

# On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

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## From tiny acorns...

It seems the Government are starting to wake up to the strength of feeling amongst Britain's drivers. In the recent budget the price of fuel was increased only by inflation — officially because some drivers are starting to feel the pinch with the recent price hikes due to the spiralling cost of crude oil.

The reduced VED rate will also apply to engines up to 1200cc rather than the original 1100cc. When this original provision was made it was only the ABD that highlighted how mean the gesture was.

## news

☞The Treasury has had a windfall of nearly £0.5 billion from rising prices at the pumps.

The Government is sitting on £427 million in VAT receipts from a surge in the price of petrol over the past year, especially in recent weeks which have seen several one pence rises.

☞OPEC members have hinted recently that oil production will be increased from April, in an attempt to halt the rocketing cost of crude oil.

## The Motorists' Forum

The Government has launched its Motorists' Forum. Participants include the AA, RAC, CBI, SMMT, Highways Agency, Disabled Drivers' Association, National Federation of Women's Institutes and the Association of Chief Police Officers.

The ABD asked for membership but wasn't judged large enough. The British public is getting the Government it deserves — people agree with the ABD, often vociferously, but until they're prepared to join us in much larger numbers they will continue to be treated with contempt by the Government and its anti-car advisors.

## Another lost opportunity

The Government's Road Safety Strategy was recently unveiled, with much fanfare. But few are happy with it — anti-car groups say it doesn't go far enough (they want even more enforcement), and pro-car groups (few and far between) say the emphasis is all wrong. Measures include:

☞A new offence of excessive speeding carrying more points & earlier disqualification

☞Harsher punishments for drink drivers  
☞Higher fines for motorists caught driving carelessly — up from £2000 to £5000

☞Strict new US-style retraining for convicted offenders, including those guilty of roadside violence and drink drivers

☞Higher fixed penalty fines for traffic offences

☞New digital roadside breathalysers

☞Plans for a mandatory six month L-plate period for learners

☞Fixed penalties will rise from £40 to £60 for offences such as red-light jumping and moving traffic violations.

Motorists who drive without proper insurance will also be targeted.

Edmund King of the RAC said: "We welcome the fact that the Government appears to be targeting the minority of hard core of irresponsible drivers."

What a shame they are also targeting the

majority of hard-core sensible drivers as well. The only mention of driver training is that of forcing people who transgress the law to undertake driver training before they are allowed back on the road. What was that about bolts and doors? And this is assuming the law is appropriate of course.

Robert Gifford, executive director of PACTS (Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety) claims we don't need to improve driver training, as measures outlined in the Government's own road safety strategy were enough to meet the target of cutting Britain's annual road death toll of 3,500 by 40% in 10 years.

Gifford's attitude is that by forcing drivers to drive slowly and strongly punishing those who disobey, we will make the roads safer.

Steve Johnson, of fleet driver trainer Drive & Survive disagrees: "realistically one should be tackling the root causes of road accidents — lack of experience and driver attitude".

Once again the real causes of accidents are being ignored. Even if the Government's figure of one third of accidents being caused by excess speed were true (the real figure is less than one in twenty) what is being done to address the other two thirds? This is the majority of accidents whichever set of figures you choose to believe.

## Official: air getting cleaner

A recent unpublished study for the Department of Health has found that Government agencies have grossly exaggerated health dangers posed by road traffic. They have been actively promoting atmospheric pollution as a major health problem when toxic emissions by vehicles are actually falling dramatically.

The report says the DETR clearly made a link between air quality and health as the primary rationale for traffic reduction in guidelines issued to local health authorities. The advice named eight pollutants as "causing particular concern", when in fact a Department of Health committee had rated five of these as harmless.

The report into premature deaths through air quality was also questioned. The report claims there are between 12,000 and 24,000 premature deaths each year due to poor air quality. Somehow they managed not to include the qualification that most of these deaths are chronically sick people whose deaths are brought forward by a matter of days.

The conclusion is that measures brought in by the DETR over the last three years (at a cost in excess of £25m) have not been justified on the grounds of saved health costs.

Efforts to restrict transport might "cause more damage to quality of life, and health in particular, than the pollutants they are designed to eliminate."

## news briefs

**P**aul Hewitson has learned he's the only motorist in the past 12 months to be prosecuted by Newcastle city council over unpaid fines. Nearly 33,000 motorists have evaded prosecution for non-payment to a council currently owed £1m in unpaid fines.

He ran up 53 unpaid fines and appeared in court last October, charged with failing to comply with traffic regulations. He was told of the council's intention to prosecute as he changed jobs — from being a traffic warden. "I was dumbfounded to be told I was the only person to be prosecuted," said Mr Hewitson. "I know I should have paid the fines but after working as a traffic warden I knew how few people were being prosecuted and I just pushed it to the back of my mind."

**C**llr Alex Hollingsworth, of Oxford City Council, has said the cheapest way to clamp down on speeding cars is to introduce intentionally confusing road signs. He wants to make sure traffic calming measures are left "ambiguous".

He said priority signs showing drivers if they have right of way on narrow strips of road should be swapped "every so often".

He added: "I for one am a great believer in ambiguity. If motorists don't know they have priority in a street, they are more likely to drive slowly. If they know they have right of way, they just speed up and go straight on."

**R**ail company Connex has come up with a new excuse for cancelling trains — the half-term school holidays. The Sussex train operator was forced to cancel half its trains on the Uckfield to London line because drivers wanted to spend time at home with their children.

Instead of an hourly service on the line from Sussex through Kent to London there was only one train every two hours.

**P**rotestors are calling for highways chiefs to get rid of a traffic calming system in Winsford, Cheshire.

Residents claim that measures introduced to slow traffic are instead causing havoc with noise, vibrations and fumes.

Speed cushions, paved areas, a zebra crossing and a mini roundabout were installed in February last year, but residents feel that the system has caused more accidents and failed to slow traffic.

Campaigner Colin Mather said: "Anyone thinking about having traffic calming measures installed should think twice."

Other residents complained that a nearby school is repeatedly engulfed in exhaust fumes because drivers are having to drive slowly in low gears.

**P**upils in Cheltenham face being stranded as bus firms pull out of school runs due to rising costs.

Coach and bus companies are being forced to push up fares or cut services because of rising diesel prices and the costs of new safety regulations which have eaten up their profits. The operators claim the cost has gone up 52% in the past 21 months.

Parents have been told they will have to make a judgment of what they can afford when they choose which school to send their children to.

**S**pending on road repairs and winter gritting in Cumbria has been cut by more than £2 million. Payments to

people claiming compensation after suffering injuries because of poor highway maintenance had risen to £250,000 in South Lakeland alone.

The council's ruling Labour group has defended the spending cuts. The savings have been switched to education and social services. They have also unveiled plans to upgrade the main rural bus corridors in Cumbria, traffic management schemes, traffic calming measures, safer routes to school for children and new cycleways across the county. Not much for drivers then.

**P**C Simon Wright nicked 7520 drivers in one year for breaking the speed limit. He's said he's shocked to see so many people driving so dangerously — ie breaking the speed limit.

The News of the World got on the case and clocked him doing 67mph in a 60mph zone and 48mph in a 40mph zone. Bet he doesn't consider *himself* to be a dangerous driver.

**A** pedestrian recently saw the chance to make some money, when he was knocked down by a bus. He decided to sue the First Leicester Bus group for damages, claiming he was off work for several months due to injuries he sustained in the accident.

As he had walked into the path of the bus without looking, Leicester First Bus

decided to counter-sue for £526. This was the cost of the damage the pedestrian caused through his negligence. Oddly enough the pedestrian thought this was most unfair — he had made a mistake, and people make mistakes, don't they? He was the one off work, so it couldn't have been his fault, could it?

As well as his two Jags, John Prescott has use of a Rover 800 provided to the Labour Party by Rover Cars. He isn't allowed to use his official car for Labour Party business so he uses the Rover (with chauffeur) instead.

Suffolk's road safety measures are constantly referred to in relation to the Government's road safety strategy. But since Suffolk introduced their blanket speed limits, the accident rate has risen substantially. Not only this, but they claim their measures were done scientifically...

## national contacts

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ABD registered office: 4 King Square, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 3DG

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

Address for correspondence  
PO Box 2228  
Kenley  
Surrey CR8 5ZT

Tel / fax 07000 781 544

Web-site <http://www.abd.org.uk>

100740.2032@compuserve.com

Chairman  
Brian Gregory

Membership Secretaries  
Jonathan & Susan Newby-Robson  
PO Box 2228  
Kenley  
Surrey CR8 5ZT

Tel / fax 07000 781 544

100740.2032@compuserve.com

Company Secretary  
Joan Bingley MA FCIS

Treasurer  
Hugh Bladon

Science, Education and Environment  
Spokesman  
Bernard Abrams  
Tel / fax 01242 511 689  
[abrams@rmpc.co.uk](mailto:abrams@rmpc.co.uk)

Roads & Traffic Spokesman  
Mark McArthur-Christie

OTR Editor & Events Co-ordinator  
Chris Medd

# ignition

**T**he media's power is frightening. Some think a quick read of *The Sun* is all they need to make them an expert on any issue. But if the media only want to put one side of the argument forward, are those who hold opposing views powerless?

Each ABD press release has around 250 recipients, many of whom use the information contained within. Recently we've had a barrage of complaints from the editor of a local newspaper asking us to justify sending him press releases, tell him why he should read them, and stop sending them. We've reasoned with him, but his mind is closed. Does he ask the same questions of the CPRE, or Greenpeace?

In last month's OTR we mentioned *Panorama's* biased programme on speed and road safety — from which the ABD was cut. David Phillips, chief constable of Kent, has complained to Greg Dyke, the BBC Director General, about a different episode of *Panorama*. He has accused them of a lack of objectivity and pursuing a pre-ordained agenda. He says prejudice was clear and intense with little prospect of the programme dealing with a difficult issue in a constructive way. He claims the interviewer and producer had limited knowledge of the subject, gained exclusively from

those with a vested interest in criticising the status quo. The BBC say the programme is produced to a high standard — but by whose judgment?

We need two or three interesting cars for display on the ABD's stand at the NEC classic car show on April 29th & 30th. If you can give a definite commitment, please send me an email. If you're not on-line please give Tony Vickers a call (01923 263 071).

It seems our message is starting to get through, according to a recent issue of *Ride* magazine. To cut accident rates, police are reducing mass enforcement and introducing rider training.

Derbyshire, Cheshire and Lincolnshire police forces have all realised that enforcement is not the way to reduce casualties. They are looking at education but are not sure how to promote it yet.

Since taking over as editor of OTR I have received requests for membership packs, additions to the speed trap database and even correspondence aimed at the Northants regional contact. My roles are to produce a monthly newsletter and to co-ordinate any events the ABD might attend. Outside these, please ensure your correspondence is posted to the relevant person, so we can run as

efficiently as possible.

Having said this, I'm extremely grateful to all members who take the time to send correspondence. Time constraints mean I rarely am able to reply — but your contributions are appreciated.

Occasionally we get letters asking what we are doing about campaigning for lower fuel prices.

The answer is simple

— we are fighting the issues upon which we are told we must use our cars less. If the AA with its nine million members can't make the Government believe that fuel prices are too high, what chance do we stand? That's not to say we've given up, but simply shouting that fuel prices need to come down is not enough — nobody wants to pay more than they have to for anything. Instead of saying fuel needs to be cheaper (which we all know), the ABD is tackling it from the other direction. We need to explain clearly why drivers don't need to be driven out of their cars — whether it's on road safety or environmental grounds.

Commuting into London I hear woeful traffic bulletins each day. Recently there was a gem. Five stations within the London network were closed, each one for a different reason. There was industrial action, power cuts and broken escalators. Meanwhile, the roads were problem-free — except for congestion through poor planning and lack of investment. What a shame the Government hasn't realised the car has a part to play in an integrated transport system.

On Saturday June 10th the ABD will be holding a members' seminar at Gaydon in Warwickshire. This will be an opportunity to find out about the issues on which the ABD campaigns, as well as to meet the volunteers who give up their time for the organisation. If you want to find out more about the link between transport and climate change or what policies the Government should be pursuing to make roads safer, please be there.

Apologies for the missing lines in last month's OTR, and thanks to everyone who wrote with their observations. Only the last line of each article was missing. Some members suggested alternative printers, but we've stuck with our printer and resolved the problems.

Chris Medd

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## Here comes the science...

One of the main reasons given for forcing drivers out of their cars is to save the planet. According to environmentalists, many health problems and the onset of global warming (or climate change) are due to car usage. Although some of the following information has been seen in these pages before, it's worth repeating for some of our newer members, who may not be familiar with the arguments.

A recent issue of Geoscientist looked at the issue of global warming, and the amount of hot air (!) it generates. They were referring to a speech made by our Environment Minister, Michael Meacher. In his speech, Meacher claimed that "we now have an unprecedented carbon dioxide increase due to the burning of fossil fuels".

Meacher was making a link between increased carbon dioxide emissions and a rise in global temperatures. Yet over the last 400,000 years there's plenty of evidence pointing to significantly higher temperatures at various times. Remember even 400,000 years is a short timescale, as climate change has been happening continuously over the 4.7 billion year history of our planet. 6,000 years ago temperatures were higher than they are now.

There is a much better correlation coefficient between global warming and sunspot activity than the virtually random relationship between 'measured' CO<sub>2</sub> changes and temperature — in short, it's much easier to link global climate changes to changes in solar activity than to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (or anything else). It has been suggested that CO<sub>2</sub> levels are rising because of climate change rather than the other way round — which is, of course, the traditional view. Whichever way you look at it, transport accounts for only 0.6% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions globally — in fact man-made emissions account for only 3.5% globally.

The rest of the world's carbon dioxide emissions (all 96.5% of them) is entirely natural - respiration of animals and man, rotting vegetation, etc. And John Prescott reckons he can control climate change by reducing car usage! Maybe nobody has told him that water vapour is a greater contributor to climate change than carbon dioxide is. Present atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are *not* unprecedented; the level has been well over ten times higher in the recent geological past.

Rather tellingly Canada's previous Environment Minister, Christine Stewart, was quoted by the Calgary Herald as saying:

**"No matter if the Science is phoney — there are collateral benefits. Climate change provides the greatest chance to bring about justice and equality in the world".**

⌘A study published recently found a great correlation between solar activity and changes in our planet's climate — a much greater correlation than exists between our climate and anything within our atmosphere. Although the work produced is highly academic, it's also highly significant — yet it received virtually no coverage in the media.

## Decriminalised parking

by Nigel Humphries

This is a term — like hypothecation — which nobody really understands. We hear it bandied about in local authority circles. However, this phrase has distinctly Orwellian overtones, meaning in practice the exact opposite of what it says. I found this out when I attended a presentation to the Worcester City Council Transport and Access Working Party by a consultancy called RTA, which specialises in setting up such schemes.

"Decriminalised parking is a central government mechanism used by Local Authorities to bring in more restrictions and charges against the motorist for which it cannot directly be blamed"

## What is Decriminalised Parking?

In short, it is what we have seen in London and other major cities where the familiar yellow hat parking wardens are replaced by what Mike Rutherford calls "Nazis" in brown uniforms who patrol the streets aggressively ticketing anyone who even thinks about breaking a parking regulation. So what does this mean for local authorities?

⌘The council takes over parking enforcement from the police

⌘All on and off street parking management is integrated into a single unit

⌘The enforcement can then be run either by the council itself or contracted out

⌘Penalties called PCNs can then be issued which are enforceable in the civil rather than criminal courts — hence the term decriminalisation.

⌘There is a national independent adjudication service based in Manchester

which hears appeals which apparently upholds a higher proportion of appeals than the magistrates

⌘The council gets to keep the money

## Benefits to the council

⌘Council decides enforcement policy

⌘New schemes can be introduced which would otherwise be unenforceable due to police resource

⌘Car trips can be restricted

⌘More people use the car parks due to more restrictions and the greater chance of a penalty if caught parking illegally

⌘The parking section can be run as a business unit.

## The hidden agenda

Already, the contempt for the road user from both this consultant and the councillors gleefully rubbing their hands together is quite clear, but at this point the deception of the public becomes blatant, with the consultant overtly advising the councillors of the true three step ideology of decriminalised parking:

⌘The DETR will not allow the scheme to be implemented unless it can be shown to be viable.

⌘The scheme only works financially by the introduction of new restrictions — residents' parking zones, increased car



## The 30mph rash

by Malcolm Heymer

The ABD has recently been getting a lot of requests for help regarding speeding charges in 30mph limits, often on roads that previously had a higher limit — 60mph being not infrequent. The rate at which roads are having their speeds reduced has meant things are done a little too quickly sometimes, with motorists being unwittingly caught out as a consequence.

The following advice is given on the assumption that you don't dispute that the vehicle caught by a camera is yours and you were driving it at the time — 'clones' are becoming more common these days. This also assumes that the

camera was fixed and not of the mobile variety — you have very little scope for challenging the accuracy of a fixed camera, but mobile cameras have to be operated within certain guidelines which, if breached, can make the speed readings suspect.

There is often something wrong with the signing of the speed limit. Remember many 30mph limits are in villages rather than the middle of an urban area.

If a 30mph restriction is in the middle of a large urban area with street lights (not more than 185 metres apart), the road is automatically a 'restricted road' as defined in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and is thus subject to a 30 mph speed limit. As a driver you are expected

# campaigning

park charges and above all on-street parking charges.

☞The new charges and restrictions must be brought in before the decriminalised parking scheme "to avoid the public linking the two in their minds."

So there we have it. Decriminalised parking is a mechanism used by central government to encourage Local Authorities to bring in more restrictions and charges against the motorist for which it cannot directly be blamed. This must at all costs be hidden from the public, and schemes are therefore always presented in terms of dealing more effectively with a minority of dangerous and inconsiderate parkers when it is built in from the start that a viable scheme cannot possibly result from such actions.

Of course, a 'consultation exercise' must be undertaken, but our consultant was unfazed by such things, describing a consultation as a process for informing people what is going to happen. It turns out that the only people they are obliged to consult with are the police, who are only too glad to get rid of the responsibility for parking enforcement, neighbouring authorities and the Highways Agency.

Apparently, one council actually consulted the people, an action that this man found incomprehensible!

## Weaknesses

Two points arose which may be of considerable interest to those seeking to make life difficult for councils implementing these money grubbing schemes.

Firstly, the council is charged for the

adjudication service — a £500 per annum fixed charge, a levy of 70p per ticket issued and a £10 fee for every adjudication heard regardless of the outcome means

that the adjudication service is a lucrative business in its own right — amazing how many

"Democracy today — councillors beside themselves with glee at the thought of inconveniencing and ripping off those they are supposed to be representing"

people have a vested interest in fleecing the public. However, readers who are quick on the uptake will see that numerous appeals by public spirited individuals would make a serious dent in the council's revenue. According to John Squires who runs a website to assist drivers with their appeals (you can find it at [www.parkingticket.co.uk](http://www.parkingticket.co.uk)), more than half the 35,000 appeals in London last year were successful.

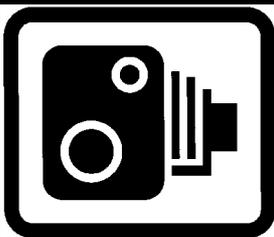
Secondly, the council was advised that it should carefully check all its Traffic Regulation Orders to ensure that they actually match what is there on the road. Usually, they don't, and any discrepancy is grounds for instant appeal. Apparently, one authority had to stop enforcement for six months because its TROs were in such a mess.

So there we have it — democracy at work in Britain today. National Government bringing in restrictions by stealth because they dare not do so overtly, councillors who kiss babies at election time beside themselves with glee at the thought of inconveniencing and ripping off those they are supposed to be representing, consultants being paid public money to advise councils on how best to deceive the electorate into accepting schemes which are blatantly against their best interests.

Next time you have to feed coins into an on street pay and display, think about it.

to know that street lighting signifies a 30 mph speed limit (as written in the Highway Code).

However, at all points where a speed limit changes, there must be signs on both sides of the road, indicating the speed limit you are entering. This includes all entry points to a street lit, 30mph urban area. This requirement is set out in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1994 and, if it is



not met, the speed limit is unenforceable. This knowledge helped someone who contacted the ABD a few months ago to have a speed camera prosecution thrown out, again in an urban 30 mph limit.

If you were caught right in the middle of Glasgow, however, you would probably be pushing your luck to claim that you shouldn't be convicted because of a missing sign 10 miles out! It would depend on where you were caught in relation to the start of the speed limit and any missing sign.

Another point to check is whether the entry point signs are illuminated. This is a requirement if there is a system of street lighting at that point, i.e. reflectorised coatings alone are insufficient. If the signs are unlit when they should have been illuminated or one of the light units has failed, you may have a case for contesting.

## Communication

Whilst *On The Road* is the only way the ABD can keep in touch with all its members, our mailing list, *abdml*, helps those with internet access to discuss things on a daily basis. Unfortunately, only around 10% of our members subscribe to it.

Some members have joined *abdml* but subsequently unsubscribed due to the number of messages generated each day (anything upto a couple of dozen emails may appear, depending on what's happening at the time). What many people don't realise is that it's possible to subscribe to *abdml* but receive only one message each day — simply view the archives on the OneList website (<http://www.onelist.com/group/abdml>). The website also allows you to opt to receive all of a day's messages as a digest (just one e-mail containing all the messages).

In an attempt to be able to contact as many members as quickly as possible, an additional mailing list *abd-action* was set up. This is restricted to time-critical and important items only. We also send out copies of our press releases to our members, the number typically being one each week. This way you know what's going on, and you also know the facts on the current issues.

To keep the volume of messages low, members cannot post to the list, only certain committee members may do so. The intention is that the message volume will be no more than one message a day — most days there will be none at all. There is no discussion at all, the facility is there purely to inform ABD members as quickly as possible.

We hope that all members with e-mail will join this new list so that urgent requests for action can be distributed as quickly as possible. Nothing posted to *abd-action* will be posted to *abdml*, or vice versa.

A recent example was a call for members to contact the BBC's *Panorama*, suggesting there could have been more balance in their 'road safety' programme.

It is only by taking such opportunities that we can make a real difference. This is how our opposition have succeeded, they have mobilised their members to tackle issues at national and local level.

So if you have e-mail, please join *abd-action*. Send an e-mail to [abd-action-owner@onelist.com](mailto:abd-action-owner@onelist.com)

To join *abdml* and *abd-action*, please send a message to [abdml-owner@onelist.com](mailto:abdml-owner@onelist.com) (we ask all *abdml* subscribers to subscribe to *abd-action* as well to simplify administration).

In your subscription request please state clearly: your e-mail address, name, and membership number.

We also have a third mailing list, *abdchat*, which was intended to take some of the general chat away from *abdml*. This has not been entirely successful, but our thanks must go to member Lance K. Green for his efforts to encourage others to use it by example!

# letters



**If you would like to write to OTR please address your letter to Chris Medd at PO Box 2228, Kenley, Surrey CR8 5ZT or email [chrismedd75@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:chrismedd75@yahoo.co.uk)**

St Peter's Way, part of the A666, is a pedestrian-free dual carriageway connecting the M61 to Bolton town centre. Recently a 50mph speed limit was imposed on this road, together with five speed cameras, two cunningly hidden behind road signs and one behind a bush.

This, however, is not sufficient for the local constabulary, who complain that regular travellers have noticed where the cameras are and slow down when passing them. They have therefore taken to lurking on bridges over the road with hand held devices, presumably regarding this as a priority in their fight against crime.

Meanwhile a couple of miles away, it is reported in the *Bolton Evening News*, an elderly widow is driven from her home after being burgled seven times in two months...

**Geoffrey Breakell**

I had a chat with a friend of mine recently. He is a local parish councillor and we were discussing the state of the roads in West Berkshire. I was moaning about the A338 and its absurd state of repair.

It's completely worn out, with potholes littering the majority of the six miles from here to the Oxfordshire border. Oxfordshire relaid their part last year — *relaid* not resurfaced. They had to dig up what was left and start again! Unfortunately this is fairly typical of roads in this area.

In the past two months the holes have been patched with fresh tarmac, seemingly thrown from the back of a passing lorry, on at least three occasions.

Apparently there are currently 84 roads in the West Berks area in need of urgent repair. The cost for these repairs amounts to an estimated £1.6 million. The allocated budget for the coming year is £300,000. This means that only four of these 84 roads will therefore be properly repaired. This is scandalous, not to say dangerous. Swerving is obligatory to avoid costly suspension damage.

I will do my best to highlight this ridiculous state of affairs locally but I suspect similar situations also exist elsewhere. How could we best use this information? Given the amount of money being spent locally on speed cameras (I seem to remember a figure of £300,000 mentioned for that too) it should be easy to highlight the council's true motives.

**Damon Green**

*Speeding needs to be made as socially unacceptable as drink driving is a phrase we hear repeatedly nowadays. But how?*

In the phrase 'drink driving' it's the 'drink' that is socially unacceptable.

In our society it's socially unacceptable to do most things while drunk. The police can't drink on duty, train drivers can't drive trains while drunk, pilots must be sober, drunken shop assistants are not allowed. Adding driving to the list of unacceptables makes sense.

Speed is different. We want faster planes, the railways want faster trains, everyone wants faster computers, the boss wants faster workers. Even those who want peace and tranquility want faster access to it!

The world has very few drunken heroes or role models but the list of fast ones is endless, from the Campbells through to Roger Bannister.

Do they really think they can make 'speeding' socially unacceptable?

Even with a national 10mph limit people would still try to set the fastest legal time from Lands End to John O'Groats. I bet no one tries to set the slowest!

Somehow we've got to get away from this impossible idea, and onto real road safety.

**Dave Hammond**

I was interested to read about Edinburgh City Council and their environmental concerns in a recent issue of *OTR*. When I was last there I found that airport taxis were not allowed to pick up in the city and city taxis were not allowed to pick up at the airport. Each returned empty — doubling traffic and pollution.

**Laurence McCurrich**

I found the *Ignition* piece on the Cyclists Touring Club (issue 33) very interesting. There are many organisations, some charities (eg CPRE), who have adopted an increasingly anti-car stance, often without the knowledge of 'dormant' members. Some of these members may well be ABD members also and have the ideal opportunity to hit our opponents where it hurts — in the pocket.

Would it be possible for the ABD to publish a list of all these 'offenders' and urge ABD members to cancel their subscriptions, together with a letter setting out very clearly why? I, for one, would take action. Name, shame and punish, all in one easy operation!

**Tony Mott**

## **New contact details?**

**If your phone number or e-mail / postal addresses have changed since you joined the ABD, have you notified us? Please let us know straight away if your contact details have changed, as we sometimes need to get in touch with members.**

I recently received a circular from Transport 2000, whose letterhead includes a list of affiliated organisations which runs to about 50 organisations. It includes the usual suspects — FoE, CTC, Sustrans, Pedestrians Association, CPRE, a handful of trades unions and various public transport bodies. There are other 'respectable' bodies, however, that might be expected to be politically neutral and one wonders whether they realise the true aims of Transport 2000. For example:

*National Federation of Women's*

*Institutes(!)*

*National Trust*

*Ramblers' Association*

*RSPB*

*Townswomen's Guilds*

*The Wildlife Trusts*

*WWF UK*

*Youth Hostels Association*

I am a member of the National Trust and the RSPB and intend to write to both of them, pointing out Transport 2000's political aims and demanding an assurance that not a penny of my subscriptions is paid to that organisation. If they cannot give that assurance, I will resign my membership. Perhaps if a few more members did the same, they might just sit up and take some notice.

**Malcolm Heymer**

As a scientist it has often occurred to me that current global temperature variations may come not from the sources usually quoted, but as part of a far bigger and much more long-term cyclical effect. It is, after all, not that long since we were being told of the possible approach of another ice-age (I recall widespread stories of this nature about 20-25 years ago).

Scientists' work can be biased (often unwittingly) by their beliefs — it's human nature to develop work in an area which is of personal interest. Nor is it unknown for extrapolated data, such as the possibility of major global warming, to be used in order to generate funding (such as the massive proliferation of requests for funding so-called 'AIDS-related' research in the 1980s — by adding this tag to something which would otherwise not be considered, it allowed an almost certain flow of money simply because of the 'fear factor' attached to it by those involved and taken-up without question by those who stood to gain from the control it conveyed — the politicians).

# letters

Opinions expressed in the letters pages are personal views and not necessarily those of the ABD  
Letters may be shortened to allow the inclusion of as many contributions as possible



Naturally, then, if such 'data' fits with the aspirations of a particular political body, they will use it to further their own ends; politicians are essentially 'controllers' (none more so than the current incumbents?) and widespread car usage represents a degree of individual freedom which is anathema to them.

We do science no favours whatsoever by getting into bed with the politicians, whatever the short term gains; we simply become prostitutes for the controllers.

**Tim Lawrence**

I could not agree more with Gary Heywood, who suggested in his letter in the February 2000 issue that we start our own political party. We are never going to get any professional politician on our side, let alone oafish Two-Jags Prescott and his ilk.

What will impress them however is our grabbing even a small share of their votes at election time. There are nearly 30 million licence holders in the UK, nearly all voters.

The Greens *have* done it and so can we. Even if we never form a government, at least we can rattle the politicians and kick a few bricks from the bases of their ivory towers!

A motorists' action party? Count me in, and maybe we could get major support from all those, keen drivers or not, who resent the way our liberty is rapidly being eroded. We are being spied upon in every aspect of our lives.

**Bill Piggott**

**The ABD doesn't have the money to campaign as strongly as it would like. Moving into the political arena requires huge amounts of money — something we don't have. Public apathy is something else we are up against — I doubt this would change if we started a political party. Do any readers have views on this? —ed.**

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The Goldline coach company has scrapped all its 30 daily Reading-London (via the M4 bus lane) services because of lack of demand. They were losing £2000 per day, with only 3000 passengers per week, compared with 8000 in the mid 90s.

It would be good if we could call for an end to 33% of the road being used for, say 5%, of the people who travel along it.

Anyone got any figures for how many people use the M4 by bus compared to car/PTW/HGV/Van/etc?

**Chris Ward**

The report on the Road User Behaviour Working Party of PACTS recently made the following statement : "We are also concerned about the Motorists Forum and the perception that safety is 'anti-motorist'. At the recent meeting of PACTS I made it quite clear that if this was the stance of the Motorist Forum we would not wish to be members nor be associated with it since we are as keen on safety as anybody else in the room. It was just that our approach to safety was a bit more mature than that of some other people.

**Hugh Bladon**

**The ABD is involved with PACTS (the Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Transport Safety). Hugh is one of our representatives on this.**

In the seventies there began an environmental debate on the use of non-renewable resources. Petrol became the no.1 target for those who hated the car and for a government needing more revenue. Apparently it takes 10 barrels of crude to produce one gallon of petrol — a barrel equals 144 gallons. If petrol constitutes only 0.36% of the oil extracted, it's unlikely that it's for petrol that oil companies go to such trouble (this low yield is from the heaviest crudes, but even the lightest yield little more than 25%).

Why use petrol to fuel our cars with cleaner and better alternatives, e.g. alcohol? It's because petrol is a by-product of the process of cracking oil to extract hundreds of valuable products. Refineries can't stop producing it, and there is no safer or more environmentally friendly way of disposing of it! Petrol is volatile, explosive, dangerous to transport, almost entirely without commercial value in all respects but one, and there's lots of it. If oil

companies had a choice, they wouldn't produce it. The fact we are paying close to £5 a gallon for a waste product is testimony to the effectiveness of corporate and government manipulation of the public mind.

Our civilisation is practically built on oil. Its products surround us and touch almost every aspect of modern life. So oil will continue to be extracted and refined for as long as it can be found. What happens to the petrol that oil companies can't stop producing if we don't use it in our cars?

Consider some options:

- ⌘ Refine it down to unfeasibly expensive gas and useless sludge
- ⌘ Leave it to evaporate
- ⌘ Flare it off like gas
- ⌘ Flush it down the drains

None of these are very environmentally friendly though!

The Government intends to double the price of petrol over the next 10 years to encourage the use of public transport. Fuel tax revenue is now indispensable to the economy, so how is the apparent insanity of a policy to reduce car use to be explained? One possibility is that the policy is a sham, as we have no option but to use our cars and pay the tax.

The other possibility is that the policy may be predicated on the potential future decline in the reserves of natural gas for power stations. Coal is no longer an option, and nuclear power is too expensive and far too unpopular so is the plan to divert the use of petrol from cars to electricity generation?

Such an outcome would suit oil companies, since this would mean fewer forecourts to support, less need for expensive ad campaigns and much easier distribution to a much smaller number of customers. The Treasury would lose nothing in revenue because oil companies would pay the tax and pass it on to power companies who would then pass it on to all of us. And the Treasury would be delighted, because we currently have some choice as to whether or not to use a car, but try living without electricity!

Too daft to be considered? These ideas may seem right off-the-wall, and I cannot claim that everything I have written here is indisputable fact. I have attempted to apply logic to what can only be seen as an insane situation, and the result cannot be guaranteed. But there may be others reading this who have better knowledge than mine and who may support or demolish my ideas. I look forward to their response.

**David Britten**

## ABD in the media

Each week the ABD appears in the media. Sometimes it's because of our press releases, but increasingly it's because we are the first port of call for media organisations who want the motorist's perspective. While this list is far from exhaustive, these are some of the media appearances the ABD has made over the last month.

A more complete and up to date list of media appearances can be found by logging on to the ABD web-site. If you see the ABD mentioned in the press please let Chris Ward know about it ([chris@waverider.co.uk](mailto:chris@waverider.co.uk)) or put them in the post to Chris Medd (see page 4 for contact details). Please note that an email address will have the "@" symbol in it — many of the 'email addresses' given to us are actually web-site addresses.

Mark McArthur-Christie did a phone-in on BBC 3 Counties Radio on budget petrol tax increases. John Gaunt, the presenter, is extremely pro-ABD and gives us every chance to say our piece. What a shame there are so many anti-car presenters on air, who don't like to broadcast pro-car views.

On the same day Mark took part in an on air discussion with Norfolk's "Linn News" on the same subject.

The unveiling of the Government's Road Safety Strategy was a golden opportunity for us to put the alternative view on road safety forward. What a shame we weren't given more chances to air it!

One of the most useful discussions we took part in was when Nigel Humphries appeared on BBC Radio Humberside talking about speed limits and how they related to the Government's road safety targets.

The following report (by Peter Davies) is strangely untypical of our spokepeoples' experiences. It's probably because those who invite us to talk are open minded. This interviewer obviously wasn't.

The interviewer (Martin Heath) stuck to the line of "speed kills, slow is safe, fast is not". My point about not being able to drive safely with due regard to the conditions around you when you have to keep your eyes glued to your speedometer was met with some derision. He trotted out the Northants Police line that "if everybody stuck to the speed limits we would have an x% reduction in accidents" at which point I was able to jump in with the line about fatalities rising again following the introduction of "traffic calming" and cameras etc in 1994. He could not grasp the concept that road safety depends on more than just speed.

I did manage to bring the interview around from the speed issue onto traffic calming and roads being deliberately engineered unsafely, but it was lost on him.

## Web-sites to visit

Web-sites worth visiting are frequently pointed out to us. Below are some of the ones we've either discovered recently or visit regularly because the content is interesting — if you know of others please let us know. [www.suffolkcc.gov.uk/e-and-t/roadsafety/](http://www.suffolkcc.gov.uk/e-and-t/roadsafety/) Suffolk's road safety strategy has been much trumpeted. This web-site allows you to offer some feedback

[www.quackwatch.com/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/propa.html](http://www.quackwatch.com/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/propa.html)

A fascinating article explaining why people are willing to believe environmental nonsense. It doesn't mention motoring specifically, but the techniques referred to are exactly what the 'speed kills' lobby use [www.roads.detr.gov.uk/roadsafety/strategy/index.htm](http://www.roads.detr.gov.uk/roadsafety/strategy/index.htm)

The DETR published the Government's Road Safety Strategy recently — this is the official web-site.

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

This web-site allows anyone to compose a message on screen then have it faxed to their MP. Simply type in your address and post code, it looks up the name of your MP, then it opens a form allowing you to compose your message which it then sends as a fax. <http://www.norfolk-now.co.uk>

On this site there's an interesting survey into motoring in Norfolk. According to the on-line poll almost two-thirds support wider use of speed cameras in non-accident black spots. 63% feel the overall speed limit in rural areas should be reduced from 60mph to 50mph. 30% agree that motorists should pay a toll to drive into town/city centres. Log on and cast your vote.

## Press releases

Each week the ABD sends out press releases to over 240 media organisations. Does your local paper have an e-mail address? Do you know a journalist or politician involved in transport issues who has never heard of the ABD?

The ABD sends out press releases via e-mail, and we are always looking to increase our circulation. We already cover the main national and regional publications — but new e-mail addresses are coming out all the time.

If you know of anyone who you think would benefit from receiving our releases, please let Chris Lamb know their e-mail address ([c.a.lamb@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:c.a.lamb@staffs.ac.uk)) or ring the ABD press line on 0870 444 2535).

If you would like a copy of a press release please get in touch with Chris Medd. Once sent our press releases are put on the web-site — if you don't have the facility for this we will be happy to post you a copy.

**21st March**

Mixed response to budget

**24th February**

Teachers face environmental indoctrination

## Member services

### Chauffeurplan

If you are unable to drive for any reason you may find Chauffeurplan's service invaluable. Offered by Longford Insurance, it's an insurance policy against losing your licence or car, with a 10% discount for ABD members. If you would like to find out more please contact Hugh Bladon (details on page 4) who will send you a leaflet. Alternatively call Chauffeurplan on 0800 24 24 20.

### Do you have e-mail?

When the ABD is asked to invite its members to respond to consultations we sometimes need to contact a lot of people in a short space of time. If you have an email address please subscribe to ABD Action, allowing us to save a lot of time and money in doing this. You can add your name to the list by sending an email to [abd-action-owner@onelist.com](mailto:abd-action-owner@onelist.com) stating your full name and ABD membership number.

### ABD T-shirts

If you would like to help publicise the ABD, why not buy a T-shirt with our details on? The T-shirts are top quality with a small ABD logo on the front and the logo, web-site address and telephone number on the back, along with the slogan "Don't let them drive you out of your car".

You can order one from ABD member Colin Gardom, for £10 (£10.50 for an XXL) including P&P. Write to ABD T-shirts at 39 St Mary's Gate Chesterfield Derbyshire S41 7TH Tel: 01246 230 005

### Legal representation

The ABD is currently compiling a database of solicitors who are prepared to represent drivers. If you know of somebody who is prepared to help our members please get in touch with Chris Medd, whose contact details are on page 2.

### ABD publicity material

If you would like copies of the ABD leaflet please get in touch with Susan Newby-Robson (details on page 2), and she'll send you what you need. There's also a limited stock of car stickers available. Flyers and posters are due soon.

### Speed limits — how they are set and your right to object

The ABD has prepared an informative action pack which sets out in detail the process by which local authorities set speed limits, and the rights that every member of the public has to object to the imposition of new or reduced limits. The pack costs £5 to non-members, but is available free to current members. Please send a large SAE (26p) to

Steve Dommett  
PO Box 3151  
West Bergholt CO6 3JH