

A Fair Deal for the Motorist



ABD Proposals to the
Downing Street Policy Unit
Autumn 2013



INTRODUCTION

The Alliance of British Drivers (ABD) would like to thank the office of Joseph Johnson MP at the Downing Street Policy Unit for the invitation to contribute towards a better transport policy for the UK.

About the ABD

The ABD is a voluntary, not-for-profit organisation, whose members are drivers from all walks of life and all parts of the UK.

More information can be found on our website, www.abd.org.uk, although in summary:

- Established in 1992, we exist to campaign for a fair deal for the driver (including motorcyclists).
- We are funded by subscriptions and donations from members and the public. We receive no funds from the government or corporates, so are truly independent. We are strictly non-party political.
- We are represented on the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety (PACTS) and have responded to consultations run by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Transport, (TRANSCOM).
- We are members of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and subscribe to its 'Fundraising Promise' on the ethical handling of donations.
- We are regularly asked to comment on motoring issues by national and local media, researchers and students. In recent years, we are also pleased to report increasing interest from their overseas equivalents. We have given advice to decision makers and been represented at conferences.

Reference

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It may be freely circulated with acknowledgement for policy development purposes.

Policy suggestions are expressly for England unless they are for a UK wide matter, such as fuel duty or a Lorry Road User Charge.

An **index** to the main subject headings used is provided on page 20. Many supporting references can be found on our website, www.abd.org.uk. Text search facilities are provided.

Three **appendices** can be read with this document:

- Traffic Safety: Why Russia should not follow the West, a report by Al Gullon,
- the ABD's summary of Al Gullon's report,
- An independent report on the effectiveness of the Under-17 Car Club.

The second document was prepared in the name of the Association of British Drivers, our name until 2012. Should further discussion be required on any matters arising, please contact fairdeal@abd.org.uk as soon as possible.

A concise **summary** of our main policy points is given on page 3 before covering topical areas.

The Main Policy Points

- The car is the dominant mode of transport in the UK. The UK has approx. 33 million drivers, most of whom have votes. At the 2010 General Election, the cost of private transport was reported to be a 'Top Two' doorstep issue and 'Motorway Man' was the key swing voter to win over.
- There should be no 'hierarchy of road users' that regards drivers as inferior to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, all road users should be treated with equal respect.
- Drivers pay roughly five times over for use of the roads. There is no case for increasing this burden. The government should respect the deep lack of public acceptability towards road pricing.
- Britain's roads should be seen as a national asset held in trust by government for future generations, with investment being paid in advance by drivers. They should remain in public ownership.
- We encourage targeted measures to address current bottlenecks and congestion, such as reversing gratuitous restrictions on road capacity
- The law should be based on encouragement of skilled and responsible driving – not the criminalisation of safe driving. Bad laws decrease respect for the law and lawmakers more widely.
- Prevention is better than cure. Engineering out hazards is a priority for safer roads, with proper maintenance of road surfaces.
- Education of road users is vital - not just for skills and knowledge but for instilling responsible and considerate attitudes.
- Enforcement should be prioritised to control those causing significant danger (such as drunk, drugged and reckless drivers) rather than technical offences causing little or no danger. The level of penalties should typically reflect the degree of danger to others created.
- Measures should recognize that the most accidents are due to inattention, distraction in some form, tiredness and misjudgment, and not the contravention of speed limits.
- Speed limits should be set at levels that drivers consider reasonable, using the proven '85th percentile' rule
- HGV limits should be raised to avoid unnecessary delays and frustration, which can lead to hazardous overtaking manoeuvres.
- There is no case for introducing blanket 20 mph zones in town and cities; such moves might actually reduce road safety.
- There should be a switch away from speed cameras to alternative, better ways to improve road safety, such as Vehicle Activated Signs and the reintroduction of police patrols.
- The government is right to maintain the '80mg' blood alcohol limit, which is scientifically based and rather than lowering it, it should be strictly enforced, with efforts targeted at the worst offenders.
- We oppose the introduction of 'strict liability offences' prevalent in some other EU countries - in a collision between driver and a cyclist, the driver would be regarded as automatically liable until proven innocent.
- We would support government initiatives to help young drivers become proficient, including off the road training before the age of seventeen. We reject any introduction of system of graduated licences for newly-qualified drivers. Apart from being bureaucratic, this would deny drivers experience that will develop their confidence and put them in good stead.
- There should be a statutory obligation for local authorities to provide adequate parking to satisfy demand either free or at reasonable cost.

The Need for Recognition

The car is accepted to be the dominant mode of transport in the UK.

84% of all journeys are estimated to be made by car, motorbike or van; and 9% by rail and bus.

The UK has approximately 33 million drivers, most of whom have votes. At the 2010 General Election, the cost of private transport was reported to be a 'Top Two' doorstep issue and winning the support of a profiled 'Motorway Man' was viewed as key to winning the election.

David Cameron was reported (Mike Rutherford interview, Daily Telegraph, 29 April 2010) to have said: *"I'm a friend of the motorist ... We can help families by cutting fuel taxes when global prices rise. That's the kind of real, responsible difference to motorists a Conservative government would bring"*

Unfortunately, Labour's initial fuel duty rises were retained until there was a considerable public disquiet and VAT on fuel was raised to 20%.

On 13 May 2010, the incoming Transport Secretary, Philip Hammond, vowed to end Labour's war on motorists. However, in a RAC survey of drivers, published in June 2011, an incredible 99% felt that the 'War on the Motorist' was still going on, and only 1% believed that it had been ended! Only 8% had any confidence that it might be ended.

For illustration - Taxes Collected From Road Users, per annum.

	£Bn
Fuel duty	24.6
VAT on fuel	7.5
Vehicle excise duty	5.5
VAT on vehicle sales	6.9
Company car tax	2.3
Insurance premium tax (est.)	2.0
Total	48.8

These figures are for private vehicle owners in 2009/10 (Source; Roads Users' Alliance 'Roadfile', quoted by DFT). In broad terms, road users pay around 4p a mile to the Treasury; whereas rail users are subsidised at approx. 21p a mile.

In spite of the large contribution drivers make to the Treasury and public services, government spending on roads (local and national) was measured at under one-fifth of this:

	£Bn
Network improvements	4.0
Maintenance	5.1
Total	9.1

(Source; Roads Users' Alliance 'Roadfile'. NB figures again for 2009/10, and are likely to be slightly lower in subsequent years, without prejudice to the aspirations for the next Parliament expressed in DFT's paper *Action for Roads: A network for the 21st Century*, released in July 2013).

Since the mid-1970s, there has been a trend for governments to take large and increasing amounts of tax from private vehicle owners whilst dramatically reducing the amount of funding to maintain and improve the road network.

As drivers pay roughly five times over for both use of the roads and carbon emissions, there is no case for increasing this burden. The EU has remarked on high transport costs in the UK, and the Treasury should rein in its aspirations, expressed in the 2012 Budget, to extract even more revenue out of drivers.

A Fairer Deal for Drivers

The track record of recent governments has not been reassuring to drivers.

- An under-current that car use was somehow 'a bad thing' and that drivers had to be got out of their cars. John Prescott's first plans to reduce car use went against the grain of public opinion and have had to be judged a failure. Addressing Labour's National Policy Forum on 25 June 2011, Ed Miliband admitted that by the time his party left office, it had lost touch with the public.
- Unfortunately, there has been a theme of continuity from the Major government days to the present. In 1996, motoring organisations condemned the state of Britain's roads, with even parts of the motorway networks becoming death traps, due to underfunding and lack of maintenance. The Engineering Employers Federation complained that transport policy was "starting to condone the restriction of transport and travel", and warned of damage to the UK economy.
- Successive governments toyed with the introduction of road pricing (tolling) in the face of massive public opposition. Under the Major government, the Transport Select Committee spoke out against motorway tolling proposals due to likely diversion of traffic to local roads and the risk of more accidents and casualties. The Centre for Policy Studies, trusted Government advisers, warned of technical problems and even mass civil disobedience if the proposals went ahead.
- Labour's promotion of road pricing through the 'Breaking the Logjam' white paper in 1999, aroused a large unprecedented public backlash in the DFT/DETR consultation. An ABD member, Peter Roberts, was later responsible for the 2006 petition that recorded an unparalleled 1.8 million signatures against road pricing.
- Where the public was consulted on road pricing, the Edinburgh and Manchester referendums produced 78%-79% majorities against it. In London, Ken Livingstone was defeated as Mayor after his refusal to heed successive public consultations that showed large majorities of residents and businesses against the extension of the Congestion Charge.
- Recently unveiled plans for the A14 have included a tolled section, with the demolition of an existing section to effectively force drivers to use it (or face a long detour). This has aroused opposition from local businesses, national business organisations such as the FSB, FTA, RHA; Chambers of Commerce, Local Enterprise Partnerships, local councils and MPs. The excuse that there was insufficient money (without tolling) looks weak given that in 2012, the government threw the £1.3Bn required at the European Investment Bank to provide Italy with motorways on the cheap; and the recent underpricing of Royal Mail shares arguably produced a revenue shortfall of £1.6Bn.
- In their 2012 paper, *Fuel For Thought*, Institute for Fiscal Studies researchers observed that historically drivers had not been a militant group but warned that "...today everything is rather different" and of simmering mass discontent.

We seek a fair deal for drivers, based on policies which encourage skilled and responsible driving – not the criminalisation of safe driving. We feel that, as drivers have paid around £500 billion to the Treasury since 1997, the required investment in bringing roads up to a decent condition has been paid for in advance. We are pleased to suggest more enlightened policies based on objective evidence that will contribute to the social good and command public acceptability.

This document combines our established policies and some innovative suggestions put forward by our members for consideration. They are listed in no implied order of priority.

Putting the Balance Right

We are surprised that under a government which has prided itself on opposing discrimination, some local authorities could operate a 'hierarchy of road users', in which some citizens were seen as more equal than others.

Typically this might put pedestrians first, then cyclists, then public transport users, then drivers at the bottom of the pile. There should be no 'second class citizens'.

We are not against other road users - far from it. At times, our members are typically pedestrians and often cyclists or public transport users, too. We seek a culture where the various parties will share the roads in a spirit of consideration and mutual respect. Breaking down attitude barriers between road users – where they exist - can only reduce reckless behaviour and 'road rage', and help lead to a more tolerant society.

As a generalisation, balance will be achieved where pavements are for pedestrians, and roads for vehicles, including cycles. The Highway Code lays down rules for safe crossing, such as at zebra crossings for all parties to respect. This is designed to ensure that danger is not introduced by forcing vehicles to suddenly change speed and direction.

(Obviously, there will be some defined exceptions, such as where pedestrians use country roads without footpaths, and where limited wheels-on-kerb parking is permitted, so as to let larger vehicles such as ambulances and fire engines go through).

We have reservations about 'shared space' approaches as found abroad. They might encourage young pedestrians, for instance, to just walk into other roads not designated as 'shared space' with tragic consequences; and are not suitable for blind pedestrians.

We would accept the use of bus (priority) lanes where they could objectively be shown to produce a greater throughput of passengers in a given time. However, we are opposed to them as 'car exclusion lanes' – they should only operate at defined times such as in the rush hour, or on football match days. There is no justification for 24 hour bus lanes which just remove usable road space.

It would also seem strange to have a bus lane unused for maybe 8-9 minutes out of every ten. Some sections of bus lane should be considered for opening up to other vehicles on the same lines as a box junction – i.e. they are permitted to enter where the exit is clear, and where this will not hold up a bus.

The practice of closing 'off line' (recessed) bus stops and replacing them with 'on line' stops that hold up traffic should also be stopped.

A More Enlightened Approach to Regulation

The balance also needs to change between levels of authority and the driver. Our ideal view of the state and the branches of government is that they should be less the iron fist, and more the helping hand.

We are concerned at the previous government's tendencies to introduce new legislation, such as the mobile phone laws, to tackle problems that should have been tackled using the existing 'due care' and careless driving legislation.

In a hurry to be seen to be dynamic, these laws produced anomalies that a stationary driver could be prosecuted for handling a mobile phone with either engine on or handbrake off, regardless of whether the vehicle might be safely positioned. A bit of common sense might have allowed *limited* hands-on mobile phone use in queues of very stop-start slow moving traffic.

Drivers will readily respect restrictions that have an objective purpose and comply with laws that are seen as reasonable. As with speed limits, regulations that cannot objectively be justified produce widespread non-compliance, and this undermines wider respect for the law and the politicians who make it. This produces extreme cases, e.g. speed cameras have been seen primarily as a means of maximising revenue from fines; and, in Lincolnshire, 25% of speed cameras were recently found to have been set on fire or vandalised.

We believe that transport policy should ultimately be decided nationally, although it would seem sensible to delegate many decisions to local level where possible. Decisions of government at any level are subject to review by national courts, so central government should lay down standards of objectivity to ensure suitable safeguards.

We certainly favour co-operation and sharing of good practice guidelines at international level – the UK can learn a lot from how the Japanese manage to repair a severely damaged highway in six days, or how other countries manage to minimise disruption from roadworks or reopen roads more quickly, for example.

However we would oppose direction at European level on essentially national matters – such as ruling out the Labour Party's recent suggestion to operate a new lower rate of VAT on fuel, as it conflicted with bureaucratic technicality. It is also wrong that national government should be prevented from introducing social measures such as providing fuel duty relief in deprived parts of the UK without a long-drawn out process of obtaining permission from the European Commission.

Any international proposals should be flexible enough to respect diversity and not impose a 'one size fits all' policy, like the imposition of mandatory daytime running lights. Although this might be appropriate to some countries, it will needlessly increase energy consumption in the UK, and provide dubious benefit.

We would also query the logic behind moves in the Localism Act 2011 to make local authorities liable for potentially unlimited fines from Europe. Industrial and traffic pollution (typically from buses and other large vehicles) blows into London from well outside the M25 and mainland Europe; this is a factor beyond the control of the Mayor of London and the GLA.

A Proven Approach to Road Safety

In particular, we campaign for a renewed emphasis of a 'virtuous circle' based on the 'Three Es' of road safety - Education, Engineering and Enforcement - which gave Britain the safest roads in the world.

Prevention is better than cure. Therefore we give priority to engineering out hazards to produce safer roads, and also appropriate maintenance of road surfaces.

Education focuses on road users and includes hands-on driver or cyclist training; wider road safety training, such as in the home and in school; and reinforcement campaigns, such as to promote safe driving in winter conditions. Education should not just concentrate on skills and knowledge; it should develop responsible and considerate attitudes.

Enforcement should be prioritised to control those causing significant danger (such as drunk, drugged and reckless drivers) rather than technical offences causing little or no danger (such as minor breaches of speed limits, which lend to numerical or revenue targets).

We favour intelligent road policing by properly trained police traffic officers, using discretion over automated enforcement. Police traffic divisions should be reinforced and the training of officers should be re-established and strengthened back to "Hendon" standards when passing the police advanced test was seen as a status symbol amongst officers; constant downgrading of police training standards has led to increased crashes involving police officers.

Whereas there should be prosecution for the most serious offences, advice from a police officer or retraining courses should be used to correct minor lapses. As retraining can be 'prevention' as well as cure, we call for road safety materials of the type used in driving offender courses to be made freely available for downloading. This will enable responsible drivers to benefit from behaviour reinforcement.

It is fundamentally wrong that drivers should be guaranteed a higher penalty if they elect to go to court; this discourages drivers from defending a case even if they have good justification for doing so. We are pleased that the courts struck down the previous government's moves to deny drivers the reasonable cost of defending themselves in cases where they were able to establish their innocence.

Speed Limits

Speed limits can contribute to road safety, if used correctly.

That means setting them at levels that the majority of drivers consider reasonable, which means setting them at the 85th percentile level (the speed that 85 per cent of drivers would not exceed anyway in the absence of a speed limit).

Speed limits have three legitimate purposes: to guide inexperienced drivers away from grossly exceeding safe speeds; to warn drivers of expected hazard density; and to provide a basis for enabling the police to prosecute those who drive at recklessly high speeds for the conditions.

Speed limits can only influence less experienced drivers if they are set at a level that the more experienced majority accept as reasonable. When this is the case, there is a high level of voluntary compliance, which puts pressure on the less experienced minority to follow suit. On the other hand, if speed limits are set too low, they are ignored by the majority of drivers, so they lose their ability to influence the young or inexperienced.

The second purpose of speed limits, to warn drivers of expected hazard density, is also only achieved if the speed limit is seen by the majority of responsible and experienced drivers to be appropriate for the road environment they can see ahead of and around them. The speed limit must confirm an experienced driver's assessment of the degree of hazard, not conflict with it. If, for some reason, it is considered essential to reduce speeds below the natural speed for the road, then the visual environment needs to be changed to alter drivers' perception of what is an appropriate speed. Simply lowering the speed limit on its own does not work.

Low speed limits lead to a greater spread of speeds, as the few drivers who comply with the limit cause frustration in those behind them, leading to road rage and potentially dangerous overtaking manoeuvres. Accident frequency can thus increase. Research in the USA shows that, on average, lowering speed limits leads to a 6.9% increase in accident frequency, while raising them leads to an 11.3% decrease. British research also shows that raising unrealistically low speed limits can result in fewer accidents, with little change in actual speeds.

Other ways in which speed limits are being misused are the application of blanket reductions on rural roads, in the belief that this will reduce accidents regardless of their cause; and extending speed limits into open country from urban developments. Speed limits should only change at the point where hazard density changes, so that drivers can relate the change in limit to the change in the visual environment. Only then will the limit be effective. Extending speed limits beyond the point where they are relevant can lead to speeds actually increasing within the built-up area, as drivers fail to slow down at the speed limit signs because they cannot see a reason for the lower limit.

Claims that there is a proven link between average speeds and accident frequency are based on theoretical studies of roads with allegedly similar characteristics, but different average speeds. The statistical methods used in these studies gave the researchers scope to aggregate data as they thought fit, and differences in traffic flow were not corrected for adequately.

These theoretical studies, which are often used as justification for lowering speed limits and promoting intrusive technology such as Intelligent Speed Adaptation, are fatally flawed. They fly in the face of the much greater body of empirical evidence that setting speed limits in accordance with the 85th percentile principle results in the minimum crash risk. This is because speed limits set according to the 85th percentile rule produce the lowest spread of speeds. Research in the USA has shown that the spread of speed (speed variance), rather than absolute speed, is related to crash risk.

Current guidance on the setting of local speed limits ([DFT] Circular Roads 1/2013) should be replaced with one based on the 85th percentile principle for speed limit setting. The new circular should also contain a presumption against the use of local speed limits on rural roads, except where there is roadside development justifying such a speed limit.

Most importantly, instead of just guidance, the new circular should be mandatory and highway authorities given a period of, say, three to five years in which to review their existing local speed limits and bring them into line. It is unacceptable that drivers crossing local authority boundaries should be faced with different speed limits on similar roads. DFT rightly produces regulations on the use of traffic signs with which all highway authorities must comply, and speed limits should be treated in the same way.

Consideration should also be given to permitting the use of speed limits in multiples of 5 mph, as is the case in the USA. In metricated countries, speed limits are usually set in multiples of 10 kph, i.e. about 6 mph, so Britain's speed limit system is very coarse.

Even when set in accordance with the 85th percentile principle, therefore, speed limits can only be considered 'accurate' to +/- 5 mph, so insisting on rigid adherence to limits lacks credibility. (Incidentally, in the USA federal guidance is that speed limits should be based on the 85th percentile and rounded up to the next 5 mph increment, not rounded down.)

Motorway Speed Limits

There should be an immediate increase in the general motorway speed limit to at least 80 mph, to bring the UK into line with the 130 kph speed limit applying in many European countries. This increase would lead to very little change in actual speeds, but would legalise the behaviour of the majority of responsible drivers and bring back some credibility to the motorway speed limit.

Variable motorway limits have frequently been found to not be correctly matched to traffic flows. Training and education could be far more cost effective in both safety and traffic flow terms.

Other Speed Limits

The existing HGV limit of 40 mph on single carriageways should be raised to 50 mph (and to 60 mph on dual carriageways, where the 50 mph limit is not respected). Slow moving lorries cause unnecessary delays and frustration, which can lead to hazardous overtaking manoeuvres. As noted above, it is speed variance rather than absolute speed that increases accident risk.

Where 30 mph speed limits apply, they should be clearly signed with repeaters. The current 'streetlight' rule is outdated and causes confusion. The existing 'car based' rule for vans should be abolished. All vans up to Transit size should be subject to the same limits as cars.

20 mph Zones

Any reduction in the default urban speed limit to 20 mph, as some campaigners are demanding, should be ruled out. A 20 mph limit may be appropriate in narrow residential streets, especially if there is on-street parking; here, actual speeds are likely to be at or near 20 mph anyway. Streets must be considered on an individual basis: imposing a 20 mph speed limit on a road where 30 mph is safe would simply criminalise safe driving and add unnecessary delays to traffic.

We would query claims for 'greater safety' based on claims for lower accident rates where 20 mph zones have been introduced, as they are often characterised by road humps or other street furniture that damages vehicles. Drivers will often seek to avoid them, and where they do not (such as reported by the local media in Portsmouth), there have been reports of widespread non-compliance. This concurs with the advice of Professor Wann of Royal Holloway College, who has warned against having blanket 20mph zones as drivers become less likely to comply.

We regard as flawed the argument that a lower speed limit would be preferable as someone hit at the lower speed might be more likely to live. The case of children dashing out into the road is often used to justify this measure. We feel that it would be a poor second to preventing collisions at *any* speed – and it would be better to press for a higher standard of road safety achieved by children having due regard for other road users, and parents training their children in the basics of road safety and showing some responsibility.

There are occasional fatalities on railways when children trespass onto a track, but nobody calls for trains to be restricted to a very low speed to ensure that anyone trespassing on the line does not become a casualty.

Fortunately, on those occasions where pedestrians do run out into the road, today's cars are equipped with several safety features to mitigate the impact, and the use of brakes tends to ensure that the speed at collision is much less and the pedestrian survives.

Speed Limiting Devices

We oppose both in-vehicle and satellite speed limiting devices (euphemistically known as 'Intelligent Speed Adaptation' or ISA). We note the increase in accidents since the imposition of speed limiters on LGVs (which we feel should be abolished).

Speed limiters can produce danger where an overtaking manoeuvre is started but a speed limit suddenly changes, braking the driver. We would also have concerns where speed limits suddenly drop by a large figure (e.g. 50 mph to 30 mph) or if a speed map contains errors. Automation is never a substitute for driver skill and control.

Addressing the Real Causes of Road Accidents

While inappropriate speed for the conditions (as opposed to exceeding a speed limit) is a factor in an appreciable minority of accidents, it is itself only a symptom of an underlying failure by a driver either to recognise a potentially hazardous situation or to appreciate that slowing down is the correct response. Leaving aside drivers impaired by drink or drugs, or engaged in some other criminal activity, these failures are due to inattention or inexperience. These are the areas to which road safety policy should be directed to achieve casualty reductions in the future.

It is generally accepted that the majority of accidents are due to human error on the part of one or more road users, and many of those errors are due to inattention, distraction in some form, tiredness and misjudgment.

Where speed limits are set at an unreasonably low level, this contributes to increased journey times and makes driver frustration and fatigue more likely. Traffic bunching up can lead to dangerous overtaking.

Canadian road safety researcher Al Gullon has been examining the evidence on distraction for 14 years and his most recent paper, presented to a Russian conference in November 2010, is attached, together with our summary of it. As can be seen, he has established a strong link between the economic cycle and fatality rates per distance travelled (not just fatality numbers) in a wide range of developed countries.

He believes that this relationship is due to psychological factors that cause drivers to be more distracted during periods of economic growth than in recession. He has also found that drivers are less likely to be involved in accidents when traffic densities are high because the frequent interactions with other road users force them to concentrate more on their driving.

It follows that strategies aimed at bringing drivers' attention back to the job in hand, especially at potentially hazardous locations, should result in fewer accidents.

In the longer term, as recommended in Al Gullon's paper, in-vehicle technology which monitors a driver's attentiveness and alertness, and sends a warning or sounds an alarm to the driver when necessary, has the potential to prevent many accidents.

Statistics

All official statistics should be presented in a meaningful, open and auditable manner.

We believe that the current STATS19 accident statistics system is seriously flawed, and needs to be replaced whilst allowing for some comparability.

There should be an end to the use of the currently misleading term KSI (Killed & Seriously Injured). Instead results must be separated into fatal (K) and serious injury (SI) accidents. The term SI therefore requires redefinition to only encompass genuinely life-threatening or permanently disabling/seriously scarring injuries. The current definition of a 'KSI' can include such things as minor whiplash or a broken toe.

Statistics should be collated for the following:

- Number of fatal and serious injury accidents involving stolen vehicles.
- Number of fatal and serious injury accidents caused primarily by excessive speed occurring above the speed limit.

Camera-based Enforcement

Current speed camera siting guidelines are inappropriate, since they recommend cameras should be located where the 85th percentile speed is above the speed limit. Where this is the case, it is usually an indication that the speed limit is too low at that point. If speed limits were set correctly in accordance with the 85th percentile, there would be much greater speed limit compliance, so less justification for the use of speed cameras

Speed cameras should be audited at 2 to 3 year intervals. If a camera has shown no casualty reduction using statistically valid data, then it must be removed. Even where speed cameras are sited at locations with a higher than average accident rate, alternative and cheaper methods, such as Vehicle Activated Signs, are likely to be more effective (see TRL report 549) in drawing drivers' attention to the hazard ahead.

Speed cameras should only be used when all other engineering measures have been tried. In such cases the speed limit should be shown on the camera post to help prevent panic braking. When other measures are introduced, they must be given a period of three years for reliable statistics to be obtained post improvement to ensure the area still justifies camera installation.

Speed cameras are limited in what offences they can detect. We would like to see reliance on cameras replaced by police patrols, which can deal with drunk, drugged and dangerous drivers. They often act as a deterrent to law-breaking and can also help drivers who have broken down.

At the Conservative Party Conference on 6 October 2009, Shadow Transport Secretary Theresa Villiers said: *"Labour's army of speed cameras is not the best way to make our roads safer. We will switch to alternative, better, ways to improve road safety. Labour's dependence on fixed speed cameras has blinded them to the effectiveness of the alternatives. It is time say enough is enough on fixed speed cameras – we have reached the high water mark. A Conservative Government would not fund any new fixed speed cameras."*

Traffic light cameras can be beneficial at high-risk sites provided that lights change at a sensible interval that allows drivers travelling within the speed limit to stop cleanly.

We feel that tailgating is a problem that requires the education of both the tailgater and tailgated. However we cannot support 'trial by camera' alone. Cameras cannot tell if a driver has just cut back in front of another, and mere reliance on camera footage would risk an innocent driver being prosecuted. Nor would we wish to see the prosecution of a driver who has been subjected to inconsiderate or even malicious braking.

Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS)

Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) are a relatively cheap and effective way of demanding a driver's attention. While visible and signed speed cameras on the approach to a hazard may be seen by many drivers, who will then comply with the speed limit, a camera does not indicate the nature of the hazard and is less likely to be noticed by the most inattentive drivers, who are the ones presenting the greatest danger.

VAS, on the other hand, are almost impossible to miss, as they use flashing lights and are only illuminated if a driver is approaching the hazard above a preset speed. Furthermore, VAS can indicate the nature of the hazard (junction, sharp bend, school, etc) so that drivers are told what to look out for. They are also very much cheaper to install and operate than speed cameras.

Traffic Calming

Traffic flow reduction measures such as chicanes and speed humps should be removed. Instead, roads should be redesigned to remove hazards as necessary.

Drink Driving

We support the view of TRANSCOM and the government that enforcement should be targeted at the worst offenders, who will typically be well over the '80mg' blood alcohol limit. The limit is scientifically based and rather than lowering it, it should be strictly enforced.

In cases where a combination of say, tiredness and blood alcohol under the limit, produces an unsafe driver, that driver can be prosecuted for either careless or dangerous driving offences.

Where there is suspicion of drink driving, we feel that police officers should use their discretion on carrying out a simple check of a driver's breath, and a formal breathalyser if needed.

Eyesight Testing

Similarly, we feel that police officers should be able to use their discretion over whether drivers involved in accidents should be required to undertake an eyesight test.

Doctors and opticians should be required to notify DVLA of any impairment that would impair driving ability. We feel that knowingly driving with seriously defective eyesight should carry strong penalties.

Penalties

Overall, we feel that penalty levels should recognise the difference between genuine errors (which should typically be tackled by training and assistance) and wilful recklessness (which should be tackled by a combination of punishment and training).

We would always favour the use of judicial discretion, taking into account the circumstances of individual cases. However, by default, there should be a minimum sentence of three years' imprisonment for car thieves, five years' where reckless driving is also proven.

Insurance for young drivers far outweighs current fine levels. Fines for wilfully driving without insurance should be increased to a deterrent level (e.g. £1,500 for a driver who might be expected to take a quote of £1,000).

Otherwise, the level of penalties should typically reflect the degree of danger to others created.

We are opposed to any system that allows points to be put on UK licences for offences outside of the UK. For a start, not all offences will be such under UK law, and driver behaviour abroad may not be typical of their driving in the UK. Under a different legal system, drivers may have a diminished opportunity of a fair hearing in court and some countries will have inferior standards of detection equipment, maintenance of such and standards of police behaviour.

We also oppose the introduction of 'strict liability offences', as found in some other EU countries. Where there is a collision between driver and a cyclist, they would regard the driver as automatically liable until proven otherwise (and there is a variant for cyclist-pedestrian collisions). We are totally opposed to this for three good reasons:

Firstly, as it is contrary to the fundamental legal principle of regarding innocence until proof of guilt. Secondly, as it might encourage a party involved in a collision to speed off rather than offer help to an injured person. Thirdly, because some individuals might feel less responsibility towards others in using the road.

Incentives - Points System

We would like to see a 'Positive Points' system introduced where drivers would gain points for every year of accident-free driving. Further positive points would be awarded for voluntarily taking extra training and passing an advanced driving assessment.

The government should consider offering tax relief on reasonable course and assessment fees to those drivers who obtain higher driving qualifications, treating them in the same way as a charitable donation. Drivers on low incomes should be able to claim relief up to 3 years after qualification.

Any penalty points would be deducted from a driver's total. This is a more sophisticated version of the current scheme where points are waived for those who undertake training following offences – except that our scheme would encourage competence as a means of prevention – i.e. helping to ensure that driving offences do not occur.

We noted with interest the Labour Party suggestion of offering the subsidised use of public transport to young people who might find the cost of driving (particularly insurance) too high. There might be a more pressing case for offering a choice of assistance with obtaining car insurance, particularly in remoter areas that do not have good public transport.

Some possibilities might be seeking sponsorship from companies who sell goods of interest to the younger generation (relieving pressure on public funds), or getting in return a commitment from those who might benefit to give something back to society by helping others in return.

As a further incentive towards good behaviour, eligibility might be restricted to those who had avoided criminal or anti-social behaviour for a qualifying period. Any subsequent offences of dangerous or inconsiderate driving, criminal or anti-social behaviour would see the benefit being withdrawn.

Improving Driver Proficiency

Probably the greatest benefits to road safety could be achieved with a fundamental review of driver training. While it is clearly necessary to ensure that new drivers have a competent grasp of car control, traffic laws and hazard awareness, it is instilling the right beliefs and attitudes, as described in Steve Haley's book 'Mind Driving' that will produce the greatest results (for more information: www.skilldriver.org/).

Self-control is even more important in a driver than car control. It will only exist if drivers have been given the right kind of training, preferably from an early age. The Under-17 Car Club, which has been providing pre-driver training to youngsters for over 35 years, has a proven track record of producing new drivers with much lower accident and conviction rates than those who take conventional driving lessons from the age of 17. The independent report on the club's effectiveness (see page 2) is very impressive.

Ways should be sought to roll out this kind of training nationally. There may be other benefits to society in involving young people in an activity which is challenging, as this can alleviate the boredom that might otherwise lead to frustration and anti-social behaviour. Something which gives them a sense of responsibility and useful skills, and which helps them to consider the needs of others, is a worthwhile investment.

Driver training should be placed on the national curriculum. We feel that every town should have at least one practice track. In many cases, a school playground and playing field could be adapted to provide simulated road conditions. End-of-life vehicles could be used, restored by school engineering workshops to give pupils practice and insight into vehicle mechanics. This would also help reduce the skills shortage in engineering trades.

Better driving standards will see a boost to reduced accident figures. In view of the costs estimated against accidents, investment in prevention can deliver real value.

Increased proficiency will lead to lower insurance claims as accidents are reduced, with perhaps the largest benefit to new and younger drivers who face exorbitant premiums.

New drivers should be encouraged to take an advanced level test, such as the 'Pass Plus' scheme, within 18 months of their initial test pass.

'P' plates should be compulsory for a year after passing a basic test, or until an advanced level test is passed.

We are opposed to a system of graduated licences for newly-qualified drivers. Apart from being bureaucratic, this would deny drivers experience that will develop their confidence and put them in good stead. A better approach would be to keep the current system with the responsibility that brings, but to encourage proficiency through training and practice.

Every driver should have the opportunity to have their driving assessed by a professional observer free of charge. This should be encouraged on a five yearly basis.

Training courses should be given to those whose lack of driving skills has been shown to have contributed to accidents. Police officers should be given powers to send any driver they judge to be severely lacking in necessary skills on a training course.

Training courses should be offered as an alternative to penalty points for some offences. However, any courses offered as alternatives to penalty points must consist of proper hazard awareness and anticipation training, and must not be just lectures on the importance of keeping to speed limits.

For existing drivers with poor accident records or convictions for serious driving offences, remedial course along the lines of the 'Mind Driving' approach are likely to be more effective than current speed awareness courses, which are in any event only offered to drivers guilty of minor technical offences that may cause little or no danger. There are signs that some police forces are using speed awareness courses as a way of replacing the income lost to camera partnerships as a result of government cuts. This is unacceptable, and these courses should be replaced with ones that aim to retrain the drivers who pose the most serious risk.

Ownership of Roads

We are in favour of roads remaining in public ownership. They should be seen as a national asset held in trust by government for future generations, with investment substantially being paid in advance by drivers.

Road User Charging (aka Congestion Charging, Road Pricing, Tolling; Workplace Parking Levy)

The road system should be funded from motoring taxes - around £50 billion paid each year – drivers have paid for road use several times over, even before previous years' contributions are taken into consideration.

We applaud the decision to rule out national road pricing or preparation for same in the 2010 Conservative Party manifesto. There has been a massive lack of support for road pricing wherever the public has been asked - the 1999 national road pricing consultation, and the subsequent consultations/referendums in Edinburgh, Manchester; and on the West London extension of the Congestion Charge. (Noting that the original London proposal was rolled into a far wider transport strategy, but that the final consultation in 2001 recorded opposition at 44%-37%, even allowing for the latter percentage being swelled by 'invited groups').

All levels of government should recognise the deep lack of public acceptability. Therefore all tolling schemes on public roads, either current or planned, should be scrapped.

We feel that the Nottingham Workplace Parking levy is discriminatory in that private sector employees are liable to pay a levy (if their employers cannot absorb the cost) while council employees are exempt. In the interest of fair and equal treatment, this tax on going to work should not apply to anyone.

The London Congestion Charge should be wound down as soon as the current contract with IBM allows; details have not been disclosed because of commercial secrecy. It should not be assumed that traffic levels would shoot up – there has been a long term trend towards less vehicles entering central London, even before the charge was introduced.

The charge cannot be considered a success; congestion duly returned to pre-charge levels. The charge failed to live up to the first Mayor's revenue projections, and resulted in a high proportion of its income going to the public service outsourcing company, Capita. The charge was designed to be difficult to pay; much of the income came from penalties, and paying drivers were treated to poor service by the 'customer service centre'. There were also a number of verified injustices, such as drivers being levied the charge outside chargeable times, and even outside the charging area.

We are disappointed at the government decision not to end the Dartford crossing tolls. The crossing was built on the understanding that tolls would only continue until its construction had been paid off. The result is needless congestion as drivers, who already pay heavily to use the roads, queue to pay tolls.

We do not support the government's plans to introduce a UK-wide Lorry Road User Charge (LRUC) after 2014; as, in the context of EU rules, this will have a negative cost impact on 6% of British hauliers and lead to extra bureaucracy in getting a rebate on Vehicle Excise Duty for the others. In our view, the charge is likely to raise the price of transported goods to consumers, increase inflation (with a knock on effect to public transport fares) and job losses in a hard-pressed industry. As Shadow Roads Minister in 2008, Stephen Hammond MP (now a minister) observed that too many family haulage firms were falling by the wayside.

Instead the government should investigate if it would be more productive to reduce fuel duty for all hauliers, encouraging foreign hauliers to fill up in the UK, or ideally introduce a 'Brit Disc' vignette for foreign lorries.

We also oppose 'spy-in-the-sky' based tolling (such as based on GPS satellites) on civil liberties grounds, as it would involve an unprecedented tracking and recording of private journeys. Building such a database will increase the chances of data loss, disclosure or sale, and the possibilities for identity theft.

We view the financially-challenged Galileo project (ESA-EU) as unnecessarily duplicating satellite technology which will be available elsewhere, and feel that scarce public funds should not be used to prop up the venture. More generally, any such road pricing system would have high set-up and operating costs, which drivers would have to cover, especially if third-party profit margins have to be factored in.

We note that when the consultancy WSP reviewed DFT's Urban Congestion Programme (UCP), it found that local authorities had systematically over-estimated urban traffic growth, and that traffic levels had, in fact, decreased in most urban areas. It also found that most traffic road models had been developed on the assumption of increasing road capacity, and had not factored in (actual) decreases in capacity.

We would also question national travel models that forecast increases in congestion on account of large population increases. We have doubts as to whether the population increases would be sustainable due to scarcity of infrastructure (e.g. supplies of electricity and water) and note that some commentators, such as Christian Wolmar, Professors Chris Nash and David Metz, see a trend for travel demand to saturate.

We would caution against forecasting gridlock and planning drastic action in response to it, partly for these reasons, and partly as road space has been systematically reduced on a number of pretexts. We encourage targeted measures to address current bottlenecks, such as reversing gratuitous restrictions on road capacity, better travel planning and real-time information for drivers, improved co-ordination of road freight and stricter control of roadworks.

Fuel Taxation and Vehicle Excise Duty

It is our long-term aspiration that fuel taxes should be reduced towards the amount needed to maintain, improve and police the road system – just as local authorities have a statutory duty to set parking charges at a level necessary to provide parking facilities. However, we realise that a phased transition over a decade or more may be required to maintain stability of national finances and bring many roads back up to an acceptable standard after years of under-investment.

VED is relatively costly to collect and we feel that it should be abolished, with its contribution factored into fuel duty in a revenue-neutral way.

Road Building

We believe a properly designed and constructed road network must be developed to meet the needs of the 21st century and ensure the economic prosperity and competitiveness needed for the UK to fund improvements in our schools, health, police and other public services.

Given the strategic nature of the road system, we feel that the Highways Agency should be publicly-owned, but properly funded and accountable for improving overall traffic flow on the road network. It should co-ordinate the development of A-roads, and work with local authorities on lower classified approach roads.

We feel that completion of the motorway and trunk road system should be a priority. Motorways allow traffic to flow at a steady, uninterrupted speed, and they are statistically the UK's safest roads.

A study by the University of Surrey on the environmental impact of the Newbury Bypass, which showed that it has actually protected the environment, coupled to the large excess of motoring tax revenue over transport expenditure, shows that there is no excuse whatsoever for limiting road building on environmental grounds. With careful design and construction, including modern tunneling techniques, bypasses and other roads urgently needed to improve the country's transport infrastructure can also benefit the environment and should be built without further delay.

Investment in road improvements/new roads with proper coach service provision is almost invariably far more cost effective than building new railways outside of major cities, and is often more cost effective and efficient than maintaining existing rail routes. This should take priority where shown to be the case.

So that the value of road investment can be appreciated, we would like to see an open and honest independent investigation into the benefits of rail subsidies compared to the equivalent amount spent on roads.

All new motorways and dual carriageways should be 'future-proofed' - built with enough lanes to meet current and projected traffic levels. Infrastructure should allow for extra lanes to be easily added in future.

Best quality surfaces should always be used; porous tarmac which dramatically reduces spray and noise should be standard practice for all new and maintenance work on motorways, whilst high grip surfaces should be used on all bends and near junctions.

All motorways carrying heavy traffic should be lit by high quality lighting in the interests of safety.

Provision of Parking

In the Parliamentary debate on 17 January 2012, Grant Shapps MP (then a local government minister, now Chairman of the Conservative Party) admitted that parking had been the number one concern raised by MPs.

There should be a statutory obligation for local authorities to provide adequate parking to satisfy demand either free or at reasonable cost. Authorities should have the discretion to enable communities to make use of unoccupied or under-used land where it might otherwise be wasted.

Demand may, of course, be reduced by providing attractive alternative means of transportation, but the public should be able to use them as a matter of choice, and not through coercion.

Planning requirements for all new developments should factor in adequate parking.

In areas where parking space is scarce, we propose consideration of providing underground parking facilities, as found elsewhere in Europe.

All on-street parking charges for motorcycles should be abolished.

On-street parking should be allowed except where there are genuine safety reasons for preventing parking; or where Controlled Parking Zones can reasonably be justified; for instance, where residents would otherwise be unable to park because of commuter or shopper parking, and would support their introduction. However restrictions must not be used to force drivers into expensive car parks.

We reject emissions-based parking charges, noting that parked vehicles typically have zero emissions. We also note that such measures do not enjoy public support. We note that strong public opposition to these charges in the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames was followed by 'regime change' in the 2010 council elections, and the new council voted to end the charges.

Road Maintenance and Signage

When finances are tight, priority should be given to keeping existing road capacity fit for purpose, and doing this cost-effectively. We feel that recent funding of pothole repairs, at around £3.2 billion over 4 years [for England] is inadequate, and that deterioration will make the problem costlier to fix in the long term.

Outside London, a road gets resurfaced on average once every 79 years; and the approach for dealing with potholes is often a 'sticking plaster approach' whereas proper reinstatement should be encouraged, both to provide safe surfaces and to prevent deterioration.

Highways authorities and their contractors have a legal obligation to maintain roads to a proper standard, including the road surface and road markings. Where there will be benefit in extending efforts to reducing and clearing a backlog of repairs, a highways authority should be given either a grant, an interest-free loan or a low-interest loan from central government. Encouraging a 'stitch in time that saves nine' will make best use of public funds and will also provide valuable job creation.

As with road building, we feel that a Highways Agency should become the overriding authority on the road network (at least in England), and it should co-ordinate the maintenance of strategic A-roads, working with local authorities to achieve economies of scale and keep disruption manageable on the wider road network.

Highways authorities should also trim overgrowing foliage on bends and at junctions to ensure vital sightlines are maintained. They should also prevent road signs from being obscured.

In some locations, signage levels can be excessive. Drivers are forced to struggle with competing messages and may either miss some which are crucial to road safety, or have to compromise their concentration on wider road conditions. We feel that a scientific investigation into the effects of 'signage overload' on driver hazard perception is required, and signage should be kept to the minimum level necessary for the conditions.

Co-ordination of Roadworks

We support the permit system used by an increasing number of local authorities, as it allows work to be scheduled and road users to plan journeys around disruption. Safeguards are needed so that this does not become bureaucratic, and it should seek to cover authority costs rather than penalise contractors (and any consumers who have costs passed on).

There should be incentives for contractors to carry out the work outside peak hours of road use, such as lane rental charges being lowered or waived. Contractors should be encouraged to plate over roadworks to minimise disruption to highways. Penalty charges should be applied where contractors over-run without proper attempts to mitigate delays.

We favour greater co-operation and synergy between different contractors to minimise collective disruption and to identify preventative measures and economies of scale. (cf. a recent National Joint Utilities Group initiative).

Contractors should be bound by criteria regarding the maximum length of carriageway that can be subjected to coning and reduced limits at any one time. Temporary speed limits at roadworks must be removed when workers are not present (except where road condition or reduced lane width dictates that the limit be retained at all times during the presence of the roadworks).

Integrated Transport

We want everyone to have the freedom to choose the most appropriate form of transport for each journey. We believe that increasing the usage of public transport is best achieved by enhancing the standard of provision, not by penalising car use.

We seek genuine integrated transport policies which recognise that the use of private vehicles is an essential part of the transport mix; for instance, providing enough free or reasonably-priced parking near to stations.

Central and Local Government Consultation Exercises

These should be undertaken and managed impartially – i.e. independently of any organisation with a vested interest in the outcome.

Environmental and Energy Considerations

Martin Horwood MP sponsored a meeting on energy supplies at the House of Commons on 22 June 2011. Here, the Executive Director of the UK Energy Research Centre, John Loughhead, expressed the view that 50 years' worth of economically exploitable oil reserves was available to the world. We note that this had increased from 30 years' worth of reserves calculated in 1980.

We are aware of widespread potential sources of oil, so, unlike some of the 'peak oil' theorists, do not believe that government action is needed to steer consumers towards electrical vehicles (EVs). We note the increases in fuel economy being delivered by manufacturers of petrol/diesel vehicles, and feel that there are better uses for the £5,000 subsidies being offered, and decisions on choice of vehicle should be left to consumers and the marketplace.

In particular, we note that the UK is likely to lose up to one-third of its current electricity generating capability under the Large Combustion Plant Directive, without clear and timely plans to replace it. The Head of National Grid, Steve Holliday, has warned of the likelihood of power cuts. Power cuts will most likely be an issue for the next Parliament, and could be an issue for the current, if generators use up their permitted hours of operation earlier than c. 2015.

We also have reservations about the range of EVs, particularly when their batteries are drained by the operation of heating and air-conditioning; or in coping with hills. There are doubts on the availability of lithium, used in EV batteries, on a global scale; the cost of the batteries, and the practicalities of swapping in charged batteries.

We favour an objective, evidence-based approach in evaluating technical issues. There have recently been politically-motivated calls to reduce the number of cars on the road to provide relief for asthma sufferers. In 1995, when emissions standards were far lower, the Chief Medical Officer, Sir Kenneth Calman, stated that there was no correlation between vehicle emissions and asthma. (Scientists have noted that other countries known for clean air, like New Zealand, have higher asthma rates than the UK; whereas some East European countries with lower vehicle standards had recorded lower rates. In the UK, asthma may be linked to household dust mites).

Similarly, the climate debate has seen its own politicisation; climate scientists have disowned reports that have been doctored, or criticised the cherry-picking of measurements. In a famous case, the 'Hockey Stick' graph was programmed to give the same temperature increases regardless of what input data was supplied.

We have since seen the 'Climategate' scandal at UEA and rising public disquiet at large surcharges on domestic energy bills. Little wonder that there is growing public skepticism. In 2007, a 'Millennium' public survey for DEFRA recorded 84% as rejecting 'green taxes' as primarily there to make money out of them. A MORI study found that although most of the public surveyed were familiar with the government's official position on 'climate change', only 11% felt any need to take personal action.

The skepticism over 'global warming' can be most intense in those who object to the irrationality of 'emissions trading' which has imposed costs on institutions (such as in the NHS) who have been forced to buy emission permits.

A BBC weather website admits that even the most experienced forecasters find it difficult to predict weather more than a few days ahead. Weather and climate depend on complex factors, and the debate is far from closed to those with scientific and enquiring minds.

A downside of preoccupation with 'global warming' is that the authorities were unprepared for the severity of the 2009/10 winter, and the Mayor of London's transport strategy proposals at that time offered no specific measures to help keep transport running in harder winters.

Substantial research points to a period of planetary cooling. Although there may have been good intentions behind the Climate Change Act, 2008, a review of out-turn in 2013 may well see unexpected results, and even cause embarrassment. We feel that 'man made global warming' is not proven, whereas longer term trends point to carbon dioxide changes lagging behind temperature changes, not the other way around.

The amount of carbon dioxide produced by burning fossil fuels amounts to less than 4% of the annual emissions from all sources, and it has been projected that if every car and van in the UK was removed from use, it would take China just two weeks to make up for the reduction in emissions.

We feel that there is no case for sweeping 'decarbonisation', which will lead to the transfer of production abroad and the loss of UK jobs. We note Tata's announced loss of steelworks jobs in Scunthorpe and Teesside on account of European emissions legislation that threatens to impose huge additional costs. We also note the steps taken by Chancellor Merkel to try to safeguard Germany's motor industry, and urge any future UK government not to sacrifice Britain's any further.

Similarly, there is no justification for taxation on car ownership and use based on carbon dioxide emissions. Taxation of company cars and private fuel should be based on a fair assessment of the real value of the benefit provided.

We fully support measures to conserve energy, such as turning off unnecessary traffic lights and speed cameras. Some years ago, we proposed the adoption of more efficient traffic light technology (based on gallium arsenide) that would save the output of one power station.

We also support measures to more quickly remove abandoned vehicles as they can prove a safety hazard as well as a blight on the environment. However removed vehicles should have safeguards against crushing (which is irreversible), as procedural errors have led to large compensation payouts.

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