat all parties equally.

If we sent the courts a letter asking them to cut us some slack because we are extremely busy at the moment and we all have colds - they would laugh...

*Emma Patterson, Patterson Law
pattersonlaw.co.uk*

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)
- **PCN**: Penalty Charge Notice (usually a parking 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

Birmingham's road safety strategy should be to build and manage safer roads and save lives, not to reduce speeds as an end point in itself."

James Harding

Dozens of sustainable transport schemes have been given the green light; Transport Minister Baroness Kramer claims these will bring environmental, health and economic benefits to communities across England. The range of schemes "will include improved infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians, better bus journeys and new and upgraded transport interchanges allowing people to easily switch from one mode of transport to another".

The DfT is providing £64m towards the schemes, with Local Enterprise Partnerships investing over £100m of their funding as part of the Local Growth Fund. Further match funding will take the value of the package to over £440m.

This all sounds great, but these modes of transport - walking, cycling, buses - account for fewer than 10% of journeys made in the UK. Investing in them is a great idea - but it shouldn't be at the expense of private transport. And you just know it's going to be...

David Hardwick

in brief...

▶ The fee for a provisional driving licence has fallen from £50 to £34 and renewals after 10 years have been cut from £20 to £14. As well as the cut in driving licences, the fee for driver tachograph cards has been cut from £38 to £32.

▶ A new tax on foreign HGVs coming to the UK could raise twice as much as expected. Up to the end of October, the HGV levy made £23.4m since it was introduced in April – £3m more than expected for the whole year. Foreign lorry companies have to pay £1.70-£10 a day to use UK roads. Nearly one million levies have been bought; anyone caught not paying, faces a £300 roadside fine.

▶ The toll to cross the Severn Bridge and Severn Crossing into Wales will increase again from 1 January. Cars will have to pay £6.50 - up from £6.40 - while small goods vehicles and small buses face a 30p rise to £13.10. HGVs and buses will have to pay £19.60, up from £19.20. Bridge owners Severn River Crossing PLC increase the cost every January in line with the Retail Price Index.

▶ Sir Peter Hendy, head of TfL, claims London could see riots again unless more trains and buses are provided at affordable fares for the lower-paid. Despite Crossrail and tube upgrades, Hendy has said that a predicted 6m extra trips driven by a growing population and the fact that low-paid workers lived in outer London are a recipe for "social unrest".

▶ Three options for removing the A303 trunk road from the vicinity of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site in Wiltshire are being investigated by the DfT and HA. Two options would see the road placed in a tunnel and a third would see a new section of road built north of the existing route. The affordability, value for money and deliverability of all three options are being examined. The study is the latest attempt to find a way to reduce the traffic intrusion at Stonehenge. The last tunnel proposal was dropped in 2005 after the estimated costs doubled to £470m.

▶ Bath and North East Somerset Council (BANES) is drawing up plans for a Low Emission Zone for buses and heavy goods vehicles in the central area of Bath. The zone would require buses and HGVs to be Euro V compliant; the current bus fleet has only about 12% of vehicles that are Euro V.

▶ Cameras help prevent 500 deaths or serious injuries on London's roads each year, according to TfL. "At locations where cameras operate in the capital, research shows that the number of people killed or seriously injured fell by an average of 58%, meaning the cameras help prevent 500 deaths or serious injuries each year," said Leon Daniels, TfL's managing director of surface transport. The figures ignore all other influences.

▶ Residential streets in Reading could be temporarily closed to traffic and designated 'Play Streets' after the council judged a pilot scheme a success. The trial has seen a number of streets closed at the request of residents, typically for two-three hours once a fortnight or once a month.

Floodgates open on illegal PCNs

Motorists could demand the refund of more than £100m in parking fines, after what experts described as an "explosive" tribunal ruling left local government traffic officials in "absolute panic". Councils have handed over parking management to private companies, but in many instances have also asked them to handle any appeals against penalty charge notices (PCNs). This process is supposed to be handled by councils, as it would be a conflict of interest for a company to examine its own possible mistakes.

The Traffic Penalty Tribunal is the second point of appeal and an adjudicator, Christopher Nicholls, has spelled out that council contractors must not be left to process PCN objections. His ruling stated: "I find that no reasonable local

authority could have concluded this contract met the terms of its regulatory and public law duties."

As a result, 13 motorists in Gloucestershire were awarded their parking fines and costs after their initial appeals were turned down by the county council's contractor, Apcoa. The motorists were repaid sums ranging from £42.50 to £155.67. The decision has widespread implications for people who may have been incorrectly fined.

Barrie Segal, who has acted for tens of thousands of angry motorists complaining about fines through his Appeal Now campaign, "conservatively" estimated that incorrectly issued fines are worth around £30m annually. He believes those who did not pursue their fines after the first rejection could claim back well over £100m, going back five years.

A38 Aston Expressway to disappear?

One of the biggest and most important pieces of 1960s road infrastructure in Birmingham could be demolished under plans unveiled by the city council. The A38 connects the Aston Expressway in north-east Birmingham with the Bristol Road in the south-west of the city, skirting the city centre in tunnels and open stretches of road. The city council says the road is a "significant barrier to movement and inhibitor to development in the city centre".



Lengthy maintenance closures of the A38 tunnels over the last two summers have helped persuade the council that the road could be permanently closed. A consultation next year will present a range of options

including "removing structures, closing the existing tunnels and redirecting through traffic on to a substantially upgraded ring road [the A4540] or new, longer tunnels under the city". Removing the A38 structures would create new land for economic development, says the council.

Rotherham prosecutes 'legal' drivers

Driver who were fooled into speeding after 40mph signs mysteriously appeared on a 30mph road have claimed they should not be fined for their mistakes. Pranksters are believed to be behind the sudden arrival of four official-looking circular signs on the A630 near Rotherham, with the local council admitting it has no idea where they came from.

A driving instructor was among those caught out by the incorrect signs, which were attached to lampposts along a one-mile stretch of the road at the former pit village of Thrybergh – they were up from Monday 22 until Thursday 25 September.

"Nobody knows where [the signs] came from," a police spokeswoman said. "The initial

indication we have had is [that] somebody has clearly done it as a joke". Police won't confirm how many motorists fell foul of the practical joke.

One driver said he'd been given three points for speeding along the stretch of road, and his daughter had also been caught. He said: "The camera van has been parked across the road from a 40mph sign dishing out speeding fines for people driving over 30mph, it's ridiculous. His daughter added: "I've not been driving very long and I was taught to follow what the signs tell me. I'm booked onto a speed awareness course after I was caught driving at 36mph on Doncaster Road where the signs said 40mph. I don't know what to make of it."

EC gears up for 'user-friendly' tolls

The European Commission has announced it will propose a new law to make road toll schemes across Europe more user-friendly if it fails to achieve it through non-binding measures. Speaking at a European Parliament hearing on European road toll systems for private vehicles, the Commission said there was a lot of room for new initiatives in the area.

As more countries introduce road toll schemes, the European Commission wants to ensure that the new set ups are easy to use across the EU and are non-discriminatory. Toll roads have been set up in Hungary, the UK, and Latvia; Sweden, Belgium and Norway are planning to put in

place such schemes in 2016. "We have seen a proliferation of national draft schemes lately," said the Commission at the hearing. "But we need to be mindful of the overall coherence of the introduction of those schemes."

The announcement came two weeks after Germany introduced a controversial law that charges vehicles for the use of its autobahn. While all drivers technically have to pay for the same highway, German citizens are given the opportunity to deduct these costs from their annual car tax. The law has yet to be approved by Berlin, but if it comes into force, the system will discriminate against foreign drivers.

UK faces major HGV driver shortage

The UK road haulage industry is facing a massive shortage of drivers according to the Road Haulage Association. Its new Chief Executive Richard Burnett said: "We are pressing hard for the Treasury to make funding available so that would-be lorry drivers can take the vocational driving and related tests that they so desperately need to pass and legally drive a heavy goods vehicle. The economy relies massively on an effective logistics industry. If that efficiency is to be maintained, it is vital that funding be made available now".

He continued: "Ours is an industry with an ageing workforce. With 45,000 HGV drivers due to retire in the next two years, and more set to leave for medical reasons or because they have jobs elsewhere, it's clear that unless Government recognises and addresses this



critical issue, the economic growth will slow down dramatically. Ours is an industry that has ridden the financial storm - 2013 saw the first increase in HGV numbers on UK roads since 2007. Despite this increase, we estimate that we are currently 40,000 drivers short. Do the maths - there are simply not enough drivers to keep the economy moving".

Planners reject more roads investment

Transport planners want more investment in walking, cycling and local rail but the vast majority oppose expansion of the trunk road network, according to the Transport Planning Society's survey of members. Walking and cycling came top of investment priorities, followed by non-high speed rail. Support for high-speed rail was low - just 22% - and support for major trunk road schemes even lower - just 11%. Support for extra runway capacity in the South East was 35%, slightly ahead of more regional capacity (30%) and level with reforming aviation taxation before any expansion (35%). Policy objectives with the highest priority were transport and health, and using the planning system to reduce the need to travel.

Members were strongly supportive of giving city regions more transport powers but had mixed views about the value of Local Enterprise Partnerships. The TPS has about 1000 members and 215 responded to the survey.

Oxford puts cyclists and walkers first

A £5.5m project to transform Frideswide Square in Oxford city centre will feature shared space for pedestrians and cyclists. Oxfordshire county councillors have approved the final designs for the square, located outside the city's railway station. It currently presents a gateway to the city for rail travellers, with more than 35,000 vehicles passing through it each day.

Oxfordshire says the redesign will reduce road space to an absolute minimum to keep vehicle speeds as low as possible. A 20mph speed limit will apply but the design speed is actually 12-15mph. Traffic signal-controlled junctions at both ends of the square will be replaced by roundabouts. Oxfordshire has rejected calls for cycle lanes to be retained in the carriageway, saying providing them would increase the road width and thus vehicle speeds. The council instead plans to create shared space areas for pedestrians and cyclists, generally at least four metres wide. A zone next to the buildings on the sides of the square will be designated for pedestrians only.

in brief...

► The Scottish Government is to be handed full powers over road traffic signs and speed limits. Holyrood will also receive powers enabling public sector operators to bid for Scotland's rail franchises. Fuel duty will remain a reserved matter but air passenger duty will be devolved.

► Deputy prime minister Nick Clegg has announced a £214m boost for cycling. The Government will give £114m to the eight cities that have already received a Cycle City Ambition Grant: Newcastle, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Cambridge, Oxford, Bristol and Norwich. The grant will be allocated between 2015/16 and 2017/18. The remaining £100m will be spent by the Government's new strategic roads company to improve cycling conditions along and across motorways and trunk roads.

► Birmingham City Council is to investigate a workplace parking levy as a way of part-funding its new 'Birmingham Connected' transport strategy. Paul Dransfield, the council's deputy chief executive, told councillors: "A workplace parking levy could result in over £20m of new investment into our transport system each year, although this is only one of a number of options available. Businesses across the city will gain significant financial benefits from a massive investment in transport and hence they will have a vested interest in contributing to its delivery."

► The London Borough of Barnet is to introduce a CO2 emissions-based charging scheme for residents' parking permits. The scheme will have three bands: below 110g/km; between 110g/km and 200g/km; and above 200g/km. Councillors will set the charges in January and the new regime will come into force in April.

► Drivers who ignore the new 20mph limit in Winchester city centre won't be prosecuted; instead their speed could be monitored by volunteers with no enforcement powers through community Speedwatch schemes. Belinda Kingsley, of Hampshire Constabulary, said that police could visit speeding "hot-spots" but would not enforce the limit. She said: "They can go out with the Speedwatch teams, but you're not going to get enforcement taking place".

► A recent survey by the IAM has found 68% of the 2622 participants would like the Scottish drink-drive limit introduced across England and Wales. The Scottish government has lowered the legal drink-drive limit to 50mg of alcohol in 100ml of blood. Over 83% of the IAM's survey respondents confirmed they drink alcohol, and over 47% reckon lowering the limit from 80mg to 50mg of alcohol in 100ml of blood will reduce the number of accidents on UK roads.

► The Mayor of London should implement a capital-wide road pricing scheme before a nationwide scheme is imposed on the capital, according to RAC Foundation director Stephen Glaister. He claims a national system of road pricing introduced by Government would see London's road users pay the highest charges but without a guarantee that the capital would receive a corresponding share of national revenues.

in brief...

▶ A network of average speed cameras on the A9 between Inverness and Dunblane went live on 28 October. The project, costing £2.5m, involved installing cameras at 27 sites. The system is opposed by campaign group A9 Average Speed Cameras Are Not the Answer. It has called for action to tackle bad overtaking. A pilot project allowing HGVs to travel at 50mph on the same stretch of the A9 also started on 28 October.

▶ Motorists will be clocked by almost 50 speed cameras and 130 CCTV cameras during a major upgrade of the M60 and M62. The route is being turned into a £208m 'smart motorway' and the restrictions will remain in place until Autumn 2017. There are 32 average speed cameras up and running on the route between M60 junction 8 near Sale and Junction 20 of the M62 near Rochdale - with a further 16 due to come. There will also be 132 CCTV cameras, so drivers will be monitored by about three speed cameras and seven CCTV cameras in every mile they cover.

▶ Portsmouth cycle campaigners are calling on the city's council to build properly engineered cycle lanes after the rate of cycling injuries increased 9% between 2012 and 2013, making Portsmouth the worst English city for cycling casualties outside London. In response Councillor Ken Ellcome, cabinet member for traffic and transportation, said: "Our worst accident site is the junction of Anglesea Road and Park Road, where a major cause of accidents here is people on bikes jumping red lights." That's upset the local cyclists...

▶ Liverpool City Council is to permanently remove all the bus lanes on radial roads. Liverpool's Labour cabinet has approved plans to permanently remove 22 of the 26 bus lanes in the city. All the city's lanes have been suspended on a trial basis since October 2013. Four city centre lanes, which had operated 24 hours a day, will be reinstated but will operate only for a limited number of hours each day.

▶ Wolverhampton and Hull City Councils are to begin camera enforcement of bus lanes. Drivers detected in Wolverhampton's bus lanes will receive a £70 PCN, reduced to £35 if paid within 21 days. It's to purchase six 'ROADflow Flexi' ANPR cameras at a cost of £108,000, plus annual maintenance of £10,800 and £7200 for data. Wolverhampton expects its scheme to be self-funding, with PCNs raising £250,000 in 2015/16, falling to £150,000 in 2016/17.

▶ The Government has welcomed a surge in sales of electric cars and other plug-in vehicles. Between July and September over 5000 grants were provided to purchasers of ultra low emission vehicles – more than double the number awarded in the previous three months and the July-September figure amounts to almost a third of all grants awarded since the scheme was launched in 2010. There are now over 17,000 grant-funded ULEVs on the UK's roads, but new car sales this year will be well over two million.

Boris plans car-free days for London

Boris Johnson has set out plans for low emission neighbourhoods with workplace parking levies alongside a scrappage scheme for the most polluting diesel cars. London's Mayor believes that offering motorists grants of between £1000 and £2000 per diesel vehicle more than a year old will promote the early uptake of ultra-low emission vehicles. He is also ready to charge the most-polluting diesel cars more in an ultra low emission zone from 2020, and 'low emission neighbourhoods' where many people suffer heavy pollution. In the latter, workplace parking levies could be introduced and zero-emission capable buses and taxis could switch into electric mode.

Johnson's plans in his *Transport Emission Road Map* (tinyurl.com/kflq6p) come as the Lib Dems prepare to debate their proposals to support the uptake of ultra-low emission vehicles by setting a 2040 deadline for banning all vehicles that are not ultra-low emission, or carrying freight, from UK roads.

Johnson has also said he'll consider plans to introduce car-free Sundays to parts of central London. The mayor of London made the



comments after taking part in a similar event in the Indonesian capital Jakarta. Each Sunday parts of Jakarta are closed to all traffic from 06:00 allowing thousands of people into the streets on bikes or on foot. The event has been running in the city for 16 years.

Johnson said introducing a similar scheme in London would involve a close examination of the implications for traffic. "I think it would probably take time to bed in and it would take a few years before people got into the swing of coming out into the streets and making use of the space that a car-free Sunday provided," he said.

Boris bikes deliver poor value

Every £1 of public money spent on London's cycle hire scheme has delivered just 70p of benefit, according to an economic analysis published by TfL. The benefit:cost ratio (BCR) of the project is 0.7:1, which places the project firmly in the category of poor value for money using the DfT's classifications. The scheme receives a subsidy of more than £10m a year from TfL and the subsidy per trip is currently £1.36.

The poor BCR contrasts with the favourable public perception of the scheme. The first phase was implemented in 2011 and there are now over 10,000 bicycles for hire at more than 750 locations

in central and inner London. More than 32 million trips have been made on the bikes since launch, usage levels are rising, and TfL says the scheme has acted as a "catalyst for change", encouraging many people to cycle for the first time.

Trip numbers are below forecast. TfL predicted 14.6 million trips a year on the bikes. Actual use in year one was 7.5 million and usage in calendar year 2014 is so far about 9 million. About 3% of trips were previously made by car or taxi and 56-58% by public transport. Revenues from hires are also below forecast. TfL expected 70% of trips to be completed in the first free half hour but in practice the figure is much higher – 90%.

France to ban diesels

France wants to phase out the use of diesel fuel for private passenger transport and will put in place a system to identify the most polluting vehicles, Prime Minister Manuel Valls has said. In 2015, the government will launch a car identification system that will rank vehicles by the amount of pollution they emit, making it possible for local authorities to limit city access for the dirtiest cars.

"In France, we have long favoured the diesel engine. This was a mistake, and we will progressively undo that, intelligently and pragmatically," Valls said.

About 80% of French motorists drive diesel-powered cars. Valls said taxation would have to orient citizens towards more ecological choices, notably the 2015 state budget measures to reduce the tax advantage of diesel fuel versus gas.

Sustrans: on your bike

Sustrans is consulting on the first five chapters of its cycle-friendly design manual, aimed at engineers and planners. The draft chapters just released cover: principles and processes for cycle-friendly design, cycle parking, maintenance and management of routes, placemaking, and monitoring and evaluation of walking and cycling schemes.

The guidance is being funded by the Big Lottery Fund and draws on Sustrans' experience working with local authorities. Sustrans' transport engineering manager and the guide's lead author, Tony Russell, said: "We're seeking feedback from the industry in order to ensure that the guidance provides a standard everyone can work to – helping to achieve wholesale change in the way we design our towns and cities."



In October, a van driver was caught travelling at 19mph on the M1 in Hertfordshire, at 7am. Traffic police tweeted a picture and said travelling at that speed on the motorway "isn't acceptable"; the driver was reported for driving without due care. Some road safety 'experts' would probably argue that the driver should have been given a medal...

The lowest ever number of winter deaths was recorded last year, in England and Wales. An estimated 18,200 excess winter deaths occurred in 2013-14, the lowest number since records began in 1950-51. Last winter was notably warmer than in previous years; of the 18,200 excess deaths, 14,000 were over 75. Temperatures were 2C above average for December and January last winter. While excess winter deaths are linked to low temperatures, the majority of such deaths are due to heart disease, stroke and respiratory illness rather than hypothermia. Funny how the green lobby never mentions how higher temperatures can be a good thing.

Last year, 36 people were fined each day for speeding in Wales. In the biggest hike in speeding tickets in five years, 13,261 tickets were issued in the country compared with 7629 in 2010. Nearly

half of those caught were in the South Wales Police force area, where the number of speeding fines has trebled since 2010. The Dyfed-Powys and Gwent areas both saw around 2500 fines each in 2013. When asked to comment, Go Safe, which operates speed cameras in Wales, stayed silent. However, an article on its website claimed: "Neither the police nor any other partners within GoSafe make any profit from speed and red light fines. All fine revenue is passed to the Treasury. This means there is no incentive for casualty reduction partnerships to place cameras anywhere other than where they are needed to improve road safety."

No mention of the fact that cash from speed awareness courses goes into the partnership's coffers (as well as those of the privately owned company running the courses. Meanwhile, deaths on Welsh roads rose last year from 93 in 2012 to 111. The South Wales Police force area had the highest number of deaths (32), with the North Wales Police area next with 29 deaths. Better issue some more tickets, quick.

Oxfordshire's chief fire officer Dave Etheridge has said he'll continue to set "very stretching" targets for the service, after it was revealed it missed its own response times target for the second year in a row. Attending 5505 emergencies across the county in 2013/14, fire crews arrived at 76.9% within 11 minutes. Its target is 80%. Etheridge blamed reduced speed limits, as the service has a rule not to drive faster than 10mph above the speed limit for safety. With more 20mph limits being introduced that means a limit of 30mph.

A South Wales Police officer faces a jail sentence after he tried to cheat his way out of a

speeding ticket by changing car number plates. Anthony Rees-Thompson was caught by a speed camera doing 35mph in a 30mph zone in Swansea. Rees-Thompson challenged the fixed penalty notice and was asked to submit photographic proof that it was not the same vehicle. He sent in photographs of the silver Vauxhall Corsa with new plates customised with a blue GB sign and the Welsh flag, then wrote to the speed camera unit pretending to be his stepfather and saying there had been a technical error or another similar car was using the same registration number. Of course he's being jailed for perverting the course of justice rather than breaking the speed limit by 5mph – but the whole episode started with him being prosecuted for the latter. Which is utterly bonkers when you think about it...

Northumberland County Council has cited hotly-contested research into the effects of speed cameras to justify the council remaining a member of the body that oversees their operations. Councillors heard that the research "demonstrated real value in the mobile safety camera programme" managed by the Northumberland Safer Roads Initiative (NSRI). The research in question was undertaken by Newcastle University (a member of NSRI) and the North East's Regional Road Safety Resource, which is based in Gateshead Council and is part-funded by NSRI. So, no conflict of interests there then.

Another year is over and 2015 beckons. Huge thanks to you for your support this year; enjoy the break and all the best for the new year.

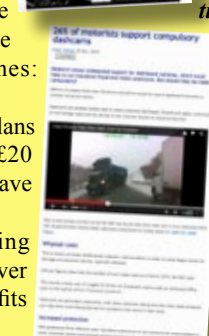
Chris Medd

Caught in the web

- ▶ The Government recently announced a £15bn package of road upgrades; here's how the money will be spent: tinyurl.com/pz6e9ty
- ▶ Looking for official road accident or safety statistics? Check out the official DfT pages at tinyurl.com/m6bzleg
- ▶ Winchester's unenforced 20mph limit has cost taxpayers £90,000: tinyurl.com/odjomdj
- ▶ Video on the *Telegraph* website about how private parking firms are trapping motorists into paying fines: tinyurl.com/nw774q3
- ▶ Good news from Cumbria, where plans for on-street parking meters and a £20 charge for residents' parking permits have been scrapped: tinyurl.com/pf2u9va
- ▶ At last; the Daily Mail is asking some pointed questions about the driver awareness courses scam, and who profits from it: tinyurl.com/ovfn8s5



- ▶ The IAM lifts the lid on the amount of money allocated to each local authority for them to spend on road improvements: tinyurl.com/ozzcky9
- ▶ Driverless cars are set to be tested in four English cities: tinyurl.com/od286d4
- ▶ How driverless cars can be confused by the rain: tinyurl.com/kh9j5lb



- ▶ Asda comes under fire from Chorley Council because it's not charging for parking – and making the council-owned car parks look pricey in the process: tinyurl.com/p4ontuv
- ▶ Insurers admit black box insurance data may be handed to police (quelle surprise!): tinyurl.com/m3gjrsj



- ▶ Should drivers be forced to use a dash-mounted camera? One dash-mounted camera manufacturer thinks so! tinyurl.com/154dn13
- ▶ Cycle superhighways scheme in London has not been thought through (surely not!): tinyurl.com/p67onop
- ▶ Brighton has put plans on hold to roll out 20mph limits everywhere, after realising maybe they're not so great after all: tinyurl.com/opgm151
- ▶ Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo has called for a ban on diesel cars in the city by 2020: tinyurl.com/k649les
- ▶ BBC presenter Jeremy Vine caught speeding on his bike – at a suicidal 16mph: tinyurl.com/o3vtqlk
- ▶ In the west midlands there's been a big increase in the number of drivers caught speeding by mobile cameras – the ABD gets a mention in there: tinyurl.com/mshzqvo

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