

# On The Road

The journal of the Association of British Drivers

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## news



### Parking, what parking?

New plans to slash parking will force nurses, students and people visiting hospitals to use public transport, walk or cycle. New Government legislation plans to axe the number of parking spaces allowed for new hospitals, colleges, retail and leisure developments. A new Government document, *Planning and Policy Guidance 13 (PPG13)*, sets out harsh new ways of stopping drivers from using their cars:

☼ New hospitals will be allowed only one parking space for every four staff.

☼ Cinemas will be allocated just one space for every five filmgoers.

☼ New businesses will be particularly hard hit with office workers only allowed one car space for six desks.

☼ New football stadia will only be allowed one space for every 15 fans.

☼ Students will not be given any parking spaces at all at their colleges.

These new planning guidelines show just how hardline the Government has become with its anti-car policies. It is time for planners and politicians to realise that people need freedom and choice to travel in the best way for them. They need to listen to what travellers really want, and recognise that the car is a central part of modern life. These guidelines will force people out of their cars and onto inadequate public transport.

The Government's pilot study to examine how the new controls will work was based on a questionnaire sent to 149 local

authorities. Officials received just 56 responses, yet the new planning guidelines were pushed ahead and published last week. This is all too typical of transport planning — any consultation is a closed shop, and the public are shut out until it's too late to react.

Congestion is likely to worsen as drivers have to hunt harder for ever more elusive parking spaces, increasing congestion on the roads. This will in turn provide fodder for proposed local authority congestion charging, creating a vicious circle for drivers.

The impacts of the new legislation are also likely to hit expanding businesses hard and damage the competitiveness of shopping and leisure developments.

### Home zones failure

A five year study sponsored by the DETR has shown that 20mph zones in the North West of England have failed to increase walking, cycling or childrens' play in the streets where they have been implemented.

This is a blow to the Government's main arguments for reducing speed limits and introducing so called traffic calming — that people are afraid of walking or cycling due to traffic speeds, and that reducing speeds will reduce fear in the community. The whole idea of the *Safe Routes to Schools* scheme is to reduce traffic speeds so parents feel safe allowing their children to walk or ride to school rather than drive them, a belief that is shown to be flawed by this study.

Either these fears do not exist or they aren't addressed by 20mph zones and traffic calming.

The ABD has long been suspicious of surveys which show that people are concerned about the speed of traffic —

☼ Pedestrians are notoriously unreliable at determining the speed of passing vehicles.

☼ Pedestrians and cyclists show no concern at being passed by vehicles travelling well in excess of 20mph, but do show concern at the screeching of tyres, revving of engines or the playing of loud music — specific intimidation or noise rather than speed.

Concerns about speed are almost always accompanied by concerns about volume — it is the number of passing vehicles which make it difficult to cross the road, not their speed.

Surveys are loaded with emotive questions such as *Are you concerned about your children's safety? Of Course. Do you think traffic speed is a factor in road safety? Well, I suppose so. Do you think your children would be safer if cars did 20mph instead of 40mph? They probably would.* Headline — 97% support 20mph zones.

People have heard speed kills propaganda, to the point where worries have been planted in their minds. Now we have been proved right — in areas where speeds have been reduced to 20mph, nobody has been encouraged to walk, cycle or play in the streets

who wasn't doing it before. They probably have other reasons for not doing so — nothing to do with the difference between 30mph and 20mph, whatever they say in questionnaires.

When push comes to shove, the people of the North West are showing commendable common sense — unlike the Government, who massage their accident statistics, they are not blasé about their children being run down at 20mph by inattentive drivers rather than avoided by attentive ones at 30mph. It is the attitude, attentiveness and skills of all road users which determine pedestrian and cyclist safety — all of which are eroded by silly speed limits and traffic calming.

The message is clear — low limits do not make it safe for children to play in the street, and do not encourage people to walk or cycle. Let's hope the government is listening to itself, and so restricts the power of councils to introduce limits which are not justified by informed road safety thinking.



## Caught by the fuzz...

**T**ougher police powers will be announced this month to target motorists who repeatedly flout speeding and drink-driving laws. Ministers have drawn up plans to allow hundreds more speed cameras to be installed on main roads and police will be pressed to be less lenient with persistent offenders.

Police forces are expected to be given the go-ahead to charge a levy of up to £20, on top of the standard £40 fine imposed on motorists caught by speed cameras. The money will be reserved for funding additional cameras and ensuring that more of the existing cameras are in working order.

The new funds will also be used to buy digital speed cameras which can quickly

send photographs back to a control centre. They are much more reliable than the 700 cameras now in operation — seven out of eight of which are unlikely to be working at any one time because of lack of maintenance or film.

The police may also reduce the trigger speed at which cameras are activated. Instead of the present leniency threshold of up to 10 mph above the speed limit, forces will be expected to fine motorists exceeding the limit by as little as 10 per cent, or 3mph in a 30mph zone.

The initiatives will coincide with a crackdown on those drink drivers who repeatedly break the law. Police will be given new powers to target pubs, clubs and entertainment venues where they suspect that motorists are drinking excessively.

A separate study found that persistently speeding motorists were usually affluent drivers with a company or high-performance car.

Researchers, who studied 6,879 drivers across five police forces to discover attitudes, to speed cameras, put forward several recommendations, including using hidden speed cameras and reducing the trigger speed levels. Police allow some leniency on the speed limit, partly because of the inaccuracy of speedometers, but the researchers said that the threshold should be lowered.

Police believe that speed camera signs are a good deterrent, even without cameras, and support better use of signs including reminders for drivers to check their speedometers.

## Great Britain?

**B**ritain's hard-pressed motorists fare worse than their European neighbours in almost every measurable way, according to a new report from the AA.

The Great British Motorist 2000 is the result of a one-year investigation into how motorists in the UK rank against their European counterparts, involving more than 4,000 drivers across Europe.

It examines transport use across Europe; driver choice and attitudes; road safety and environmental concerns; and what can be learned from the comparison.

It shows that the British:

- ⌘ Spend the most time commuting
- ⌘ Suffer the worst road congestion in Western Europe
- ⌘ Pay the most for petrol and diesel

- ⌘ Pay the most for their cars
- ⌘ Are most likely to have their cars broken into
- ⌘ Are least likely to find alternatives workable, like public transport and cycling
- ⌘ Have a car ownership that is less than the European average
- ⌘ Are less loyal than other country's drivers to their domestic car makers
- ⌘ Are taxed highly and receive the least return in investment in roads and public transport.

John Dawson, AA Policy Director, says: "What emerges is that compared to our European neighbours, the British get a bad deal out of driving and transport generally — and it's getting worse. At the root of this depressing picture lies the crisis of investment. The pitifully low levels of money spent on the UK's crumbling transport infrastructure have weakened

every link in the chain, from poor maintenance to bad day-to-day management. If we are to reverse this deplorable situation we must fund a formal structure of workable projects that will get Britain's transport network back on track."

But the report, which is compiled with five years' worth of research data, is not all bad news, particularly in the area of road safety. Britain has the safest roads in Europe, with the risk of being killed in Greece and Portugal almost four times that of the UK.

What seems odd is that it wasn't long ago that the AA were saying that the cost of motoring now is cheaper than it was (in real terms) 20 years ago. Why say such a thing only to prove it wrong with a study like this?

## What consultation?

**B**erkshire's ABD representative Damon Green recently received a call from a Parish Councillor in Henley-on-Thames concerned at a consultation document sent out by Oxfordshire County Council and its anti-car bias. It has not been sent to individuals, only Parish Councils. He was previously unaware of the ABD but acquired contact details via *Autocar* magazine. He called them to try to raise media interest in the goings on, and kindly forwarded a copy of said document to Damon. The format is one of an A5-ish sized pamphlet of 12 pages with a freepost questionnaire to fill in at the back. Here are some choice quotes:

### Emissions

Nationally vehicle emissions have been attributed to causing in excess of 11,000 deaths every year, and increasing the incidence of many health problems including childhood asthma. Through quality partnerships with operators and through 'Better Ways to Work' we will be seeking to

promote the use of cleaner vehicles, similarly the introduction of low emission zones, and on-street enforcement will also help in the reduction of these emissions.

### Buses

The bus is the most flexible and safest alternative to the car for the majority of journeys where walking and cycling are not practical. The County Council will build on the successes of the existing Quality Bus Partnerships by creating more bus priority measures, to make these journeys faster and more reliable....

Home Zones get a mention, as do Pedestrian Priority Routes. Interestingly there is talk of Clear Zones where only low emission vehicles will be permitted. So, that's most modern cars then!

The *Speedwatch* scheme is outlined: 'Cutting our speed will make our roads safer, cause less pollution and noise - and even save money on fuel and vehicle wear and tear'. (Not so — lower speeds generally require a lower speed, higher engine revs and noise and greater fuel consumption as the vehicle has to be accelerated once free of the limit).

The questionnaire consists of 13 questions. The following are to be ranked in importance 1-5. Such gems as:

Travelling Safely — Which areas of transport safety do you think we should prioritise:

- a) Safety courses and awareness campaigns for all road users
- b) Road accident reduction schemes
- c) Speed reduction measures - eg traffic calming, speed cameras
- d) Improving safety on public transport
- e) Lowering speed limits

Anyone spot a recurring theme?

The impacts of traffic - The impacts of traffic on our environment can be high. What priority should we place on:

- a) Exhaust emissions
- b) Light pollution - street lights, headlights etc.
- c) Noise and Vibration
- d) Road traffic speed
- e) Severing of communities by heavy traffic

It is documents like these that we need to tackle at a local level — this is how the groups we oppose are successful — and we can counter them.

## Fuel Tax Escalator: The Sequel

The inventor of the fuel tax escalator, Professor David Pearce, is saying that the current level of tax 'now covers all the environmental costs of car ownership'. He goes on to say that the revenue should in future be spent on public transport improvements.

Since it was suggested recently that the cost of fuel will no longer automatically be increased by 6% +1p above inflation each budget, there have been many sighs of relief. But of course it's not that simple — we haven't been promised anything, and what we have been told is that any rises above inflation will channel that extra money into public transport. John Prescott has already gone on record (on Jonathan Dimbleby's programme) saying that everyone is asking for better public transport — therefore everyone wants more fuel price rises to fund such improvements.

## Bath time

In Oxford and Cambridge drastic measures to squeeze cars away from their centres are now in place. Next up could be the city of Bath — the council will decide in February whether to install a bus gate in Northgate Street and force car drivers into convoluted detours.

Ruth Gilbertson, a member of Bath Chamber of Commerce and a leading opponent of the scheme, has two small shops. "We want to measures other than bus gates before they come in — blocking off roads, proper signs to car parks, a decent system of park and ride and co-ordinated traffic lights. Bus gates won't discriminate between those who are making economically necessary journeys and those who aren't. They will deter people who have things to do in the city."

But Barry Maunder, transport officer at the Bath Environment Centre believes a bus gate will concentrate motorists' minds on whether all car journeys are necessary.

## A load of hot air

This was seen on a high profile news web-site recently — it's no wonder people are so badly informed with stories like this being published. There are so many unknowns and variables involved in the equation, yet ideas are being put forward with the suggestion that there is a much greater degree of certainty than there really is.

The vast ice sheets of Antarctica could melt within 300 years, according to global warming research. Scientists working on the multi-national Cape Roberts in the frozen region say the melting would cause the sea to rise by 70 metres. Researchers working on the

buses in general. It's right to raise this issue — you get people thinking about what sort of future they want," he said.

"One of the biggest frustrations is lorries delivering to small traders and holding everyone up in the middle of the day. Congestion isn't good for business. If something as radical as this is introduced, it's bound to take a time for retail turnover to stabilise — perhaps 12 months for people to get used to it."

Independent traders in Oxford, a city which has been famous for traffic chaos, are struggling to live with bus gates which, after seemingly endless arguments, were finally introduced in June. The furore has yet to subside, for while gates were welcomed by environmentalists and some larger stores, small business people are at the end of their tether.

Barry Carter runs a printing business in the High Street, and he's has seen turnover drop by 25%. "For the first time, I wasn't

profitable this summer and a lot of others are talking about a drop in revenue of 25-30 per cent. These gates have split the city in two and it can take 40 minutes to cross from one side to the other."

The councils are run by a bunch of left-wing lunatics — there are no concessions to traders. A lot of problems could have been solved by aggressive signage — warning motorists of congestion and not to enter the city unless absolutely necessary."

Bath is assessing the impact of its scheme — potential effects on the environment, air quality and the economy. It's also trying to predict what might happen to traffic whether or not the scheme goes ahead.

project have built a 57-tonne drill rig on floating sea ice. The rig has brought rocks up to 350 million years old to the surface, helping scientists to get a detailed view of Earth's climate history.

Experts have found that since the time when dinosaurs roamed a tropical South

Pole, the world has cooled by 6.5 degrees centigrade. But they fear that 65 million years of cooling could be reversed by global warming.

The argument seems to be that as it was 6.5 degrees warmer millions of years ago, and there was no ice on Antarctica,

man made warming must be true and all the ice will melt.

Possibly more worrying is the idea that there is something man can do about climate change!



## Bill dies

The infamous Country Lanes and Villages Bill has been dropped. Introduced by Helen Brinton, the MP for Peterborough, the Bill proposed 20mph speed limits in villages and 40mph on country roads.

## What danger?

Safety campaigners claim that the Government, police and local councils are out of touch with public anger about road danger.

They say road safety is appallingly under-funded compared with rail safety, with Britain spending just one sixteenth as much as the Dutch per head on making streets safe for children.

Rob Gifford of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, (PACTS) said: "It is clear that some chief constables treat road safety as a very low priority. We need to see the Home Office laying down a much tougher line on road crime. The government appears to tolerate 5,000 children being killed or seriously hurt on the roads each year — the worst figures in Europe. The public will not accept this any more. The government should create a road safety tsar to knock heads together and make sure road safety is given at least the same priority as rail safety."

"All round the country councils are struggling to raise money for minor traffic calming schemes which save death and injury very effectively and at a very low cost."

The government is preparing its review of road safety and speeds. It may be planning tougher action against law-breaking drivers in heavily-populated areas following support for the policy from the RAC Foundation and the AA.

Ministers will face increasing pressure over the next few weeks under a barrage of campaigns being launched by groups representing many people who say they are not protected on Britain's dangerous roads in towns and villages.

Groups who have written to the prime minister include the Women's Institute, The Children's Society, the RNIB, Help the Aged, Roadpeace, The Children's Play Council, and the Pedestrians Association. Many of them are planning to coordinate their campaigns with scores of residents' groups round the country.



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# news briefs

## Racing gear

The *Top Gear* TV programme is in all kinds of trouble after an all-party government select committee accused the show of portraying 'virtue in driving too quickly'.

The Commons Environment, Transport and the Regional Affairs Select Committee added: "Driving programmes such as *Top Gear* appear obsessed with acceleration and speed: their producers should remember that such macho posturing might be acceptable on private roads but not on crowded streets."

In a particularly forward-thinking move, the Committee set an aim of ensuring 'that young people see driving simply as a means of transport rather than a form of self-expression'.

Also turning its fire on irresponsible filmmakers, the Committee stopped short of an attack on *Chariots of Fire* for its scenes of flagrant running where a steady walk would have sufficed.

## Norfolk waste

Norwich City Council spent £73,500 on a traffic calming scheme four years ago. They are about to spend £25,000 removing it after the series of chicanes was found to have caused a rise in the number of accidents.

They have decided that instead of having the chicanes they will put a 20mph speed limit in place.

## Bus lane savings

According to a report from the Highways Agency, the M4 bus lane has reduced journey times for all who use it — especially those who can use the lane! They also claim it has made the motorway safer and they project annual savings for the UK economy of £750,000 a year. Their next release will state that it is possible to turn water into wine.

## The man from Teletext says no

A teletext phone poll which 2100 people rang showed 90% against tolls to enter towns. The question is, will Prescott listen to them, or plough on regardless? At least he's delayed his plans until 2005 at the earliest.

## Wanted: letter writers

If you're in a letter writing mood you might like to write to John Prescott to counter two initiatives currently underway. Friends of the Earth are urging their members to complain that the Government are reneging on their promise to cut CO2 levels, so he must act swiftly. Meanwhile Transport 2000 and the CPRE are asking their members to support them in campaigning for reduced speed limits, as they (the silent majority they call themselves!) are starting to lose ground they have gained — drivers are starting to complain too loudly! They are going to Downing Street on December 22nd to present their case. You can write to J2J at:

The Rt. Hon. John Prescott MP  
Deputy Prime Minister,  
Eland House,  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

## Slot driving

The Highways agency has endorsed an idea put forward by students at Southampton University which would entail drivers buying time slots on the road. In return for a slot fee the road network operators guarantee a level of service and give refunds for delayed trips.

## Traffic growth slows

Traffic growth is slowing according to the latest government figures. The increase in traffic is running at 2% annually, compared with 8% at the end of the 1980s. The annual

traffic survey for the first nine months of 1999, showed static levels. This follows the 12 month period for 1998 when traffic on major urban routes decreased by 1% (yet congestion worsened) although motorway traffic levels grew by 4% in 1998.

## Anti-car Association

In the latest AA magazine there is an article about why people speed. It contains the statement "speeding is a factor in up to half the UK's 3,600 annual road deaths". Those who are members may wish to write to them to ask where this figure

comes from — especially as their own research into accident causation found that only around 4.5% of accidents were caused by excess speed.

## Drunk walkers

The perils of drinking and walking have been highlighted with a warning from transport officials that about half of all pedestrians killed in traffic accidents have consumed alcohol. Among the fatalities, 37 per cent of adult pedestrians are over the drink-drive limit — compared with 19 per cent of drivers killed — and one in four of the pedestrians have drunk more than twice the limit, compared with one in 12 drivers.

## Council get the hump

Preston Council recently rejected £18,000 offered to them by the parents of a child run over and killed by a car. They had hoped to have speed humps installed on the road where their six year old daughter fell into the path of a car.

Her mother said: "I realise that my daughter tripped and fell into the road so speed humps may not have helped her, but they would have made the car which hit her slow down. We know the driver was using the street as a short-cut."

## Environmentalism

Powers which would allow the police and security services to target environmental and political activists are reportedly to be included in a new Prevention of Terrorism Act. The definition of terrorism is to be changed from using "violence for political ends" to one that includes threatening violence or intimidation for political, religious or ideological ends. The new definition could embrace environmentalist groups which have destroyed genetically-modified crops and religious groups which "incite" dissidents in other countries.

## Have you moved?

Sometimes we have to contact our members — and our database regularly has contact details that are out of date. If any of your contact details have changed since you joined, or you've added to them (such as acquiring email), please let us know. We can't keep you informed if we can't get in touch...

## Not even standing room

A woman recently collapsed on the floor of a train because it was so overcrowded. Rush hour trains on the Worcester to Birmingham line are so massively overcrowded that passengers are demanding action.

Central Trains say they can't increase capacity as the train is only crowded at peak times. When will the Government realise public transport simply doesn't have the capacity?

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# ignition

## Big things ahead...

**O**n *The Road* has a slightly new look, as Steve Dommett has stood down as editor, due to the Government's refusal to include more hours in the day. A huge thank you is owed to Steve, who has handed over responsibility for OTR to me, although he will continue to take care of the ABD web-site. If you haven't looked at it recently, I'd suggest you have a look soon — you can find it at <http://www.abd.org.uk>

The ABD is enjoying unprecedented success at the moment, partly due to our members spreading the word about us. We are always aiming to make that easier, so if you need copies of the ABD leaflet please ask for some to give to friends. We will soon have A4 posters available — car stickers and flyers are also on their way. So if you know of somebody who is prepared to put one in their shop or pub, please request whatever you need — we'll even pay the postage! Details are below.

Keeping our members informed is particularly important, so we have decided that in the spring we will have a seminar for members at our regular meeting place of Gaydon, Warwickshire. This will be a chance for members to find out all the facts on the various issues upon which the ABD campaigns.

We will also be producing updated fact sheets on our campaign issues, so you

will be able to campaign more effectively should you choose to do so locally and individually.

The agenda will include information on the groups we are working against — it's surprising how many of them there are. What's even more surprising is how much they achieve with very few members — something we can all change by writing the occasional letter to our local press or MP.

Possibly the most important feature of the seminar will be that it will be the perfect opportunity for you to ask any question you like on any of the issues we campaign on — whether it's driver training, speed cameras, public transport, the environment or road safety.

## OTR is your newsletter

In taking over OTR, I have decided to impose a fixed deadline for contributions — which are always welcome. This has been done so that we can fix the printing and distribution dates, ensuring the magazine is delivered on time at the end of the month to your door.

If there's anything you would like to see added to or changed within OTR please let me know — any ideas are welcome as are contributions in the form of press cuttings, press releases or letters.

## We can make a difference

Over the last few weeks we've heard that the government has abandoned the Fuel Tax Escalator (at least in name), Helen Brinton's Country Lanes Bill has been dropped and road tolls will not be introduced until at least 2005. These are all things that our opponents have attempted to push through, but by standing up for our rights we have won the day — for now. John Prescott has also realised that drivers are not a minority group — barely a day goes by when he isn't in the public eye trying to reassure us that he isn't anti-car. The problem is there is still so much to do at both national and local level. Don't let anyone tell you that we can't achieve anything. The ABD can't take all the credit for these achievements, but as our voice gets louder we are being heard increasingly.

## Another year gone...

As one year turns into another (no I'm not going to mention the millennium word) I'll just wish all ABD members a merry christmas and a very happy new year. 1999 has been a turning point for the ABD — and the best is definitely yet to come.

Regards to all,

Chris Medd

# contacts

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# campaigning

## Join in the ABD-Action

Members will be aware that the ABD has for some time operated a mailing list called *abdml* operating through *Onelist* on the internet. Some members have joined this list but then found themselves unable to deal with the volume of messages received, and consequently unsubscribed from the list. We are also aware of a large number of members with e-mail addresses who have never joined the list, probably for a similar reason.

This compromises our ability to utilize e-mail to quickly contact as many members as possible, at virtually no cost. To overcome this problem we have set up a new mailing list called *abd-action* which will be restricted to time-critical and important items only. We are also sending out copies of our press releases to our members — the number typically being a couple each week. This way you know what's going on and you also know the facts on the current issues.

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

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

A recent example was an opportunity for members to respond to Surrey County Council's consultation on speed limits in the county. The ABD sent a fact sheet to these members, allowing them to spend a few minutes composing a letter. It is only by taking such opportunities that we can make a real difference. This is how our opposition have succeeded — they have mobilised their members to tackle issues at a local level.

Members without e-mail can be assured that *On The Road* will continue to keep them up to date, but you will appreciate that this can only be on a monthly basis, rather than the potential daily update facilitated by e-mail.

If you would like to join the list, please send an e-mail to *abd-action-owner@onelist.com* stating your full name and ABD membership number — you'll receive any messages straight away.

## The gauntlet is down...

The Government's consultation period on road safety strategy has brought about some interesting developments in a period of frenetic activity and mounting success for the ABD. This began recently, when the ABD was invited to attend a meeting at the DETR — an invitation the ABD accepted, much to the annoyance of Transport 2000 and their associated hangers on, whose party was very much spoiled. A full report of the event appears in next month's *On The Road*.

A few weeks later, a group of 14 charities were bamboozled by Transport 2000 into signing a letter urging the Government to "ignore a small but vociferous minority of motorists" and press ahead with reductions in speed limits in both town and countryside. This is almost certainly a direct response to our participation in this seminar and the support we received from the driver training lobby. We should take great encouragement that our arguments and our profile in both media and Government are sufficiently good to merit such an attack.

The action really hotted up in late August, when the *Sunday Times* produced one of those wonderful opinion-testing controlled leaks, intimating that the Government was considering reducing the national limit to 50mph, with 20mph replacing 30mph in towns. At the same time, Asst. Commissioner Paul Manning announced that he would be recommending a zero tolerance approach to 30mph limits to the ACPO Traffic Committee.

These two items created a storm of protest from almost all sections of the media — Manning was widely pilloried and the speed limit reductions were treated with the contempt they deserve. Only the *Today* programme on Radio 4, in the shape of reporter Roger Harrobin, tried determinedly to stick to the party line, even going as far as attempting to marginalise the DETR road safety division by describing it as "the last bastion of unreconstructed thought" — a truly frightening statement that would be more at home in Chairman Mao's little red book than put forward as the opinion of the BBC's premier news and current affairs radio programme.

Manning in particular succeeded in bringing a lot of people off the fence on the issue of speed limits. Even RoSPA pointed out that zero tolerance would reduce people's attentiveness and hazard perception due to speedo watching, and the IAM produced an excellent press release condemning blanket speed limit reductions and zero tolerance as ineffective and inappropriate.

The ABD kept up a steady stream of press releases over this period, resulting in a high

level of media exposure, but, with the heavyweights of the RAC and AA increasingly on side, opportunities for a major media breakthrough were limited, and came instead from the famous Prescott 300 yard drive.

The highlight of the Manning coverage was in *The Mail on Sunday*, where our friends from the British Motorcycle Federation had helped set up a speed trap to successfully catch out Manning himself — the British media in full cry against our opponents is a joy to behold. *The Mail on Sunday* suggested it was to run a campaign against the persecution of motorists, and the ABD had extensive contacts with them over the next week, producing a list of the top ten speed camera abuses in Britain, which were then all photographed by the 'paper'.

Excitement was building - at last this was the breakthrough we needed — a public exposure of the way cameras have been used without any regard for safety and in blatant violation of all the empty promises made on their introduction would surely create unstoppable momentum for a change in Government policy. But then the empire struck back. Nothing was to be found in the *Mail on Sunday* — no camera abuse list, no mention of the ABD, no campaign against the persecution of motorists. Weak excuses were given about space constraints, but we leave members to draw their own conclusions about press freedom in this country.

Further counter blows were struck by Transport 2000 with their tame 'charities', and by the CPRE, which has begun an emotive and irrational campaign for 40mph limits on unclassified roads based on a survey conducted by its volunteers showing support for such a cut. *The Times* produced an almost unbelievable editorial likening drivers to Nazis who were terrorising country lanes and calling for 20mph limits enforced by hidden cameras to improve the life of village dwellers. Quite how villagers' lives will get better without a driving licence was, of course, not explained — it never is!

Meanwhile, eight councils are going to get money from speed camera fines to invest in more persecution by blanketing their counties with more of these Orwellian machines.

The bottom line is that we haven't won yet — nothing like. But at least battle is joined. At least there is some sort of debate and discussion rather than just propaganda. At least there is a chance for reasoned views to be heard and for the full demands of the anti-car lobby to be put in front of the public, who may just be scared into joining us as a result.

We must continue to send releases, provide spokesmen, lobby Government and, above all, campaign locally against speed limit reductions and traffic calming schemes, where we are guaranteed media exposure and the support of right-thinking people.

**"We must continue to send releases, provide spokesmen, lobby government and, above all, campaign locally against speed limit reductions and traffic calming schemes, where we are guaranteed media exposure and the support of right-thinking people."**

**"The Times produced an editorial likening drivers to Nazis, who were terrorising country lanes, and calling for 20mph speed limits enforced by hidden cameras to improve the life of village dwellers"**

# campaigning

## Who mentioned democracy?

**B**rian Gregory and Brian Hunter attended the Who Speeds? Who Cares? Seminar at the Mitchell Theatre in Glasgow at the start of November, but unlike the DETR seminar in the previous report things didn't look so rosy for drivers. As with all previous such events Brian Gregory has attended, everything had been carefully stage-managed, the speakers and audience had been carefully chosen, and probably many of the question session participants had been vetted and their questions provided for them.

Those who were there who may have had differing views were in an overwhelming minority; with only one speaker (who did exceptionally well) to give the motorised road user's point of view — purely so that he could be pilloried and ridiculed by a committedly anti-motorist audience.

### *The Community Perspective, Rosie Kane*

Described as a mother of two, but additionally as someone who "cut her protesting teeth on the campaign against the M74, believing that investment in new roads encourages car use and preferring to see investment in public transport". She is also the Scottish Socialist party's environmental spokesman. She does not hold a driving licence and started her talk by confessing that she had been run over as a child and that it had been entirely her own fault. She was lucky that the driver overtaking the bus from behind which she had emerged had been doing only 25mph.

She then went on to outline the efforts she had put into changing the Govanhill traffic system; which, it was alleged, had been converted into a one-way system race-track which did not meet local, non-motorised residents' needs. Too late to join the '20's Plenty' scheme, local residents had posted their own 20mph signs but were concerned that they would be ignored when motorised road users realised they were only advisory. Naturally this was used as a vehicle to promote the blanketing of our cities and towns with 20mph and homezones — whether necessary or not. Ms. Kane, while claiming she didn't want to demonise car users — clearly had her own, none-too-secret secret agenda and giving motorised road users a fair hearing didn't figure in it. And guess what? She wanted to see more rigid enforcement of speed limits.

### *Scott Allan - Principal Traffic Engineer, Renfrewshire Council*

Allan opened by reporting 1998 Scottish Road Casualties as follows:

	Fatal	Casualties
All Scotland	385	22640
Renfrewshire	6	705

Some 75% of those injured were car occupants. Concentrating mainly on the urban scenario, Allan spouted the party line on speed, citing it as the "primary threat to walkers, cyclists and children". There was no consideration of the other, predominant, potential accident causes. Drivers needed to be educated or coerced to drive within the speed limit. At no point was education for other road users really mentioned, beyond politically correct schools programmes to influence childrens' views on car use and speed"

### *The National Perspective, John Stewart, Slower Speeds Initiative*

Stewart is an adviser to Roadpeace, national charity for road traffic victims, and a founder member of the SSI. He noted the National Road Safety Strategy and its daughter documents, including the speed limit review, which he anticipated would enact many of the things of which he was in favour. The CPRE initiative on rural road speeds was also mentioned. He started by saying that "speed caused one-third of all deaths on the road". Because of the end-of-session question format, I was unable to challenge this or anything else he said (much of which was factually incorrect), and frankly felt I would have been wasting my breath anyway with an audience constituted as it was.

All the other usual claptrap about perceived road danger, emissions, social exclusion, traffic noise etc etc.. etc.. was rolled out (the NVH comment somewhat undermined by Rosie Kane's previous comment that cars today are so quiet that you can't always hear them coming). He also noted that children in the lowest social classes were five times more likely to be killed in road accidents than those in the highest one and cited the estimated the total

cost to the economy of road accidents at £1.8Bn.

The roads where they want lower speed limits of 20mph or less enforced are:

- ⌘ Residential roads
  - ⌘ Urban main roads
  - ⌘ Villages
  - ⌘ Unclassified country roads (30 or 40mph)
- Enforcement (surprise! surprise!) figured highly as the primary requirement for these measures to work.

### *The Motorist's Perspective, Alan Douglas, Motoring Journalist*

Douglas gave a stout and reasoned defence of the car. He questioned the complete arbitrariness of speed limit setting policy and condemned speed cameras as Orwellian Cash Machines that had made roads like the A68 more, rather than less, dangerous. From Brian Hunter's own experience, he can confirm this — having driven it in each direction the day before and the evening after the seminar. Everything Brian might have wanted to say Alan Douglas did. It all fell on deaf ears, of course. A sterling performance, in a room with well over 100 police officers, many of whom were very senior, took a lot of bottle. It would have been too easy for him to capitulate. He

didn't, and he defended himself eloquently in the Q & A session following. He's well known to Scottish TV viewers and, having been in the business for 30 years, has all the contacts we could need.

### *Who Speeds & Why, Dianne Parker, Driver Behaviour Research Group, Manchester University*

Ms Parker presented research into driver behaviour. She classified driver faults into three categories:

- ⌘ Errors: Essentially observation and hazard perception failings.
- ⌘ Lapses: State of mind/ inattention failings (which may lead to errors?).
- ⌘ Violations: Systematic disregard for safe following distances, safe overtaking procedures, speed limits; and intimidatory use of lights and demonstrations of hostility etc..

Errors and lapses were judgement based; violations, attitudinal. Drivers with the highest accident rates were young, male, violators (those scoring high on her DBQ questionnaire assessing driver characteristics). They were less risk and less consequence concerned. They were stated to be statistically

"At no point was education for other road users really mentioned, beyond politically correct schools programmes to influence childrens' views on car use and speed"

"Speed limit compliance seemed to be the sole focus of this road safety policy. The whole exercise smacks of social engineering and indoctrination at its worst — especially as it is based on badly flawed assumptions."



# campaigning

significantly more prone to errors and lapses in combination with their violations than either of the other two classes of driver, and this led to statistically significantly higher accident propensity.

Ms Parker then went into all kinds of motivational studies and proposed a programme in which social pressure would be brought to bear on such offenders with the sole purpose of making them comply through combined peer pressure and enforcement. The justifications given were similar to those given for enacting and enforcing current drink-driving legislation.

Her research appeared to suggest that violators; those who drove ultra-aggressively, habitually ran red lights, overtook on continuous lines, ignored Give Way signs etc.. had a statistically higher than anticipated propensity to be involved in accidents compared with those subject solely to errors and lapses.

*Violation + Error or Lapse = Catastrophe*

As she put it. This is hardly a surprising conclusion, but there is a world of difference between wilfully ignoring all traffic warnings and instructions in an adrenaline-charged orgy of risk-taking and — with due care and attention — declining to observe inappropriately set speed limits (of which there is an ever-increasing number). Also, she only showed data relating to those drivers who had had at least one accident over the portion of their careers studied. She did not show a profile of those drivers who had had no accidents over that period.

What was also clearly lacking in Ms Parker's study was an evaluation of individual drivers' capability level; her only (exceedingly coarse) measure of this being the driver's age. When objective evidence is readily available that driver training can effect something like a seven-fold reduction in driver accident involvement rates by sharpening hazard perception, this crucial missing and unaddressed piece of information throws the rest of her study into serious question.

**Foolspeed Initiative, Fiona Murray, Senior Researcher in transport & road safety**

Started out as a dietician who now "prefers to change people's driving habits instead of their diets". Now Director of the Scottish Road Safety Campaign. The programme will:

- ⌘ Build an identity
- ⌘ Challenge salient beliefs
- ⌘ Establish new behavioural controls via the pressures of the subject's peer group
- ⌘ Set new behavioural intentions
- ⌘ Modify driver behaviour

**"Mildly amusing if you happen to derive enjoyment from hearing a professionally executed discourse on how the law has evolved — and can be used — to deprive basically law-abiding citizens of their cash, or even their livelihoods and their family homes; should they be imprudent enough to make use of the demon speed"**

Speed limit compliance seemed to be the sole focus of this. The whole exercise smacks of social engineering and indoctrination at its worst — especially as it is based on badly flawed assumptions. They are seeking private sector partners, and have attracted Transco, Robert Wiseman's Dairies and CGU Insurance so far — I shall be changing our house insurer later today and writing to CGU telling them exactly why. The campaign is set to run for another 4-5 years with further TV advertising and static displays. Queue here for your lobotomisation.

**Legal Implications, Alf Vannet, Procurator Fiscal**

Mildly amusing if you happen to derive enjoyment from hearing a professionally executed discourse on how the law has evolved — and can be used — to deprive basically law-abiding citizens of their cash, or even their livelihoods and their family homes; should they be imprudent enough to make use of the demon speed. In politically correct fashion, Mr. Vannet himself takes the train. Just as well, as I suspect he'd be a menace on the roads.

**Driver Improvement Scheme, Michael Coleman, Director of Operations, IAM Fleet Training**

Offered as an alternative to prosecution in some cases. And achieving favourable results. In England it was implied that the scheme is too fragmented and its standard is therefore not consistent. However, this is very much locking-the-stable-door-after-the-horse-has-bolted stuff: at no point in the day's proceedings was any real focus placed on ongoing (as opposed to purely remedial) road user training as a way of reducing accident rates.

**The Future Role of Enforcement, Martin Papworth, Asst. Chief Constable, Strathclyde Police**

**"We are not going to go away and will be able to reap the maximum harvest of embittered, hapless road users caught in this assault and turn them against those responsible for this ill-judged and ultimately ineffective initiative — hopefully in the most politically damaging and effective way"**

Papworth opened by unashamedly playing the emotional card by referring to the death of a child called Clare that had been referred to in the previous year's seminar. Not knowing the circumstances of this accident, it is impossible for me to comment meaningfully on this part of his discourse. He concluded the proceedings by saying what the majority of the selected audience wanted to hear: in essence that by more rigidly enforcing speed limits, lives would be saved. Those that wouldn't comply would be removed from the roads. There was no mention of the appropriateness or otherwise of those limits. Such was the tenor of Papworth's closing remarks that neither Brian Hunter nor Brian Gregory felt disposed to listen to the closing question-and-answer session and left at that stage.

**But it's not all bad...**

Very depressing, but not really very surprising; there were only three saving graces to the day:

⌘ A representative of the Cyclists' Touring Club suggested that motorists should be offered higher speed limits on selected roads, e.g. motorways, in return for having to accept lower ones on others. Sterling work by some ABD members with CTC connections seems to have caused a limited outbreak of sanity within it.

⌘ A recent Mail on Sunday carries a piece indicating that Strathclyde's Chief Supt. Jim Gilmour (who chaired the day's proceedings and reports to Asst. Chief Constable Papworth) has called for a (rigidly enforced) 80mph motorway speed limit (well, it's better than 70!). In fairness to Gilmour, while the other participants had only referred to 'speed', he had on each occasion referred to curbing 'inappropriate speed'. I shall be writing to Gilmour thanking him for the opportunity to attend. While commenting on the one-sidedness of the day's proceedings (lack of commitment to addressing the real causes of 96% of road accidents), I will nonetheless also thank him for his comments on the inappropriateness of the motorway limit - which comment can be applied to many other roads.

⌘ We are not going to go away and will be able to reap the maximum harvest of embittered, hapless road users caught in this assault and turn them against those responsible for this ill-judged and ultimately ineffective initiative — hopefully in the most politically damaging and effective way.

⌘ We are not going to go away and will be able to reap the maximum harvest of embittered, hapless road users caught in this assault and turn them against those responsible for this ill-judged and ultimately ineffective initiative — hopefully in the most politically damaging and effective way.

# campaigning

## Norfolk Turkeys

Alan Dale was introduced to you recently, and as he continues to enter into prodigious quantities of correspondence it's only fair to offer this follow up article. Alan hails from Norwich, and campaigns vigorously for improved driver training through his organisation the Roadcraft Advice Patrol Service. If you can support Alan in any way please contact him on 01603 720 100.

With letters constantly being exchanged between Alan and Westminster (his MP is Keith Simpson, rather than David Prior as previously stated), the CPRE, Transport 2000, the DETR, the Eastern Daily Press, Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Constabulary (as well as many others), there's no shortage of statements made that make you want to reach for the blood pressure pills!

It seems that Norfolk County Council are imposing (or are intending to impose) some of the most difficult conditions for drivers in the UK, as they are going their own way with their version of Helen Brinton's Country Lanes Bill. The Bill is currently floundering, but Norfolk County Council are doing it anyway, although on a more limited scale than Brinton envisaged. The Bill basically proposes reduced speed limits on C-class roads and below, and automatic priority for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders on designated roads.

Alan was originally invited to take part in the consultation process as to whether or not the Norfolk Quiet Lanes Project should proceed. He opposed it, and had plenty of hard evidence as to why it was a bad idea. When the next consultation date was imminent Alan was concerned that he hadn't received an invitation to take part. Further investigation indicated that "all seats had been taken" and there was no space for him. Unsurprisingly the project has been given the green light, after overwhelming support for the project!

It is the CPRE who are campaigning most heavily for reduced speed limits in rural areas. It is also the CPRE who are currently predicting traffic level rises of up to 140% in East Anglia over the next 30 years, though how they arrive at this figure is unclear. The CPRE say traffic levels will rise by at least 48%, even if positive measures are taken — whatever that means. Their solution? Cut rural speed limits and put a complete halt to any development that will help traffic to flow freely.

Alan sent us an interesting letter from Don Mathew (of Transport 2000). His letterhead calls him a Consultant on Transport and the Environment, and in the letter he spells out why the greens have achieved success. He says they have played the game, linking in with Government policies, and they normally try to be positive and constructive — suggesting that's not a pre-requisite! Don accuses MPs of being poorly informed,

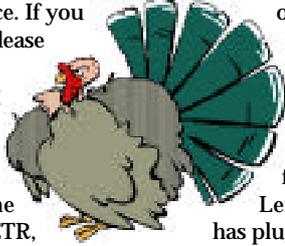
but thankfully Transport 2000 is there to "coax them along"! The rest of the letter talks of poor safety records for children, pedestrians and cyclists, the answer to which is lower speeds. Apparently the standard of driving in this country is so low that speed cameras and humps are the only solution — driver training isn't an option because it's unworkable!

The regional newspaper that covers this area (the Eastern Daily Press, or EDP) offers some cheer, as quite a bit of pro-car stuff is printed. But letters from eco-warriors abound. Tim Lenton, a columnist for the EDP, has plugged the ABD a few times in his column. Tim frequently uses figures from ABD sources, often to discredit letters printed in the paper, and his knowledge of the ABD is thanks to Alan introducing Tim to us.

An example of this concerns the decision to make permanent a temporary closure of part of the city centre. Denise Carlo (of the Norfolk Transport Action Group) applauded the decision, saying it sends the right message to the Government — thus increasing the chances of the city getting more money to put into transport. Tim seized on this by saying democracy and common sense didn't figure in the decision, showing what a farce it all is.

A less heartening piece in the EDP concerns Suffolk transport chiefs, who have requested £8.8 million from the Government to improve safety on the county's roads. At the beginning of August, 29 people had been killed on the county's roads — 5 more than in the whole of 1998. They want the money to cut fatal accidents by a third within 10 years — by bringing in more traffic calming, stricter enforcement of speed limits and reducing speed limits. As they have done all these things already over the last few years it's rather worrying that they want to tighten the screws still further to achieve their aims — which they won't achieve with their current agenda.

Finally, the EDP reinforces the complete incompetence of policy makers in Norwich by reporting on the transport plans (or lack of them) for the impending new year. The two major car parks in the city centre will be closed, and the park and ride scheme will not be in operation. The bus operator has only just been told that the streets will be open for them (but not for cars) so they hadn't planned to put any buses in operation over the new year! Traffic wardens will be on duty throughout new year's eve (into the early hours), so no parking is allowed on the streets either. You can't use your car, and there will be minimal public transport. The official line is that if you want to celebrate in Norwich city centre you have to walk in — whether you can or not!



## ABD events

The ABD's final event of 1999 has come and gone: the November NEC classic car show was the best yet. More people signed up than at either of the events we have attended this year, and once again we made some useful contacts within the car clubs assembled in Birmingham.

Visit of the weekend was from a civilian linked to the police service who took exception to a panel stating that speed cameras are frequently sited to raise money rather than improve road safety. He said they're sited at accident blackspots only, so their use is justified — they are *not* sited to raise revenue. When he insisted that over a third of accidents are caused by excess speed he was asked to produce the evidence. His evidence was that "everybody knows a third of accidents are caused by excess speed", which we argued wasn't very conclusive! When shown the results of one of the few studies into accident causation, he was reluctant to accept that only 4.5% of accidents were caused

by excess speed. As he left the stand he defiantly said that in his force they had just costed the new SPECS system for an accident blackspot — this was clearly not a speed camera being used to raise money, but money being invested to save lives. Knowing nothing about the scheme we couldn't oppose his views on this one — until he volunteered: "I'm a bit concerned how they've costed it out though. We've been told it will cost £600,000 to implement the scheme, and as a result we'll have to catch a minimum of 28,000 people with it in the first two years — that's a target we have no choice but to meet". Bearing in mind his anger when he stepped onto the stand, it's hard to see how he could disagree with the statement on our panel!

Crass statement of the weekend came from the man who couldn't express his support for us strongly enough — except he wouldn't pay £12 for a year's membership! He said he had a particular dislike for speed bumps, but as everybody else around the country wanted some he had been campaigning for some to be installed outside his house — he didn't want to miss out!

Next year we'll be at the NEC again, and hopefully the Coys Historic Festival as well.

Thanks are due to David Bridge at PEP, who set up our stand, saving us lots of money. Also a big thank you to Jonathan and Susan Newby-Robson, Bernard Abrams, Tony Vickers and Andrew Bent for giving up their time to canvas support for the ABD.

**"the standard of driving in this country is so low that speed cameras and humps are the only solution — driver training isn't an option because it's unworkable"**



# letters



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

## Friend or FoE?

Sir — I heard on the news on the radio today a short interview with a Friends of the Earth spokesman, who rebuked the government for not doing anything to force people back to the bus queues. He commented that it was not possible to change the way we travel at a stroke, but rebuked the government for not even having taken the first step to comply with the anti-car freaks' demands. True to character, like all anti-car freaks, he kept quiet about the wonderful alternatives they have in store for us, and what "changing the way we travel" really means!

One could rant for hours about the arrogance of pressure groups like the FoE; however, the implications, when calmly considered, are interesting.

Governments, of whatever colour, tend to carry out their most unpopular proposals (tax increases, promise breaking, etc.) during their first two years, and ease off a bit in their second two years, before going to the polls again after about four years in office, so as not to appear too desperate to hang on to power.

With this in mind, it would be easy to say "OK, Freaks, you've missed the boat". However, we know that these creatures are anti-popular, won't take no for an answer, and when things don't go their way will simply lie low for a while, and then surreptitiously relaunch their propaganda at government ministers, in a somewhat different guise. I therefore view the situation with cautious optimism; the government as a whole (J2J apart) seems reluctant to act. Why? Could it be that deep down, they know that anti-car freakism is unworkable, unpopular, and, if any serious attempt were made to force people to avoid driving, the economic (and therefore electoral) consequences would be catastrophic?

Let's take encouragement, but not be arrogant or over confident, from this complaint by our foe that they aren't getting their own way. Keep the letters to MPs and Ministers flowing, telling them, in terms of their own values and interests, that ordinary people want and need to drive to earn a living. I recently made a point in a paper I submitted, comparing the green freaks to the Trotskyites of the '70s and early '80s — they hadn't a hope in hell of winning power under their own banner, so they infiltrated the Labour Party. And where did that lead the Labour Party?

Today, how many votes do 'green' parties win under their own colours?

Ministers be warned! The bus doesn't have the flexibility to take you everywhere you want to go but it will take you to the dole office.

**Simon Butler**

Sir — Walking through the City of London today alongside a lorry float moving at around 5 mph, I and my colleagues were amazed how many things there were in the roadway to fall over and trip on. The City has suffered from a rash of kerbs, islands and other hazards in its processional way. Although the actual pillars of traffic lights had been removed for the ceremonial occasion of the Lord Mayor's Show, permanent kerbs cannot be moved for just one day. I know ceremonies are rare, but England prides itself on this type of ceremonial procession and it is yet another argument against the ever-spreading traffic calming works.

**Joan Bingley**

Sir — "We are apt to believe that today we experience more violent upheavals of Nature than in past generations, but this is not so. Heavy storms and exceptional weather phenomena occurred much the same in past years as now. Today, however, with the advance of science and weather research, we have better and more accurate records of all that occurs, and with the Press of the world and the wireless, everyone reads and hears of any exceptional weather incidents in different parts of the globe."

That was written in 1955. The Observer Book of Weather! The only difference is that now it is called Global Warming.

**Paul Wakefield**

Sir — I recently went to an exhibition in Birmingham about yet more proposed bus lanes. One of the people manning this worked for Centro (West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive), he told me how bus lanes are intended to act as traffic calming and how he would love to put bus lanes on the Hagley Road (A456 main road out of Birmingham to the west) "but there would be a public outcry, so we're doing the easy ones first".

He then told me that he was an 'advanced motorist'. I had to wonder which came first; his joining the IAM, or his support for anti-car measures.

## New contact details?

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

While the IAM allow such people to be members, I have little inclination to join them!

I've also just noticed a story about a new road safety campaign aimed at children at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/education/newsid\\_482000/482788.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/education/newsid_482000/482788.stm)

Of particular concern to us is this line:

"Five year olds think that road users have a duty not to damage things — if someone is hit, it is the driver's fault, regardless of the circumstances."

So the propaganda is having the desired effect then.

**Chris Ward**

Sir — While at a conference recently (see page 7), I spoke to several serving police officers — motorcycle patrolmen, accident investigation officers and a traffic officer. All, as you might expect, were reasonable people who treat safety as the prime reason for doing the job and education as the key element that makes a difference to attitude amongst drivers. One mentioned a man he had in tears following his description of what would happen to the man's child, unsecured in the car, if he had a 30mph crash. The man now ensures that his child, and anyone else in the car, is belted up. That works — a £40 fine and 3 points would not have. He agreed with me when I suggested that drivers were much more likely to learn if spoken to by a traffic officer, rather than receiving a fixed penalty notice through the door, perhaps two weeks after an alleged offence. "Great revenue earners, speed cameras", I suggested. He smiled.

**Brian Hunter**

Sir — I was out with the UK Police today (Paul is a motoring journalist — ed) and learned that the outsourcing of running speed cameras could be not a million miles away. At present each Gatso prosecution costs the police about £80 to process and the fixed penalty is usually only £40 — so it costs for each prosecution. Unofficially the Police don't like the Gatsos that are being put up on deserted A-roads — with no safety motive — to the extent that they often choose not to load them with film.

If the running of Gatsos is outsourced on a purely commercial basis, revenue generation will be the main focus — and we can all imagine the outcome of this. Every high traffic road will be awash with them.

The 'kill your speed campaign' has cost

# letters

£3m — does anyone know how much the govt spends on training people (mostly kids) to cross the roads? Where's the Tufty Club gone!?

**Paul Gander**

Sir — "Anybody who cannot pass such tests should not be in charge of a potentially lethal weapon..."

Oh no — not the lethal weapon routine again! So is a bread knife, a hedge trimmer, a baseball bat, a hammer, a nail scissors, a pillow, a pen, a cooker, a lead pencil, aspirin...

A car is a dangerous tool, not a weapon. As with hammers, chain saws etc the vast majority of deaths and injuries result from misuse, not deliberate aggression. The problem with describing them as weapons and focusing on the damage they can do if used as such, is that it implies that only homicidal maniacs can cause injury, and the rest of us have no need to improve our skills and judgement.

**Lance Green & Andrew Bent**

Sir — In Bill Bryson's latest book there is a chapter on implausible things that injure Americans, based on Casualty admissions statistics. Apparently some quite remarkable number (I think it was 7000 per year) admit themselves to hospital claiming to have been injured by their beds! I'll never look at mine the same again.

Wouldn't recommend the book though — there is a very depressing chapter on global warming in it where he slags off Americans for driving everywhere and trots out the tired old thing that even if there is only a 1% chance that reducing our carbon output will 'save the planet' (his words), then it's worth doing. Made me want to throw up, especially when I got to the chapter where he talked about how he'd gone on an all-expenses paid book tour by plane, lasting three months. I expect the outputs from the planes he went on were magically non-existent.

**Alan Wesson**

Sir — Having just returned from two weeks in India. I couldn't help thinking that the driving conditions there represent the way things are heading in the UK.

1. Traffic rarely exceeds 40mph due to natural traffic calming i.e potholes, cows sitting in road (moo-bile traffic calming!).

2. Only a small percentage of the population can afford to own cars (20-30%).

3. Driving standards are appalling. Indicators are never used at all. Lane discipline does not exist. Roundabouts and junctions are a free for all. Driver training is virtually non-existent. Driving with broken or non-existent lights is

perfectly acceptable as is using main beam at all times.

4. The roads are full of children, pedestrians and cyclists, the place is one giant homezone.

5. Ancient buses and taxis fill the roads pouring out acrid black fumes (at least they are cheap 5p for a half hour bus ride).

6. Road maintenance consists of repairing a road when it becomes impassable.

The result of low speeds, children allowed to play in the road, low ownership of cars, total reliance on public transport, poor road maintenance, no driver training?

One of the worst pollution records and what must be amongst the highest accident rates in the world. Much as I loved the country I would not wish to see us go this way!

**David Razzell**

Sir — The ABD is sometimes seen as slightly negative as we can attack other peoples' ideas without always necessarily offering solutions. The issue of congestion is one that is high on the political agenda currently, and it is one that the ABD has thought about long and hard.

To start the ball rolling I have suggested the following 10 points that I think should be high on the list of priorities for getting motorists moving again.

1. Invest in adequate road maintenance (30% of congestion is roadworks related)

2. More fiscal neutrality: reinvest more of the £33bn road transport taxation in roads, railways, sea- and airports

3. Encourage home-, tele-, and flexible working practices

4. More low cost town periphery secure parking and park-and-ride schemes

5. More urban centre light rail and tram systems where appropriate

6. Start building immediately the badly needed 500 bypass schemes currently postponed or cancelled

7. Complete the UK motorway system with an outer orbital motorway routing traffic bypassing London away East (M2/M20) or West (M4) without using the M25.

8. Likewise Birmingham

9. Likewise Glasgow

10. Complete Manchester M60 ring-road

**Brian Gregory**

Sir — Below is a URL of a web site which contains a consultation questionnaire regarding local transport in West Yorkshire. Leeds City Council would like to pioneer road charging.

Here is a chance to have your say. If you are likely to be affected by these proposals, make sure that your views are at least sent to them.

Don't forget to read the section on enforcement

<http://www.westyorkshire-ltp.co.uk>

**Noel Shaw**

Sir — Doubtless you have heard the recent news of 'government economists' and their message that government spending on road safety is inadequate. There are several points that need to be raised here:

1. the accountants have as always used fanciful sums of money (cost of distress, medical teams and facilities already paid for, lost productivity but this assumes a lot!) and double accounting to come up with their ridiculous £1 million cost for each road fatality

2. They talk about the total cost to the economy which results, but do not make any adjustment for the benefits arising from car use in the first place, nor for the cost of congestion which already exists due to ineffective 'safety' measures (aimed at reducing speed and nothing else) nor do they calculate the additional cost that their further 'safety' spending would incur as this would also be purely speed-reducing and hence bad for the economy due to delays in transit of goods and longer journey times for personnel

3. They compare the UK with higher spending EU partners but fail to point out that, for instance, while we are 'urged to follow Holland' with its higher spending on (politically correct but useless) road furniture, the Dutch have a worse safety record than we do! So we are being urged to waste money, by economists!

**Bernard Abrams**

Sir — I frequently read letters expressing concerns about the oppressive, punitive and extortionate measures levelled against the motorist by successive governments, wherein the writer ends by beseeching us to protest, frequently alluding to accusations of widespread apathy at the same time.

Exhortations like these I welcome and support. They are frequently seen in newspapers and magazines, and are often heard in conversation — yet rarely do the authors suggest any practicable means of how to protest in a useful and significant manner!

Ironically I'm unable to improve upon the situation since, other than writing to my MP and J2J (who has not replied), I have no suggestions to make. But hopefully I have focused attention on this omission and now eagerly await a deluge of practicable, useful, significant and relevant suggestions!

**Steve Lyden-Brown**



## Member services

### Legal representation

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

### Chauffeurplan

If you find yourself unable to drive for any reason you may find Chauffeurplan's service invaluable. Offered by Longford Insurance, it's an insurance policy against losing your licence or your car, with a 10% discount for ABD members. If you would like to find out more please contact Hugh Bladon (details on page 2) who will send you a leaflet. Alternatively you can get in touch with Chauffeurplan on 0800 24 24 20.

### ABD T-shirts

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

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

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

The ABD has prepared an informative action pack which sets out in detail the process by which local authorities set speed limits, and the rights that every member of the public has to object to the imposition of new or reduced limits. The pack costs £5 to non-members, but is available free to current members. Please send a large SAE (26p) to  
Steve Dommett  
PO Box 3151  
West Bergholt CO6 3JH

### ABD publicity material

If you would like copies of the ABD leaflet please get in touch with Sue Newby-Robson (details on page 2), and she'll send you what you need. Car stickers, flyers and posters are all due in January 2000.

### Do you have e-mail?

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

## Press releases

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

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

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

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

#### 30th November

ABD welcomes decision to scrap speed limit cuts

#### 23rd November

Global warming — a flawed argument

#### 19th November

Response to the Queen's speech

#### 17th November

The UK driver's tax burden

#### 16th November

Our children are being brainwashed

#### 14th November

PPG 13 (see front page)

#### 28th October

The ABD supports the IAM publicly

#### 5th October

Anti-speed campaign is flawed

## ABD in the media

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

BBC Radio continue to give us quite a bit of air-time — they respond more to our press releases than anybody else. BBC Radio Humberside interviewed Nigel Humphries on the proposals to reduce the legal blood/alcohol limit.

The ABD response to the Queen's speech created a lot of opportunities for us — we made several comments to the Daily Mail, an interview on BBC Radio Wiltshire, an interview for Radio 5 Live and we now have a very pro-ABD contact at Motorcycle News. The front page of the Birmingham Post featured the ABD — our quote was before the AA's, which was rather gratifying.

Our Scottish representative, Brian Hunter, has featured in The Scotsman, arguing against the imposition of a 20mph speed limit in the Old Town in Edinburgh when what's needed are barriers to prevent drunks from falling off pavements into the paths of vehicles, Fleet News (arguing against the proposed introduction of GPS-controlled speed limiters on fleet (i.e. company) cars, and a quote in The Daily Record

who phoned him to ask the ABD's opinion about the Council's plans to ban all cars from Princes Street in Edinburgh. Brian has also just appeared on BBC Radio Scotland over this last issue. Space constraints have meant his report has had to be held over to the next edition of OTR.

Several ABD members work in journalism, which is helping us to turn the tide, albeit very slowly. Even where we don't have members we are gaining credibility very quickly — so much so, that many parts of the media are very keen to feature the ABD. The front page of the Daily Mail featured the ABD very prominently when it covered the oil companies' intentions to raise fuel prices even further before the end of the year.

Also Mark McArthur-Christie is now writing a regular column for MG World. It's supposed to be about his Midget, but there might be a few other references in there...

On Radio Leeds Nigel Humphries was recently put up against a Green Party Councillor — the interviewer asked him if he would vote for workplace parking taxes in his own ward of Kirklees. He wouldn't answer the question, and the interviewer showed no quarter and tore into him, eventually getting him to admit he would support them. Nigel was then able to say how that illustrated all his points — Prescott hadn't the nerve to bring in these unpopular taxes himself so he was delegating them to councils, and even the Green party was reluctant to admit support for them! This type of interview is getting increasingly common...

## Web-sites

Web-sites worth visiting are frequently pointed out to us. Below are some of the ones we've either discovered recently or visit regularly because the content is interesting — if you know of others please let us know.

<http://www.junkscience.com>

Explodes some of the myths that proliferate worldwide — such as global warming

<http://www.coedbach.force9.co.uk>

The negative impact the Government's transport policies will have

<http://www.nationalcenter.org/kyoto.html>

The Global Warming Information Center (US)

<http://www.mag-uk.org>

The Motorcycle Action Group's web-site — their aims are broadly the same as ours

<http://www.tagish.co.uk>

A directory of directories — if you're looking for contact details look here first. Especially useful is a list of all local Government offices, with links to their web-sites. Find out what your local authority has in store for you!

<http://www.detr.gov.uk>

The web-site for the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, there's a wealth of information available. If you've got a couple of days to spare, log on!

<http://www.highways.gov.uk>

Another Government agency web-site, the Highways Agency also has huge amounts of information on offer.

<http://www.devon-cc.gov.uk/agenda21/booklets/transport.html>

Devon County Council are consulting on how to structure their transport plans — this page is anti-car.

