

On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

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More hot air

Scientists have warned that Britain is facing environmental disaster, predicting a dramatic rise in the emissions of the greenhouse gases responsible for global warming. Does this sound familiar? Haven't we been here before, very recently?

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution is calling for a 60% cut in CO₂ emissions over the next half century "to prevent climate change running out of control". Surprisingly (!) they've lost sight of the evidence that says this is complete nonsense.

It says the UK's CO₂ emissions are falling at

Reds see green

That cosy alliance of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, Friends of the Earth and RoadPeace have joined forces to warn the Government they could face a public outcry if it goes ahead with a road building programme. They claim the environment will suffer and large scale road building will not be cost-effective.

Stephen Joseph, director of Transport 2000, said: "We would see a public outcry, not just from Swampy and his friends, but from ordinary people up and down the

Greens see red

Dr Patrick Moore, founder of Greenpeace, has been branded a traitor to the cause by environmentalists, following his public condemnation of the movement. Moore recently denounced the charity as an enemy of the environment, declaring its policies irrational and damaging. He also condemned much of the rest of the mainstream environment movement for scaremongering.

And the greens don't like it. "He gets far more press than is scientifically justifiable. It's one individual who is trading on his past credentials to try and discredit everything that everyone else is working for," said Tamara Stark of Greenpeace Canada. Of course Greenpeace know all about getting more press than is scientifically justifiable.

Moore has said: "Most of the really serious

news

the moment, but expects them to start rising again, although why this is the case isn't made clear. One of the Commission's key recommendations includes a carbon tax to replace the Government's planned energy tax. The report expresses disappointment at the government's "slow progress" in tackling the growth of road traffic in the UK. Again, they've overlooked the fact that car usage is down and public transport usage is up.

country. The last thing we need at the moment is another civil war over transport when there is so much that can be done to tackle traffic and improve the quality of life without new roads."

They want measures to 'civilise' traffic, improve transport choice and reduce car dependence, including 20mph zones and traffic calming on all residential streets. In old money this means they want everyone forced out of their cars onto an inadequate public transport system that is already overloaded.

issues have been dealt with. There are an awful lot of positive trends - we're improving air and water quality."

But according to Moore, most eco-activists just want continued confrontation: "When society adopted the more reasonable items, the only way to maintain a confrontation was to adopt a more extreme stance that most people just don't agree with. Greenpeace isn't interested in solutions - only conflicts."

Today's environmentalists, he insists, are against science, business, civilisation and even humans; and the net result is that they are anti-environment. "It comes to the point of dogma. There is no longer any room for intelligent discourse."

The greens say the Earth is in the middle of the biggest mass extinction since the dinosaurs. How apt they compare themselves with these long-extinct creatures.

Progress - we Think!

The Government's fatuous *Speed Kills* campaign has finally been superseded by something less offensive. The £9m a year *Think!* campaign is aimed at all road users, suggesting that it's not only drivers who have a responsibility when using the roads.

The ABD - unlike other 'road safety' groups has long campaigned for all road users to be educated. This latest development is the start of the DETR listening to our voice. Long may it continue - next on the list is fuel tax.

Oxford's Strategy fails

Opponents of Oxford's controversial transport strategy have marked its first anniversary with demands for a public inquiry. Retailers claim they've lost £12m in trade because of the scheme to get people out of their cars.

Thousands of shoppers are boycotting Oxford, because of high parking charges and traffic chaos resulting in some independent retailers going bust.

Two thirds of businesses have seen turnover decrease - they blame worsening traffic problems since the start of the scheme.

Eddie Luck, chief transport planner for Oxfordshire County Council has said the transport strategy is a success because the council has reduced the number of cars travelling into Oxford and increased the number of people using buses and the park and rides. If this doesn't illustrate how overzealous these power-crazed imbeciles are, what does?

⌘ A key part of Oxford's transport policy - a bus lane between Witney and Oxford - will be delayed by at least a year because four bridges along the A40 need to be strengthened. The earliest the designated lane will come into operation is 2004.

The cost is escalating, too. Original estimates for the bus lane scheme were £5m. Three years later they have crept up to £8m. Still, the motorist can always be squeezed for a bit more cash.

news briefs

One of the rail industry's most senior managers has described the quality of commuter services as intolerable. Richard Middleton, commercial director of Railtrack, said his own experience as a regular peak-hour passenger was so unsatisfactory, especially in relation to overcrowding, that he sometimes travelled by car instead.

The Highways Agency is inviting comments on their Route Management Strategy for the M62. Proposals include high-occupancy vehicle lanes, lorry lanes, and variable speed limits. Ring 0800 018 0789 (west of the Pennines) or 0800 018 2888 (east of the Pennines) for a questionnaire which must be returned by 31 July. See websites to visit for more info.

Over 40 Stockport schools are pushing for 20 mph speed limits outside their gates. Speed restrictions will be highlighted on street signs and offenders will be issued fixed penalty tickets. Stockport Council are spending £100,000 on the restrictions.

Residents in Buckinghamshire are fighting traffic calming proposals being foisted upon them by Bucks County Council. The former claim traffic volume is the problem, not speed, but of course Nanny knows best. Put in measures to annoy drivers and they'll simply leave their cars at home, thus reducing volume. Simple really.

London Mayor Ken Livingstone has named traffic congestion charging in central London as his greatest priority. He says London has terrible problems with congestion and pollution and this is the solution. Someone else who thinks a 25% full bus is kinder to the environment than a car.

Derby motorists could be paying £50m over the next 10 years to pay for measures to get them out of their cars. Options being considered include on-street parking charges, the introduction of a workplace parking levy and road user tolls. This will pay for a fast-track route for buses, cycles and taxis. Predictably the council says the problem of growing traffic congestion can't go on indefinitely.

French researchers claim that men who spend hours driving each day could be suffering from infertility because of the high temperatures in their cars. They say that sitting for long periods in stuffy cars or trucks raises the temperature of the scrotum which can cause lower sperm counts. One assumes high temperatures in buses don't make a difference. They also don't mention that cycling is far more damaging because of pressure on the relevant glands!

Stoke council has just won a £295,000 grant to introduce an innovative parking scheme. They have finally admitted that 'pay and display' tells the villains how long they have to steal your car, and are going to try replacing it with a 'pay on exit' scheme. Is this really that innovative?

Workplace parking taxes and road tolls for the West Midlands are in jeopardy after Walsall Council announced its decision to reject the schemes. Walsall Council leader Mike Bird said the authority would take no further part in them and the plans are virtually unworkable without Walsall's support. The West Midlands has already received a £5 million windfall from the Government as a reward for agreeing to consider new forms of road taxation.

Friends of the Earth claims the Birmingham Northern Relief Road will add to congestion on other roads. They say charges might be set to encourage cars to use the road but make it commercially difficult for freight companies. This would mean heavy goods vehicles continue using alternative routes. So how does congestion on a road increase by removing cars but not lorries? Answers on a postcard to the usual address.

Another positive campaign from Lincolnshire police. Adding to their free tuition for certain drivers and riders, they are educating drivers on the importance of keeping tyres within the legal limits.

The Government's official line on the Motorists' Forum, is that it will be "working within the conceptual framework of the Government's Transport White Paper and sustainable development strategy. It seeks to maximise consensus on the role of the car in the context of the Government's integrated transport strategy and will be looking to help address the adverse problems of congestion and pollution." So it will be forcing us out of our cars then.

The Environmental Transport Association (ETA) are urging drivers to leave their vehicles at home and walk or take public transport to get to work as part of the Don't Choke Britain 2000 campaign. Surely they should be doing the opposite? The same group wants the Government to tax private car mileage for company car drivers, as they obviously don't pay enough. And I thought ETA was a group of terrorists. What's that? They are?

Residents in Stafford want speed cameras used to deter drivers from using their roads as a rat-run. The police are reluctant as there have been no accidents. Guess who'll be caught first.

national contacts

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

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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

Company Secretary
Joan Bingley MA FCIS

Science, Education and Environment
spokesman Bernard Abrams

Membership Secretaries
Jonathan & Susan Newby-Robson
PO Box 2228, Kenley, Surrey CR8 5ZT
Tel / fax 07000 781 544
100740.2032@compuserve.com

Chairman Brian Gregory

OTR Editor Chris Medd

Road Safety & Traffic Spokesman
Mark McArthur-Christie

Treasurer Hugh Bladon

Clubs contact (motorsport/classic)
Russell Eden

Motorcycle spokesman
Dave Hammond

ignition

I'm keen to introduce OTR to a wider audience as there's a wealth of information in it. It's now possible to get your OTR as a pdf file. If you've got email access you can email me at chrismedd75@yahoo.co.uk and I'll send you a copy of OTR in electronic format. You can then print out or forward OTR to as many people as you like. This is in addition to your paper copy each month.

Dave Hammond, The ABD's motorcycle spokesman, will be at Trafalgar Square on 22 July. So will a lot of motorcyclists – the Motorcycle Action Group, which is organising the event, is hoping for 50,000 people. Dave and a few ABD committee members will be there flying the ABD flag.

Although the protest is predominantly a motorcyclists' one, most of their demands are in line with ours. Any that aren't are not at our expense – secure bike parking being an example. If you would like to support the ABD by handing out some flyers please give Dave Hammond a ring (details on page 2).

Thames Valley police force is targeting disqualified drivers,

netting 51 so far. Earlier this year the force's traffic department and Crime-stoppers encouraged people to contact a helpline if they suspected a disqualified motorist was continuing to drive. No licence means no insurance, and while the ABD would never condone such actions, I wonder how many of the people who shop somebody else may lose their own licence through driving perfectly safely, but being caught out by unreasonable limits.

Suffolk County Council has secured £100m to 'invest' in transport. Their investments have so far failed to perform, with services being cut and the accident rate increasing since their 'road safety' measures were instigated. A third of this new money will be spent on 'integrated transport schemes'. This normally means measures to get drivers out of their cars, so it will be interesting to see how long we have to wait for the headlines proclaiming Suffolk residents are revolting.

I came close to witnessing a huge pile-up on a motorway recently, when somebody spied a highways engineer on an overhead bridge. Although the driver who nearly caused the accident

was within the speed limit, the sight of a fluorescent jacket had him standing on the brakes. Those following were travelling too close (not too fast) and it caught them out. Thankfully there was no impact, but most of the following drivers had just switched off and weren't looking ahead for hazards. Just illustrates how nervous this obsession with speed traps is making drivers.

West Berkshire council has defended its 'road improvements' on the A4, consisting of road narrowing and unnecessary traffic lights which have extended rush hour jams though the whole day. They say they are trying to encourage people to use other forms of transport and the scheme is one way of doing that. Quite how these groups can get away with such arrogance is breathtaking, but with public apathy as it is, perhaps I shouldn't be surprised.

A recent report from the AA Foundation for road safety research received a lot of attention – which was both welcome and unusual. Especially as it was in the driver's favour. The report says only 8% of traffic is on the school-run, and much of this is on the road anyway because mums and dads are on their way to work when they drop the kids off. But unsurprisingly the Government claims a fifth of traffic in the morning and afternoon is parents on the school run. Government figures 150% out? Who would have thought it? What's sickening is local authorities lowering speed limits, introducing traffic calming and closing roads to deal with this congestion.


The Association's AGM was held at Gaydon on 5 June 2000 and the resolutions proposed were passed. If you would like a copy of the minutes please contact the membership secretary.

A representative from Choice in Personal Safety attended our AGM. We are happy to be affiliated to them, and in the next issue of OTR there will be a full article on the aims of this organisation. Suffice to say they are in favour of people being responsible for (rather than protected from) themselves.

Chris Medd

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campaigning

A breath of fresh air

by Malcolm Heymer

I recently attended a conference in London organised by the National Society for Clean Air, about air quality in London and progress towards drawing up action plans and declaring 'Air Quality Management Areas' (AQMAs). These are requirements of the National Air Quality Strategy. The conference only related to London but a few points of interest emerged:

One of the speakers was Darren Johnson, Ken Livingstone's advisor on environmental issues and a member of the Green Party. He wasn't in a position to set out what the Mayor's air quality strategy will be, but he came over as more moderate than expected. But he did reiterate the Mayor's intention to set a 15% traffic reduction target across London.

Dr Jennifer Mindell spoke about the links between transport, pollution and health and was initially objective. She went through the findings of the now famous report with its '24,000 premature deaths due to air pollution' estimate. She explained that, as we know, the deaths are only brought forward by a very small time (a few weeks at most) and compared this with the much larger reduction in life expectancy brought on by the voluntary act of smoking (about 14 years). She made the point that the 8100 deaths estimated to be brought forward by particulates represent only about 2% of all deaths. She was also quite clear that asthma is not caused by air pollution, but those with the complaint may have symptoms brought on or exacerbated by it - apparently sulphur dioxide is the worst offender and is basically not a transport related problem- except for diesels.

Leith Penny of Westminster City Council spoke about the results of the TRL's research into a low emission zone for central London (TRL Report 431) and was quite honest about the fact that it is buses and medium and heavy goods vehicles that are going to pose the biggest problem to improving air quality in central London. He even made the statement that, even if all private and company cars were banned, the air quality targets could not be met! The focus has got to be, therefore, on getting heavy diesel-powered vehicles to be much cleaner.

There were a few loonies in the audience asking about things like reducing CO2 output and acting to save London from flooding due to global warming, but they were treated with the contempt they deserved.

Spanner in the works

by Russell Eden

I recently attended a Local Transport Plan consultation, where I managed to put a spanner in the works of a discussion on congestion, chaired by FoE. I pointed out the new TRL report featured in the *Telegraph on Saturday*, which found that bus lanes cause delays for buses as well as cars. This struck a chord. I also pointed out that measures promoting public transport must be positive. They must not be measures reducing the attractiveness of the car through road re-allocation.

I threw in the old chestnut about 25 Focuses creating less pollution than one 1976 Fiesta, and the Kyoto report that pointed out one of the most carcinogenic substances known - 3-nitrobenzanthrone - is a product of the large diesel engine. As found in buses. FoE weren't too happy about these observations.

Industrialists joined in and agreed many of my points. One of them asked for new roads, particularly the Western Orbital. When the FoE chap said the money isn't available, the industrialist replied: "Well they found it for the bloody Dome didn't they, and that's been wasted!" When I piped up and added: "Failed because someone decided that they didn't want any car parking there!" there were cheers from around the room.

Another green suggested congestion charges. He was nearly chased out of the room by over half of us. Later, in front of the full meeting, our FoE guy announced that he had encountered problems getting his points over as most of his group, led by the representative from the Association of British Drivers, would have had him lynched had the meeting not run out of time! Fame at last! This goes to show that if somebody will stick their head above the parapet there will be plenty of support. Not only that, but if it's an ABD member who is prepared to speak out initially, it will publicise the organisation.

"it's buses & medium/heavy goods vehicles that pose the biggest threat to air quality"

"A magistrate admitted most drivers are safe and cameras exist to raise revenue"

Official: The law is an ass

by Malcolm Heymer

The question sometimes arises about cyclists in relation to exceeding the 30mph speed limit. The fact is, the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, under which speed limits are imposed, states that "No person shall cause any motor vehicle to exceed...." whatever the speed limit happens to be.

So cyclists are exempt from speed limits, which will be great if home zones are introduced with a legal maximum of 10 mph. Cyclists (who will have priority over cars) will be able to cycle flat out with impunity. The only charge the police can lay against a cyclist travelling at a dangerous speed is one of 'cycling furiously'.

Doing your bit

by Russell Eden

My favourite local newspaper *The Stourbridge News*, recently promoted a Learn and Live Roadshow at Merry Hill Shopping Centre. Organised by Vicky Stone of 'P' provisional plate fame, it included police officers, road safety experts, driving instructors and a local magistrate.

I introduced myself as a local road safety campaigner and immediately began chatting with a driving instructor and the magistrate. The DI came 'on side' very quickly, having been an HGV driver frustrated enough by speed limiters to pack it in, and with his support I laid into the magistrate about speed.

I asked him why, if I got caught for my first burglary would I get a caution, but criminalised for my first speeding offence? How can you make judgements on dangerous driving if you have not received advanced driver training?

This went on for about 20 minutes and the poor bloke looked like he wished he had stayed in bed. Within this period he had taken on board much of what I had to say, and finally admitted that most drivers are safe and that cameras and limits are there to raise revenue.

Next target was the road safety expert. I thought I'd see how he liked my ideas on bright orange camera housings. His angle was just as I thought; he prefers drivers to get fined rather than see them slow down in advance of hazards. The first DI is still with me at this point and agrees with every word I said.

At this stage I break cover to the DI and introduce the ABD. This turns out to be a good move as he asks for the web address and 'where we meet and how often.' We go through most of the ABD stuff, how to campaign against limits, pollution and buses etc.

When I got home I looked through the leaflets I was given. One, called *Drive On* is given to new drivers. Try to get a copy from any driving instructor and look at the article by Seth Jacobson entitled *Keeping it Clean*. This guy had got the environmental picture the wrong way up. "...27m vehicles, all belching out an unholy cocktail of chemicals..." Having passed their tests this article suggests that they leave the car at home. Great message that!

This trip was well worth while and I recommend other members get out and do the same from time to time.

campaigning

Stop the rot

By Chris Ward

The ABD is launching a campaign against a scheme to evaluate the pyramid financing of speed cameras. Eight police forces (Strathclyde, Cleveland, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire, Thames Valley, South Wales, and Essex) are participating in a pilot scheme whereby a surcharge added to speeding fines funds more speed cameras – to massively raise the level of speed limit enforcement.

It is wrong for those responsible for enforcing laws to benefit financially from so doing – criminal law will cease to serve the public interest, instead becoming a tool for raising money. This will happen because many of the speed limits that will be enforced are not supported by the motoring public and do not correspond with the maximum speed at which it is safe to travel.

So far we have co-ordinators for our campaign in four of the eight force areas, but we urgently need volunteer co-ordinators for Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire, and Strathclyde. The task of co-ordinator would involve acting as a point for local members to send copies of their letters to the press, and copies of any press cuttings; liaising with said members; and forwarding information back to the national committee. You won't be asked to speak on behalf of the ABD!

You can help by:

1. Writing to your local paper.
2. Forwarding newspaper articles.
3. Write to the chief constable expressing your concerns.

4. We need local information on:

⌘ Examples of major roads where the speed limit has been reduced to an unnecessarily low level for no good reason.

⌘ Examples of such limits being enforced by speed cameras.

⌘ Examples of locals caught by speed cameras they campaigned for.

⌘ Examples of speed cameras located on all radial routes into a town.

Co-ordinators for this campaign (details page 3):

Cleveland - Brian Gregory, Essex - Dennis Kaye, Thames Valley - Damon Green/Peter Davies. South Wales - Tony Goodall agoodall@globalnet.co.uk, Strathclyde - Peter Spinney peter.spinney@virgin.net

If you live in Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, or the Lincolnshire force area and can help, please contact us.

The ABD website has a dedicated page giving more information, including addresses for all the police forces involved.

1 + 1 = 7

by Brian Gregory

RoadPeace printed an article in their Spring 2000 newsletter, entitled: *The Association of British Drivers: Linked to Living Marxism? We investigate.* This in itself is a lie, because the level of investigation that took place is superficial to say the least!

Their article opens by saying we don't have a high national profile, nor do we meet with Government ministers. So what?

"Even founder members of the environmental and road safety movements are convinced they are more anti-capitalist than pro-ecology/road safety"

Does that make our views less valid? It's not as though we don't want to talk to Government ministers. They know we exist and they hear our views often enough. But they don't like them, so they won't listen officially.

The article says we claim to have 20,000 members – we have never claimed to have more than 1000, our current membership figure. This compares with the Pedestrians' Association (under 1000) and Transport 2000 (1200), so our views are as relevant as theirs.

RoadPeace suggests there is a connection between me (and by implication the Association itself), and the Marxist publication *Living Marxism* (LM). My closest connection with Marxism is that I studied Chemistry at Oxford, contemporaneously with Peter Mandelson.

There is criticism of the ABD within their poorly researched article that is full of contrived speculation. But what Roadpeace has done is criticise LM quite harshly, and by implicating the ABD they are indirectly slating us. At this point I would like to state categorically that there is no link between the ABD and *Living Marxism*. On these grounds any criticism of LM, and hence implied criticism of us, cannot be justified.

RoadPeace criticises the ABD for its unwillingness to accept unthinkingly the official received wisdom on climate change. What they fail to acknowledge is that there is much evidence pointing to its origins being solar/tectonic/oceanic. For more info look at www.weatheraction.com

The link between the ABD and LM comes from my acceptance of Austin Williams' invitation to address his New Millennium Conference. Which Roadpeace also attended! Indeed the article dwells on how many people who attended the conference have marxist tendencies, and even mentions the fact that RoadPeace were there. But for some reason everyone else's presence except RoadPeace's points to them being Marxists.

As Austin Williams has written for LM and, like me, comes from the northeast, the conclusion is drawn that the ABD is a Marxist group! Such deductions give the phrase

"Now our opponents have somebody who knocks their arguments down they're getting edgy."

'tenuous link' a whole new meaning.

The assertion is then made that because one of LM's regular female contributors has the same surname as me, I must have Marxist leanings! Such tenuous evidence hardly represents sound grounds to throw about accusations that I (or indeed the ABD itself) hold extremist political views.

RoadPeace needs to check very closely for Reds under its own bed, so to speak. Even founder members of the environmental and road safety movements are now convinced that they are more anti-capitalist than pro-ecology/road safety. The environmental movement makes no bones about its desire to reduce the attractiveness of car-use by reducing the pleasure of driving.

Mind-numbingly low speed limits are part of this strategy. Hence the road safety lobby has itself been heavily infiltrated by these hypocrites and charlatans.

Reclaim the Streets is simply an anti-capitalist anarchist group. It may try to cloak its activities in 'green' credentials, but its website says:

"The struggle for car-free space must not be separated from the struggle against global capitalism – for in truth the former is encapsulated in the latter. The streets are as full of capitalism as of cars and the pollution of capitalism is much more insidious".

Several prominent figures in the UK and European road safety establishment have links to left-wing philosophies and ultra-leftist groups like RTS.

Predictably, RoadPeace criticises the ABD for its stance on speed limits and their enforcement. Since speed enforcement became the only tool in the road safety kitbag (and with it the abandonment of road user education and road engineering), the trend of constant road safety improvement over the previous 50 years has terminated. A good example of the dangers of oversimplifying highly complex road safety issues is provided by recent events in Suffolk.

The county wholeheartedly embraced the *Kill Your Speed* ethos by posting 450 new 30mph limits in 1995 – and has seen year-on-year increases in fatalities and casualties ever since.

The ABD gives cautious approval to the DETR's new Think! campaign. With this, it seems that the DETR is belatedly coming round to the ABD viewpoint, and is beginning to understand what is really required if we are to achieve further real road safety gains.

This article says much about our opponents' concerns about the impending driver backlash. They are used to getting it all their own way. Now they have somebody who can knock their arguments down (which isn't difficult) they are starting to get decidedly edgy.

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

Peter Spinney's letter saying we should align ourselves with the Tory party as "their views are very similar to ours" outraged me.

Is this the same party that gave us gatsos galore, gridlocked our towns with ever lower limits and traffic calming, started road tolling experiments and constantly bent the truth on emissions? Did they not encourage privatised parking and clamping while allowing our roads to become a series of linked potholes? Furthermore didn't they raise motoring taxes well above the rate of inflation, introduce the phrase "making speeding as socially unacceptable as drink driving" and generally gave drivers as unpleasant a time as possible for years?!

Drivers are as unacceptable to the three major parties as Jews were in Nazi Germany – we have to endure terms like rat-run, and I for one am not a rat!

As for forming a political party, that's a huge step. It would mean taking on education, health, defence and all other aspects of government, thus losing the main objective of our cause.

T R Hudson

I finally plucked up the courage to visit the FoE website and in amongst the 'cars cost the earth' propaganda I found the following gem:

"Fuel consumption varies considerably with speed. It is lowest at 40-50mph for petrol cars and 30-50mph for diesel cars. At low or very high speeds it can be twice as high or more. More fuel is used when the driver brakes or accelerates. It can be almost four times as high in congested urban traffic as in free-flowing traffic. 10-15% of fuel can be saved by driving smoothly at moderate speed."

So how do they justify the prevention of by-passes? What we need to do is allow cars to travel without deliberate restriction (speed humps, bus lanes, gated traffic lights etc) and allow them to proceed at above 30 (or even 40) mph at all times.

Gary Heywood

I recently spoke to a traffic planner friend, who has just joined the traffic management team of a borough council. He is starting to receive letters of objection sent in by ABD members to a speed limit proposal in a small village in the south east. At least 10 letters, including my own, have been sent and there may be more on the way. Members of his team were most surprised to receive such a response! My friend has explained to them that the people who sent them know what they are talking about and they need to be taken seriously and reported in detail to the Council's Environment Committee.

What was particularly interesting is that he has been talking to his new boss, who was also

in charge when he and I sent in objections a couple of years ago to previous speed limit proposals. Although those proposals went through, our efforts were not in vain, as they have started a debate within the Council and officers there have used some of our arguments to knock back a number of speed limit proposals from councillors!

Apparently, quite a few of the lower speed limits that were set out in a report two years ago have been dropped before they even got to the public advertisement stage.

There is hope, therefore, even though it feels like we are banging our heads against a brick wall much of the time. Just because there is no obvious outward sign of having any effect, a persistent campaign of well argued objections may be having a greater impact than we think. We should never give up.

Malcolm Heymer

I frequently get asked whether children are safer in Europe because of (or in spite of) the 20mph limits? I lived in Germany for nearly three years – in Germany, not on a British Army establishment.

One of the most impressive road safety facts is that all children have a high visibility orange pendant flying over their bikes. These are clearly visible to drivers when they are on the pavement, and as such it is even more obvious when they are about to enter the road from between parked cars. Brilliant – but simple.

A second fact is that all school kids have a back pack that NASA would be proud of. They are at least twice the size required, but are again high visibility with Scotchbrite all over.

Thirdly, and some of you might not like this, is that in residential areas they have priority from the right. Over here of course this would be priority from the left. This means that it is your responsibility to give way to vehicles about to join your road, and is very effective in slowing down traffic at junctions. It certainly didn't present any problems to me, and would be much cheaper and sensible than speed bumps.

Russell Eden

I am grateful for Mr. Kaye's response (in OTR 35) to my letter regarding the great petrol scam. But I have to say that his assertion that I was fundamentally incorrect is a little strong. His suggestion that some crude oils yield a volume of petrol as high as 80% is doubtful. I

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.

assume he includes in this figure other fuels such as diesel and aviation spirit etc.

My letter, however, was about petrol. The oil production reference book that I used stated that the maximum petrol yield from the lightest crude oils is 25%, so I also have some reservations about his claim that the global average yield is 30%.

But even if he is entirely correct, it makes no difference to my argument – in fact it tends to reinforce it. Our civilisation still needs plastics, lubricating oils, aviation spirit for aircraft, and literally hundreds of other essential products all derived from oil. The process of refining out these products still leaves a large quantity (30% by volume according to Mr K) of a by-product called petrol for which there is (currently) no practical use other than to fuel motor cars. My question, therefore, remains unanswered; if we don't put petrol in our cars, how will oil companies dispose of it?

David Britten

The recent *Do Your Bit* advert featuring Mark Lamarr suggests traffic pollution causes asthma, although the phrase used is 'aggravates asthma'. To the uninitiated there is no difference between these two subtly different phrases and I would argue that there is an implicit desire to mislead the general public.

Sulphur dioxide has been shown to be the greatest aggravator of asthma incidents, and this is produced largely by diesel engine vehicles such as buses and taxis – the vehicles we are being encouraged to use!

Professor Emeritus Stanley Feldman (Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School 1995) made these public comments (letter to *London Weekly Times* 03/02/95):

"In the last 40 years the level of air pollution has decreased dramatically. Nevertheless the incidence of asthma has risen."

"Childhood asthma is a bigger problem in the green fields (than in cities)"

"...as far as the scientific evidence goes, pollution does not cause bronchitis or asthma, nor does wearing a so-called anti-pollution mask do anything except identify the wearer as a sucker"

The situation is summed up well by Dr Kenneth Kalman, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health Study on the Causes of Asthma:

"Air pollution does not cause asthma ... there is no correlation between levels of vehicle emissions and asthma incidence."

Dr Damon Green

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



I recently rejoined CSMA (Civil Service Motoring Association) after many years of absence. I find the magazine interesting but there is a stark absence of the reality of the state of our roads. Cars are of no use if we have nowhere to drive them. To enjoy driving we need to have good roads and the freedom to use them but this is now severely curtailed by the anti-motorist stance taken by successive Governments.

We are attacked on two fronts with fuel costs. Governments increase taxation, petrol companies seize every opportunity to sneak in an extra penny on a litre. And the adoption of the litre was yet another con. A penny on a litre is roughly 5p on a gallon. In the past there would have been an outcry but the litre masks the reality of the extent of the increases.

Traffic calming, bus lanes, blocking off alternative routes are all forms of obstruction designed to frustrate the motorist. Interestingly TRL have now reported that bus lanes have little or no effect on overall travel times.

Then there are the speed cameras deliberately painted grey so they cannot be seen and often hidden behind an obstruction. The cameras are there to raise revenue and we will see more of them if local police forces are allowed to keep part of the money raised in fines. **(There are currently 3000. There are calls for 75,000 - Ed)**

Speed does not directly kill as the propaganda constantly advises. Bad driving kills and fewer people died on the roads last year than in accidents in the home.

I have no doubt that an increase in traffic volumes needs some response on how we view use of the car but freedom of choice ought to be paramount and there should be some correlation between income from motorists and road expenditure. Many accidents result not from speed but congestion and road rage is an ever growing symptom of the frustration encountered in traffic jams.

John Pugh

I was driving through Burton recently. Some way behind me, in the same lane, was a 125cc Aprilia bike, the rider of which was wearing all the correct (and expensive) gear and was apparently out for a pleasant evening's ride.

On approaching traffic lights (which were just changing from red to green) the bike pulled over to the left, 'undertook' at least 10 cars whilst going across the junction and then rejoined the traffic stream. Ho, hum, thought I, that'll not be shiny and new for much longer but still, some people only learn the hard way. Laddo then indicates right, turns into the entry of Burton Police Station, pulls up at the 20' high security gate, takes out his pass-card and enters the 'Police Vehicles Only' area.....

On his way to a crime, or just on his way to committing several? Answers on the back of a 'Get Out of Jail Free' card to the usual address!

Tim Lawrence

Now that we are faced with the certainty of the fuel price leaping up again it's time the Government is seriously challenged on its policies.

One of the chief justifications they have for keeping the cost of fuel high is global warming. This, as they will tell you, is proven, the causes are established (cars) and they not only know what to do about it (tax the motorist) but are actually doing it.

Why then do they still find it necessary to pump untold millions into GW "research"? I wonder how many scientists would still be willing to speak out for GW were this funding to dry up?

I read recently that Texaco have pulled out of the anti-GW camp, much to the delight of the environmentalists. Perhaps they figure the best way to kill GW is to give Governments less reason to pump money into it - without which it cannot sustain itself.

Does anybody know how much the Government is spending on GW research? It would be interesting to compare this to what they spend on research into cancer, meningitis, AIDS, and so on.

Peter Hattingh

I spent the day at the Essex County Show recently. The County Council had several displays related to their services, including road safety in which a whole marquee was devoted to speed and nothing else. There was all the usual propaganda with members of the local authority and police on hand. They had even hijacked the DETR's *Think!* logo by putting *Kill Your Speed* underneath it - which I believe to be an abuse and giving a

contradictory message.

They were pressing very hard for visitors to sign a pledge to Kill Your Speed by always driving within speed limits, driving at speeds appropriate to conditions within those speed limits and when travelling as a passenger in a car to urge the driver to do the same.

I was approached to sign the pledge which I declined in the strongest terms and, being more conversant with the wider issues, argued the toss for 20 minutes or so. I put the usual points about speed being overstated, inappropriately low limits introduced as a result of NIMBY action, TRL Report 323, personal responsibility of all road users, failure to separate excess from inappropriate speed, neglect of standards of road use and creating a culture where anything goes as long as it's done slowly. In response, it was claimed that Essex was targeting speed since that was the most important issue but they are concerned with other aspects of road safety although there was no evidence of this. I don't believe that just my efforts made a difference but if more people as knowledgeable of the issues as myself had also had a go, it would have made them think twice.

The wider issue is that ABD members could usefully enjoy a day out at county shows and take a little time out to remonstrate with local authorities and police forces who have lost their way on road safety. I'm sure Essex isn't the only example.

Trevor Magner

Following on from the case of the driver fined for eating a Kit Kat at the wheel and now the young lady who has been fined for drinking water whilst at a red traffic light, I understand that Lord Whitty and his department are considering legislation to clarify the matter.

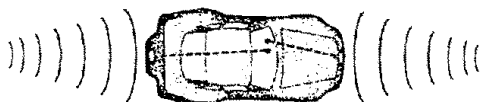
Apparently consideration is being given to make it an offence to eat or drink anything whilst at the wheel of any motor vehicle.

The problem of people who chew their nails has been covered in the working paper and the current proposal is that when first applying for a provisional licence, the applicant will have to provide evidence that they do not chew their nails. If this cannot be provided the licence application will be rejected. The worrying problem of what to do with those who currently hold a full licence and are habitual nail chews apparently caused considerable controversy, but it is felt that to make the law retrospective and to revoke these people's licences might create some hardship. The police will however be instructed to examine drivers' fingernails whenever possible and issue strong warnings to those who show recent evidence of having indulged.

Derek Green

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Radar defence systems



For the very best advice on purchasing a portable or installed radar/laser detector, speak to the experts...
For a free information pack contact Networx Ltd at

20 Hillhouse Farm Gate
Lanark
Lanarkshire ML11 9HT

Tel 01555 666 444
Fax 01555 66 33 44

networx.ltd@dial.pipex.com

20% discount for ABD members!



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) or put them in the post to Chris Medd (see page 2 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.

Nigel Humphries has had a busy month, thanks to the launch of the Government's new *Think!* road safety campaign. Appearances on BBC Radios Leeds, Humberside and GMR (Manchester). LBC Radio also interviewed him on driving standards and speed.

Honest John did an article about the new SPECS digital speed cameras in the Telegraph of 20 May. The ABD were publicised in this piece.

Bernard Abrams has also been busy. His press release was reproduced in the Daily Mail as a letter heading up an entire page of anti-police letters on the Linda Smart police ticket (drinking-water-at-traffic-lights case).

Another letter (with full ABD contact details) was published in *Evo* magazine and a news item in *Evo* was taken from an email from Bernard about cars not being

to blame for the majority of pollution—buses are 60% less energy efficient than the average car.

Russell Eden's midlands-based website featured heavily in a recent Express & Star. His bus lane feature was included in full - complete with lots of publicity for the ABD.

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, 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.

21 June

Cheating chancellor punishes pensioners and mugs motorists

10 June

Oxford anniversary brings tears to traders

8 June

Driver persecution enters new waters

6 June

Time to question the speed trap mentality

2 June

Police over-reaction causes Cheltenham chaos

26 May

DETR to launch new Think! road safety campaign on 1 June

Web-sites worth visiting

Below are some of the websites we've either discovered recently or visit regularly because the content is interesting — if you know of others please let us know.

transport2000@transport2000.demon.co.uk

Yes I know it's an email address rather than a website, but you might find this useful. As we all know, Transport 2000 spend a lot of time looking after us, protecting us from ourselves. If you'd like to write to them thanking them for their concern, you can do so to this address.

www.lowerfueltax.btinternet.co.uk has now changed to www.lowerfueltax.co.uk
www.m6corridor.com

A study into the future of the M6 transport corridor complete with a discussion forum. One of the groups involved with this study is SRA (run by Kristine Beuret) who famously said "cars are the last bastion of personal freedom ... this must be overturned).

www.m62route.co.uk

Fill in a questionnaire on The Highways Agency's Route Management Strategy for the M62 - see page 2 for more.

www.driving.co.uk

Bill Lavender's excellent driving online site, featuring links to all sorts of useful sites.

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.

OTR in cyberspace

Issues 31 onwards are now available as pdf files. If you'd like a copy of an issue please email chrismedd75@yahoo.co.uk and he'll send you a copy by return. You can then print off as many copies as you like or forward OTR to friends via email.

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@egroups.com stating your full name and 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 white only 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
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.

Breakdown recovery

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

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 (27p) to

Steve Dommett
PO Box 3151
West Bergholt CO6 3JH