

## Bad roads kill 300 ...

The Automobile Association has conservatively estimated that at least three hundred people die each year because of poor road design. It reckons that many of the flaws are easily avoidable and changes could prevent deaths and injuries among drivers, motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians. Some of the more common problems highlighted are:

- \* Confusing arrays of traffic lights at junctions;
- \* Poorly sited crossings for pedestrians;
- \* Lampposts on the wrong side of a crash barrier;
- \* Road signs hidden by overhanging branches or uncut grass.

The Highways Agency, responsible for motorways and trunk roads, said Britain's roads were the safest in the EU, with stringent design guidelines.

*Funny, that. When it comes to excuses for the installation of Gatsos and the implementation of unnecessarily low speed limits, government agencies would have you believe that our roads are so extremely dangerous. - Ed.*

## ... and 700 more are killed or seriously injured by councils' failure to grit

Thousands of accidents are being caused each year on Britain's roads because local authorities are cutting back on gritting budgets, it has been claimed.

The BBC's Countryfile programme found some councils had reduced budgets by hundreds of thousands of pounds. As a result, some roads are being left untouched during cold and dangerous weather, it is alleged.

The AA estimates that 700 people are killed or badly hurt on slippery roads.

*So much for local councils wanting to make roads safer. Doubtless they will try to blame any accidents on these ungritted roads on 'speed'. - Ed.*

## Your number's up

While road users are dying due to under investment in maintenance, what are the ring masters in Whitehall planning? A "crackdown" on distinctive number plates, that's what. Yes, as the planet (if we believe their propaganda) heads towards doom, and amidst the real issues of inadequate, dangerous roads, the most important matter for the deskbound clowns is whether the characters of your number plate are correctly spaced.

We thought that number plates were for identification purposes, in which case would not a distinctive and memorable plate be a good, not a bad thing? That the irony of this is lost on Jack Straw's circus reveals just how thick their skulls are.

However, we are forgetting, number plate formats are not dictated for purposes of identification any more than speed limits are set for purposes of safety. They are both set for the purpose (so aptly expressed by Auberon Waugh) of imposing subservience for its own sake.

## "Don't do as I do ..."

John Prescott, remembered (amongst other things) for his hail of invective against two-car families, once used a helicopter to avoid the traffic and take him from Wembley Stadium to Kensington Palace, where he was due to meet the Queen. Helicopters are said to be the most fuel-inefficient means of transport but his office claimed it was the 'only means' to get him to the palace on time.

This was in May 1997, and was one of eleven RAF private flights made over the next 16 months at an average cost of £3,063 to the taxpayer. The information was obtained by shadow defence secretary John Maples in a Parliamentary reply.

## Clarkson's clanger

In the middle of the Radio 4 debate on cars in cities, attended by the ABD, Jeremy Clarkson, who was in general speaking up well in favour of the car, dropped a major clanger which the Greens and their allies have been quick to exploit.

This is well worth looking at in some detail, as we can all learn from it and avoid making the same mistake - we could easily do so if placed in the same position.

It began when an individual from the audience was invited to make his point, which was a very clear articulation of the green policy on speed - namely that all urban areas should be limited to 20mph and enforced with zero tolerance and heavy penalties. This would make car use unattractive compared with cycling and public transport, remove all expectation of achieving any significant speed and create a more "civilised" environment where car drivers made more eye contact with pedestrians and cyclists. Even though it would be boring, there would be less accidents, he claimed, and less road rage (Really!).

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## Inside this issue

Speed - Whose business is it?	2
Global Hot Air	4
Your letters	4
Anti-Gatso petition	6
Pro-Motor News	6
New Meeting Dates and Times	6

Instead of decrying this unbelievable abuse of road safety for the sole purpose of creating a climate of fear to make driving as unpleasant as possible, all JC could do was to say he agreed with 20mph limits, with even less outside schools.

The Sunday Telegraph's environmental correspondent Greg Neale was off the mark like a sprinter on steroids, extracting a few more choice quotes from Clarkson which he probably used out of context in an incredulous article on 24 January entitled "Clarkson Backs 20mph Limit in Towns". Of course, RoSPA, Transport 2000 and the Slower Speeds Initiative were all lined up to welcome their new recruit with open arms.

Of course, we all know what Jeremy means. Of course there are times and places where it is necessary to drive at 20mph or even 10mph, and any responsible, alert driver will do so. But this is totally different from a blanket zero tolerance 20mph limit being introduced everywhere which is now 30mph, to go with the 40mph open road limit and 55mph motorway limit these devious and politically astute people want.

## A Council Meeting

*ABD Member, Nigel Humpaway reports on a typical example of Democracy in Action.*

I recently attended a meeting of Worcester City Council Access/Transportation working party, which I had been invited to at the request of a local councillor. This was most interesting. The main item on the agenda for this meeting, which involved around 20 people, concerned a proposed network of cycle lanes throughout the city. Much of this was fairly non controversial from the drivers' viewpoint, and I was actually able to speak up in favour of cycle contraflows on existing one way streets, which some people raised

**Thought for the day**  
*"There was no such thing as road rage until traffic calming was invented"*

A DJ on local radio.

## UK News

objections to. There were four people there representing cyclists, including a representative of the CTC, and it was clear they were very clued up, very militant and had plenty to say for themselves. No wonder they get what they want!

They seemed to say some sensible things, though, and one of them actually said that speed wasn't the problem for cyclists, it was drivers who gave them no room. I noted this carefully and stored it up for future regurgitation! There were a few issues I managed to object to - one a dual carriageway they were proposing to reduce to one lane for a cycle and pedestrian crossing 50yd after a major junction, but when I queried the usefulness and safety of these absurd strips of red tarmac they put at traffic lights allowing cyclists to sit directly in front of cars, the cycling lobby showed their true colours and rounded on me aggressively. Funny, when I cycled extensively I never had any problem without them. I shall have to get my bike out and try them.

I kept out of the arguments about the desirability of putting cycleways through the pedestrian precincts and observed the inevitable conflict between the for and against camps with interest!

Half way through the meeting, the representative of Transport 2000 had to leave to catch a train home - I could barely contain myself!

Then they started on about "Safe Routes to School", of which there are two schemes in Worcester. These seem less about getting children safely to and from school than introducing humps, chicanes and 20mph limits to make life unpleasant for drivers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Since this exercise is being driven by Sustrans, this is hardly surprising. They have obviously reached the unsurprising conclusion that calling their schemes "safe routes to school" instead of "making car use unpleasant" is much more likely to lead to success from their point of view.

Not knowing the areas in detail, I kept quiet; but one is still due to be consulted on so they can expect an alternative ABD proposal from their local representative.

### **Speed Limits - How they are set and your right to object**

**The ABD has now printed a very useful 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 members. Please send a large sae, stamped (26p) to: The Editor, PO Box 3151, Colchester CO6 3JH.**

## International News

### **The truth comes out**

In the January issue we revealed how the truth behind the so-called "green" activists' agenda was coming out: in an unguarded moment, (or was it blatant arrogance?) Canada's Minister of the Environment, Christine Stewart, said: "No matter if the science is all phony, there are collateral environmental benefits. ... Climate change [provides] the greatest chance to bring about justice and equality in the world."

### **"planting trees will not lead to the societal changes we want to achieve"**

Now we reveal a further, astonishing statement from the anti-car lobby. A delegate to the Kyoto conference, in December 1997, speaking about the plans to plant trees to absorb the carbon dioxide emitted by cars, said: "The trouble with this idea is that planting trees will not lead to the societal changes we want to achieve."

## Conference News

### **Speed - Whose Business Is It?**

*Malcolm Heymer reports on the PACTS conference that he and John Lyon attended on 10th February 1999.*

As expected, this was a very depressing event. I will attempt to summarise the speakers' contributions in their order of appearance.

**Lord Whitty** was first and described the background to the Government's speed review and how it fitted in with the development of new road casualty targets. Provisional guidance on the latter (to cover the next ten years) is expected 'shortly', but the final strategy will not be published until after completion of the speed review, in the autumn. Ominously, he said that speed would be an essential part of the strategy. Although he claimed to embark on the speed review with an open mind and was anxious to obtain as much input as possible, it is clear that the "speed kills" fanatics have already made quite an impression on him, from his remark that speed plays a major role in causing accidents. He was also of the view that lower speeds make walking and cycling safer, or at least provide a greater perception of safety (the Slower Speeds Initiative has obviously been at work).

He then commented on the different national speed limits, where it seems that there is still some vestige of hope that he could be persuaded to see sense. On the 30mph urban limit, he wondered whether it was still appropriate or should be lower in

## The Association of British Drivers

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For contact details see:  
[www.abd.org.uk/contacts.htm](http://www.abd.org.uk/contacts.htm)

some areas. He recognised, however, that there was no point in imposing limits that will not be observed and signs alone would be ineffective in reducing speeds below 30 mph. He thought that traffic calming is effective but can cause noise and environmental problems, as well as a backlash from residents in some areas.

On rural single carriageway roads, he said that the 60 mph limit was often seen as too high on country lanes and lower default speeds were being considered, especially where there is a high accident rate. He also acknowledged the demand from residents of many villages for lower speeds, but was not sure how these could be achieved without intrusive traffic calming and signing. He seemed to be against an overall reduction in the national limit, as it would then be unrealistically low in places.

On the motorway limit, he acknowledged that motorways are our safest roads despite the existing speed limit being exceeded by a substantial proportion of drivers. He seemed to accept that there was little road safety benefit in retaining the limit at 70 and he mentioned the campaign to have the limit raised. He felt, however, that raising the limit would just ratchet speeds up further and there were environmental disbenefits that had to be taken into account (the greens have been knobbling him again!). At least he seemed to have virtually ruled out a lower limit because of the compliance problems.

On enforcement, he believed that speed cameras were effective and discussions were continuing with the Treasury about the proportion of fine revenue that should be recycled to pay for camera operation. The Police should give more priority to speed limit enforcement and he felt that the Crime and Disorder Act could encompass speed management. The level of penalties is to be reviewed. He said, however, that speed limits should not be enforced just to raise revenue and speed cameras should be sited for safety only! He also wanted to consider speed limiters (more on those below).

The next speaker was **Richard Allsop**, Professor of Transport Studies at University College, London, who spoke about the impacts of speed - less time for a driver to react (no mention of the soporific effect of low speeds), higher damage in an impact, higher emissions of some pollutants. He concluded that the 'optimum' speeds for the benefit of society as a whole were lower than those of individual choice. The benefits of lower speeds were less motivation to buy powerful cars, shorter journeys by car would be discouraged in urban areas and increased journey times for longer trips would discourage them and tip the balance in favour of rail. In other words, lower speeds were desirable for political reasons!

A discussion session followed and the first speaker was **Peter Bottomley**, who was in favour of lower speed limits but wanted the 40mph limit on HGVs on single carriageway roads scrapped as anomalous

(one bit of sense at least). An officer from Staffs police wanted money from camera enforcement reinvested but also called for more flexibility in speed limit signing on roads subject to the national limit - apparently there is a 70 mph dual carriageway in Staffs with a speed camera on it and drivers, who associate speed cameras with urban speed limits, have been panicking and standing on the brakes when they see the camera! So much for improving safety. He wants to be able to put 70 signs alongside the camera warning signs.

**Trevor Magner** of the BMF bravely put the view that speed should not be singled out to the detriment of other road safety issues, that driver behaviour is complex and speed enforcement is concentrated on because it is the easy option. It is more important to encourage drivers to avoid accidents. Given the nature of most of the audience, he might as well have been speaking Swahili.

**Anne Mortlock** (of Oxfordshire County Council) made a plea for more funding - she was having trouble putting in many of the lower limits residents wanted because in half of the villages concerned there had been no accidents!

## **He blamed virtually all of society's ills, real or imagined, on drivers**

The next two speakers were both academics, **Steve Stradling** of Napier University and **Claire Corbett** of Brunel University. Stradling went through all the psychological mumbo jumbo about 'lapses', 'errors' and 'violations' and the reasons why drivers 'speed' (he didn't mention the obvious one that most speed limits are unrealistic). Corbett then set out her views about how drivers could be persuaded to conform to the acceptable level of behaviour represented by speed limits - basically more speed cameras and lower trigger speeds.

After a reasonable lunch (one of the day's few saving graces) we were subjected to yet another academic, **Oliver Carsten** from the University of Leeds, on the subject of speed limiters. He described the development work carried out at the university on a speed limiter for cars that controls the vehicle's speed to the posted limit. Instead of having thousands of roadside beacons to activate the on-board equipment, however, they are using satellite GPS technology to track the exact location of the vehicle and change the limit speed that way. He also said they were working on an enhancement to the system that would enable it to be 'dynamic', i.e. to alter the maximum speed according to weather, road geometry etc. (they actually have a working vehicle already with the posted-limit technology in it). On the basis of the TRL's dubious work on the effect of speeds on accident rates, he estimated that a fully dynamic system fitted to all vehicles could save 35 per cent of

injury accidents per year. It should be noted that the report on which he has based this deduction (which suggests that a 1mph reduction in average speeds leads to a 5 per cent reduction in accidents) itself suggests that the maximum accident reduction from reducing speeds may be only about 25 per cent, so Mr Carsten has apparently extrapolated the report's findings without taking account of its caveats - not very professional.

The next part of his presentation was the most interesting, however, when he described the work done to ascertain whether the fitment of speed limiters could result in adverse effects on driver behaviour. I believe he said this part of the work had been done through a European programme of research and it tested the behaviour of a sample of drivers in simulated conditions: with no speed limiter, with the speed limiter system providing information on safe speeds only, with the speed limiter controlling the vehicle speed to the posted limit and, finally, with the limiter controlling the speed dynamically according to the prevailing conditions. The results showed that the 'mandatory' systems (i.e. the limiter actually controlling the vehicle speed) resulted in a large increase in close following or tailgating, compared with an uncontrolled car. Even more frightening, however (but entirely predictable to those of us with a practical, as opposed to an academic's knowledge of driver behaviour) were the results of simulated driving on a foggy motorway. In each test, the driver entered a motorway which became progressively more foggy, until eventually they were confronted by a queue of stationary traffic ahead. The speed profiles of the drivers under the different limiter regimes along the motorway showed that the highest speeds were attained by those who were driving a vehicle subject to mandatory limiting to the posted speed limit - considerably higher than drivers of uncontrolled vehicles. With the limiter, three drivers 'crashed' into the stationary queue, compared with only one in an uncontrolled vehicle. The lowest speeds, not surprisingly, were found when the dynamic limiter was in operation, but the advisory system was almost as effective at reducing speeds to safe levels. Carsten's conclusion to all this was that speed limiters would need to be introduced 'very carefully'!

**Neil Mayhew** of Norfolk County Council was next and described work done in that county to manage speeds in villages, at sharp bends and high accident junctions, without necessarily resorting to unrealistic speed limits and traditional traffic calming. Measures such as warning signs that light up in advance of hazards, if the approach speed exceeds a certain level, and redefining carriageway limits in a village centre to cause drivers to slow voluntarily, have been used. His was a refreshingly pragmatic approach to real life situations and it is a pity other highway authorities do not take heed (Suffolk and

Oxon for starters).

The really rabid contribution was kept to last, from **Don Mathew** of the Slower Speeds Initiative. He stated his membership of several environmental groups and was sneeringly dismissive of drivers. He painted a picture of millions of people frightened to go about their daily business because of fear of the speed of traffic. He blamed virtually all of society's ills, real or imagined, on drivers in general and speeding drivers in particular.

The conference was rounded up by **Robert Gifford** of PACTS, who set out his vision of short, medium and long term goals. In the short term, he wanted fine hypothecation from speed cameras and signing improvements. In the medium term he wanted targeted educational initiatives (presumably "obey the speed limit without question") and a review of speed limits (i.e. lower). In the long term, despite Oliver Carsten's evidence, he wanted speed limiters on all vehicles.

Lord Whitty had left before lunch, so he did not hear the presentations about speed limiters. I shall be writing to him, however, to advise him of the outcome of the driver behaviour studies and warn him about taking notice of academics! I believe he may still be open to reasoned debate, but we need to keep up the pressure throughout the year.

## The Environment

### Global Hot Air

*ABD member, chartered chemist and fellow of the royal astronomical society Bernard Abrams puts "Global warming" refreshingly into perspective.*

John Prescott has stated publicly that the science of global warming is "clear and unchallenged". Nothing could be further from the truth. The problem may not start with Johnny Two-Jags but it does end there. While he will enjoy putting BMW drivers to the wall now that the revolution is here, the justification is wearing thin. Spurious environmental grounds for taxing cars off the road are being exposed as deceitful by the ABD and others, including many climatologists.

Dr Piers Corbyn, of South Bank University and Weather Action, has pointed out that solar-based models of climate change are far more accurate in the short- to medium-term, and beyond that astronomers know all too well that it's the cycles of the Earth's orbital eccentricity and axial tilt which drive climate change. Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are determined by surface temperature, not the other way round, and the surface temperature level on any timescale within human experience - i.e. a few tens of years, hundreds at most - is determined by the Sun's activity within the semi-regular 11 year / 22 year, and longer-term irregular, sunspot cycles.

Claims of extreme weather this decade are usually absolute rot. We are not

### CO<sub>2</sub> - What they're worried about

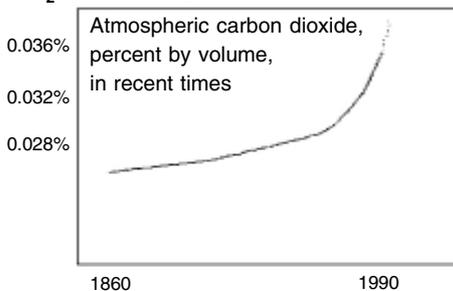


Figure 1

### CO<sub>2</sub> - In perspective

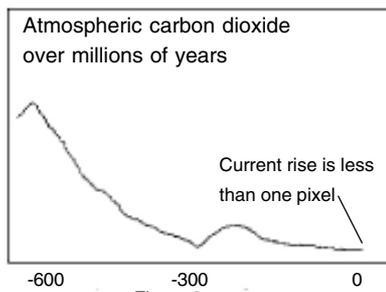


Figure 2

### °C - What they're worried about

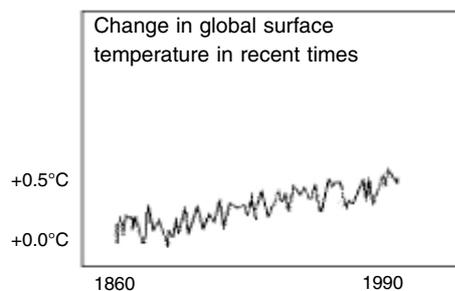


Figure 3

### °C - In perspective

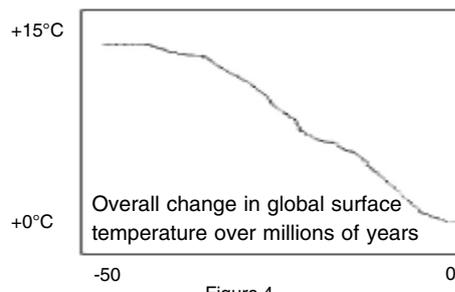


Figure 4

experiencing anything other than relative stability in the climate at present and have been doing so for some 8,000 years! Yet within this timescale we have had several episodes of what Prescott and the greens would call global warming, and also a mini ice age or two, all without the help of a single car.

Unfortunately astronomy education is not a major feature of school (or university) science these days, so many climatologists ply their trade in blissful ignorance of the most relevant facts. In addition, some of those entering global climate research are often motivated by a desire to 'save the planet' - not that it needs saving from us, whereas frequently we do need saving from the planet - and therefore expect to find a problem which does not in fact exist. This leads to graphs such as those shown here (figures 1 and 3), which are taken as closely as possible from a research paper in the House of Commons Library, a document which is available to MPs and Ministers and which is undoubtedly influencing their thinking.

Even so, one cannot help but suspect that they know the score, as a Canadian politician recently admitted with a statement that the science of man-made global warming may be phoney but the social advantages of the policies it creates make it all OK. This is dangerous nonsense; at both macro-economic and micro-quality-of-life levels these policies will do nothing but harm.

The timescale for the graph in the Commons Library document is too short by a factor of between one thousand and one million. Our planet Earth is just that, a planet, and we must look to astronomical and geological timescales to see the wider and true picture.

When this is done, the graphs shown here

provide anybody with an open mind ample evidence that man-made carbon dioxide, and the dubious small rise in the average surface temperature of our planet this half-century, are probably still in the statistical noise of the measurements when the changes are examined in their proper context: within timescales of tens or hundreds of millions of years (still short-term by an order of magnitude in the 4.7 thousand million year history of planet Earth).

So the claimed small (half a degree) rise in surface temperature may not exist. If it does exist it is insignificant. And whatever it is, carbon dioxide from cars or any other source are not responsible. Are you listening Mr Prescott?

## Letters



### Call for Action!

Sir - I urge all those who moan about the misuse of speed cameras to do what I did. Cobble up your own petition against them, get 1000 signatures, then present it to your local council. You and I know it won't have the slightest effect on that council's policy, but the publicity might wake a few people up!

Doing just an hour or so each week, it took me just 11 hours to get 1000 signatures. I knew feeling against cameras was high, but even I was surprised. I used to visit industrial estates, pop into various businesses and ask if anyone wanted to sign. I was nearly killed in the rush!

At one factory someone took a couple of petition forms away and came back half an hour later with 40 signatures! Two people had been caught by the same camera on a dual carriageway for doing 43mph in a 40mph area. Their attitude was that they would never

help the police after such an experience; worrying.

No one at my local council wanted to accept the petition, so all of December was taken up being shunted from one department to another. Eventually my own councillor accepted it.

In the meantime I had sent various information to the local media, so subsequently appeared on Westcountry TV, Plymouth Sound and Radio Devon (which covers some of Cornwall and Somerset as well). There I was able to spread the gospel on behalf of the DTM (Down Trodden Motorist)! I also managed to get in several plugs for the Association of British Drivers and Motorists Union. I also took the opportunity to warn anyone listening that they should look out for their council's plans to impose a town entry tax and to do something about it!

In gathering these 1000 signatures just 19 people refused to sign, so we have a ratio of Plymouth voters/taxpayers of 53 to 1 against the use and spread of speed cameras.

John Kitson, Plymouth

*Congratulations to John Kitson for this initiative! Read more about his activities under the Campaigning section. - Ed.*

### Danger of the sound-bite

Sir - One word instead of a hundred is always preferable when dealing with simple issues. However, the problem with our soundbite culture is that it has stopped the development of arguments, particularly in the media where it matters, of anything more complex than the day of the week.

Global warming, road safety and other issues close to ABD hearts simply cannot be discussed within a soundbite mentality. Brevity in the form of soundbite-ism is one of the reasons why political correctness is scoring so many hits: nobody has the attention span these days to concentrate for more than a millisecond, and the short emotional

outburst is seen as more important than the exercise of reason.

Bernard Abrams, Glos.

### Bridges farce

Sir - It is a matter of serious concern that some 30,000 of our bridges on non-major routes are at risk of not being able to carry the 'new' 40 tonne lorry which officially came into effect on 1st January 1999. This is because of the serious under-funding by the Government in carrying out bridge assessments and subsequent strengthening programmes.

The BRF has expressed concern and has recently commented that some of the bridges assessed have been found to be unsafe even for the current maximum vehicle weight of 38 tonnes which indicates the seriousness of the situation. The Road Haulage Association is said to be at the point of 'frustration bordering on despair' over the backlog in the strengthening programme. The likely outcome of all this is more frustration and delays for the British driver when travelling on local roads, as local authorities will have little choice but to put restrictive weight limits on many bridges forcing heavy lorries onto other routes causing more congestion and delays. The Freight Transport Association head, Don McIntyre has said that the situation was getting pretty serious now and that the outlook was bleak.

All of this just emphasises how seriously under-funded our road systems are even when it is a question of public safety. Also what a raw deal the British driver is getting from Government whilst at the same time being subjected to a tirade of anti-motorist legislation.

Ken Butler

### Road to the dole queue

Sir - Newcastle-under-Lyme Council have recently turned down a planning application for a small industrial estate on the grounds

that it included a 44-space car park. This does not comply with the government's guidelines on encouraging alternative forms of transport.

A resubmission with a 30-space car park was approved although nothing was published about deals with bus companies etc.

A Stoke-on-Trent pottery company has applied to demolish an unused warehouse to make more parking spaces. (I think this is needed as a result of rationalisation into less factory sites following redundancies). One of the reasons given by council officers for advising rejection is again that car use is to be discouraged.

This sort of ruling is going to make it increasingly difficult for those in the surrounding rural areas to find employment that they can get to. Two of my daughters have had to give up employment on an industrial estate as their shifts started at 6.00am but the first possible bus could not get them there until after 8.00am. It was only a twenty minute car drive.

Dave Hammond

### Who won World War II?

Sir - The Government is planning to extend towns into the green belt in order to provide housing room. In itself, this is reasonable. Then, however, we find that it intends to build car-free corridors, dedicated to buses, linking with parent towns. Walk and cycle ways are also planned - together with other measures designed to dissuade residents from driving.

That has nothing to do with road safety or the environment. It is unadulterated fascism, intended to obstruct the mobility of undesirable plebeians. The establishment has always resented and resisted the motorcar and the freedom it brings to the masses; but it has rarely been as nakedly and aggressively expressed.

Public transport never met people's needs. In a modern industrialised society, the



Contact the Elderly

### DRIVE AWAY HER LONELINESS

Car Drivers required to drive elderly people to tea one Sunday afternoon a month.

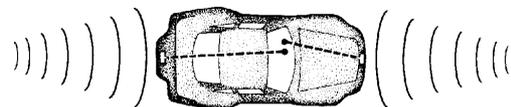
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Government's transport policy is no more than a miserable sham to try to make us stay where we are.

Did the Nazis win World War Two, after all? It seems like it.

Lance K Green BA Dip Stats FSS

### British Brainwashing Corporation

Sir - Our kids are being brainwashed! I watched last night's Newsround program which was dominated by a major feature on global warming which of course blamed the whole thing on the use of motor vehicles.

The same old twaddle about the melting of the polar ice caps was trotted out showing a particularly large iceberg drifting away from an ice sheet.

We need to make sure that our kids get a balanced view of the facts related to 'global warming' and its causes. No doubt complaining to the BBC or our caring, liberty-loving government about the bias in this article will be about as much use as a Chocolate Fireguard, but I think we should do it anyway.

In an earlier program re the incidence of child asthma, every child interviewed blamed car exhaust fumes and nothing else! which just shows how far this indoctrination has gone.

John Dean

### Gatsos - snippets from the email

**Q:** Re Gatsos "Head-on". You fellows have worried me! I have always understood that Gatsos can only work with vehicles approaching from behind.

**A:** You are correct in your belief that, currently, Gatsos can only be triggered to give two flashes by a vehicle passing it from behind. The oscillator in a Gatso that emits the radar sends approximately 200 pulses per second and is constantly active. Multiple samples are taken (and speed calculated by reference to the Doppler principle) which triggers the first flash and photograph. The second photograph is timed to be taken precisely 0.500 seconds after the first to provide the evidence. Prosecution is based on a calculation of the actual speed of the vehicle, by reference to the road markings in the photographs and calculating the distance travelled in that half second.

I don't believe they rely solely on the speed calculation provided by the Gatso (although using the Doppler principle, it should be pretty accurate anyway).

## Campaigning

### Plymouth anti-Gatso petition

ABD member, John Kitson, has been campaigning against Gatsos in his home city of Plymouth. See his letter in this issue.

He got 1000 signatures on a petition in just eleven hours of canvassing. His petition statement read as follows:

**We, the undersigned voters and taxpayers, demand that the Devon County Council and the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary cease the spread and draconian use of GATSO speed cameras to enforce outdated and unrealistic speed limits under the spurious excuse of "road safety".**

**The hundreds of thousands of pounds saved by this move should be used to further the cause of real road improvements: signing of accident blackspots and searching out bad driving with increased traffic patrols.**

### Media coverage

John's petition was covered by the two main Plymouth newspapers; the Evening Herald and the Sunday Independent. The Independent published a short article mainly comprised of various quotes from John. The article concluded that speed cameras don't improve road safety necessarily and that Plymouth's citizens are in favour of the scrapping of the cameras.

The Evening Herald's coverage was rather more prominent. Most of one page was given over to the article. Although there were plenty of quotes from John, opinions had been sought from Adrian Trim, the city council road safety officer. He said that there had been a 38% reduction in injury accidents since the cameras were installed, better than the 28% national average. Predictably, he said that cameras are a good thing, but the council will bear the petition in mind when deciding whether or not they will add another five cameras to the eighteen they currently 'enjoy' in the area.

The opinions were also sought of Plymouth's police road safety officer, MPc Ian Tanner. He was not in favour of reducing the number of Gatsos. In the following week's edition, the letters page featured 'For and Against' letters from local residents. John White was in favour of Gatsos, saying that anyone who feared them was obviously a tearaway who never used their indicators or seat belts because the law wasn't for them. If you are against Gatsos you don't care about any other road user. Mike Mulvey wrote in favour of doing away with Gatsos. He said they don't reduce accidents and motorists are being seen as an easy target.

## ABD in the media

### Mark Christie gives anti car lobby some EVO stick!

February's EVO magazine contains a fascinating test of a Ford Focus versus a Ford Anglia to illustrate how cars have progressed since the 70mph motorway limit was imposed. Unsurprisingly, the Focus stops from 70mph faster than the Anglia stops from 50mph, and EVO finish by saying that there is a strong case for raising, if not abandoning the motorway limit.

There follows a two page spread by ABD

spokesman Mark McArthur Christie laying out the full horror of the anti car lobby, liberally supported by photos of Oxfordshire Gatsos hidden behind road signs. Mark deals with Gatsos, pollution and traffic calming in devastating style, and still has space for an inset panel where he issues a call to arms to EVO readers:

"The Government's plans for new driving taxes and controls show they are profoundly and deeply anti car. Their proposals for new Gatsos, lower speed limits and more traffic calming show that they do not even begin to understand what makes for excellence in driving.

### "As drivers we have to fight back"

"Owning and driving a car is about freedom. This freedom is disappearing with every new consultation document, white paper and transport proposal. As drivers we have to fight back - before we have nothing left to fight for."

## Pro-Motor News

### New Meeting Dates / Times

Meetings are held on Saturdays at the Heritage Motor Centre, Gaydon, just off M40, Junction 12. The forthcoming meetings are: 10th April, 5th June, 18th September, 6th November.

Meetings commence at the *new time* of 1.30pm. Please inform the membership secretary that you will be attending and bring your membership card.

The museum is well worth a visit before the meeting and there is a self-service restaurant. Coffee will be served in our meeting room at 1.30.

## Web sites

Chris Lamb found a couple of interesting looking sites about Gatsos. The first one is at <http://www.radar.co.nz/index.html>, and is produced by a firm which has been making detectors for 20 years.

The other is a personal page, and is at <http://www.homeusers.prestel.co.uk/warren/frames.htm>

Chris has added a new page to his own site concerning the growing trend towards electronic control of the population. It is at <http://members.tripod.com/~Cybertrucker/polstate.htm>.

The German web-site <http://radarfalle.de> is a superb site, obviously run by people who have much in common with us - concern about abuse of speed limits, radar traps on motorways, use of speed enforcement for sheer revenue raising purposes. They also list camera sites on the main Autobahns. It's worth a visit, even if you don't speak German.