

Motorway speed camera madness

Speed cameras are going to be introduced on a wide scale basis on the British Motorway network for the first time. This information was inadvertently revealed to an ABD member by an official in the South Western Region of the Department of Transport last week.

Civil servants based at Chipping Sodbury have hatched a plan to cover the whole of the M4 and M5 in their area of jurisdiction with Gatso Speed Cameras during the next two years! Until questioned by an ABD member, the officials at DOT headquarters at Marsham Street were completely unaware of these plans.

cameras will blanket motorways in SW

Speed cameras will purportedly be introduced only at "accident black spots". The first camera is to be installed at Junction 20 on the M5 at the base (instead of at the apex) of a "notorious" hill! This was the site of a single well publicised accident involving a caravan and a bus in which one person was killed. Sad though this is, it does not make it

an accident black spot. The plan is to blanket the whole of the motorway network in the South West of England and to enforce the widely disregarded motorway speed limit strictly.

According to Government speed surveys, the vast majority of car drivers on motorways travel faster than 70 mph and fifteen percent exceed the speed limit by more than fifteen miles an hour.

Scientific evidence, revealed by a scientist from the Government's Transport Research Laboratory, shows that speed cameras have no significant effect in reducing accidents and casualties on link roads. Speed cameras only have a significant effect in reducing accidents and casualties when sited in the vicinity of traffic lights and junctions.

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Motorway tolls off the agenda - but only for now

It looks increasingly unlikely that the Government's proposals for motorway tolling will go ahead, at least for the time being. The proposals were originally put forward by Roads Minister John Carlisle, who is quoted as saying that he thought motorists would be "happy to pay the tolls". He was sacked almost immediately after the announcement, but the idea was enthusiastically taken up by John MacGregor, the former Transport Minister. He tried to sell the idea to the British public in a glossy Green Paper entitled "Paying for Better Motorways", which at least promised that the money raised would be spent on improving and extending the network.

Mawhinney is keen on tolling

The tolling proposals for motorways have been criticised by Parliament's own Select Committee on Transport, and was not even welcomed by last year's anti-car Royal Commission Report on Transport and the Environment.

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Cabinet split over Axe-man Mawhinney's road cuts

Despite the Cabinet's attempts to put on a united front after the Conservative party's near civil war over European policy, it is emerging that there is a split between the pragmatists who see that improving our road network, especially motorways, is essential if the UK is to be able to compete successfully in Europe and beyond, and the "Green" faction, who appear to be heavily influenced by extremist environmental pressure groups.

It seems that Michael Heseltine (Trade and Industry), Michael Portillo (Employment), John Redwood (Welsh Secretary), and Kenneth Clarke (Chancellor of the Exchequer) are all broadly in favour of the road schemes and are less than happy about Dr Mawhinney's negative approach.

Dr Mawhinney has however made it clear that there is a stark choice to be made, and that economic growth will suffer if transport investment [including road building] is cut back. He is quoted as having said "We are in no doubt that an efficient transport system is one of the most vital [requirements] if we are to achieve the doubling of living standards within 25 years to which this Government is committed"

Further cuts in road building have

been predicted. That will make grim news for the country's two and a half million

grim news for the unemployed

unemployed, and for the many thousands of businesses still struggling out of the worst recession for 60 years.

Performance-related pay!

The well-known phrase is given a sinister new meaning by media reports which indicate that traffic policemen are going to be put on performance related pay as from next year.

How performance will be measured is not known, however members are warned to expect a financially motivated crackdown on drivers exceeding speed limits.

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Gatsos in SW

These motorway speed cameras will act to reduce speed in the safest traffic conditions on virtually the safest roads in the world. Because the cameras are designed to police a fixed speed limit, they will be ineffective in poor weather and heavy traffic when vehicles are travelling slower than the maximum speed limit, but still too close together for the prevailing conditions. Therefore the cameras will have no effect in reducing the "motorway madness" type multiple pile ups, which occur on congested motorways in poor weather.

To quote the ABD Chairman, Brian Gregory: "The Government's cynical, revenue-motivated stance on the issue of speed camera deployment is a clear betrayal of its previous promise only to place these devices at genuine accident black spots.

"We in the ABD anticipate (as we have since the idea of camera enforcement of speed limits was first proposed) that events in the UK will rapidly follow the degenerative Australian experience: it will not be long before police and civil servants are actually refusing to site cameras at genuine blackspots because they will generate insufficient revenue; while the willy-nilly proliferation of speed cameras will occur on wide, safe, multi-lane roads where the revenue generating potential is maximised. The road safety benefits, meanwhile will at best be non-existent; and at worst, actually negative, due to the increased risk of multiple pile-ups due to 'shockwave' braking by large numbers of motorists at the approach to speed camera locations."

British Motorways are by world standards very safe. Internationally, only the Dutch motorway system, which has a higher and variable speed limit, is safer. Unlike our motorway network, the Dutch motorways benefit from having a modern high tech' traffic signalling system. This British designed system imposes reduced speed limits as required by deteriorating traffic and weather conditions, whilst allowing higher speeds when and where the road is safe.

The Association of British Drivers

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For contact details see:
www.abd.org.uk/contacts.htm

International evidence indicates, that there is *no link* between maximum speed limits and fatality rates on motorway standard roads. The U.S. interstate highway system, with a strictly enforced 65mph speed limit (some states 55mph), is no safer than the largely unsignalled and speed limit free West German Autobahn network. Autobahns, unlike our motorways, have strictly enforced traffic regulations which outlaw close following and poor lane discipline.

there is no link between speed limits and motorway fatalities

A survey carried out last year by Renault UK's magazine, Autoworld, to which three and half thousand motorists responded, indicated widespread support for an increased and variable motorway speed limit supported by improved motorway traffic signalling.

The Government has not announced that it intends to upgrade our antiquated and inefficient motorway signalling. However it has announced, that it intends to introduce motorway tolls. This proposal will require the installation of expensive infrastructure over the entire motorway network.

Motorway charging will divert traffic, onto adjacent less safe roads passing through built up areas, thus causing an increase in accidents and road deaths and an increase in environmental nuisance. Media reports and opinion survey results indicate, that there is strong public hostility to the concept of motorway tolls.

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Motorway tolls

Objections to tolling include the inevitable diversion of traffic back onto the unsuitable rural and urban roads which the motorways were built to take it from, and the inevitable increase in road deaths and injuries which would result from it, as well as the civil liberty implications of the Government

tracking every journey electronically, and the enormous costs associated with installing and enforcing a deeply unpopular new tax.

It is believed that the present Transport Minister, Dr Mawhinney, is also keen on tolling, despite all the problems, but it is believed that the technology involving "microwaving" drivers as they pass under toll gantries is not yet workable. Trials of the system had been planned for Britain this year, but have now been postponed indefinitely.

With the motorway programme slashed to the bone, it would also have been quite unjustifiable to proceed with the tolls, although this may not have been a factor. The likely unpopularity of the scheme, coupled with the Government's slim majority and current poor ratings in the opinion polls may have played a part though.

It is great news that the tolls are not going ahead now - it is time for the Government to say that the whole idea is dead and buried for good.

Safeway's chief slams government policy on out of town developments

Mr Colin Smith, chief executive of Argyll, owners of the Safeway chain of hypermarkets, has claimed that Government planning guidelines on out of town development "fail, in many respects, to recognise the needs of the modern family shopper".

Mr Gummer, Environment Secretary and crusader against modern shopping habits, has now further tightened the planning guidelines which are making it virtually impossible to get planning permission for shopping developments outside town centres.

How do the Gummerts bring home the family shopping?

What Mr Gummer fails to do, however, is to explain how one is supposed to bring one's groceries home other than by car. The weight of a week's shopping for a family of four, including

Car is the only way!

drinks can easily reach 35 kilogrammes or 77lbs (close to double the airlines' standard luggage allowance). As millions of shoppers throughout the country would tell him, the car is the only way to do it.

Parliamentary Transport Select Committee

During last year the House of Commons Transport Select Committee investigated the Government's proposal to introduce motorway charging, as detailed in the HMSO publication, "Paying for Better Motorways". At the conclusion of their deliberations the committee issued a "Report and Minutes of Proceedings"; copies of both of these documents have been purchased and studied by senior ABD members.

Although the ABD responded to the proposals put forward by the Government, unfortunately, because senior members were not aware of the Committee's proceedings, no attempt was made by ABD members to make a contribution for the Committee to consider during the period allowed for taking evidence. This was a major mistake although understandable bearing in mind that the ABD is staffed by ordinary motorists with busy home lives and careers to protect.

The Committee took a dim view of the Government's proposals on two major grounds, the issue of diversion and the possibility of this causing an increase in accidents and casualties, and the issue of how road tolls would be spent in the context of road spending and road taxation generally.

So far so good from the ABD's point of view. However the committee recommended that the Government give consideration to the introduction of a simple low cost "tag" on every vehicle, which would comprise an electronic number plate!

Committee recommends electronic tagging of all vehicles

The report took evidence from Thames Valley Police and stated. "Tagging all vehicles or photographing number plates could raise civil liberty issues, even though police witnesses stated that in their experience of using special cameras such questions had "never arisen".

These snippets are indicative of how public policy is shaping up with regard to the way we are likely to be dealt with in the near future. We in the ABD must make it plain to those in authority that we are very much concerned with regard to the erosion of our civil liberties, especially by the unwarranted use of high technology in the policing of ordinary citizens as they sit in their humble motor cars.

The ABD is now on the Committee's press release mailing list and will offer a contribution to any future enquiry in our area of interest.

MPs urge traffic curbs

MPs are urging the Government to consider yet more curbs on your freedom to use your car in an attempt to reduce emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds. These compounds are part of the cause of ground

level ozone, which some scientists allege may be harmful to health. The call is made on the basis that traffic is the largest single source of VOCs, but takes no account of the fact that VOC emissions from cars are set to fall dramatically by 2010 - to just 19% of their 1990 levels - (see "Air Pollution Levels Set to Fall and Fall" in this issue).

MPs ignore evidence of falling emissions

Further reductions in VOC emissions could come from devices to capture VOC emissions at petrol pumps, and reformulated petrols. Sadly this call to curb car use is yet another example of the Luddite, backward looking mentality of our political "representatives". It is time they learned that there is a better way.

Minister wields pickaxe

Mr Allan Stewart, the Scottish Industry Minister has been forced to resign. Allegedly he had threatened a motorway protester with a pickaxe handle. If only other ministers would take it upon themselves to defend the country's sorely needed road building programme.

Political correctness it seems now extends to preventing the construction of much needed motorways and bypasses, which divert traffic away from environmentally sensitive areas and reduce congestion and road deaths.

All right thinking motorists should defend such a public spirited defence of motorists' interests.

The Minister deserves a medal!

Low limits

= boredom = death!

Many road accidents are caused by drivers going to sleep at the wheel.

Research undertaken in the South West of England, and on the Midlands motorways has shown that at least 16% of all road accidents and 20% of those on motorways were caused driver fatigue. The actual figures may be a good deal higher because researchers discounted accidents with some other apparent cause, even where driver fatigue may have been partly to blame.

Sleep related accidents are mostly likely to happen between 2.00 am and 7.00 am, and during the mid- to late afternoon, and apparently men are more at risk than women. Surprisingly, younger people are more at risk from going to sleep at the wheel than older ones.

The monotony of motorway driving is undoubtedly a factor, and explains why sleep causes a greater proportion of these accidents than others.

The findings are interesting when compared to American research, where single vehicle accidents involving drivers falling asleep at the wheel on long monotonous journeys at 55 mph are one of the main causes of road deaths and serious injuries. It seems likely that the low speed limits actually make driving more dangerous, because attention wanders more easily.

Recent Swedish research, for example, shows that boredom leading to fatigue is more common on motorways limited to 80 kph than when the same road is limited to 90 kph. That report has received limited publicity in the U.K. of course!

Motoring organisations bid for "privatised Police duties"

The motoring organisations have taken over the manning of the traffic control monitors, emergency phones and the management of the vehicle breakdown service on some motorway stretches in the country. The AA has the contract for Kent and part of the M25 and it is believed that the RAC is either bidding for a forthcoming contract or has already signed up for one.

The escort of wide loads on motorways is another area which is going to be contracted out to the motoring

organisations in the near future.

Drivers may get the impression that the established motoring organisations will no longer act to protect their interests

AA and RAC members "sold down the river"

for fear of losing out on any potential lucrative contract. Are we going to be sold down the river by those on whom we used to rely to protect us?

Motoring in Europe

On The Road To Austria

J.L.Newby-Robson, founding editor of OTR, describes a high speed round trip to Austria.

Last summer I was depressed. At the time news reports indicated that the CDU party in Germany stood a real chance of losing the next national election due in October 94. Bearing in mind that the red/green alliance opposition, would, if elected, have imposed a national motorway speed limit of 130kph (81mph) on the largely speed limit free autobahns, I was desperate to get over to Germany to try out them out before the date of the election, just in case!

Unfortunately the idea, of nipping over the channel simply to whiz up and down the autobahn, was anathema to Susan, my partner. This presented a problem! With some persistence, I managed to persuade her that the Austrian Alps in September were a great place to visit. Other factors included reasonably priced accommodation and for myself, a member of CAMRA, the chance to sample some excellent beer. Plans were laid for a September holiday.

Originally I had planned to leave home in London in the early hours and travel direct to Austria in one leg. Other members of the family vetoed this so we decided to "stop over" just beyond the Belgian border in Germany. As we wanted to be flexible, apart from booking the ferry and the hotel for the first night, we did not prebook any accommodation.

On the day of departure we left early and drove to Ramsgate, "sedately". We had picked the cheapest crossing we could find, which was Ramsgate to Ostend, leaving mid morning. The crossing was slow, taking four hours, and the facilities on the boat basic. We arrived at around mid afternoon and drove across Belgium to our hotel.

a Belgian motorway driver is three times more likely to be killed than his British counterpart

Motorway driving standards are low in Britain, but no where near as bad as in Belgium. The people there seem to be short sighted and fascinated by rear number plates; which they study with great persistence by driving as close to your rear as possible. Belgians are also very public spirited, and try to assist police speed enforcement (max speed 75mph) by pulling out in front of speeding motorists. Their motorways are very busy, very slow and very dangerous. This fact is borne out by international accident statistics which show that a Belgian motorway driver is three times more likely to be killed than his British counterpart.

Crossing the border into Germany we ventured into Aachen. The change in the built up scenery and atmosphere was immediately obvious; cleaner, better organised and the town traffic slow and well controlled. Our hotel was excellent and the bill for two, including a lot of excellent draught Bitburger beer, and terrific food was £100. We shared the dining area with what appeared to be the annual night out for the local women's institute.

Next day we left at around 9.00am and drove in the direction of Koln. The A4 autobahn is a well built dual two lane carriage way with hard shoulder and very busy. As we neared Koln we came upon Germany's equivalent of our matrix signals.

The signals are mounted on gantries above the road and

convey two types of information, the mandatory temporary speed limit, signalled separately for each lane by a number surrounded by a red circle, and above, the reason for the limit spelt out. On this occasion the limit was 120kph (75mph) and the words read "Stau" or in English "tailback". It was startling to realise that the temporary slow speed limit was faster than our national speed limit.

the temporary Autobahn limit was faster than our national speed limit

These speed limit signs also indicate the end of any temporary speed limit by showing a white diagonal surrounded by a white circle. This sign tells the driver that national recommended speed limit applies; 130kph. The limit is not legally enforced and is advisory only. In other words it means; we advise you to not to exceed 130kph but you can if you want to! Thanks for the advice but no thanks!

Nearer Koln we found the "Stau" and we slowed to a crawl. The blockage was caused by road works at the massive bridge over the Rhine. We crossed over and turned south onto the A3 autobahn; a dual three lane road similar to one of our motorways.

The traffic cleared and we saw our first speed delimit sign, diagonal grey stripes on a white background. Then out of nowhere, two sleek black super cars appeared, belting down the outside lane probably at around 130mph, nose to tail. They passed us, as if we were standing still, whipped round a sharp bend, down a steep gradient and out of sight. To my eyes they appeared to move like lightning. In twenty years on British motorways I have never witnessed anything like it! The contrast with our experience the previous day was stark. We drove very carefully from this point onwards. My priority was to find a filling station and a lavatory!

On this speed limit free section, the bulk of the traffic appeared to move at around 10mph faster than we are used to seeing in England, with the middle lane at about an indicated 95mph. A significant minority of drivers went well over a 100mph, however very few did more than 115mph. Although the traffic went a fair bit faster, most drivers were noticeably more disciplined than I had seen any where else, both from the point of view of lane usage and correct following distances. Another difference was the relative scarcity of trucks.

German drivers were noticeably more disciplined than I had seen any where else

We found a fuel stop at Siegburg and I had my first crisis. I didn't realise that you had to take the self service fuel spout out of the pump before it zeroed its reading! This was the occasion for a great deal of embarrassment with me trying to communicate with a hapless German motorist in German. I could not speak German and he could not speak English! I was trying to ask him how it worked; meanwhile Susan was getting impatient and was beginning to shout! He must have thought I was mad! However I managed to solve the problem.

We rejoined the motorway and within a few miles I found that I was becoming acclimatised to the higher speeds. I settled

Motoring in Europe

on 95mph at first. We were driving my company car, a 2 litre 5 series BMW, which on English roads feels fairly sluggish. It has a heavy shell and a relatively small engine although the handbook says it can do 128mph. However on the autobahn, much to my surprise, the car seemed to be entirely at home. The stability and ease of acceleration at around the 95mph mark was excellent! The autobahn appeared to have many sharp bends and gradients, much sharper than those found on our motorways. Bends tend to be marked with 130kph limits and it was on one of these, that I thought for an instant, at about 150kph, that I had over done it. I was ***** myself. I held on tight, gritted my teeth and the car went round as if it were on rails, without any drama at all. I said nothing to my passenger who didn't even notice. By the time we had reached the Frankfurt area we were cruising at well over 100mph.

At Frankfurt we switched to the A5 and continued to Karlsruhe. The leg to Karlsruhe was uneventful and very fast. At Karlsruhe we turned onto the A8 for Stuttgart and Ulm.

Parts of the A8 were very twisty and carried a 120kph limit. In the Stuttgart area we came across the traffic signals again and on this occasion they signalled no speed limit. Here I had the indignity to have been overtaken by a taxi which must have been doing well over 100mph.

fuel consumption was much better than on slow journeys in the UK

At Ulm we turned off to join the A7 and drove south towards the Alps. We filled up with fuel at Memmingen. This required 51.73 litres (11.8 gallons), after 487Kms (304 miles), and 232 minutes, giving an average speed of 79mph and fuel consumption of 26mpg. This fuel consumption figure was very much better than that which would be achieved on the typical stop start slow journeys the car does in the UK. The handbook gave the official figures as; urban cycle = 21mpg, constant 75mph = 31mpg.

The A7 here is a lightly trafficked dual two lane motorway with no speed limit. I will never forget the experience of seeing the Alps gradually coming into view over the horizon whilst cruising at a steady indicated 120mph.

The scenery towards the bottom end of the A7 is very beautiful and well worth seeing. Once off the A7 and into the foothills of the Alps the views just got better and better. The quickest route into Austria, in particular to the area where we eventually stayed, would have been by way of Munchen and scenically dull in comparison.

We ended up in Leutasch, not far from Garmisch, for our first few nights and then moved on to Neukirchen, which is just south and west of Kitzbuhel. We stayed about ten days in Austria and enjoyed excellent food, drink and accommodation.

The weather was warm and sunny, and we managed many long walks in beautiful alpine scenery and plenty of excellent "Stiegel" beer in Alpine huts.

We drove home in one leg, leaving the hotel at Neukirchen at 5.30am. By early morning we had reached Nurnburg where we had a pit stop and ate breakfast. Susan had done the driving on this stretch and had comfortably cruised at 100mph. I took over and drove to the Belgian border which we reached by 1.15pm, despite a 20 minute hold up at roadworks, and on to Ostend arriving at 3.15pm. Unfortunately the boat was late and the crossing slow, so we didn't get to Ramsgate until

9.30pm. Sue did the driving into London and we arrived at around midnight, too late for a curry in the local Indian.

The trip demonstrated how easy it was to drive a right hand drive car across Europe, fast. The German autobahns, although not built to the high design standard we are accustomed to, are however, unlike our motorways, built with solid foundations and are truly excellent. I sincerely hope that the German opposition parties change their minds.

If only the UK authorities could respect the intelligence and integrity of the public ...

The worst part of the trip was undoubtedly the Belgian section, thus demonstrating the significance of intelligent traffic regulation, and the sheer stupidity of a slow blanket speed limit applied rigorously without regard to prevailing conditions. If only the UK authorities could respect the intelligence and integrity of the public, and were to apply intelligent and respect-worthy traffic regulations. Would not the result be intelligent and responsible behaviour on the part of motorists and as a consequence, improved driving standards?

If the UK authorities continue to treat the UK motorist with contempt, then they will deserve contempt in return.

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£150 fine for flashing lights

A driver flashed his lights to warn others of a speed trap and was subsequently fined £150 by a court in Leicester for "obstructing the police". The "offence" was committed near Wigston on the A50.

According to the Highway Code: "flashing headlights means only one thing - it lets another road user know you are there". So surely, how oncoming drivers interpreted the flashing lights was up to them? And if the flashing resulted in them checking and reducing their speed, was this not a contribution to road safety?

Could it be that this is just another example of police enforcement activity having the primary aim of revenue generation?

Local news from around the UK

Bath says "No" to business

Bath City Council has decided to implement a new policy on car parking from 1st April 1995. From now on, no car parking provision whatsoever will be permitted for any office or retail developments, except for "essential servicing" and disabled needs. The policy covers not only wholly new developments but also simple changes of use of existing buildings, where property owners will be forced to close off existing spaces.

To add insult to injury, the Council will then refuse to issue the planning permission unless so-called "commuted parking payments" are handed over to the Council in a form of local development tax. These will be used to subsidise the Council's own Park and Ride scheme. The changes are understood to have been introduced with virtually no public consultation, presumably for fear of the reaction that the public might give.

Council staff become victims in ideological war against the car

The City Council of Birmingham - home to Rover's Longbridge factory, and manufacturing centre for the automotive components industry - is considering scrapping the provision of "company" cars for its senior officers when contracts come up for renewal.

Senior officers were given the cars for the first time when fixed term contracts were first introduced 6 years ago. Salaries would be increased to compensate, and the official reasoning is to "encourage the use of more environmentally-friendly public transport".

Now even cyclists face ban in Cambridge city centre

Cambridge has long been a by-word for lunacy when it comes to a transport policy, and is likely to be the first city in England to experiment with road pricing, with a clever system designed to encourage driver aggression and impatience: you will pay electronically, and at a faster rate when your car is stationary in traffic than when it is moving normally.

Now, the County Council has voted to impose a six month trial ban on the use of bicycles in much of the city centre, as an "experiment". What is more, the City Council wants to challenge the ban, leaving local Council Tax payers to foot both sides of the legal bill.

We wonder what the justification for the ban could possibly be: perhaps cyclists are undermining more environmentally-friendly (Diesel) bus services, or may be they are to be condemned as another manifestation of the kind of individual personal mobility that is anathema to the bureaucrat.

Residents reject "traffic calming"

The residents (yes, residents, not motorists) of Brantham in Suffolk have succeeded in winning the removal of so-called traffic calming measures imposed on them by the County Council.

Suffolk has squandered millions in recent months on ugly and unnecessary schemes such as resurfacing roads in red and erecting signs as big as motorway direction boards at the outskirts of tiny, picturesque villages.

Brantham, which straddles the busy A137 between Ipswich and Colchester, does have a problem with some vehicles exceeding the speed limit. But the Council decided to solve this problem with a series of "throttles" reducing the road to single track every 100 yards or so.

The ensuing chaos could easily have been imagined by anyone, except of course those motivated by fanatical anti-car idealism. Long queues built up, especially at peak periods, so the residents suffered an increase in noise and pollution.

It took a year-long campaign by the villagers to persuade the Council to remove the scheme on which they have already wasted £35,000.

What's happening in your town?

Write to "On the Road" with news of what is happening (or not happening) in your town, village or county.

Spy in the cab for cars.

The Environmental Transport Association is an organisation for "green" motorists. The ETA is campaigning for the installation of spy in the cab type black boxes in all motor cars by law.

The black boxes would work in a similar fashion to those found in aeroplanes. In the case of an accident the black box would give investigators valuable information to help them understand how the accident was caused.

However, changes in traffic policing methods, making use of this new technology, would enable the police or a fleet operator to identify "speeding" drivers. The process of identification need not involve any physical contact between the inquisitor and the vehicle or driver, being by way of radio communication between electronic circuits.

The Government is currently working with motoring organisations and environmental pressure groups in a green motoring forum! Recommendations are expected from this forum later on this year. You do not need a crystal ball to predict what unpleasant measures will come out of this exercise.

The ETA supports supposedly "greener" driving and wants the Government to enforce the existing speed limits strictly. The spy in the cab black box would greatly assist in doing this!

Speed limits when and where required for road safety are supported by the ABD. But strict speed reduction with respect to our outdated motorway speed limit, which the vast majority of motorway drivers disagree with and disregard, would be completely intolerable.

Speed enforcement with a vengeance would be a certainty if organisations like ETA were to prevail! For politically correct elements to seize the agenda to such a degree that they are able to ram their extreme ideas down the throats of ordinary citizens, aided by police armed with Orwellian style Big Brother technology, is absolutely unacceptable and cannot be put up with by ordinary citizens!

However, it is up to you ordinary citizens to make your views known at least as forcefully!

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Mediocre standards the result of 70 limit

Sir - I find I was first licensed on 21 September 1945. My early impression was that the official attitude to motoring had stemmed from the squires who thought one should only go by horse and the socialists who thought one should only go by bus. If that was so they have won in that driving has been made almost as miserable as the unions and the great British public have made all other travel.

There are roads where given the right time and skill it is sometimes possible to proceed far faster than the limit. Equally, at other times you might expect only a lunatic to attain the allowed speed. Mostly today you see almost everyone droning on at a shade over the nominal limit, half-asleep, any deviation from that speed suitable to conditions procuring either the attention of the police or a thump up the tail. I used to find if we could get on in good conditions it preserved interest and attention, and patience and toleration for the slow bits. Now we are apparently supposed to just become bored and bad-tempered. Why should it be a crime to drive alertly on a dry, deserted three-lane motorway in a modern vehicle at a hundred or so but OK to creep down it half asleep or in a foul temper at seventy, continuing so when it becomes wet and busy? It is illogical to demand that people take no advantage of good conditions but all necessary account of bad, and it does not happen.

A more serious problem than drink-driving is all those who are unfit when sober and see no incentive to improve; one seldom stays at the same level of attainment in anything and if one does not improve one tends to regress.

Speed traps have often been placed where and when it is easy to fill a quota rather than where hazard exists and we are starting to see this with the new devices. Generally what is prosecuted is what is easy, while stupidity and incompetence go unchecked. Worse, over the years I have encountered a weight of anecdotal evidence and some experience which suggests that the anti-motoring zeal of certain forces is fuelled not only by official prejudice but by the social prejudice of individual officers. At the same time no real concern is shown about vandalism and theft directed against our vehicles, to the extent that some do not report incidents lest more attention be directed against them than the perpetrators. Some official pronouncements have almost appeared to stem from a view that car crime is the fault of people for having cars!

The present avalanche of "statistics" reminds me of the "trial" of the 70 mph limit by Marples and Castle when minor accidents were decreed to be no longer reported, that a

reduction might be shown. (It was probably inevitable. Firstly, the notion was emerging that no one should do better than another. Secondly, the "workers" - in unionspeak - who intermittently produced vehicles which blew up over 70 had to be defended against imports which did not. Thirdly, British Rail did and do base advertising on it.)

Very much private motoring is for convenience, if seldom now for some brief illicit pleasure. People who can not cope should be advised to stay off the roads and not comforted by persecution of those who can. Or else let's be fair to all and bring back the man with the red flag!

I put two propositions:- One is that it should be OK to put the foot down if a road is obviously clear and safe. The other is that we'll never get that because it is now very clear that the real offence is what over many years I thought it to be - just to enjoy motoring.

Alex. L. Dick, Dundee

"Traffic calming" is counter-productive

Sir - I do of course wholeheartedly agree with your aims with regard to elevating the blanket 70 m.p.h. limit on British Motorways, indeed I would go further than you in that I would like to see GB adopt German procedures where there is only a limit imposed in adverse circumstances, in my view that should be the way things are done here. The 70 m.p.h. is truly ridiculous in Scotland where our motorways just do not carry the same volume of traffic as is the case further South. I always find on my journeys South that by far the most dangerous aspect of travel is that drivers drive much too close together, many obviously do not think about what is to happen should one's engine suddenly fail as indeed once happened to me, especially if this occurs in the overtaking lane. It of course also important to keep spacing on the inside lane so that vehicles joining a motorway can do so without impedence. At the end of the day, I suppose I am saying that I would like to see the naive blanket 70 m.p.h. limit replaced by a 2-second rule, this should be the gap between following vehicles, in my view, this allied to better lane discipline is far more likely to reduce accidents than the idiotic enforcement of a needless restriction, I note as I write this, the ridiculous fining and banning of Damon Hill for doing 103 m.p.h. on a motorway ! Need one say more.

While I know that the ABD is primarily concerned to do something about our fatuous motorway restrictions, does the Association have any view on the matter of so-called "traffic calming". Here in Edinburgh in the last two or three years with a Labour administration, there has been a growth of

traffic constriction measures, particularly at road junctions and roundabouts. I have been writing to the local authorities to make the points that

1. these constrictions are dangerous to cyclists (I cycle to work) as the cyclist is pushed into the kerb by motorists who cannot judge the position of the vehicle accurately on the road surface;
2. road constrictions do not merely slow traffic down (this is given as the reason for building them) but in fact stop it altogether leading to large single line jams;
3. the basically needless stoppages created by these measures must increase vehicle fuel consumption hence increasing costs all around and also consequently increasing the pollution load on the city's air;
4. the queuing resulting from the constrictions leads to frustration and anger and an angry driver is likely to be a bad driver;
5. the money wasted on building pavement infills to constrict traffic flow would be much better spent in trying to improve public transport. I do accept that a surfeit of vehicles really does not suit a historic city centre such as is the case in Edinburgh.

Further aberrant behaviour by the city authorities evident when one drives or cycles in Edinburgh is the lack of action in dealing with those who park in such a manner as to obstruct vehicle flow, I suspect our authority sees the inconsiderate car parker as another weapon in its array of measures for "slowing down the motorist".

I learnt to drive in 1959 and while I realise that traffic densities at that time were not what they now are, I cannot help feeling that many of the measures passed in recent years encourage the essentially incompetent driver at the expense of the better one. I always try to drive the principal of minimum impedence, that is to say that I try to consciously position my car such as to create two or more lanes if possible, to leave a space for cyclists to come up the inside or motorcyclists to come up the outside, to position on roundabouts such the others can come on alongside and so on, yet today, I notice all too often that some manages to position themselves on the road such as to create maximum impedence such as the classic of selecting a right lane and to only signal right when the light changes!

I would be interested to know the opinions of others in the ABD regarding "traffic calming measures" in cities.

Alan R. Werninck, Edinburgh

Pollution and health issues

Air pollution levels set to fall and fall

According to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report "Transport and the Environment", the amount of air pollution in this country caused by the motor car is set to continue to fall *despite any rise in the amount of traffic*. (See graphs below).

The Report, which we found was actually biased against the motor car, predicts that emissions of every major pollutant by motor vehicles will decline dramatically for at least 20 years. Even taking the *least optimistic* predictions:

- Carbon Monoxide emissions from cars are reported to be falling already, and by 2010 will have fallen by 68%;
- Volatile Organic Compound emissions from cars will fall by 81% by 2010;
- Nitrogen Dioxide emissions from cars will fall by 77% from their 1990 levels by 2010; and
- although Particulates emissions from cars are likely to rise slightly as a result of the growing popularity of Diesel cars (Particulates are largely a Diesel problem), this will be more than offset by cleaner HGVs, buses and taxis which should be on the road by then. As a result total Particulate emissions from road vehicles will fall by 67% from their 1990 levels.

The declines in Nitrogen Dioxide and Volatile Organic Compounds emissions should, in turn, cause a decline in the levels of ground level ozone.

Although the Report expects to see levels of these pollutants creeping up again slightly after 2010, this is highly speculative since it assumes that there will be no further improvements in

vehicle technology beyond those already legislated for.

There is no reason why emissions levels should not be brought lower still, as demonstrated by the fact that the cleanest cars are already much better than the average, but these figures reveal that there is no need to restrict car use in order to achieve clean air.

there is no need to restrict car use to achieve clean air

At the cost of enormous practical and political difficulties, it might be possible to force people to reduce car journeys slightly - a fall of just 10% would be virtually unachievable - and there would presumably be a corresponding fall in emissions. The economic cost to a major car making nation, on course to be making over 2 million cars a year shortly, could be catastrophic, and our lifestyles would be severely and needlessly compromised.

By failing to grasp that the motor car is here to stay, and by failing to understand that it is only through better technology that emissions will fall, environmentalists are unwittingly delaying rather than accelerating the cleaning of our air.

UK set to beat target for fall in carbon dioxide emissions

The Government has predicted that it will beat its target for reducing Carbon Dioxide emissions. The target was to reduce the emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

Although the theory is far from proven, it is widely accepted that Carbon Dioxide emissions may be causing the so-called "greenhouse effect", and global warming.

Even if this is so, the Government's latest predictions are that emissions will be between 6m and 13m tonnes *below* the 158m tonne target.

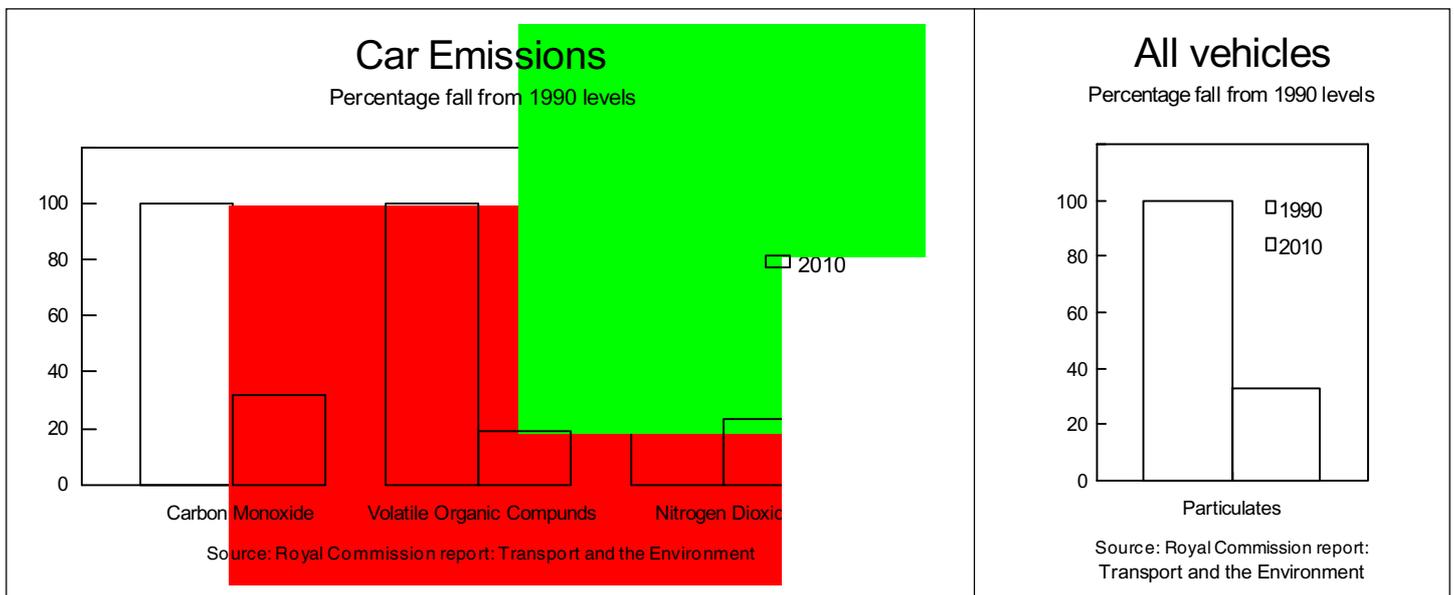
Cars only produce 13% of CO₂

According to figures released by the RAC, cars are only responsible for 13% of the country's Carbon Dioxide emissions.

Home heating - is it linked to asthma and hay fever?

A study of 6000 school children in Germany has found that hay fever (an allergic reaction similar to asthma) is twice as common among children who live in homes heated by gas or oil than in those who live in homes heated by wood or coal.

This may also explain why hay fever is four times as common in clean Munich than in heavily polluted Leipzig, in the former East.



Pollution and health issues

Radioactive teeth!

The latest anti-car scare was sprung upon the unsuspecting public by the Today programme's presenter John Humphrys on 3rd February. Listeners heard Humphrys fairly tear into the hapless Peter Bottomley, erstwhile Transport Secretary and husband of Health Minister, Virginia.

According to a report, later published in the Lancet and referred to by Humphrys, it appears that vehicle exhausts contain polonium-210, a naturally occurring radioactive element which emits alpha particles. Traces of this substance have been found in children's teeth. Car drivers were therefore accused of being the cause of some childhood leukaemia. Bottomley tried to put the risks outlined by Humphrys into perspective and for his efforts, was rudely slapped down. The exchange can be only described as being acrimonious.

It can have been no accident that at the weekend following this item, an article by John Birt the "DG" of the BBC, appeared in The Times, entitled "Why our interviewers should stop sneering and start to listen". The article referred to "studio argy bargy" and put forward a case for a more sober and reflective approach to public debate.

Humphrys, in the week following the appearance of this piece, was noticeably less like a Rottweiler in his interviewing manner.

Presumably those of us of a more seasoned age should expect to have a higher concentration of polonium in our teeth. Can we therefore look forward, in our later years, to reading in bed at night without the aid of a light, the luminescence of our teeth providing adequate illumination? We await developments with bated breath.

No excuse for another round of "bash the motorist"!

In the mean time it is worth looking more closely at the Lancet report. A number of facts emerge:

- The researchers at Bristol studied over 2000 teeth from children but the statistical analysis used only 220 of these which were from subjects who lived within 10km of a motorway.
- They did not have information about how long the subjects had lived at their present addresses.
- They surmise that the presence of polonium may arise from the use of *leaded* petrol.
- They found that polonium is attached to particulates. That is, the smoke particles from dirty engines.

So whilst polonium may be emitted by vehicle

exhausts, the research has *not* shown that this is the only source. More importantly such indication as there is shows that most motorists driving clean, modern petrol engines using unleaded fuel are *not* to blame for this latest scare. Thus there is no excuse for another round of "bash the motorist"!

Pesticides linked with childhood cancers

While researchers in Britain predictably continue to blame the car for everything from hair loss to athletes foot, research in America is linking the use of insecticides and herbicides in the home and garden with increased incidence of childhood cancers including leukemia.

Cancer of the connective tissue is four times as common among children who live in homes where gardens are treated with chemicals, as those who live in homes where they are not, and children exposed to insecticidal strips run twice the risk of developing leukemia. Children whose mothers were exposed to strips during pregnancy are at three times the risk.

Major LA polluter traced

Scientists at the University of California have devised an interesting experiment. They seem to have found a bigger source of atmospheric pollution than the car! Worse even than buses! The offender is the hamburger which, when grilled, emits droplets of fat which burn at high temperature.

The experiment involves cooking fast foods under controlled conditions and measuring the resultant emissions. Calculations show that the pollution released *daily* by Los Angeles' 30,000 fast food restaurants amounts to 13.7 tons of smoke and 19 tons of organic compounds.

"Cost" of noise to be taken into account

The government is seeking ways to include the cost of traffic noise when considering new road schemes. It would take into account loss of property value and even people's mental health.

These factors are surely impossible to cost accurately and there can be no doubt as to the true motives for this scheme: more employment for civil servants and the production of spurious figures to "prove" that much-needed roads should not be built.

Once again the burden of cost and delay will fall on the hard-pressed productive sector of the economy: those who have to travel to work, transport goods and pay the taxes to support all those civil servants.

Action checklist

Members often ask, "What can I do to help?" Here are a few ideas:

- Write personally to your MP.
- Write to your local press to protest about anti-car proposals by local government.
- AA and RAC members should write to these organisations asking what they are doing to support their members' interests and to combat anti-car propaganda.
- Write to the BBC and other national media whenever emotive, anti-car sentiments are presented as "fact".
- Enrol more members! You should find a membership form with this issue. 'Phone or write to the Chairman or Secretary for more copies.
- Do you have skills, or access to facilities, which could help run the ABD? Write or 'phone to let us know.

Apathy is our main enemy. Many news media present anti-car viewpoints as though they are held by the vast majority of citizens. We need to show that this is not the case!

Moving house? Please make sure you tell us!

So that we can keep you up to date with developments, please ensure that we have your correct address, and do not forget to tell us if you move.

Industry v. the media

Boomtime for Britain's car industry

Despite the poor state of the U.K. home market, largely due to the lack of private car buyers, still too frightened of losing their jobs, or struggling to pay off negative equity in their homes to consider buying new cars, Britain's car makers are pushing up production to meet higher demand on export markets.

Honda, Toyota and Ford are all planning to increase production in the U.K., and to introduce new models. Mazda, the only major Japanese manufacturer without European production facilities, is to have its own new small car soon, to be built at the Ford plant at Dagenham. Rover has not looked back since BMW's takeover last year and continues to build on the success that started with the introduction of the 200 series five years ago; and Peugeot has announced plans to give its Coventry plant a role in planning and designing future models.

The rumour is that Vauxhall may also build its successful new Corsa model (currently made in Spain and at Eisenach in the former East Germany) in the U.K.

Production is the highest for 20 years and is set to rise to over 2 million per year by the end of the decade, an all time record. Production was just 880,000 in 1982.

Hypocrisy reigns supreme in the media

Whilst most of our newspapers and TV stations continue their war on personal mobility and the motorcar, carefully reporting everything they can to persuade the British public that driving a car is a deadly sin, they continue to make millions of Pounds out of advertising revenue from the car manufacturers.

They also - rightly - welcome every new investment in car manufacturing which comes to the U.K. stressing its value to the economy in terms of jobs and export revenues. They do not seem to realise that the U.K.'s relatively low wage costs and access to European markets will not mean a thing unless there also customers - millions of them - here in the U.K. to buy the cars that the new factories are building.

Metropolis

You may have watched the recent series of BBC2 documentaries, in which Chairman Brian Gregory was due to appear following an interview last year. Unfortunately, Brian's interview was not screened. Obviously, the programme makers did not want to broadcast any message that conflicted with the views they wanted to promote.

Three Cheers!

French scrap anti-speeding laws

French drivers were delighted to learn that their Government has scrapped its plan to introduce controversial new laws which would have led to draconian penalties for speeding.

M. Edouard Balladur, the Prime Minister, gave lack of parliamentary time as the reason why the Bill had to be dropped, but it is widely thought that the real reason was his concern about the unpopularity of the measure among voters just three months before an election.

It should be remembered that France was brought to a standstill two years ago when the country's truck drivers blockaded roads in protest against the introduction of a system of penalty points for driving licences.

The new law would have involved serious offenders in criminal proceedings rather than simple payment of an administrative fine as at present in France. Fines for speeding would have ranged up to FF7,500 - about £1,000 - with the threat of prison for those exceeding the Autoroute speed limit by 60 kph.

The lesson in all of this, for British drivers, is that political pressure from the electorate can work, and that the tail need not always wag the dog.

Norris gets it right:

Speed in itself is not the problem

Road Safety Minister Steven Norris was reported in Complete Car magazine to have said, "It's not speed in itself that is the problem - it's speed that is inappropriate for the conditions that's the killer".

Well done, sir! At long last a politician gets it right. We in the ABD have been long arguing for a sensible and responsible approach to the issue of speed and the enforcement of limits. Speed reduction measures applied only when and where needed at the correct level will save lives without persecuting the ordinary car driver.

Cars are best!

In a further statement, Mr Norris said that private cars are "extraordinarily convenient", and he defended them by stating that "You have your own company, your own temperature control, your own music - and you don't have to put up with dreadful human beings sitting next to you".

His remarks may have been insensitive to say the least (although even the last part of his statement will have struck a chord if you have ever had a representative of the great unwashed sit next to you on a crowded bus or train), and they caused a political storm. The funny thing is that most of what he said was absolutely and undeniably true! The car is simply the most civilised way to travel, most of the time.

Cops get tough on centre lane hoggers!

The motorway police in the West Midlands and West Mercia police districts have introduced variable message signs fitted to the rear windscreen of their patrol vehicles, to give instructions to errant drivers.

The signs are preprogrammed and will be used to ask motorists to "Put your phone down", "Seatbelt", "Reduce your speed", etc.

Police will also use the signs to tackle centre lane hoggers who are one of the major causes of accidents and congestion.

ABD - Drive for Membership

The Government is taking decisions which affect you as a motorist. Your liberty and your wallet are under threat!

It is vital that we organise *now!* If we delay, it will be too late.

So encourage your friends and colleagues to join the ABD and help in the campaign to protect our freedom.

You will find a membership application form with this issue. Telephone for more copies if you need them.