

On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

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abd.org.uk

Labour quangos to shun democracy nationwide

The small print of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill, which is currently going through Parliament, gives sweeping power to new organisations to control transport policy, including the power to levy taxes, according to the Conservatives, which have accused the Government of trying to impose road pricing via the back door.

Under the terms of the Bill, new 'combined authorities', made up of two or more local authority areas will be created. They'll control economic development, regeneration and transport policy but will not be directly elected, and the rules on appointments to the quangos will be made up by the Government. The Conservatives claim the move is an attempt by Labour to remain influential in local government after losing hundreds of councillors in the last local elections.

In the small print of schedule 6 of the Bill, are

plans for the new authorities to impose local charging schemes. The Conservatives have warned that Labour will use the new unelected quangos to force through new taxes on driving and parking.

Eric Pickles MP, shadow secretary of state for Communities and Local Government, said: "Gordon Brown's response to the Labour Party being kicked out of local councils is to kick elected representatives out of local government. New laws are creating regional quangos which can impose failed government policies from above. An unwelcome constitutional precedent is being set of unelected bodies having the operational powers to impose and vary taxes. It is clear that Labour politicians intend to use these new 'combined authorities' as a Trojan Horse to force through congestion taxes, road pricing and workplace parking taxes. They intend to subvert local democracy by abolishing it."

Limit cuts a step too far?

The government is to cut the national speed limit from 60mph to 50mph on most of Britain's roads, enforced by a new generation of average speed cameras. The reduction, to be imposed as early as next year, will affect two thirds of the country's road network. The move promises to be another blow for road safety, with Labour's obsessions with speed limit reductions costing countless lives. Britain's roads were the safest in the world until 2001, relative to its population, but have since fallen into sixth place behind countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway.

The new 50mph limit will apply to single-carriage A, B and C roads, and while local authorities will have the power to raise the limit to 60mph on certain roads, they'll have



to justify it. Ministers plan to use average speed cameras, which monitor speeds over distances of up to six miles, to help enforce the new limit. The cameras have already been installed at 43 locations. The Home Office is expected to approve their wider use later this year.

Driving bans set to explode

Thousands more drivers could lose their licences under plans to give police the power to issue penalty points for careless driving without evidence being heard in court. Police will be much less likely to give verbal warnings and will instead issue fixed-penalty notices for minor offences such as failing to signal, passing too close to a cyclist or not displaying lights at night. Drivers will pay an automatic £60 fine and have three penalty points added to their licences.

More than a million motorists have six or more points on their licences. Anyone who receives 12 points within three years is banned for six months; in 2006, 26,400 drivers were banned for reaching 12 points.

Unlike existing fixed-penalty offences, such as speeding or using a hand-held mobile phone at the wheel, the evidence for careless driving is much less clear-cut and is often a matter of the officer's opinion. At present, police must take drivers to court if they want to prosecute them for careless driving, it's a time-consuming process involving large amounts of paperwork and officers rarely bother to prosecute, preferring to pull motorists over and give them a warning.

The Government believes that allowing police to issue fixed penalties for careless driving will make roads safer because motorists will know that they are more likely to be punished. Drivers will be able to insist that their case is heard in court but most will accept the fixed penalties because the court punishment could be much greater: up to nine points and a maximum fine of £5000.

The number of convictions for careless or dangerous driving has fallen by 77% from 125,000 in 1985 to 29,000 in 2006. Experience suggests that police are likely to make extensive use of the new fixed penalty. The number of fines for using a hand-held mobile phone at the wheel trebled after it became a fixed-penalty offence in 2003.

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The ABD campaigns for:

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

Oxfordshire County Council is to spend £1.25m on a network of 50 ANPR and 16 CCTV cameras, in a bid to monitor congestion hot spots so drivers can be given better information about which areas to avoid. While anything that makes drivers' lives a misery has to be welcomed, you can't escape the fact that not only has Oxfordshire implemented a raft of measures guaranteed to increase congestion, but it really ought to put that £1.25m towards something to help cut jams rather than just tell drivers where they are.

The speed limit reduction madness continues at a local level with county councils now beginning to implement their own lower limits. In OTR90 we reported on Warwickshire's raft of limit reductions – all against police advice – and now Lancashire is set to follow suit. Many roads will have their limit slashed by 20mph; at what point is somebody in power going to realise that these moves are seriously screwing up road safety, rather than improving it?

The Campaign for Better Transport (aka T2000) recently sent out a press release welcoming the news that the A57/A628 Mottram-Tintwistle Bypass has been rejected for funding and therefore cannot be built until at least 2016. The CfBT stated:

The road scheme, which had been plagued by substantial cost escalations, would have gone through the Peak District National Park and parts of the North West. But council leaders in the North West have now decided not to fund the road. People now need real solutions for the traffic problems in the area, especially heavy lorries rumbling past people's front doors. Traffic controls, lorry bans and reopening the Woodhead rail

line should all be considered and could all be delivered before 2016.
Real solutions to traffic problems eh? So the freight that needs to be carried will just evaporate or all go by rail will it? Sounds more like the Campaign for No Transport to me...

It seems that Labour's obsession with speed limit reductions really does know no bounds. Intent on reducing the national speed limit to 50mph nationwide, road minister Jim Fitzpatrick, has defended the plan, claiming: "I'm sure that the vast majority of motorists would support the proposals." Really? If he's so confident, there'll be a referendum on this then, will there not? If you want to vote against the plans make sure you log onto the Number 10 petition at <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/noNSLreduction/>

Most stupid road user seen in the past month:
The Audi driver who whizzed past me on the M6, while jabbering away on his mobile phone – all in full view of a marked police car that was cruising along in lane one. If the guy couldn't spot a fluorescent battenburg, what hope was there?

This job ad was spotted by Adrian Stokes; it sounds like a nice little earner for someone:

Role specification: The Climate Change Adaptation Sub-Committee is a new expert body to be established under the Climate Change Act 2008. It will advise the Committee on Climate Change on climatic risks in the UK, and through that Committee ensure that the Government's Programme for adaptation enables England to prepare effectively for the impacts of climate change. We are seeking a Chair who offers the ability to steer and develop the work of the Sub-Committee and to act as its figurehead and advocate for the work of the Sub-committee, both as a member of the Committee on Climate Change and with external stakeholders. Remuneration: £800 for two days (as a member of the Committee

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The next issue of *On The Road* goes to press on Monday 22 June. Contributions deadline is Monday 8 June.

2009 AGM: 18 July

This year's AGM will be held a little earlier than usual, which is why the 25 April open meeting promoted in OTR90 is now a committee meeting only. More details will follow in OTR92 about what's happening at the AGM on 18 July – in the meantime, make sure you keep the day free to come and find out what the ABD has planned for this year and the foreseeable future.

on Climate Change), £900 for three days (as Chair of the Sub-Committee) (circa £50k per annum).

Gordon Brown has said that he isn't keen to bring in minimum charges for each unit of alcohol, because he doesn't want to penalise moderate, responsible drinkers for the actions of an irresponsible minority. So why is it that he is happy to preside over a government which penalises drivers at every opportunity – for the actions of an irresponsible minority?

Something that I meant to squeeze into OTR a couple of issues ago was some comment on a very enlightening *Guardian* web page, showing the Greens in their true light. You can read the page at <http://tinyurl.com/6yrvv2> – it's a column by car-hating Green Jenny Jones. She wrote the article around the time that Boris Johnson was launching his consultation on scrapping the western extension of the congestion charge zone, and needless to say, the lovely Jenny is apoplectic about the idea of asking Londoners what they want. Choice comments from her include: "Most Londoners I know have been weaning themselves off the car for years" and the wonderful:

Londoners have a duty to the rest of the country to stop Johnson from hitting the reverse gear. The first big battle will be the mayor's consultation on dropping the western extension of the congestion charge. This will start in September and we need to win the debate against the dinosaurs, who still cling to the "car is king" mentality of guzzling up oil laid down during the Jurassic era.

The beauty of the web is that readers can post comments, and it seems there aren't many *Guardian* readers who agree with poor old Jenny; take a look if you get the chance.

Chris Medd

Spain shows the way forward in casualty cuts

Spain ended 2008 with fewer deaths on its roads than in any previous year. Figures released by the DGT (Spain's DfT) showed a drop of more than a fifth on 2007. The total number of fatalities in road accidents last year was 2182, some 559 fewer than the previous year. The DGT said the record low figure continued the trend seen over the last five years and attributed the improvement to the new legislation which introduced penalty points, as well as heavier punishments for offenders. There

is also, said the DGT, a heightened awareness of road safety amongst the public.

The average number of deaths per day has fallen from 11 in 2003 to 5.9 last year, while the number of seriously injured in 2008 was 25% down on the previous year. The record drop in road deaths dates from 1994 when 627 fewer people died than the year before, but the number of fatalities totalled 4260, almost twice last year's figure. It's necessary to return to at least 1964 to find a total as low as last year's, but then there were only a million vehicles on Spain's roads compared with 30m now.

This spectacular reduction in road deaths is down to good old-fashioned policing, a strong road building programme (with an emphasis on ironing out blackspots), a positive points system and concentration on drink driving. Cameras and speed enforcement barely figure in the strategy.

Dave Razzell



They may be uncommon, but Spain does use scameras

Labour promises chaos

Plans to allow thousands of homes to be built without the necessary infrastructure in place have been met with uproar. Despite inspectors last year recommending that new roads, schools, doctors and dentists should be funded when thousands of new homes are built across the area, the government now looks set to go against this advice.

Hazel Blears, minister in charge of communities and local government, is suggesting a series of changes to the South East plan – a blueprint for the region over the next 18 years. Her changes would see infrastructure no longer a condition of development.

Instead she is suggesting that councils should perform a test – first seeing if they could make roads less busy by bringing in measures such as tolls or charging businesses to allow their employees to park on their premises. Only if these two fail is Blears suggesting new infrastructure should be pursued.

Insurer refuses payout

Staffordshire County Council's insurers are refusing to pay out £2000 to a motorist whose parked car was hit by a bin lorry – because the road was icy. Mark Jones found a note which read 'bin lorry hit car' on his windscreen after the crash which left his car damaged. But city council insurer Zurich has rejected the claim after arguing the road was icy.

Jones' car was hit by the bin lorry outside his house; binmen left a contact phone number and Jones sent quotes for the damage. The 24-year-old said: "It seemed the council had admitted responsibility and I assumed it would all go through insurers fine. It wasn't a bin collection day on our street and if there was any ice the council should have gritted so either way they should take responsibility and pay up from their own pocket even if their insurance refuses to fork out."

A council spokesman said: "We are sorry to hear of this accident but our insurers have not accepted the claim. This is because there was no negligence on the part of our driver who was driving very slowly, carefully and cautiously in icy conditions."

20mph scamerass to get national approval

The use of cameras to enforce speed limits in residential areas has come a step closer with news that a new camera system has successfully completed the testing phase necessary for Government approval. The SPECS3 camera technology has been recommended for full type approval by the roads policing enforcement technology committee, meaning that only the formalities of legal agreements and Home Office signing of the approval certificate stand in the way of the cameras being market ready.

The SPECS3 technology can in theory enforce speed limits across road networks with a limitless number of entry and exit points. The system monitors the time vehicles take to travel the between camera sites. One of the most frequently cited uses for this type of technology is to enforce speed limits in 20mph zones with multi-entry and exit points.

Progress towards the availability of the SPECS3 technology has been closely monitored by local authorities, some of which see cameras as an alternative to the engineering measures currently used to enforce 20mph zones and which have at times proved unpopular with residents and motorists.

TfL is to encourage use of the cameras in London. TfL will be working with London boroughs, piloting the installation of some 20mph zones where part of the enforcement will be using the new cameras. One of the most enthusiastic boroughs for the technology is Hackney. Referring to the use of the SPECS3 system, councillor Alan Laing, the borough's cabinet member for neighbourhoods, said that "if TfL wants a guinea pig to introduce 20mph limits in one borough on all roads including their own road network, we're more than happy to be that guinea pig". Hackney already has an extensive number of 20mph limit streets.

Big Brother costs driver £150

ABristol motorist had his car towed away because police thought he had no insurance – thanks to of an out-of-date database. And the driver then had to pay £150 to get his car back. George Onyehasi was left at the side of the road as police towed his car away because he was not able to prove to them that he was insured; he'd renewed his insurance just hours earlier, but the database the police use to run checks on motorists' details had not been updated.

The police initially stopped him because they believed he was braking erratically, which is characteristic of drink driving. Officers gave Onyehasi a breath test, which was negative as he

had not been drinking, and they also checked the details of his car. The Motor Insurance Database wrongly showed the car was uninsured, but instead of giving Mr Onyehasi seven days to produce his details, they impounded the car immediately.

Onyehasi said: "They said the database showed I was uninsured; I knew they were wrong and offered to take the officers to my house to get the insurance certificate, a short 10-minute drive at that time of night, but they preferred to wait an hour for the towtruck to arrive."

He was left stranded at the side of the road, and when he went to the police station the following day with his insurance certificate, Onyehasi had to pay £150 to get his car back.

in brief...

•South Wales Police will stop responding to incidents on the M4 unless more funding is granted, Chief constable Barbara Wilding has warned. She says that although the force will still attend collisions, new traffic officers from the Highways Agency should deal with more minor incidents. The force faces a deficit of up to £14m and can no longer afford to carry out routine patrols on the motorway, she claims.

•The number of speeding prosecutions and fines has increased sevenfold in ten years, new figures show. Speed camera offences rose from 262,000 in 1996 to 1,865,000 in 2006.

•Britain is to become the only European country that allows motorists to have at least one alcoholic drink and still be legally fit to drive. The Government has changed its mind about reducing the limit from 80 to 50mg of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood. The Republic of Ireland still has an 80mg limit but says that it will reduce it to 50mg this year.

•Boris Johnson has been caught out by his own congestion charge after forgetting to pay the £8 fee for driving into central London. Johnson was stung with a £60 fine for failing to pay within two days, and claims his experience highlights the need for an account-based charging system.

•A man who wrote a cheque to pay a parking fine on toilet paper was ordered to spend a day in court as a punishment. Richard Roper was issued with a summons when Suffolk Police refused to cash the cheque because it would cost £15. When he appeared before magistrates he was told to sit at the back of the court throughout a morning session. Roper was fined £30 for illegally parking his car across two spaces.

•A motorist who paid a £30 fine in 10p pieces sparked a bomb scare in Suffolk when the parcel was treated as a suspect package. Staff at a ticket handling office in Ipswich called police after noticing the package was unusually heavy. Workers were evacuated, buses diverted and an army bomb disposal team was brought in to X-ray the package. It was then discovered it contained coins sent as payment for the fine.

•Drivers are able to carry out illegal manoeuvres with impunity, in a third of London's boroughs, as police have been ordered to stop handing out fixed penalty notices for the offences and leave the task to councils. But 12 local authorities have failed to put their own enforcement arrangements in place. The boroughs affected are Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Greenwich, Havering, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston, Lewisham, Merton, Richmond and Sutton.

•Teenagers in Maryland have started a trend of speeding past scamerass in the state, generating speeding tickets. Innocuous enough you might think, but before triggering the scamera, they tape a fake number plate to their car, displaying the registration of somebody (usually a teacher) who they don't like. It's called speed camera pinging, and it's causing Montgomery authorities major problems, as speeding tickets are sent out without any checking.

in brief...

• Road tax evasion has fallen by over 40% in the last year, according to the DfT. The annual survey showed just 1% of vehicles aren't licensed, compared with 1.7% in 2007, and that the DVLA collected an estimated 99.1% of all potential revenue from road tax in 2008.

• A London bus firm has been ordered to reduce its fleet of buses after it was found to have breached safety rules. London Central Bus Company Ltd was ordered to take 20 of its buses off the road – reducing its fleet to 618 – following a maintenance report.

• Figures show that 14,230 illegal drivers were stopped in London last year, compared with none in 2004 and 5886 in 2006, as police began using ANPR cameras. By August 2008, 16,384 illegal vehicles had already been seized. The Motor Insurers Bureau estimates that 1.2% of vehicles on London roads at any one time are outside the law. In all, there may be about 450,000 illegal motorists in the capital.

• The amount of homeworking has barely changed since 2002, according to the DfT. Despite the rise in internet use, just 3% of people work from home, with another 7% doing so once a week. However, 78% claim they're not able to at all.

• Police in west Cornwall are to target drink-drivers who use small country lanes to avoid detection. Officers said they were concerned some drivers think they can drink and then use unclassified roads because they were not patrolled as often. Operation Sobers will see police, in unmarked cars, around Helston and The Lizard between now and December.

• Roadside tributes to crash victims will be removed after 12 weeks under proposals approved by Derbyshire County Council. New guidelines also mean police family liaison officers will accompany bereaved family and friends wishing to lay tributes. The council said existing memorials would be dealt with on an individual basis following consultation with the families involved.

• A Berkshire council is facing claims for half a million pounds after cars were flooded at a park-and-ride site. Some 35 people have lodged insurance claims with Wokingham Borough Council after their cars were ruined at Loddon Bridge park-and-ride site in February.

• Motorists parking or driving in bus lanes in Bristol could find themselves caught on CCTV cameras and fined. The authority, which is inviting views on the plan, said CCTV bus lane enforcement could begin as soon as May.

• Warwickshire is in talks with the police and CPS about removing the need for advance warning signs of speed cameras. The policy of alerting motorists to cameras was introduced by the Government a number of years ago; the use of signs continues to be recommended in the Government circular, 1/2007 *Use of speed and red light cameras for traffic enforcement: guidance on deployment, visibility and signing*.

If you have a cutting you'd like to have included in OTR, please send it to Chris Medd – contact details are on page 16.

Olympic travel plans "will cause chaos"

Plans to allow Olympic athletes and VIPs to be driven in express road lanes will bring chaos to London, according to a Games insider. The Olympic Road Network will provide the lanes between the Olympic villages and main sporting venues, but a senior executive close to the project has warned that instead of lasting for just a day, the operation will last up to six weeks and cause disruption for thousands of drivers and residents. According to the Olympic Delivery Authority, the plan will see:

- Cyclists banned from miles of express routes designed to transport officials and athletes through London in high-speed convoys.

- Motorists facing strict "no stopping" rules on miles of roads on pain of fines of up to £5000.

- Parking and loading bays that may hinder the network will be swept away before the Games even begin.

Senior officials believe that although the DfT is consulting on the proposals, it is not revealing the full extent of the clampdown.

Meanwhile, drivers across Hampshire could face hours of delays and fines of up to £5000 as lanes across the region's highways are closed for the London 2012 Olympics. To allow athletes, officials and VIPs to travel between London and Weymouth, where the sailing events will be held, lanes along the M3, M27 and A31 could be reserved for Olympic travel only – and anyone who strays into them will be fined. Anyone who challenges the fine could then face a £5000 penalty.

The DfT scheme would last through the 16 days of Olympic Games and 12 days of the Paralympics to allow up to 55,000 athletes, officials, media and sponsors easy travel between venues and events.

It will also see the M27 reduced back to three lanes for the period, despite the current road widening scheme that is seeing a fourth lane added in both directions between junctions three and four (Nursling and the M3) to alleviate congestion.

Foreign driver penalties set to mushroom

Foreign drivers will have to pay on-the-spot fines of up to £900 for flouting traffic laws, under new legislation from 1 April. If they don't have enough cash or a working credit card, their vehicles will be clamped until they pay – and they'll face an additional £80 release fee. The law will also apply to British residents who cannot prove at the roadside that they have a valid address in Britain.

The fines will be described officially as deposits, because the money would be refunded if the driver went to court and was found not guilty. However, very few foreign drivers are likely to return to Britain to contest their cases. Until now, foreign drivers have rarely been prosecuted because police can't take action against them if they fail to respond to a summons. Instead,

officers often merely give verbal warnings.

Three million foreign-registered vehicles enter Britain each year. Polish vehicles account for 36%, French vehicles for 10% and German vehicles for 9%, with foreign vehicles 30% likelier to be in a crash than a British-registered vehicle. The number of crashes caused by foreign vehicles increased by 47% between 2002 and 2007 with almost 400 deaths & serious injuries plus 3000 slight injuries from accidents involving foreign vehicles in 2007.

The standard deposit for a careless driving offence – including driving too close to the vehicle in front or reading a map at the wheel – will be £300. Deposits for speeding offences and using hand-held mobile phones will be £60, in line with existing fixed penalties. Foreign drivers won't get penalty points however.

LEZ plans axed

Plans to extend London's Low Emission Zone (LEZ) have been shelved by the city's mayor. An expansion of the LEZ would have seen owners of vans and minibuses being fined up to £500 a day by October 2010. But Boris Johnson pulled the plug as he said it could damage businesses already suffering in the recession.

Introduced in February 2008 by previous mayor Ken Livingstone, the LEZ currently requires owners of large lorries, buses and coaches to meet emissions standards or face a daily charge of up to £200 or a fine of up to £1,000. The next phase would require owners of smaller vehicles such as vans and minibuses to meet the same standards.

Johnson said this could result in 90,000 vehicle owners paying up to £2000 each for emission reduction equipment.

Another fine mess

A total of 4128 motorists are to have their speeding convictions quashed after it emerged police in Cheshire had no powers to prosecute them. The drivers were caught speeding on the A5117 at Deeside Park, Chester, over an eight-month period in 2008, but it emerged that a legal order to enforce a 40mph speed limit next to a stretch of road works ran out in April.

The drivers have already had points added to their licence, been fined and attended speed awareness courses; the mistake was discovered on 15 December. In a joint statement, Cheshire Police and the Highways Agency admitted the traffic order had lapsed in April and had not been renewed. Supt Guy Hindle said: "We are not happy to progress with offences on this road which occurred between 9 April and 17 December 2008. Police are currently identifying everyone affected."

Right to repair

As reported in OTR recently, car maintenance costs are set to spiral thanks to fresh EU legislation that could see independent garages denied access to technology to service newer models. The regulation in question is known as the Motor Vehicle Block Exemption, and it was introduced in 2002 with to regulate agreements between car companies and franchised dealers. But one of the side benefits of the regulation was the release of components, data and tools to allow independent garages to service vehicles, even when they're in the warranty period.

With cars gaining in technical complexity day by day, the need for access to items such as the on-board diagnostics system is essential. With the regulation up for review by mid-2010, the independent motor trade is horrified to learn that the European Commission thinks there's little reason to renew it.

"Abandoning EU regulations on car servicing could leave motorists facing higher bills and greater inconvenience," says Brian Spratt, chief executive of the Automotive Distribution Federation (ADF). "If the independent sector of the motor trade loses the right to technical information plus the parts and tools they need to maintain today's cars, the outcome will hurt motorists most of all".

Spratt continues: "Car owners will lose the right to have their cars serviced where they wish during the warranty period and independent garages will struggle to find the technical information they need to make sure cars are safe and comply with environmental laws. With the current economic climate forcing dealers out of business, there will be insufficient service bays in dealers to cope with customer demand, so the average motorist will find servicing is less convenient, both in terms of distance to a dealer and waiting for an appointment, and it will definitely be more expensive."

The ADF has investigated the difference in hourly rates between dealers and independent garages. Typically, outside the London area, dealers are charging £80-£100 per hour, depending on the vehicle make. Independent garages are around two-thirds of that hourly rate. As a result, the motor trade across the EU is now fighting to reverse the Commission's proposal, and has launched the 'Right to Repair' Campaign. Log on to www.r2rc.co.uk to learn more about the problem and add your signature to a Europe-wide petition. You're also urged to contact your MEP about the issue. It's European Parliament elections this June; so far, MEPs have been leaving the decision to the Commission, but contact from their constituents may make them take more interest! You can find who your MEP is via <http://tinyurl.com/d8j9eb> or ask at your local library.

•www.adf.org.uk

Pulled – for laughing

When Gary Sanders was pulled over by police he was sure he had done nothing wrong. The company director was obeying the speed limit and not driving dangerously. But to his astonishment he was told he had been stopped for excessive laughing. Sanders had been talking on a hands-free kit and was chuckling at what his friend had said. But the officer who ordered him to stop at the exit to the Mersey Tunnel told him: "Laughing while driving a car can be an offence."

If that had been the end of the matter, Sanders would probably have laughed the whole thing off. But he subjected him to a 35-minute grilling, with questions about everything from his ethnic group to details of distinguishing scars on his body. And despite not being charged with an offence, he still had to waste a further 90 minutes of his time producing his driving licence and other documents at a police station.

Intriguingly, despite being given a producer, Superintendent Kevin Hagger of the Mersey Tunnels Police said: "There is no record of the incident in the system so it seems the gentleman was just spoken to by the officer and the matter not taken any further."

Driver does Civic duty

A Bristol driver caught on a speed camera at 98mph has escaped a ban – after he proved his car had a top speed of just 85mph. Dale Lyle, 21, spent £1200 proving his innocence after his L-reg 1.3-litre Honda Civic was clocked by a mobile speed camera. He contested the accusation in court and magistrates challenged him to "prove it".

So Lyle, who had sold the 14-year-old car, bought it back for £600 and paid an independent driving expert £600 to take it on a two-mile test circuit at top speed. The results showed that even when driven flat-out the Honda could only do 85.4mph in fourth gear and 81.3mph in fifth. Lyle, who has a clean licence, was cleared of speeding after he presented his evidence in court. He now intends to return to court to ask magistrates to award him £1200 compensation to cover his costs.

Lyle obtained the footage of his alleged offence, which showed another car in the same frame when the camera claimed his car was doing 98mph. Said Lyle: "When the three-minute film starts the mobile speed camera is panning into the sky, then it focuses on the middle lane but it doesn't take any readings. Then you see the operator point the camera at me as I pull out into the third lane, but cars on the inside lanes obstruct the view. When the 98mph reading flashes up there's another car in the picture – I think the camera must have confused the distance with the other car. It makes you wonder how many people take the fine and points when they're not guilty."

in brief...

- The London Cycling Campaign has called for every London borough to ban cars from some streets on Sundays to increase the number of bike users in the capital. A spokesman for the Mayor said: "We are increasing the funding for cycling to a record £111.3 million in 2009/10, up from £36 million last year."

- Speed limits are set to be cut on dozens of roads throughout Lancashire; 84 stretches of the county's 130 A and B roads will have reduced limits. Some 60mph roads will be cut to just 40mph; other roads are having their speed limit reduced from 50 and 40mph to just 30.

- Disgraced peer Lord Ahmed, freed early from a 12-week jail sentence for dangerous driving, has vowed to become a road safety campaigner. If he's genuinely seen the light, that's got to be a good thing – but will any respectable road safety group want to have anything to do with him? We'll soon find out...

- Road traffic levels in Great Britain fell last year for the first time since the late 1970s, due to the recession. Provisional statistics from the DfT suggest that traffic fell by 1% overall in 2008.

- Edinburgh is to become the first local authority in Scotland to introduce an emissions-based parking system for residential parking permits. A vehicle emitting more than 226g/km will have to pay £320 – double the current charge. Someone owning two vehicles both emitting more than 226g/km will face a charge of £400 for their second car.

- Richard Brunstrom has called for average speed cameras to be implemented on Wales' trunk road network. He said: "These things are not cheap but, on the other hand, the consequences of not having them are worse. The impact that it has on driver behaviour is quite astonishing".

- The London Borough of Richmond is looking at extending its emissions-based parking charges to parking meters and council-owned car parks. Cars emitting under 120g/km would get a 25% discount – but only if they've already registered. Anyone not registered would automatically pay the full fee, regardless of emissions.

- The liberal Democrats have pledged to cut the Highways Agency's budget for road improvements by 90%, to help pay for the party's education policy commitments. The HA's £1.2bn budget for major road projects in 2010/11 would be cut by £980m. The freight Transport Association has criticised the plan, saying the party is underestimating the value of better roads to road safety and the economy.

- Income from London's congestion charging scheme is expected to be £37m lower this year than originally forecast. TfL had budgeted for income of £354m in 2008/09 (£201m from charging and £153m from enforcement). It attributes the decline to lower traffic volumes, fewer penalty charge notices being issued and motorists settling PCNs earlier when penalties are lower.

not so clever

Intelligent Speed Adaptation is felt in some quarters to be the future of road safety in the UK. Unsurprisingly, it's not the panacea it's claimed to be, as Malcolm Heymer relates...

If you read my article in *OTR70* in 2005, you'll know that Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA) is a device which prevents vehicles exceeding speed limits. Research into ISA has been undertaken at the University of Leeds for several years by a team led by Dr Oliver Carsten. In September 2008 the DfT published a raft of reports on the ISA project, giving details of the results of field trials using vehicles fitted with ISA, and predictions of accident reductions and economic benefits from the fitment of ISA to all vehicles.

The research focus of the field trials was with a voluntary system (capable of being overridden by the driver), rather than an informative one (which just tells the driver they're speeding but does not control speed) or a mandatory one (the driver having no override option). Each vehicle held a database of speed limits on the road network and a GPS receiver, enabling the ISA system to know what speed limit the vehicle was in at all times.

The car field trials were conducted in Leeds (mainly urban) and Leicestershire (mainly rural). Each trial was for six months: month 1 without ISA activated (baseline), months 2–5 with ISA and month 6 without. The speed limit data covered only the areas of the trials, so the system did not operate when someone drove beyond the trial boundaries. A fleet of 20 Skoda Fabias were used.

The ISA system prevented the engine responding to throttle pressure if this would mean exceeding the speed limit. The driver could override by

pressing a button on the steering wheel or using a kick-down facility. The system would re-engage when the speed fell below the limit, or the driver re-engaged it, or another speed limit zone was entered. The throttle pedal was made to vibrate if it was held wide open and the system was overriding it. The system would also apply 'mild' braking to stop the car exceeding a limit, such as when travelling downhill or if the driver failed to slow on entering a lower speed limit.

Participants in the trials were recruited from newspaper adverts (private drivers) and local authorities (fleet drivers). Eighty were recruited in total (20 for each of the four trials). They were divided into male or female, young (23–39) or old (40–60), and by their predetermined intention to speed or not to speed ('intenders' and 'non-intenders'). Since the participants were self-selecting, they may not have represented a genuine cross-section of drivers but were more likely to be favourably disposed to ISA.

The results show, unsurprisingly, that there was a small reduction in speeds between the first (non-ISA) and second (with-ISA) phases, but in the third (non-ISA) phase, speeds returned more or less to those of phase 1. Notably, 20mph and 70mph limits were the most frequently exceeded, with 85th percentile speeds greater than those limits even with ISA in operation, reflecting the degree to which drivers overrode the system.

Looking at the percentage of distance travelled in

excess of the speed limit, the greatest percentage was in 20mph limits, being over 40% in all three phases and, perhaps surprisingly, being greater in phase 3 than in phase 1. This shows just how unacceptable drivers find the need for such a low speed limit.

As expected, the spread of the speed distribution reduced during phase 2 compared with phase 1. In the case of 30mph and 70mph speed limits, there was a particular reduction in the highest speeds (over 45mph in 30mph limits and over 75mph in 70mph limits), but in phase 3 the distribution reverted to that of phase 1, with even an increase in some speed intervals just above the limit. It's especially noteworthy that the most frequent speed interval in 30mph limits, in all three phases, was 35–40mph (significantly above the limit), while that for 70mph limits was 65–70mph.

Another interesting finding concerns the proportion of distance travelled in phase 2 with ISA overridden, for each speed limit. The highest proportion (16%) was in 70mph limits, with 13% in 20mph limits and 8% in 30 and 40mph limits.

Comparing the overall proportion of distance travelled with ISA overridden (all speed limits) by type of driver, shows unsurprisingly that men overrode the system more often than women, and young drivers overrode it more than older drivers. What is very interesting, however, is the relatively small difference between the 'intender' and 'non-intender' groups – the former overrode the system 10.5% of the time compared with 8% of the time by the latter. Even more surprising is that, in 30mph limits, the non-intenders actually overrode the system more than the intenders – surely proof, if any were needed, that those drivers who say they never speed are either lying or deluding themselves!

Attitudinal surveys were conducted among participants at various stages in the trials. There was a very small decrease in the 'intention to speed' at the end of the trials compared with the beginning. However, participants were more likely to feel that speeding would make them feel good after experiencing ISA than before – presumably a reflection of the frustration caused by not having full control of the car.

Driver behaviour questionnaires were also completed by participants. These included self-reporting of 'aberrant' driving (consisting of 'lapses', 'errors' and 'violations'), all of which were claimed to decrease slightly over the period of the trials and continued when ISA was removed. This result seems at odds with the measured changes in speeding, especially the reversion when ISA was switched off. It may be a case of people giving the answers they think are expected of them.

The questionnaires also examined participants' views on the acceptability of ISA, measured in terms of 'usefulness' (how good it is for the traffic system) and 'satisfaction' (how much it fulfils the participants' goals). The usefulness score fell slightly when ISA was switched on (compared with the anticipated level at the start of the trial, which was positive) but rose slightly with experience. The satisfaction

Lorry trial

The lorry trial consisted of a single 7.5-tonne rigid truck (subject to a 50mph limit, not 40mph, on single carriageway roads), which was assigned to a company operating a parcel delivery service in Leicestershire. The ISA system fitted was essentially the same as in the car trials but the trial period was just nine weeks (two weeks without ISA, six weeks with, and one week without). The same driver was used throughout and was assigned by the company – he did not volunteer.

Clearly, a trial consisting of just one vehicle and driver has little scientific validity. Nevertheless, the results are interesting, particularly the attitudinal survey. The findings in terms of speeding before, during and after the operation of ISA were similar to those in the car trials, although there was a marked increase in speeding in 40 and 50mph limits in phase 3 compared with phase 1, i.e. after ISA was switched off compared with before it was first switched on. The driver gave a low (negative) score for ISA's usefulness and satisfaction before the trial began, and the scores got even lower as it progressed. The following is taken verbatim from the report:

"In this truck driver's opinion, the introduction of ISA would decrease traffic safety, the joy of driving, the ease of overtaking and surprisingly the ease of keeping to the speed limits. Similarly, he believed that ISA would increase feelings of stress, accident risk, pressure from other traffic and the feeling of being controlled... Experience with the system

seemed only to confirm and strengthen his negative attitude to ISA.

"Following experience of ISA, he could only justify the imposition of ISA for novice drivers, speed offenders and those who had recently regained their licence. His trust in the system, having gained experience of ISA, was substantially lower than he had expected, and his trust continued to decline into Phase 3. He was unwilling to have an ISA installed in his truck even if its use was voluntary. Similarly he disapproved of any compulsory fitting of ISA to all new vehicles or the mandatory fitment of ISA on all trucks.

"It can be concluded that the participating driver had a general dissatisfaction with and mistrust of the ISA system. He appeared to start the trial with a negative attitude towards ISA and his experience with the system did not change his beliefs. However, the ISA system was effective in curtailing speeding across all speed limits."

So that's all right then! Perhaps the driver's employer assigned him to the trial knowing that he was opposed to ISA, or it could just be chance. In any event, I suspect his feelings about the system would be shared by most ABD members – perhaps he is one! At least it gives a counter to the results of the car trials, whose participants may have volunteered because they expected to support the system.

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

score was low but positive before the start of the trial, became negative during the first month with ISA, but improved slightly during the four months with it switched on. The score increased markedly, however, after ISA had been switched off!

Concerning attitudes to the introduction of ISA more widely, 54% of participants would be willing to have ISA installed in their vehicles if its use was voluntary, while 62% approved of its compulsory fitting to all new vehicles, and 56% approved of making its use compulsory by all drivers – somewhat contradictory findings. It should be remembered that the participants were self-selecting volunteers, so the results might be quite different if they had been selected on a random basis.

Simulator experiments

Experiments were conducted on the University of Leeds driving simulator into the effects of ISA on drivers attempting to overtake on single-carriageway rural roads. Twenty-six drivers (12 male, 14 female) each had two drives on the simulator, one with voluntary and one with mandatory ISA, (no override available). In each drive, 10 overtaking scenarios were presented, with ISA switched on in half of them (drivers were aware of when it was on or off).

The simulated road consisted of one lane in each direction, with occasional three-lane sections where two lanes were reserved for vehicles in the direction of travel. The trials set out to measure the effects of ISA on the number of overtaking attempts and the safety of those attempts. The latter was judged in relation to the number of times a driver encroached on the hatched area at the end of a three-lane section, and the following distance prior to overtaking and the degree of 'cutting-in' afterwards.

It was found that the number of attempted and successful overtakes with voluntary ISA was the same as without ISA, as drivers overrode the system when overtaking. With mandatory ISA, however, attempted overtakes were almost halved, and there was a 59% reduction in successful overtakes. Drivers also encroached on the hatched areas more often and for longer with mandatory ISA. With either ISA system, drivers tended to follow the car in front more closely before overtaking than they did with it switched off, and more aggressive cutting-in after overtaking was exhibited in mandatory mode.

The report suggests that the reduction in overtaking attempts with mandatory ISA "would be positive for safety" as overtaking is inherently risky. It ignores the fact that the drivers of ISA-limited cars, if not attempting to overtake themselves, would simply increase the risk for those behind who were determined to do so. While the report acknowledges that mandatory ISA would increase danger during overtakes that were still attempted, it makes no comment on the acceptability of ISA as a result.

Predicted accident savings from ISA

Two scenarios are considered: 'market driven', in which vehicle owners or operators choose to have a form of ISA fitted, which would initially be advisory or voluntary; and 'authority driven', which would

Motorcycle trial

The motorcycle trial was different from the car and lorry trials as it took place at the MIRA research facility, not on public roads. The ISA installation was also different in that it provided a warning phase at speeds just over the limit (involving flashing LEDs, auditory alerts and vibrations through the seat), before intervening at higher speeds. Intervention consisted of reducing throttle demand to control speed, without application of the brakes.

A Suzuki Bandit 650S was used and 33 riders took part, all but three of them men. Participants were recruited from MIRA itself (though none were involved in developing ISA) and invitations were issued to motorcyclists from a list provided by the DfT's advisory group on motorcycling.

Three systems were tested: advisory (without intervention), 'assisting' (with intervention), and information (as advisory, with additional route-related information). The order in which participants tested the first two systems was varied to avoid bias, but the information system was tested last by all of them.

Riders were questioned on their views of the 'usefulness' and 'satisfaction' of ISA, before and after the trials. They had a positive view of ISA's

begin in the same way as the market-driven scenario but, at some point, the government or EU would require all vehicles to be fitted and the override option deleted, to become mandatory ISA.

In both cases, roll-out is assumed to begin in 2010 and the impact of ISA (compared with the 'do nothing' situation in which accident numbers are assumed to remain the same year-on-year) is assessed until 2070. In the market-driven scenario the 'benefits' of ISA are assumed to grow over the 60-year period, leading by 2070 to claimed reductions of 16%, 10% and 5% in fatal, serious and slight accidents, respectively. In the authority-driven scenario, it is assumed that mandatory ISA would become compulsory in 2045, whereafter the claimed reductions would be 42%, 38% and 23%.

The claimed reductions in accidents are based on "empirically derived relationships from various studies" of the impact of speed changes on crash risk and severity. This means, of course, the discredited '1mph average speed = 5% accident reduction' relationship and others like it. Since the DfT's own studies have shown that exceeding the speed limit is a factor (not necessarily the only or main one) in just 12% of fatal, 7% of serious and 4% of slight accidents, it is clearly impossible that ISA on its own could bring reductions in accidents greater than those figures. As seen with the simulator trials (not only on overtaking but those reported in a 1999 paper), ISA might actually cause accidents that do not occur at present.

It is also patently absurd to make predictions so far into the future, when so many unforeseeable changes are bound to affect roads and vehicles. The claimed benefits of ISA are just pure fantasy.

usefulness in advisory mode before the trial and this increased with experience of it. They had a lower, though still positive, view of its usefulness in assisting mode, and this actually increased as a result of the trial (though not to the level of the advisory mode). Their positive view of the information mode before the trial actually decreased with use.

In terms of satisfaction, a small positive view of the advisory mode became a small negative view with experience. A large negative view of the assisting mode became a slightly less negative one afterwards. A neutral view of the information mode became reasonably positive as a result of the trial.

Riders believed that ISA would increase safety and reduce accident risk (more so in advisory than in assisting mode), but would increase their irritation, stress, and feelings of being controlled, and would decrease the joy of riding and their ability to overtake other traffic, especially in assisting mode. Participants believed that ISA was most appropriate for young or novice riders, or speed offenders, while 64% would consider having an advisory ISA system fitted to their motorbikes and 39% were willing to consider an assisting ISA. (It's important to remember that the ISA systems under test were all capable of being overridden when desired.)

Benefits and costs of ISA

A cost-benefit analysis was undertaken for the 60-year assessment period, with the benefits deriving solely from the predicted accident reductions. The costs were those of the equipment itself plus the public costs of creating and maintaining the speed limit database and its transmission to vehicles. The net present value of costs were calculated as £16.9bn and £26.6bn for the market-driven and authority-driven scenarios, with the corresponding net present value of benefits being £31.3bn and £84.1bn. The ratios of benefits to costs are thus 1.9 and 3.2 for the two scenarios. Since the claimed benefits have been exaggerated outrageously, these results can have no validity whatsoever.

Needless to say, the report's conclusions advocate ISA as a "mature technology which is capable of delivering substantial reductions in excessive speed and thereby considerable benefits in terms of safety." Tellingly, driving with ISA disengaged is referred to as 'unsupported' driving. This shows the mindset of the author, who clearly believes that drivers are incapable of making judgements without interference.

Since the greatest claimed benefits of ISA are with a mandatory system, it is perhaps surprising that this was not tested in the field trials. Perhaps the researchers were afraid that accidents would occur, making it difficult for them to hail the trials as successful. The results of the simulator trials suggest this could indeed have been the outcome. The ABD will be opposing any plans to make ISA a compulsory fitment.

•The ISA reports are at: <http://tinyurl.com/d8sqbk>

abd action

A member asks some searching questions (and gets answers), plus the ABD presents, observes and consults all over the place...

ABD: just how does it work?

The ABD's main forum (ABDML) is a useful tool for finding out more about how the ABD works as well how you can get more involved. Member John Ryle recently posed a series of questions about how the ABD operates, and it didn't take long for various committee members to answer them.

Does an ABD campaign simply mean the issue of a press release? Or does it have to be announced on abdaction? What is the process for deciding upon which subjects PRs are published? What is the process for determining ABD policy on any particular topic? The ABD manifesto may be clear on our website, but we live in a world of constantly moving goalposts and have to be able to respond to new government "initiatives".

If the answer to some of these questions is "the committee" then by what process is the committee elected/selected/ appointed? It seems we have a very effective method of

Crucially, John's questions focused on those areas of which many ABD members are unsure; how is the committee structured, how does it work, and what can ordinary members do to get more involved. Having got a series of answers to his questions, John is now happily much more involved than he was...

responding to press queries and very eloquent spokesmen, but this is all reactive stuff. How do we become more pro-active? I'm told I can't submit Number10 petitions as an ABD member, only as an individual. And I may only pen my letters as an individual rather than quoting ABD. I accept this as a condition of membership and that if I don't like it I can just leave and save my subscription.

That doesn't answer my main points above, though. If the real answer is "pay your subs and the committee will decide what is best" it hardly differs from the mantra of Gordon Brown.

John Ryle

The committee consists mainly of those who hold positions of responsibility in the ABD, and others who are particularly active. Directors have potential legal responsibilities and liabilities, so have an interest in making sure ordinary members don't misrepresent the ABD. Members of Alpha (the committee) vote on who joins Alpha. We don't run many distinct campaigns, but there are key exceptions of course.

PRs are usually a reaction to government announcements, policies, news, events etc, although sometimes we issue a PR to make news. PRs require someone to instigate and write one, others comment as a sort of 'peer review' before they're released.

The ABD tries to cover and respond to all issues that affect the driver. Spokesmen are contacted via a press line, or sometimes directly for local issues. Those who want to represent the ABD do so by becoming local co-ordinators and follow the guidelines on the members' website. I don't see a problem with a member signing a letter as a member of the ABD, as long as it doesn't show the ABD in a bad light, or being extreme, or goes against ABD beliefs or policies.

The concern about No 10 petitions is that generally only small numbers of people are signing them, which would be an embarrassment to the ABD if its name was attached, the ABD having been associated with a record breaking 1.8m-signature petition; let's quit while we're ahead!

Paul Biggs

The first and foremost issue with any campaign is the time and effort to run it. It's no use demanding the ABD run a campaign unless someone can be found who has the time to run it. We were successful in Manchester because Sean Corker put in a huge amount of time and effort. So if anyone feels a strong desire that the ABD should campaign on a particular issue, the first thing to do is offer to run it!

Chris Ward

Running campaigns is about individual initiative; it doesn't need to be a loner activity, though. There are plenty of people in ABD circles, who can help with advice and background info. Given that what ABD stands for is intrinsically popular, there should also be members of the public, or the occasional sane politician who will support our campaign aims.

On the subject of roles, I've found in other campaigns that some people are wary about taking on important-sounding roles. Sometimes the concern is fear of commitment to ongoing responsibility or simply a fear of letting the side down through inexperience. But everybody has to start somewhere.

I've found it a lot easier to get people to help with a particular task, like research, or envelope-stuffing or helping with a leafleting session. Sometimes it pays to get people started with something smaller, then let their appetite (and confidence) grow.

Brian Mooney

The ABD consults...

The ABD's evidence to the Transport Committee's inquiry into road safety is now on our website (<http://tinyurl.com/bpt9yv>). In addition, the ABD has been responding to various Government consultations. The most important has been on road safety compliance, in which, among other things, the Government proposes increased penalty points for 'extreme speeders' and making careless driving a fixed penalty offence. The ABD's response has opposed both these ideas; there needs to be a return to sensible speed limit setting before any thought is given to penalising people for exceeding limits by arbitrary amounts, such as the 20mph suggested. Many speed limits have been reduced by 20mph (or more) in recent years, so it would be wrong to penalise people for driving at a speed that was previously considered perfectly safe and legal.

The idea that careless driving should be made a fixed penalty offence is another example of the Government's desire to punish as many drivers as possible and its failure to grasp the complexities of road safety. Unlike exceeding a statutory speed limit, there is no absolute standard by which a driver can be shown to be guilty of careless driving. It is largely subjective and, given the target-driven culture under which the police now operate, there would be enormous temptation to hand out fixed penalties at the slightest excuse. Drivers would have little chance of contesting a charge in court, since it would be their word against the police officer's, and we all know who the courts believe. It would be a further disaster for police-public relations.

The ABD has also responded to the Government's consultation on a sustainable transport system. This was aimed at strategic issues, and the main point we made was that the goal of tackling climate change should be removed entirely, since it is due to natural causes. Continuing to base transport and other policies on the discredited claims of man-made climate change will distort priorities and cause great economic damage. Not that the Government will take any notice!

Another consultation, on regulations for implementing workplace parking charges, gave the ABD the opportunity to reiterate its opposition to these charges in principle. The ABD's responses to all these consultations should be available on the website by the time this appears in print.

Get a free electronic copy of *OTR* each month to send to whoever you like – email otr@abd.org.uk and you'll be added to the free PDF list

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

The ABD presents...

Brian Macdowall and Idris Francis made two presentations to Portsmouth council on the cost ineffectiveness of speed cameras, firstly to the council's portfolio holder on transport and then the head of the council's sustainable transport department. The presentations certainly gave all listeners some food for thought; they had difficulty arguing against a truly formidable presentation. Despite this though Portsmouth still believes the imposition of city-wide 20mph zones is a good thing and cameras still have a place despite being shown that they only cause a minority of accidents.

On the same day, the duo made another presentation then a few days later Idris spoke at another councillor's meeting, armed with claimed accident reduction figures from the Hants camera partnership. Idris has already lodged a formal complaint about these figures with the serious fraud office, but the wheels of so-called justice grind exceedingly slowly.

Despite all these presentations, Portsmouth has already opted to pay into the camera partnership this year (a hefty £400,000) but it has forced a reduction to £230,000 for next time, should it choose to go in again; the ABD needs to convince it to stop the payments altogether.

The ABD observes...

It has long occurred to me (and I'm sure many others) that it may be a mistake to frame debate as being between skeptics and the IPCC. Here, for example, is the IPCC iconic statement from AR4:

"Most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations."

I don't actually agree with this statement, but it differs profoundly from the common 'translation':

"It is warming, the warming is due to man's emissions, and the consequences will be catastrophic."

People should check which version is being used. If it is the latter, then it is clear that the user has not bothered to go through the IPCC report and is simply repeating the environmental line. The display of such laziness should dispel the credibility of the user.

It's ironic that Gore shared the Nobel Peace Prize with the IPCC since Gore pretty generally exaggerated or even reversed what the IPCC said.

*Richard S. Lindzen
Alfred P. Sloan Professor of Atmospheric Sciences
MIT, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA*

in brief...

•Please let our membership secretary, **Susan Newby-Robson**, know if you change your email address – especially if you have elected to receive your copy of OTR electronically. Susan gets bounced emails aglore every time OTR is sent out.

•**John Ryle** writes in to mention a useful website at <http://saynoto0870.com>, which allows you to save money on premium rate phone numbers. On the site you can search by company name (e.g. type DVLA and it will give you all the Swansea numbers) or you can tap in the number and it'll find the organisation and its land-lines. There are two sets of results: those proven and those needing verification. If you use one of the latter and it works, revisit the site to confirm it. The site's success depends on people doing this and also upon people discovering new numbers and submitting them.

•More evidence that the lunatics have taken over the asylum, courtesy of Malcolm Heymer. He writes in to mention that the Nottingham Declaration has been signed by many councils as an article of faith that man-made global warming exists – and they're all keen to introduce anti-car measures to tackle the supposed 'problem'. See <http://tinyurl.com/8vryzr> for more.

•**Paul Biggs** spotted that the ETA (Environmental Transport Association) recently claimed that: 'Motorists do not pay for the damage they cause. These costs must be paid and taxation is one of the best ways of doing so. We shall be sending a report to the Chancellor with the recommendation that he increases his annual fuel tax above its current 6% level. We would suggest a level of 14%.'

•**Robert Bolt** has noticed that the CPRE is launching a campaign against new roads under the heading 'Roads are so last century'. To quote:

'A priority list of new transport schemes for each region is being drawn up behind closed doors. We're worried the list will include far too many new roads that will just carve up more of the countryside. Help us campaign for transport schemes for a low-carbon future that won't ruin the landscape. Please write a letter to your county or unitary authority councillor.'

As Robert points out, we clearly need to keep an eye out for that list and lobby our councillors.

•Robert has also picked up on a campaign in Watford where cyclists are calling for 20mph limits in residential areas. For more information you should check out www.20splentyforus.org.uk which is a group set up to campaign for 20mph on as many roads as possible, on the assumption that road safety will improve as a result.

Spotted by Keith Peat

An outbreak of sense in Yorks

Reading the *Yorkshire Post* on 6 March, **Peter Horton** came across this statement:

"As part of a highway maintenance scheme to resurface the section of Holmsley Lane, Woodlesford between Pymont Drive and North Lane it is proposed not to replace the road plateau and the set of speed cushions. Local residents have expressed concern over the features and have requested they are removed. The maintenance scheme provides an opportunity to accede to the request and it is proposed that the two features are not replaced."

It seems the Council has started to see sense, and perhaps this is the start of an encouraging trend. Meanwhile, Peter also recently spotted this on the agenda for the North Yorkshire County Area Committee for Harrogate District:

*"Safety cameras feasibility study:
In order to ensure continued progress against the challenging casualty reduction targets it is necessary to look at all available options and for this reason the 95 Alive Partnership has commissioned a study*

looking at the feasibility of a safety camera project for York and North Yorkshire. The study is ongoing and the 95 Alive Steering Group is to consider a report recommending a proposed way forward. Any decision to take forward a safety camera project would then require the approval of key partners specifically the County Council, City of York Council, North Yorkshire Police and the Highways Agency. In the case of the County Council, the matter would be the subject of reports to the Transport & Telecommunications Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Executive Committee and ultimately the full County Council."

Chief Constable of North Yorkshire, Grahame Maxwell, is not in favour of fixed cameras but prefers the use of mobile units which can be moved around. This viewpoint may well be ignored when a lot of prejudiced politicians get their fingers in the pie. Peter intends to find out who are the people on this steering group, and he'd like any information available to steer them away from fixed cameras. You can contact Peter via pete.pam24@fiscali.co.uk

Want to get more involved? There are plenty of ways you can help the ABD to move forward. Just check out page 11 to find out how

The death of good journalism

Keith Peat came across this excellent blog by Stephen Murgatroyd, called *The end of journalism and the death of science* at <http://tinyurl.com/ent6tp>:

James Lovelock, the British chemist and alleged expert on climate change, suggests that 80% of mankind will be wiped out by climate change and that the hot planet will last for 100,000 years. So persuasive is his assertion that it was asserted on BBC World's HARDtalk as a fact today. What ever happened to science and to journalism?

Let's deal with journalism first. Stephen Sackur, who now fronts HARDtalk, is normally no slouch. He has a solid journalistic career behind him – strong history as a tough foreign correspondent for the BBC and then the solid BBC Washington correspondent – a well respected position and he did sterling work, covering the Lewinsky scandal, Clintonomics and the various forms of Clintongate. He also covered the Bush election by the Supreme Court. He has hosted HARDtalk since 2004, when he replaced journalist and novelist Tim Sebastian. Yet here is talking about science and technology and he quotes this absurd claim by Lovelock as if it were a statement of fact.

Journalists have generally given up on seeking to understand science, but instead look for the next scientist who will say something strange so that they have a "story". This is why we have such a warped view of all sorts of scientific work - climate change, mad cow disease, obesity being good examples. The trick is to take a general position and then find extreme cases which "prove" the position. This is not scientific reporting or indeed journalism. As we lose more and more science trained journalist to be replaced by more and more journalists who have no other education but a degree in journalism (what exactly is that?), then we can expect science reporting to go very strange. This is why people like Dr James Hansen of NASA can get such a strong press coverage - the more outrageous they are (coal trains are "death trains" and coal powered power stations are "factories of death" according to Hansen) the more likely they will be reported, all in the name of science.

Then there is the problem of science, or more accurately, sensationalism masquerading through a person who used to be scientist who has now become a polemicist. Lovelock is today's example - last week it was James Hansen and no doubt others will follow. Lovelock suggests that some 5 billion will die as a result of global warming



and climate change and, because he used to be a scientist, this is then presented as some sort of scientifically based "evidence" when in fact it is total speculation (aka "bullshit"). Most people have got to the point when they don't know what to believe, especially when serious journalists report speculation as science. The consequence is that both science and journalism get a bad name and both get exploited by the lunatic fringe who make a living from bullshit.

We need some journalistic standards, like triple sourcing and fact checking, to come back into science reporting. We need scientists to stop pretending to be something they are not. We need rational, evidence-based conversations. Otherwise, we will just discredit good science, good journalism and rational, evidence-based dialogue.

Malcolm Heymer talks SPECS on the telly

Recently I met the BBC on the A14 in Cambridgeshire, for an interview on speed and ANPR cameras. The interview was in connection with a forthcoming edition of *Inside Out*, a regional news programme broadcast on Wednesdays at 7.30 pm on BBC1.

We met on the A14 because of its SPECS camera system; the weather was foul. We started with me driving up and down part of the A14 with the cameraman in the front seat and the interviewer in the back. Due to the weather and the moderately heavy traffic it was not possible to show the adverse effects of the average speed cameras, which are at their worst in free-flowing conditions.

I made the point that cameras of any sort were irrelevant to the safety issues on this stretch of the A14, which suffered from lack of capacity, especially in peak periods, and an unusually high frequency of junctions and accesses, many of which have inadequate acceleration and deceleration lanes. Many of the accidents that occur were likely to be rear-end shunts in the unstable, stop-start conditions in peak periods, or accidents associated with vehicles leaving or joining the main carriageway at junctions and accesses. In most cases, both types of accident will be below the speed limit.

I said that the real solution was an engineering one, by widening the road to three lanes in each direction and improving and rationalising the junctions, with fewer direct points of access to



the main carriageways and those that remain being brought up to full modern standards. If that work were done, the accident rate would drop to average levels with no need for cameras.

We then parked in a depot off the main road (with no deceleration lane at all approaching the access point!) and stood in a muddy field so that I could be interviewed with one of the SPECS gantries in the background. The interviewer repeated some of the questions he asked in the car, and also what was wrong with speed cameras. I replied that cameras had adverse effects that could be divided into two categories, direct and indirect. The direct effects include the well known phenomenon of drivers panic braking on spotting a camera, leading to rear-end shunts. I said that, while the direct effects were significant, it was the indirect effects that

were far worse, by undermining the fundamental culture of safe driving.

I explained that safe driving was an exercise in continuous risk management and drivers had to think for themselves to adjust their speed for the conditions. The whole emphasis on speed limits and their enforcement was sending the message to drivers that they no longer needed to think for themselves, encouraging them to believe that someone else has done the thinking for them and all they have to be safe is observe the number on the pole at the side of the road and stick to it. Road safety is too complex for that. I managed to get in the point that the best form of speed control is in the driver's head, when drivers are taught how to detect hazards and respond to them correctly, including slowing down when necessary.

I was also asked about the ABD's view on ANPR cameras and I said we had no problem with them being used to catch unlicensed and uninsured drivers, but we were concerned at the police building up a database of everyone's movements, which they intend to keep for five years. I explained that this also included CCTV images from places such as petrol stations, so every time someone goes out in their car their journeys are monitored.

This was my first TV interview and I found it a bit of an ordeal, and won't be rushing to do more!

Malcolm Heymer

EU votes to make fining drivers much easier

On 18 December in Strasbourg, MEPs voted for cross border enforcement of penalties for 'serious' driving offences, starting with failure to wear a seat belt, speeding, drink-driving and running a red light. At first there will be fines only, rather than endorsements, but it's only a matter of time before points will follow – along with a stream of other 'serious offences'.

So any police force, council or other authority, which is in need of a bit of extra cash, or has to meet certain 'driver prosecution targets', can pick on jolly foreigner, so as not to upset local voters and knowing full well there'll be little chance of anyone contesting the issue. They know you'll have little chance to defend yourself hundreds of miles from home – and even if you wanted to defend yourself, how could you? You face an alien language, plus court systems and laws

of which you'll have only a basic knowledge. It's daunting enough defending yourself in this country – which is why most people don't.

Diana Wells MEP says: "Making sure offenders pay the penalty is one of the main benefits of European co-operation" but she would say that, being a member of the car-hating EU and Liberal Democrat party.

Only recently, Cheshire police admitted a mistake which will mean refunding 4128 speeding fines and endorsements. Some people affected may have lost their jobs or forked out for speed awareness courses. In the future what will happen to all those foreign drivers that have been caught and traced through their own government? When it comes to refunds, they will conveniently be untraceable while their fines and endorsements will stand in their own countries.

Terry Hudson

Q: Do drivers pay enough?

Malcolm Heymer recently attended the Transport Committee's evidence session on its inquiry into taxes and charges on road users. The other members of the panel were Peter Roberts (Drivers' Alliance), John McGoldrick (National Alliance Against Tolls) and Edmund King (the AA).

The session was very different from the inquiry into road safety that Malcolm attended last May. On that occasion Malcolm was representing points of view that were significantly different from some of the other panel members, so he had more opportunities to comment; in the most recent session, all three speakers were basically saying the same things.

Edmund King was a bit more politically correct than the other two, but still made the point that motoring taxes are too high and drivers don't trust politicians! Importantly, the group managed to get the point over that the Manchester result (and Edinburgh, and Peter's 1.8m petition) shows people will not accept road user charging. When asked what should be done instead to reduce congestion, Peter explained that traffic levels in cities have been dropping at the same time as speeds have reduced (i.e. congestion increasing).



This was due to obstructive traffic management measures which need to be reversed.

One of the MPs, Sammy Wilson from Northern Ireland, made a positive contribution by suggesting, before any of the group had the chance to do so, that the benefits of road transport need to be considered as well as the costs. Needless to say the trio agreed with him.

Another of the issues covered is the inadequacy of the motorway network compared with other countries, and that greater capacity needs to be provided. Malcolm didn't stay for the second session, which had witnesses from the likes of the Campaign for Better Transport. It would have been bad for his blood pressure!

On the buses



Terry Hudson was embarking on some bedtime reading lately, and came across some interesting facts in a DFT paper entitled Bus subsidy consultation document, dated 2008. All below is for England only:

- Subsidies have gone from £1bn to £2.5bn in 10 years.
- This accounts for roughly 40% of the bus industry's total income.
- When written, fuel duty was 50.35p/litre; bus companies could claim back 41.2p/ litre.
- Included in the subsidy is 'Concessionary Fares' which cost £725m and a further grant of £212m is to be made available.
- In London, subsidies have gone from £1m in 1999 to £650m to 2008

It suggests that if London's increased passenger figures are taken out of the equation, bus travel is not really showing any real positive improvements. Now for the real punchline:

"By far the most important factor has been the decrease in fuel efficiency of more modern buses, due to increases in vehicle weight and specification. It appears, this downward trend in fuel efficiency has now been reversed, and the most recent Euro 4 buses are more fuel efficient than their Euro 3 predecessors, but this still represents a significant decline over the last decade in fuel efficiency of buses relative to other vehicles, and an increase in carbon dioxide emissions."

So we must assume "other vehicles" are cars and they could not bring themselves to say it!

Contact your MP

MPs are listed by name & constituency on the Parliament site (parliament.uk/directorios/directorios.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 shadow ministers are listed at conservatives.com

How you can help the ABD to grow

- Speak to Bob Dennish about becoming a regional contact/support your existing contact.
- Speak to Brian MacDowall (p16) about volunteering to help at events.
- Are you a car club member? Then get your club to support our affiliation scheme, which is run by Terry Hudson – whose contact details are on the back page.
- Donate to the ABD's fighting fund. Get a form from the membership secretary.
- Make your spouse a joint member.

- Subscribe to ABD-Action (see email groups on p15).
- Get your friends to join – they can sign up online at abd.org.uk.
- Write to your MP regularly, reminding them of their duty to stand up for drivers.
- Take the time to reply to anti-car articles and letters in the local press.
- Complain about proposals for traffic calming and speed limit reductions. Few people do, which is why they happen.

letters

Write to OTR: Chris Medd, PO Box 2228, Kenley, Surrey CR8 5ZT or send an email to otr@abd.org.uk

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

When (and it will be when, not if) a car fitted with ISA has an accident, and ISA stopped the driver from taking action that could have avoided the accident in the first place, who gets the blame? By taking partial control away from the driver we need to ask about blame and responsibility. How will insurance companies react?

Chris Burmajster

The law on blood alcohol content is unreasonably harsh, and contrary to normal principles of criminal justice. There are many conditions, not simply the effects of drugs (legal or illegal) which can impair a driver's ability. The most dangerous of all is tiredness, which, at worst, causes a driver to fall asleep at the wheel, and at best severely impairs judgment and slows reactions. There is no such offence as tired driving, because tiredness can't be measured, so such an offence would be no money spinner.

Second is anger; a person who is angry can't think about anything else but that about which he/she is angry. And what about minor illnesses, which must be on a par with alcohol? Who, with credibility, could argue that a driver doing his best to continue working with a cold should be banned for at least a year and heavily fined? Brunstrom, Red Ken, and Jenny Jones would love to!

Simon Butler

Like most others, I think the present (and previous) systems of road tax are seriously flawed as they don't take into account the annual mileage of a vehicle. Currently, two identical cars will pay the same even if one covers 12,000 miles a year and the other only 6000. How can that be fair? Jacking up the price of fuel having abandoned VED seems to be the option most people suggest as an alternative, then nobody would be able to avoid paying. But this suggestion always seems to fall on deaf ears in Westminster.

I have another suggestion. Since we all pay for other utilities such as gas, electricity, water or the phone after the commodities have been consumed, why could we not do the same with road usage? After all, the vehicle's mileage is indicated on MOT certificates, so before the issue of subsequent MOT certificates, the vehicle's mileage since the last test would be logged and the owner presented with a bill for miles driven. The MOT certificate would not be issued or the

One of my routes, the A453, is one of EuroRAP'S most improved roads for safety – without speed cameras. Between 2001 and 2003 there was just one fatal crash and seven serious injuries, but between 2004 and 2006 there was just one serious injury. Why? Well, no speed cameras have been installed, but the Bassets Pole Island has been altered with traffic lights, so you can get across the A38 safely. Also, the bikers that gathered at Bassets Pole to race around have been targeted. The short section in Mile Oak that has had the

Give us a quote

"Prosperous, free cities are always congested places. The last time I saw really empty streets and deserted motorways was in East Germany before the Wall came down."

Ferdinand Mount, The Sunday Times, 22 December 2002

keys released until the debt was settled. A chip and pin card could be issued, the chip containing the information that appropriate tax had been paid and that the vehicle had passed the test. A similar arrangement could be installed at garages so an alternative time for settlement could be when the vehicle is serviced. At the country's ferry ports, foreign vehicles would be logged on arrival and departure and the owners billed accordingly so they would pay for using our roads.

Martin Davies

I am now beginning to encounter many of the Warwickshire speed limit reductions, and they are ridiculous! Several perfectly good roads have been reduced to 50s, some (already too low) 50 limits have been reduced to 40s, and some 30s extended for a mile or two outside villages (before turning into 40 limits). When I registered my objection during the consultation, I was told that:

our results have not been based upon accidents (although in some cases, where accidents are an issue, then it has been beneficial to use this data).

Warwickshire are very pleased with themselves that they've been the first to "review" (lower) their speed limits. Expect to see this nationwide soon!

Dave Derrick



I've just renewed the tax disc on one of my cars. I do this at the village post office so I guess it takes a while to make it to Swansea. A renewal reminder from the DVLA tells me that if I pay my VED by phone or online I can legally use the car on the road for up to five working days with the expired tax disc.

speed limit reduced from 50 to 40mph wouldn't have had any effect, although the council would claim otherwise; it's not enforced and many ignore it – but the pedestrian refuges that were installed would certainly help pedestrians cross the road to the bus stops. Of course, had speed cameras been installed, they would have been given much of the credit, but it's clear that engineering safer roads is so much more than just sticking up a camera.

Paul Biggs

•www.eurorap.org

Good to see some sense at last. BBC news this morning had Edmund King from the AA with a lady whose son had been killed as a passenger in a car driven by a young drink driver doing 60-80 in a 30. They hit a tree and he was thrown from the car (no belt). I was expecting the usual nonsense but instead they were both going for early driver education in schools, also combined with pedestrian education and a more relevant driving test with post-test training.

The AA is offering free training courses to youngsters who have passed their test. King rightly pointed out that legislation isn't what's needed, although the lady did want a limit on passengers for new drivers between 11pm and 5am, something I have some sympathy with. Has the AA finally woken up to what the ABD have been saying for years?

Dave Razzell

How does this work? How does the guy ticketing (or crushing) me for not having a valid disc know whether I've applied online or by post and it just hasn't yet arrived? The card specifically states this concession applies to online or phone renewals; does this mean I can legally use a four-day old disc if I use these methods, but not if I renew at the post office on the third day following expiration?

Is this just a fudged way of going back to the old system of allowing some days of grace (previously two weeks) without losing face or is there something more sinister afoot?

Please excuse my suspicion but this rabble in Wales seem to have behaved previously with a vindictiveness exceeded only by their ineptitude. Their latest spiteful act is to threaten me with the disproportionate penalty of burdening me with a Seat Ecomotive; this surely is in breach of the Geneva convention.

Details supplied

Surely they can just check the computer to see if you've stumped up for a new disc? And the Ecomotive isn't that bad! Ed

Recent bulletins report that Honda is closing its Swindon factory for four months. The shutdown is thought to be one of the longest in Britain's recent industrial history. Similar stories have emerged from other British car plants ranging from the luxury Bentley factory to the more modest MINI production line. All plants blame the shut-downs on lack of demand for their products. Do you suppose there is any chance that Whitehall and Parliament will also shut down for some months because nobody wants any of their output either?

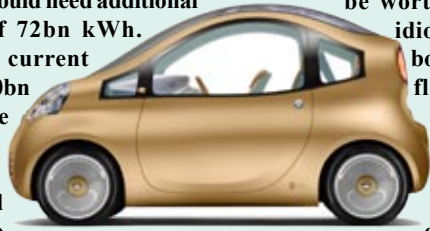
From the ABD website

What is a driving "expert"? Somebody like Keith Peat who has been policed trained?

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

An electric car as we know it (those that look daft) typically use around 0.15kWh/km. If the average mileage of a UK driver is 16,000 km, to replace a car fleet of say 30m vehicles would need additional production capacity of 72bn kWh. To put that in context, current production is around 360bn kWh, so this would require an additional 20% of current production capacity. Since the grid is failing anyway and we have had no reasoned energy strategy for the last ten years of Labour dithering and pandering to the greens, the best advice I can offer is to stock up on candles.

As for the gains? Using a weighted average for our current electricity production (coal, gas, nuclear, etc) the generation industry produces around 470g of CO2 per kWh. With



consumption as noted above, the electric car therefore produces 70.5g/km of CO2. Given that some petrol models are already down to 100g/km this 30% gain surely cannot be worth, even to the greenest idiot, the enormous cost in both dollars and carbon of fleet replacement as well as the associated heavy metal batteries, which incidentally only last about five years and work out at about £70/month.

These cars therefore cost more to run and that's before HMG finds another way to tax them as fuel duty revenues dry up.

Note that these figures are only 'steady state' running costs – the carbon footprint of a battery car is considerably higher on a cradle-to-grave basis than that of a petrol car.

John Ryle

Somebody who has not been involved in any accidents? But then, driving 10,000 miles around Norfolk, is very different from driving a similar mileage around a large city, where the chances of having an accident are much greater.

You may do well on your IAM test and pass, but that's not a lot of good, if once out on the road you disregard most of it. And what about a speed awareness course? Somebody who has passed a car, bike or truck test, and who has a wealth of knowledge and experience can still drive inconsiderately. Certain driving courses can make you a better driver and give you more credibility, but I think it is very hard to qualify, what makes an 'expert'. Any suggestions?

Terry Hudson

A new TRL report, commissioned by the RAC Foundation, looks at driver impairment while texting. The summary starts with a reference to a previous RACF study in 2008 which surveyed 2000+ users of Facebook, "showing that 45% of UK drivers engage in texting while driving." What an absurd claim! Facebook users are hardly representative of the population as a whole. If this is the standard of research carried out by RACF then they have zero credibility.

From the ABD forum

I'm a magistrate who has considerable sympathy with much of what the ABD says, particularly about the fiddled figures the government uses to support the emphasis it has given to speed enforcement at the expense of every other measure. However, in press release 652 (available on abd.org.uk) you show a misunderstanding of how fines enforcement works. Magistrates have nothing to do with sending the bailiffs round to settle an unpaid fine. Fines enforcement is a back office function of courts, carried out in all the initial stages by court staff, who would make any decision to send round bailiffs.

You may also not realise that the Courts service is a member of camera partnerships only for the

When the US 55mph federal speed limit was repealed, Montana removed all daylight speed limits outside urban areas, insisting only that drivers travel at a 'reasonable and prudent' speed. Over the following five years road deaths in the state dropped to their lowest ever. When, under pressure from the police (who found it difficult to prosecute drivers!) a 75mph limit was introduced, fatalities increased by over 40% in one year.

In the absence of a speed limit, drivers have to judge a safe speed for themselves and cannot transfer their responsibility to a sign at the side of the road. I am not saying all speed limits should be abolished, but their limitations need to be acknowledged and they should be used sparingly, not as now.

Malcolm Heymer

The much-hyped pay-as-you-go insurance trial used by Norwich Union didn't do much for getting road pricing equipment installed in the name of discounts, so I can't see normal drivers biting at voluntary ISA. Those who already drive at pathetically slouchy speeds won't have much need for a further limiter.

And other insurance companies will probably have enough savvy to know how few accidents are caused by breaking the speed limit. I can't

purpose of collecting fines, and deliberately has no involvement at all in any other aspect of their operations or policies.

Magistrates only get involved at a final stage of fines enforcement, if there is a question of sending someone to jail for non-payment, if there is no prospect of it being paid so it needs to be written off, or if it is a fine imposed by a court which looks as though it is too high for the offender to pay, so it would need to be reduced. The fine may have been set too high because the defendant failed to turn up to court or send in a means form, resulting in a fine being imposed in their absence without any information about them.

Details supplied

Shorts

One of the accidents used to justify a camera near my house was a driver who crashed because he had a heart attack. Amazing things speed cameras – they can prevent drink driving and heart attacks.

Paul Biggs

Rosie Winterton, Minister for Pensions and the Ageing Society, said pensioners shouldn't worry about turning the heating up as the Government has increased winter fuel and cold weather payments for the elderly. What? And emit more CO2 'that causes global warming'?

From the ABD forum

I love it when people (usually Graunaid readers) use 'libertarian' as a term of abuse. Since the antonym of libertarian is 'oppressive' I assume they're happy to be labelled as such.

Bruce Young

Wouldn't it have been fun, when the buses were not running in London last week, to pop round to Sian Berry's house in a 4x4 and ask her if she needed a lift?

Chris Ward

The ANPR cameras on the ticket machines at Heathrow airport have read my number correctly only once in three visits, so how accurate are the ANPR and SPECS cameras that now proliferate? But then the SPECS cameras on the M1 south of Luton have raised £1m to date (or is it £2m?)

Paul Oxley

'Rat-runs' is the new word for a short cut, but I thought all roads were part of our national system. I wonder why, when people buy a house, they think that also includes the road outside and they can dictate who uses it?

Terry Hudson

see them rushing to be embarrassed by pushing an ISA device that can instead lead to certain types of accident.

My tip is to watch out for government stealth, possibly in getting the European Commission to propose something for new vehicles. Our government has already been reported to favour ISA in its own fleets.

Brian Mooney

What's the point of new proposals to force car owners to insure their vehicles even if those vehicles are laid up? Those who want to drive uninsured will continue to do so, having already not bothered to put the vehicle in their name and having quite possibly already cloned another car's plates.

Currently between myself and my better half we have eight cars; one is a donor for a kit, one has been unused for three years and two are basically scrap. We also have about 25 bikes, some of which are never going back on the road and some of which have been off the road for

A friend recently hit an unmarked broken-down car, putting him in the path of an oncoming vehicle which hit him square on the driver's door. His Ford Escort had no side protection and his extensive injuries included broken ribs, a punctured lung, broken sternum, broken hip, damaged spleen, broken vertebrae and all manner of other bits and pieces.

Taken to the Bristol Royal Infirmary, the surgeon said this was the worst accident victim he'd had to deal with and he wasn't expected to survive – although he did. Two things come to mind: firstly this convinces me even more that advances in medical abilities are responsible for the survival (and thus the reduction in those killed) of such



accident victims. How much it's impossible to say, but for people to pretend that having cameras all over the place, and punishing people for driving in a perfectly reasonable manner is the sole reason for any reduction in the number of people killed is simply ridiculous.

But something else came to mind and I think we could do something here. On the continent you have to carry a warning triangle so that if you break down you give advanced warning of your vehicle. Indeed,

in some countries such as Spain, you're required to have two such triangles. I am no advocate of copying everything other countries do, but without doubt, early warning may well have prevented my friend from getting clobbered.

Hugh Bladon

ages but will eventually go back (and currently about half of which are insured).

All this will do is force me to insure vehicles that are not on the road (and quite possibly in lots of pieces in boxes). It will cost me large amounts of money for zero benefit to anyone except insurance company shareholders.

SORN is already a bureaucratic pointless waste of time and money which should be scrapped. The last thing we should be doing is introducing yet another waste of time and money. We should be simplifying things. Scrap SORN, scrap VED (which gets rid of most of the DVLA and should save hundreds of millions of pounds a year) and put a small amount on petrol.

From the ABD forum

An off-duty copper caught driving at 105 mph on the M9 in Stirlingshire is given only six points and a £600 fine; no ban. It was said that it was daylight and traffic was light; not that this would make any difference for a civvy. What's more worrying is the comment made by ISA supporter Neil Greig of the IAM/AA. He said: "It's a dangerous speed for anybody to be driving". Would that apply if the officer was on duty? He also added "It's good to hear that Central Scotland Police are catching a wide range of people when they're breaking the speed limit in their area." Greig seems to have joined the road safety bandwagon/industry somewhere in the very early 1990s. He also added "There's no excuse for driving at this sort of speed." Really?

From the ABD forum

Speed limits on many rural A roads in Derbyshire have been dropped to 50. Drivers familiar with the roads, overtaking and obeying the new limit, are exposed on the wrong side of the road for longer. In the wake of these new limits, I've seen two near head-on misses on one road and a substantial side swipe as one spent too long passing a lorry the other night.

Lorries continue below the new limit, while

(legal) overtakers are now more at risk. It's utter madness, but what can you expect from a Transport Select Committee, previously headed by Gwyneth Dunwoody, which laps up incompetent advice from Brake, Sustrans, The Slower Speeds Initiative, Pedestrians' Association, Ramblers' Association, T2000 and Brunstrom, to name just a few.

Paul Oxley

The Highways Agency often uses the phrase that 'congestion costs £20bn each year'. But compared with what? If it's absolutely no traffic on any any A to B journey, then that surely has never happened. If not that, then what amount of traffic delay is used for any comparison? It's a figure plucked from calculations designed to subject everyone to yet more restriction and transport cost; it's going nowhere. I wonder if such elements as the following are included:

•Company A has a deadline to meet to obtain a contract worth £3m. Company B is to provide some documentation for company A for its tender to be valid. Company B has messed up, and the courier is waiting for the document "just a couple of minutes more". Twenty minutes is the average waiting time when told two. The courier gets the document and has a rapid delay-free journey, but the deadline has passed, and the £3m contract is lost.

•A railway locomotive has broken down and passengers are delayed. The problem is a blown fuse, so a correct fuse is located in Acton. I was sent to collect the fuse and delivered it to Wolverhampton two hours later. Meanwhile, the loco has been out of service and not making money (if railways make money), so passengers and goods must find another route.

These scenarios happen, the former frequently. As a courier for over 20 years I can vouch for that, and it's nothing to do with congestion. How many such such scenarios are tabulated into these congestion cost figures?

Derek Reynolds

OTR glossary

- ACPO: Association of Chief Police Officers
- ALG: Association of London Government
- ANPR: Automatic Number Plate Recognition
- Brake: Vocal anti-car group
- CbFT: 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
- ECHR: European Court of Human Rights
- FoI: Freedom of Information (Act)
- Gatso: Speed camera that measures a car's speed at a single fixed point.
- IAM: Institute of Advanced Motorists
- IPCC: Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (pushes man-made CC view)
- ISA: Intelligent Speed Adaptation
- KSI: Killed or Seriously Injured
- LTP: Local Transport Plan
- MART: Manchester Against Road Tolls
- NAAT: National Alliance Against Tolls
- NIP: Notice of Intended Prosecution (usually a speeding ticket)
- RHA: Road Haulage Association
- PACTS: Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety (of which the ABD is a member)
- Scamera: Speed camera
- SPECS: Speed camera that measures a car's average speed between two or more points.
- TfL: Transport for London

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IAM discounts

The ABD has negotiated a special rate for the IAM Skill for Life programme - everything you need to prepare for, and take, your advanced driving test. ABD members over 26 will be entitled to a £5 discount, reducing the price to £80. This is in addition to the £10 discount for under 26s. The IAM manual *Pass Your Advanced Driving Test* is available to ABD members at a 25% reduction (£6).

Breakdown recovery

If you quote your ABD membership number when joining Britannia Rescue you'll get 10% off your membership.

Chauffeurplan

If you lose your licence you will find Chauffeurplan's service invaluable. Offered by Longford Insurance, it's an insurance policy against losing your licence or car, with a 10% discount for ABD members. Call Chauffeurplan on 0800 242 420 for more.

Ferry tickets

Book Ferry tickets online using the ABD website and we earn a small commission which helps boost our fighting fund.

Number plates

If you are in the market for a personalised number plate, Simply Registrations is offering special rates for ABD members. Go to simplyreg.com or contact james@simplyreg.com for details.

Protective film

Rhino Protect is offering ABD members a 15% discount on its range of stone chip protection film. To obtain the discount, phone 0870 803 0187, give them your membership number and request a 15% discount. See rhinoprotect.com for more.

Will making

Everyone should make a Will, to make life easier for those you've left behind in the event of your death. You can arrange for the ABD to benefit from a legacy of whatever size your estate can afford. For advice on making a Will, contact Gibson-Forge – see the advert on p14. In drawing up the document, make sure that the legacy quotes the legal name, number and registered address of the ABD for the avoidance of confusion. These are: *the Association of British Drivers (an operating name of Pro-Motor, a company limited by guarantee and registered in England under Company Number 2945728) and whose registered office is 4 King Square Bridgwater Somerset TA6 3DG.*

Stay informed

email groups

We sometimes need to contact as many members as possible in a short space of time. If you have an email address please subscribe to ABD Action, allowing us to do this. You can add your name to the list by sending an email to abd-action-owner@yahoogroups.com stating your full name and membership number. You can also subscribe to the ABD forum to take place in various discussions. If you'd like to join send an email to abdml-owner@yahoogroups.com, stating your name and membership number. abdml subscribers will automatically be added to abd-action as well and if you've got a bit more time available you might like to subscribe to ABD-Chat, which has a higher rate of postings. To subscribe to this just send an email to abdchat-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Website

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

OTR – go electronic

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

OTR in cyberspace

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

Speed limit objection packs

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

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

Help out

ABD publicity material

If you would like copies of the ABD leaflet, flyer or poster please get in touch with Susan Newby-Robson (details overleaf), and she'll send you what you need – but please don't over-order as printing costs are high. There's also a limited stock of car stickers available.

ABD merchandise

Help publicise the ABD with a group polo shirt or a golfing umbrella. They cost £20 apiece (including P&P) and you can order them from Susan Newby-Robson, whose details are overleaf.

Affiliated organisations

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

Business cards

Business cards are available from the membership secretary if you're representing the ABD.

Fighting fund

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

Joint memberships

Joint memberships 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.

national & regional contacts

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

Affiliated organisations

- American Automobile Club
- BMW Car Club
- CIPS (Choice in Personal Safety)
- Citroen Car Club
- Driver Awareness
- Jaguar Drivers' Club
- NO2ID

- Panther Enthusiasts' Club
- Parkingticket.co.uk
- Professional Drivers' Association
- Renault ClioSport Club
- Safe Speed (safespeed.org.uk)
- South East Lotus Owners' Club
- Subaru Impreza Drivers' Club
- The Independent Porsche Enthusiasts' Club
- Triumph Stag Enthusiasts' Club

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These are the main contacts and their key contact details. For a complete list of contact details, visit the members' website (details on page 15)

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