

# On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

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## Ice age, anyone?

by Bernard Abrams

While the DETR and their minions merrily continue with their attempts to save the planet by taxing us off the roads and onto Two-Jags' beloved Borg Collective Transport, NASA announced in April of this year that Earth has entered a period of global cooling. The announcement was disseminated worldwide by Reuters, but the UK's doom-and-gloom media are only interested in tales of man-made thermal Armageddon, so coverage was non-existent.

To the uninitiated, the amount of cooling found over the 12-month period to April 2000 seems trivial, but this is not so. The 0.1 degree Celsius cooling found by accurate satellite measurements corresponds to 14% of the entire warming claimed for the entire 20th century. Of course, there has been no change, contemporaneous or otherwise, in the output or atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide, claimed by the greens to cause global warming.

The Sun's output, not mankind's output from burning fossil fuels, is driving climate change. There are signs that the environmental lobby are aware that the

## Breathalysers over limit?

Studies into a type of breathalyser used by Thames Valley police have found they record a much higher level of alcohol than other machines.

Scientists in London compared the Intoximeter EC/IR and found it registered results six to eight per cent too high.

Eight of the Intoximeter machines have been used in police stations in Oxfordshire for the past two years and the news means that hundreds of motorists could claim their convictions are unsafe.

However, the Home Office disputes the findings. It says: "We are aware of the allegation that the instrument is inaccurate. The forensic science service tested that instrument and the

game is up and are beginning to change their tune. One of the originators of the global warming apocalypse appeared in a recent *Daily Telegraph* article stating that carbon dioxide was not, after all, to blame for 20th century warming. The culprits are now said to be methane (a major source, apart from cows' stomachs, is 'eco-friendly' hydro-electric power stations!) and CFCs - the gases thought to be responsible for ozone layer depletion. This is an attempt to salvage some form of man-made input in the global warming scenario, and it's doomed to fail just as the CO2 red herring has failed.

It will take some time before the truth sinks in. While it is sinking, there has never been a better time to drive for pleasure - we can now claim to be saving the planet from the next ice age. Of course, tax and duty on petrol will not fall in order to encourage us in this vital environmental role, but this must not be allowed to discourage us. Of course, such an argument is as specious as the greens' ecoclaptrap on global warming.

other two evidential breath-testing instruments in use in the police service and we remain satisfied with the accuracy of the instrument."

A Thames Valley police spokesman said: "We take our guidance from the Home Office. They are satisfied with the machine and we are happy to go along with that."

Dr David Trafford who carried out the tests, said: "I have my reservations about the machine. I have measured what I believe to be inaccurate results. For example, if an average man has drunk two pints, which is close to the legal limit, the machine gives a reading as if he was over the limit. It is extremely worrying."

He advised motorists to have a blood test which would prove for certain whether they were over the limit.

## news

## Not so sweet

A report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has found the Government's policy of reducing car ownership is causing increased social exclusion in the countryside.

"There is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of Government thinking when fuel taxation and other policies designed to reduce car use and ownership serve to exacerbate rural exclusion and intensify barriers to employment. Fresh ideas are clearly required and it's time the Government accepted that a car is essential for life in rural areas."

## ACPO clarifies

ACPO claims that in the wake of the threatened action by Transport 2000, the law is unchanged along with its table of thresholds. It has explained what it does and why in the area between the legal limit and the threshold. Below the threshold it is up to the officer's discretion. The officer will look at additional factors, including the circumstances and environment. If caught doing 33mph in a 30mph limit outside a school at 3pm, you would probably be pulled over. But on a clear road in good conditions at the same speed, the officer might choose to use his discretion and not act. This has always been the case.

This is all very well, but what about gatsos, which offer no such discretion?

A spokesman said: "We have to consider whether we have a case which will stand up in court. Car speedos aren't always accurate and nor is speed measuring equipment. We have to be able to prove the offence."

So there we have it - conditions are not constant, so the tolerance that a driver is given will vary from one circumstance to another. Not only this, but the equipment used by the police to measure vehicle speeds cannot be relied on 100%. Yet fines are being increased to saturate the country with speed cameras.

## news briefs

**T**he latest edition of the Government's annual report shows that in 1994/5 the Tories spent £12bn on transport. In 1995/6 this dropped to £11.5bn, which was then reduced to £10bn the next year. When Labour arrived the figure was reduced to £9.1bn, then £8.6bn. The current figure is just £8.8bn – that's out of £36bn taken from drivers annually.

**To avoid a repeat of this year's fiasco, at next year's British GP Silverstone officials will restrict the number of car parking spaces to 18,000 – less than half the 40,000 normally made available. Passes will only be issued to those who car share.**

Having had it their own way for too long, Transport 2000 is now getting somewhat defensive. A recent press release of theirs states: "The ABD is a far-right libertarian organisation that believes motorists should be allowed to drive wherever, whenever, and at whatever speed they like, regardless of the effect on others. It champions the rights of the individual over responsibilities towards the community".

**Many villages in the Lake District are to get 20mph speed limits after a reduction to 30mph was deemed to be too racey. The police have said they haven't the resources for enforcement, but the council says 20mph limits are so unusual that drivers will stick to them for the novelty value.**

The University of London's Institute of Education has found that the availability or non-availability of public transport can be a major influence on decisions about education. Among 15 to 16-year-olds, more than 40% of students reported that access to public transport was a factor in whether they stayed in education. If transport is not available when students need to travel to college, this becomes a barrier to continuing in education.

**In Derby City Council's Driver Improvement Scheme, drivers stopped by police for driving without due care and attention will be offered the option of signing up for a one-and-a-half day driving course – at a cost of £120 – instead of being fined. A spokesperson said: "We know that teaching bad drivers to alter their habits is much more likely to reduce accidents than simply fining them." A similar scheme run by Devon County Council revealed that 98% of drivers who passed the course were not involved in further accidents.**

According to figures released by the Child Accident Prevention Trust, 43,000 children are taken to hospital in the UK every week after being injured in accidents. Under-fives are most likely to be hurt or killed by accidents in the home, usually in falls or bumps. Older children are more likely to be injured in accidents outside the home, particularly on roads. Choking and suffocation peak in babies under a year old, and poisoning accidents peak at about the age of two. On average, six children are killed every year trespassing on railway lines.

**Connex is expecting to hear next month if it has won its bid to continue running train services from Sussex to London – the Shadow Strategic Rail Authority will base its decision on factors including customer satisfaction. But Connex has scrapped an email address which customers could use to make complaints – now they have to visit the firm's website and fill in ticket details before the complaint can be registered. The company says it is making it easier for customers by making the changes.**

Residents are threatening to blockade a Swansea road after a nine-year old boy wasn't hurt when his cycle collided with a car. His mother was watching when he cycled into a moving car – now she wants traffic calming measures installed.

**Police forces are having to cut non-essential services because of the cost of fuel. Gloucestershire police force's 320 vehicles cover 3.5million miles each year, and is hoping to cut its fuel bills by 50% with a switch to LPG-powered cars.**

Company car drivers clocked up a 100% failure rate when they sat the basic Highway Code theory test as part of a new police initiative. 100 of them sat the test as part of Fleet Safe, a Warwickshire Police one-day scheme instructing company car drivers in tackling road risk.

**Officers in Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot are planning an autumn campaign on defective car tyres and will give drivers an optical once-over at the same time. Their plan is to advise rather than prosecute. How civilised.**

John Prescott has announced a fuel duty rebate for all community transport schemes. Currently commercial bus operators can reclaim most of the duty they pay on fuel for local services but community transport schemes, which are registered charities, cannot. From April community transport schemes can reclaim 37p for every litre of diesel used.

**A plan to massively boost the railway network in Norfolk has been unveiled. That's the good news – give drivers a viable alternative. But the reasons given for its introduction are primarily environmental. Do trains produce zero emissions? Are they generally full, operating at maximum efficiency?**

A "ground-breaking" project has been launched in south Devon, called *Life in the bus lane*. The scheme allows students to travel at half price if they're going to or from college – as long as they buy a £100 pass. Revolutionary stuff indeed.

## 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

**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

**Science, Education and Environment spokesman Bernard Abrams**

**Treasurer Hugh Bladon**

**Company Secretary**  
Joan Bingley MA FCIS

**OTR Editor Chris Medd**

**Clubs contact (motorsport/classic)**  
Russell Eden

**Motorcycle spokesman**  
Dave Hammond

# ignition

**I**t's hard to say how successful the *Dump the Pump* campaign was, as objective coverage within the UK media is rather difficult to find. What can't be denied is the strength of feeling within drivers – an anger that the anti-car groups are doing their best to trivialise. They're doing what they can, but I think they may just be out of their depth on this one.

*I recently saw a couple of buses in the rural area where I live, both with just one person on board – the driver. When I looked at the cost and time it took to travel on them I saw why – they cost more than twice as much as a car journey, and took more than twice as long. Yet more and more money is being pumped into this incredibly inefficient way of travelling. Your money and mine.*

First it was Jack Straw's chauffeur, then it was Anne Widdecombe. Both were apologetic and eager to impress upon the throng of journalists just how dangerous breaking the speed limit is. Yet neither was charged with dangerous driving, and both could offer a genuine reason for breaking the speed limit. Just like thousands of drivers every day.

*Thumbing through a 1994 issue of*

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Autocar recently, I came across an article entitled *Government declares war on cars. It spelled out the tough measures to be imposed to force drivers out of their cars. Road closures, restricted parking, bus lanes, traffic calming, road tolls and crippling parking charges are all listed as ways of enticing motorists to either not travel or to use a different means of travel. Robert Key, then Roads Minister, said: "These are not polite suggestions to town planners – they are a definite framework which must be adhered to".*

*We've frequently been accused of being paranoid, claiming that we're being forced out of our cars against our will. Safety and saving the environment are the reasons generally given for the introduction of these measures – but time and again we've shown this to be complete nonsense. The arguments simply do not add up.*

*As Christine Stewart, a Canadian minister, said at the Kyoto environmental summit: "Planting trees does not allow us to make the societal changes we wish to achieve". Social engineering is the real reason behind many of these measures, so don't be fooled into thinking that it's anything else.*

Another 1994 issue of *Autocar* had a piece about how taxes from drivers would rise from £21bn a year to £26bn within five years. They actually rose to £36bn in that time, but both casualties and pollution levels fell.

*The ABD is absolutely against reducing speed limits and introducing traffic calming measures willy nilly unless there is a good reason for such changes. Instead we advocate the education of road users.*

*This is where we start to encounter difficulties in being taken seriously. For many people a road accident is seen as the fault of the driver – nobody else seems to have a responsibility when using the roads, because "pedestrians and cyclists are more vulnerable than car drivers". Surely it's precisely for this reason that these road users should be taking more care? How have we got into the situation where all drivers are seen as reckless while all cyclists and pedestrians are responsible?*

*But instead of throwing in the towel and saying education is a waste of time, we should be looking at ways of reallocating all the money spent on negative measures to promote positive ones.*

*A good start would be to educate children to use roads properly – something that should be part of the national curriculum. How about a three-part driving test, the first two parts being as they are now? The third part would involve motorway tuition before the licence is granted. Lane discipline is abysmal – instead of plastering urban roads with speed kills signs, how about a few signs on motorways urging drivers to use the left-hand lane? The millions spent on the speed kills campaign could be directed at promoting driver training – sure the take up wouldn't necessarily be that great, but how many people have been influenced positively by the speed kills nonsense?*

*These ideas don't constitute an official ABD list, but they do illustrate how positive measures rather than negative ones could be used to make our roads safer.*

Seen in the *Daily Mail*, from a rather cynical 14-year old: "Railway station announcers now refer to passengers as customers because for passengers you need to run trains, whereas for customers all you need to do is sell tickets".

**Chris Medd**

# campaigning

## Liberal Democracy

by Dave Hammond

The following is part of the Liberal Democrats' transport policy. The ABD isn't politically aligned, but you may be interested in what follows:

In the Government's White Paper on transport virtually no action has been proposed to curb the rapid growth in road traffic, with the accompanying pollution and congestion.

Reversing the growth in road traffic is probably the most difficult policy change the UK faces, requiring both immediate action and a longer-term fundamental shift in personal and industrial behaviour. This must be achieved if the UK is to meet its climate change targets, tackle air pollution that causes so many health problems, and reduce the economic burden of traffic congestion.

Liberal Democrats would reverse the trend towards increasing transport dependence and promote more environmentally, socially and economically efficient methods of achieving access to people, facilities and information. Actions will include:

- ☛ Reversing the decline of bus services through a major re-allocation of road space to bus lanes with higher local subsidies drawing on revenue derived from road pricing, taxation of private non-residential parking, enforcement of emissions standards and parking offences

- ☛ Road pricing in urban areas where public transport alternatives exist or are developing, and the introduction of taxation on private non-residential parking

- ☛ Development of pedestrian zones, public transport-only zones, air pollution action zones, and traffic calming schemes – leading, in due course, to car-free city centres

- ☛ Encouraging cycling with safe cycle routes

- ☛ Introducing a fuel duty escalator of 8% per year in real terms.

## Temporary speed limits

by Malcolm Heymer

Temporary speed limits at roadworks must be backed by a traffic order to be legal and the order will specify the length of road to which it applies. The presence of signs alone does not make the speed limit enforceable without the traffic order backing it up.

The signing of speed limits must also be in accordance with regulations, which specify that there must be a sign on both sides of the road (or carriageway, if dual carriageway or motorway) at the start of the speed limit and repeater signs (on one side only) at intervals throughout its length, as with a permanent speed limit. It is normal to place derestriction signs at the end of a limit but the absence of continuing repeater signs would make the lower limit invalid in any case, even if the traffic order continued to be valid.

## PACTS consensus seminar

by Nigel Humphries

On Friday 21 July I attended a seminar organised by PACTS, the aim of which was to try to obtain consensus on aspects of road safety policy. 25 people were invited, from Roger Peal of the DETR through Andrew Howard of the AA to Lynn Sloman and Ben Plowden – plus the usual PACTS people.

Participants were split into three groups and asked to consider what the rights and responsibilities of road users should be. The results were then to be discussed by everyone to reach a consensus or identify areas of difference. The objective was then to discuss measures required to reach the consensus position.

My group was asked to look at the car driver, with the other two considering larger vehicles and so-called vulnerable road users. We were asked to produce our ideas for the rights and responsibilities of drivers. My approach was to state loud and clear that I regarded the rights and responsibilities of drivers to be one and the same – to drive safely – and that this was equally true for all road users. I therefore scoped my rights very carefully indeed:

- ☛ The right to be helped to improve my hazard perception skills and so be equipped to avoid the vast majority of accidents

- ☛ The right for enforcement to be targeted at that behaviour which resulted in accidents that I could not possibly avoid myself.

Others put forward the freedom and mobility aspects of driving.

Responsibilities were easy – the vehicle and driver should be fit for the purpose and the driver should pay attention whilst driving, travel at an appropriate speed and, crucially, improve their driving skills.

I had little difficulty getting these adopted as group offerings. The only area of contention was the suggestion that cars should have priority on high-class roads but that pedestrians and cyclists should have priority on lower-grade roads. I immediately grasped the implications of this and made up my mind that I was under no circumstances going to go along with this kind of thinking. I could not prevent it going forward as a group input, though.

The inputs were collated onto a big wallchart by the facilitators and the whole group was then asked to agree the various rights and responsibilities.

There was much discussion about the concept that pedestrians should not be discouraged from walking because they were afraid of traffic. I made the point that this fear may or may not be justified and successfully introduced the word *perceived* into the agreed answer.

We then had a huge discussion over this business of vulnerable road users having

priority over cars on everything but A-roads, and cars having priority on main roads. This concept came under attack from two directions – A-roads are not meant to constitute a safety hierarchy – after all, anything that isn't an A- or B-road ceases to be a road at all under any commonly accepted definition. Roads are for the passage of traffic – whether motorised or not. Any movement away from this would create conflict between road users and confusion over who had priority.

After the argument had gone on some time and I was showing no sign of giving in despite some watering down of the concept, I suggested the issue should be put on hold, which it was.

Some of the arguments that came up were rather interesting. The chief facilitator showed himself to be rather less than neutral when he asked me if I thought all speed limits should be the same if all roads had the same priority. I said of course not – they should be set according to the nature and density of hazards.

At all times during the debate, I made it absolutely clear that I was totally in favour of due care and courtesy being shown between all different types of road users – so nobody could accuse me of being Mr Toad.

Next, we were split back into our groups and asked to come up with our top five actions to achieve our aspirations for rights and responsibilities. There were some very good suggestions from others, like making safety part of the national curriculum and making an advanced driving test compulsory after two years on a normal licence. I plumped for removing blackspots by road engineering, a public education programme on hazard perception and encouragement to undertake additional driver training.

There were some truly awful suggestions from others – a hierarchy of speed limits on rural roads, a zero blood alcohol limit and, of course, blanket 20mph limits imposed by GPS speed limiters. I duly rubbished all of these suggestions when they were made. The vote ended up with some of each – the education programme got through as first choice, as well as the national curriculum. After that I'm afraid it was the speed limiters and the rural hierarchy. It is clear that these speed limiters are very much on the agenda – this issue and this absurd idea that speed limits should be set in some hierarchy according to what the road is used for rather than for real safety reasons are the big challenges for us to stop before they start. However, the Government has set ambitious road safety targets for 2010 and we can expect these people to get more and more desperate to be seen to be doing something drastic as it becomes increasingly clear that current measures are resulting in no movement towards them.

# campaigning

## Late Night Currie

by Nigel Humphries

Having appeared on Late Night Currie recently, I made a return appearance during July for an hour and a half. The topic of debate was speed cameras, SVDD and hypothecation. I was put up against John Stewart from Roadpeace.

Because Edwina had just been done for speeding in her new Porsche there was every chance that this would be an entertaining evening!

The upshot was that I had a flaming row with Stewart on the air – with accompanying gleeful looks from Currie. He name-called and interrupted – I stuck to the arguments. He accused me of living in a dream world because 1200 people were being killed by speeding and everyone accepted this figure. I then destroyed it – saying that all the research showed that speed was the primary cause of less than 10% of accidents.

He then fell back on the contributory factor argument – I said that this meant nothing and that the focus on speed made the causes of 90% of accidents worse.

He then fell back on the old impact damage argument – I then accused him of resorting to this because he couldn't win the causation argument. He didn't like this at all.

"The phone-in people were motorists who had been nicked twice in a month after 20 years of a clean record"

The phone-in people were mainly distraught, confused and frightened motorists who had been nicked twice in a month after 20 years of a clean record.

There were several Taxi drivers – this might be a rich vein for us. Wait till the penny drops that it's all pointless and counter productive.

The first chap was on the line before the programme – a Roadpeace plant who had been knocked down on the A286.

The best bit was when Stewart accused me

of paranoia. I simply retorted that since his organisation had claimed that the ABD was linked to the Communist Party on the basis that our Chairman's surname was the same as a columnist in Living Marxism, he should know more about paranoia than us.

One chap rung in who was campaigning for 30mph limits in villages on an A-road between Bath and Bristol.

Two limits had been reduced, but the other was in Gloucestershire and they wouldn't. The police wouldn't enforce the ones that had been reduced.

I jumped in and said: "wait till they did – most of the people they caught would be locals who had campaigned for the limit – a bunch of hypocrites"

This chap had clearly never thought about this, and went ballistic, accusing me of being outrageous. I told him this was what had happened elsewhere and Currie had a go at him, too. I then said it was wrong for locals to set speed limits and Stewart went ballistic. Great fun.

## Fuel tax campaign

by Tony Vickers

The ABD's fuel tax campaign is taking shape – our aim is to target the Government directly. We will concentrate on two issues. We will try to persuade oil companies and retailers to display the price of fuel and tax separately at the pumps and on forecourt price-boards, leaving no doubt in anyone's mind where the blame lies for high fuel prices.

There will also be a campaign to hit the Government where it hurts them most, in the ballot box. An appeal will be made for all drivers who are fed up with being cash cows for the Treasury to sign a pledge not to vote for any politician or party which supports punitive fuel taxes. If we can gather enough pledges, it may convince the Government their jobs are at stake.

In addition it may encourage opposition politicians to offer positive help for motorists rather than merely suggesting that they will not raise taxes further.

We will demand nothing less than a significant and permanent reduction in fuel duty and a commitment not to transfer the costs to some other form of motoring tax. This can be achieved if drivers stick together and remind the Government they are a major part of the electorate. You can help by telling everyone about the campaign, urging them to join in. We are currently asking newspapers and magazines for space to place pledge forms. Other forms will be available on our web-site and in a future copy of OTR; these can be photocopied and passed around.

This campaign will coincide with the nation's return to work in early September.

## To ABD or not to ABD – that is the question

by Nigel Humphries

Some members have suggested we should change our name. As with everything there are arguments for and against. There are three reasons why one should change a name:

☞ To distance the product from a negative brand image. Such changes rarely work because people see through them. We should not change our name for this reason. Our problem is awareness, not branding. We are still building our branding and very few people know about us or exactly what we stand for – even some of our members don't.

☞ You are now part of a much larger or global organisation or have changed direction significantly.

☞ Your brand name isn't sufficiently strong and doesn't reflect your aspirations – your organisation may have grown and want to underline a new start or the existing name may not be up to date. The new product has to be sufficiently revolutionary to distinguish itself from the old for this to be credible.

"Our problem is awareness, not branding. Few people know about us or what we stand for"

### Arguments for staying as the ABD

☞ We are becoming increasingly known in official and media circles

☞ We need to build the ABD brand rather than starting again

☞ There isn't anything different or revolutionary that we want to change about the product to give a name change credibility

☞ A name change would cause confusion

☞ The name ABD describes what we are very well

☞ It's early in the alphabet

☞ We don't have the resources to communicate a new name effectively.

### Why change?

☞ The ABD has been rubbished in many circles without knowledge. A name change would give a new start

☞ The ABD has changed enormously since it formed. A name change would be a focus for a relaunch

☞ The name is a bit of a mouthful and many people get it wrong – calling us the BDA or something

☞ The initials are meaningless, easily confused with the ABI, and the full name is too long

☞ The name doesn't convey what we stand for

☞ The name is a bit staid and old-fashioned.

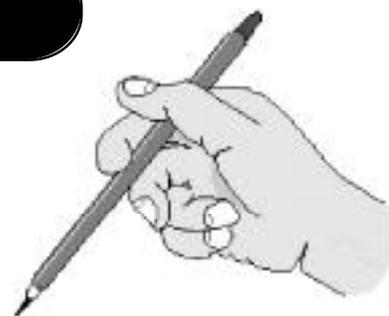
### But bear in mind:

☞ If we are going to change, we need a good name – and I haven't seen one

☞ We could use a name change to launch two separate organisations. How about *Positive Transport Solutions* and *Positive Safety Solutions*?

☞ We don't have to do it now. Even if we think this is a good idea, the time may not be right, although we might want to copyright the names. This is the sort of thing we need to do when we are much bigger and sufficiently resourced to put on a credible relaunch. Frankly, when we are, I'm inclined to support this idea. But it isn't a decision to be made lightly.

# 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)**

**T**he Government is proposing that convicted criminals will have their driving licences suspended, as part of their punishment. What an excellent idea – being forced to use our public transport system is enough punishment for anybody.

It's nice of the Government to admit that public transport is a form of punishment. I suppose our crime is having a driving licence!

**Terry Hudson**

**(Removing somebody's licence won't mean they are forced to use public transport. It means there will be thousands more people driving around with no insurance – Ed)**

*Rainbow Six* is the new bestseller by Tom Clancy. It tells of an elite international counter-terrorism unit based on the SAS, who find themselves facing a sudden spate of terrorist incidents, all apparently unconnected. Clancy tells several threads of the story at once, often based in separate parts of the world, all inter-twining and leading to a startling conclusion.

The impression is rapidly gained that Mr Clancy is not fond of environmentalists, and misses no opportunity for his characters to attack their arguments. If you weren't worried about environmental extremists before, you will be after reading this. I hope Hollywood picks this up for a film – it would be a marvellous way of alerting the public to the reality of environmental fanaticism. Published by Penguin, the ISBN is 0-14-027405-7

**Chris Ward**

The Highways Agency wants to reduce the northbound slip road onto the M5 at Junction 21 (Weston-Super-Mare) from two lanes to one. This junction is very busy on weekday mornings, but the traffic does flow well enough. Apparently a majority of the inhabitants of one of the major new housing estates on the edge of Weston use this route to commute to work in Bristol. Further new housing is planned and the Highways Agency is concerned that this will increase the traffic volume still further.

## Local meetings

Damon Green organises a local meeting for members on the second Tuesday of each month at The Swan in East Ilsley (to the north of J13 M4, just off the A34) at 8pm. Contact details p3.

Dave Razzell holds his inaugural meeting for members on Tuesday 19th September, hopefully followed by meetings on the third Tuesday of each month. Initial venue to be The Abergavenny Arms, on the A264 just off Junction 10 of the M23 towards East Grinstead. His number is 01403 260 651 or email him: [dave@razz23.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:dave@razz23.freeserve.co.uk)

Their imaginative solution is to deliberately slow the traffic with the intention of forcing people off the motorway and onto local roads and/or public transport (which of course is either extremely slow or goes from town centre to town centre, which is not where most car-driving commuters either live or work). The Agency states it will make lane 1 of the slip road into a bus lane. A maximum of 16 buses per day get onto the motorway at that point!

**Dave Razzell**

I am reading a book by John McLean which highlights the growing threat of officialdom to personal liberty in several areas and the ABD gets a mention on account of its website highlighting gatso locations.

Over 20 pages are devoted to parking and driving regulations – insanities like doctors getting penalty points for speeding on the way to treat a collapsed patient, the parking fines cash cow, loony councils like Camden that ban single yellow line parking on Sundays. For me Camden also takes the biscuit for impounding the car of a woman who went on holiday after disputing a £30 ticket. When she got back, she found that the bailiffs had seized her £5000 Golf and sold it for £3500. Of that she got only £1700 after 'expenses' had been deducted. £3300 for a disputed ticket!

**Brian Mooney**

Statistics can be made to say what you want, so road casualty figures need to be analysed pretty carefully to ascertain exactly what's going on. I've been having a look at exactly what the definition is of some of the commonly used terms we hear banded about.

**Killed** – Human casualties who sustained injuries which caused death less than 30 days after the accident.

**Serious Injury** – An injury for which the person is detained in hospital as an in-patient, or any of the following injuries whether or not the casualty is detained in hospital: fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushings, severe cuts and lacerations, severe general shock requiring medical treatment and injuries causing death 30 or more days after the accident.

**Slight Injury** – An injury of a minor character such as a sprain, bruise or cut which is not judged to be severe, or slight shock requiring roadside attention. This definition includes injuries not requiring medical treatment.

In nearly all cases where a child has to attend hospital after an accident (including those described as road accidents) they are kept in overnight for observation. This is due to the fact that it is difficult for the

medical staff to get proper answers out of a toddler about their condition, so they keep them in just in case. This is of course good practice however it does escalate some very minor injuries into the serious category for the statistics.

If a child rides their bike into a parked car, falls off, bangs their head and attends hospital they can, and probably will become one of those children killed or seriously injured on the roads that year.

**Gary Heywood**

Oxfordshire has just introduced another phase of blanket 30mph limits in the south of the county. I live just over the border and have just had the misfortune to drive an off-driven route which passed through three of these revised limits. Most are 40mph reduced to 30, but there are a significant number of 60mph roads knocked back to 40. It came as no surprise to find that these limits were being ignored by all the traffic I was following, and I am becoming increasingly angry that in order to make safe and efficient progress I have to break the law.

To prove a point I drove for a section of the journey at a speed matched to the road ahead as per IAM / Roadcraft / ROSPA doctrine. My wife checked the speedometer and it transpires I was safely travelling at 50mph in one 30 limit – along with the other traffic. This section was previously signed as 40mph. I am still considering driving to the local police station and handing myself in!

I feel a letter to Thames Valley Police may be in order...

**Damon Green**

I'm just filling in an income details form for my appearance at Hampshire magistrates' court for a speeding ticket.

You have to enter your incomings and outgoings on a weekly basis. The outgoings section has spaces for lottery, scratch cards, cigarettes and alcohol, but no space for water charges or telephone bills (or school fees and golf club membership, for that matter!)

**Alex Roebuck**

## 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.**

# 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**



103 mph eh? That's 33mph over the limit, which is worth a fine of up to £1,000, six points or a short ban. I expect they will say that because the driver was a policeman, he was safe to drive at that speed. Even if that is a fair assumption, it is an admission that training improves safety. So why can't we, the public, have the option to enjoy this legally if we're good enough?

**John Simpson**

I recently heard a suggestion that highway engineers set speed limits – not the case. Local councillors set speed limits, often against the advice of their own highway engineers. The stupidity and arrogance of many local authority councillors has to be experienced to be believed (I'm sure you've experienced this already).

Highway engineers design roads in accordance with the design speed appropriate for the type of road. The design speed determines various parameters such as the minimum radii of horizontal and vertical curves. On dual carriageways and motorways, the most important design parameter is the minimum stopping sight distance. Rural motorways and dual carriageways are designed for 120kph (about 75mph), for which the minimum stopping sight distance (measured between points one metre above the carriageway) is 350m. This is about three and a half times the stopping distance in the Highway Code for 70mph, which understates the stopping performance of modern cars. The design figure was arrived at by assuming a combination of worst case scenarios – wet weather, a car with barely legal tyres and braking performance and a driver with an abysmal reaction time – about 2.5 seconds I believe. Using the formula by which the Highway Code stopping distances are calculated, 350m is the stopping distance required from about 130mph on a dry road.

**Malcolm Heymer**

It was my direct experience of decriminalised parking enforcement, which started in London in 1994, that prompted me to set up the Parkingticket site ([www.parkingticket.co.uk](http://www.parkingticket.co.uk)) when I became an independent consultant. I am aware of the possible abuses, and daily help motorists who have fallen foul of the system.

I now publish a free monthly e-zine of parking news and information. Anybody interested in receiving it can do so by sending a blank e-mail to [parkingticket-subscribe@egroups.co.uk](mailto:parkingticket-subscribe@egroups.co.uk)

**John Squires**

Greensteps is a partnership between *The Sentinel* newspaper, the environmental charity Environ, Severn Trent, the Environment Agency, Hanley Economic Building Society, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and BBC Radio Stoke. They are running a campaign to reduce car use in Staffordshire, on the pretext that urban air quality is deteriorating and car use causes asthma.

I have no problem with what they are doing – if they want to encourage more efficient car use, more walking and cycling and better public transport rather than penalise and obstruct motorists, that's fine. I'll even co-operate. But I object intensely to their justifying it using false arguments about air quality and asthma.

Have they any data to substantiate their statement that air quality is poor? Do they not know that the view that traffic causes childhood asthma has been long ago abandoned? They should get their facts right.

**Nigel Humphries**

I took the IAM test mainly as I believed that it would help me in my campaigning for more sensible motoring laws as I would be far more likely to be taken seriously having some form of evidence of the quality of my own driving. I have found this belief to be absolutely correct.

It is very difficult for the pseudo-road safety campaigners to argue with somebody who has passed a test which many of them know in reality they would not have a hope in hell of passing.

Some have mentioned that they don't like the IAM's attitude to speed limits. Things are not as bad as they are made out to be and most observers and examiners take a sensible attitude to this. It is of course difficult for the IAM to publicly condone law breaking but there are huge numbers who feel as we do including many influential people at the top. The IAM have publicly condemned zero-tolerance for example and the lowering of blanket limits.

Things within the IAM are

improving all the time as more realise the futility of current thinking by the authorities. As there are no viable alternative training organisations and none are likely to start up I suggest we are better off joining and campaigning within for change as I have had some success in doing. I'm sure most ABD members as keen drivers would pass with ease.

If the ABD can claim that most of their organisers (if not members) have voluntarily had their driving assessed in some way it would be impossible to pass them off as speed-crazed maniacs, a tendency which has plagued the ABD from the start.

**Dave Razzell**

**Virtually all ABD committee members have undertaken driver training, whether it's IAM, RoSPA or HPC – Ed**

I stopped and questioned a mobile speed trap operator recently, on a 40mph-limited road near me. The equipment being used was a forward-facing videotape radar camera pointing out of the back of a van.

The policeman said only those doing over 47mph would be considered for prosecution – Transport 2000 may have influenced the official line, but not what happens in reality.

Interestingly he had to zoom in on number plates to gain identification, but motorbikes don't have front numberplates, so presumably they are immune from this type of enforcement.

The copper agreed with our principles that speed enforcement is unpopular, loses the police vital public support and that there are far better ways of improving road safety. His line was that he was "only carrying out Government policy".

**Roger McBroom**

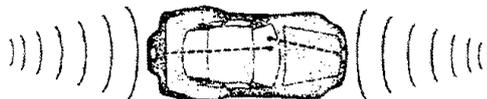
In July's *OTR* you report that Stockport Council is planning to be one of the first authorities in the country to impose 20 mph around schools which request them. They have now announced the first 17 schools to be chosen and have earmarked £300,000 over three years for the scheme.

However, it has met with a less than enthusiastic response from the police. Superintendent John Edwards, head of Greater Manchester Police traffic department, has said: "Everyone with an interest must not think there is an easy solution by the mere imposition of a 20 mph limit." He added that in the absence of traffic calming measures, the limits could not be effectively enforced, and that his officers did not have the resources to attempt to do so.

The local newspaper also quoted a senior officer as commenting: "This is obviously political. It's stupid, naive and irresponsible."

**Peter Edwardson**

## 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](mailto: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 we're the first port of call for media organisations who want the motorist's perspective. This list isn't 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 (contact details page 2). Please note that an email address will have the "@" symbol in it – many of the 'email addresses' given to us are actually website addresses.

The BBC Policy Research Unit interviewed Hugh Bladon about the ABD's aims, so let's hope they give us more coverage as a result. Next on the list was Radio 3 Counties (Beds, Bucks and Herts), BBC Radio Bristol and What Car online ([www.whatcar.com](http://www.whatcar.com)) about Straw's speeding. He took the line that the driver should be treated the same as everybody else but why should anyone be done for doing 103mph which is an everyday occurrence in Germany and, providing conditions are suitable, is a perfectly safe speed on our motorways.

The Record (Scotland, Friday) did a two-page spread supporting their assertion that cycle lanes are, in terms of cost per mile versus take-up rate and increases in congestion / pollution caused, a waste of money. They quoted the ABD in areas where the statement was a general one and not unduly anti-cyclist, which we are not. Dave Hammond was also interviewed for this, and his line was that given the high casualty rate they need the protection of cycle lanes, but only if the cycle lanes go somewhere. The use of cyclists as mobile traffic calming is unacceptable, and so are increased casualties elsewhere through

journey displacement due to lost road space. He mentioned that many stray bits of cycle lane are only introduced to legitimise funding bids.

The London Taxi Drivers' publication *The Badge* published an article they requested from Hugh in their September edition – and gave all ABD contact details at the foot of the article.

BBC Radio Oxford wanted to talk about speed cameras. Hugh did a five minute slot, stressing that we do not condone inappropriate speeds and the fact that Northamptonshire has issued 17,000 tickets since April this year as opposed to 4000 for the whole of the preceding 12 months.

The Press Association and BBC national news rang for a chat about speeding, fines etc.

*Dump the Pump* offered us plenty of opportunities – the Daily Telegraph, Sky News, BBC Radio Gloucestershire all used us for comment on why the protest is needed.

## 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.

**18 August**

Toyota advertising campaign is unsafe

**4 August**

Double standards in traffic policing

**31 July**

Government's 'do as we say not as we do' attitude to drivers

**29 July**

Nottingham speed cameras useless for safety

## 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.

[www.transport2000.demon.co.uk/](http://www.transport2000.demon.co.uk/)

Transport 2000's new website, which at the moment is just an attack on *Dump The Pump*  
[www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

Ken Livingstone is inviting comments on his congestion charging plans for London  
[www.think.detr.gov.uk/](http://www.think.detr.gov.uk/)

If you thought the *Think!* campaign was getting away from *speed kills* have a look at the campaign guidelines

[www.unece.org/trans/roadsafe/rsras.htm](http://www.unece.org/trans/roadsafe/rsras.htm)

A spreadsheet of European accident statistics  
[www.gpstrapalert.com/](http://www.gpstrapalert.com/)

Information on the GPS speedtrap alert system  
[www.unece.org/trans/Welcome.html](http://www.unece.org/trans/Welcome.html)

Large collection of statistics and other information from the UN Economic Commission for Europe - Transport Division  
[www.greenpiece.org](http://www.greenpiece.org)

An excellent parody of Greenpeace  
[www.millennium-debate.org/road.htm](http://www.millennium-debate.org/road.htm)

Newspaper articles on road issues  
[www.skepticism.net/global\\_warming/](http://www.skepticism.net/global_warming/)  
[www.greeningearthsociety.org/](http://www.greeningearthsociety.org/)  
[www.globalwarming.org/index.htm](http://www.globalwarming.org/index.htm)

Sites that dispel global warming myths

## 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](mailto: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 email?

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

## Member services

the list by sending an email to [abd-action-owner@egroups.com](mailto: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  
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.

## 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. They've been a long time coming, but flyers and posters are due at the start of October.

## 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**