

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
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Dear Secretary of State

Parking and moving traffic offences – From deterrence to fines harvest

Over the past 10 years, the enforcement of parking and moving traffic offences has evolved. What used to be an emphasis on information and deterrence has turned into what we've described in response to two recent bus lane investigations – Preston and Newcastle – as a trap. Drivers are effectively being harvested for fines.

- ANPR cameras and other technology is being deployed to maximise the opportunities for issuing penalty charge notices (PCNs).
- Simple ticket machines are being replaced with complicated keyboards that catch out the elderly and people in a rush.
- Controlled parking zones, intended to protect residents from selfish outsiders, continue to wring money out of those residents on environmental grounds – despite car engines being switched off and Commons evidence that such charges are a tax.
- Some councils cancel up to 95% of PCNs challenged and nearly 30% of parking, bus lane and moving traffic offences appealed to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal are not even contested by councils.
- DVLA reportedly provides 19,000 vehicle keeper details a day to private parking enforcement companies who, unlike councils, can issue thousands of fines at one location without question or fear of scrutiny.
- 60% of our members who received a parking penalty, 77% caught in a bus lane and 58% in a box junction had no idea they had committed an offence until the PCN arrived.
- In London, more than half of AA members have had a council parking ticket, at least a quarter have had a bus lane ticket and more than a fifth have been caught in a yellow box junction.
- If Transport for London gets its way, the fine for a bus lane or box junction offence will soon rise to £160 (£80 if paid within 14 days).

It's little wonder, then, that many AA members feel that they are being hunted for their cash, trapped by poor signage and road layout, tagged by their number plates, and constantly under threat of a fine.

The AA believes that it is time for the balance of deterrence and enforcement to be restored, accountability to be reinforced, and an end to the 'trap' culture.

Grievances frequently raised by AA members:

- Bus lanes – first-time visitors, such as hospital out-patients, are particularly vulnerable where warning signs are inadequate or hidden by lorries and other high-sided traffic.
- Yellow box junctions – 'You MUST NOT enter until your exit is clear' is clear enough but if a single junction is generating millions of pounds in fines, such as Bagley's Lane in Fulham, there must be something wrong with the layout, rather than with the majority of the drivers affected.
- PCN fishing – when councils are refunding so many parking tickets even before they get referred to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal, and more than 55% of appeals that do go to tribunal are successful, the issuing of PCNs starts to look like a fishing exercise in the hope that busy drivers and the less well-off will just pay up regardless.
- Private parking honeypots –private parking firms can issue thousands of penalty charge demands at a single location without question or fear of scrutiny. No scrutiny means no pressure to rectify bad design or poor signage
- Trial by technology – drivers, particularly the elderly and those who might need reading glasses, don't want to be confronted with small keyboards to input their registration numbers or phone-based payment systems that can be complicated and load charge on top of charge. Make a mistake with either and it's a fine.
- Residents parking – CO2-related parking permit charges mean that parking outside your home in some cities can still cost hundreds of pounds more if you have a large family car, and in some areas still incentivise diesel car ownership. The truth, as evidenced in a 2009 Commons' Transport Committee report, is that these CO2-related parking charges are a tax and should be scrapped.

To help restore that balance between deterrence and enforcement, the AA proposes what we believe to be reasonable solutions:

1. First time bus lane offenders should be sent a warning letter rather than a penalty notice.
2. First time yellow-box junction offenders should be sent a warning letter rather than a penalty notice.
3. It should be a condition of automated enforcement (e.g. by camera) that councils publish data – number of tickets by location, monthly.
4. The number of private parking company requests for Vehicle keeper data from DVLA should be reported by location, monthly.
5. There should be a limit on the number of tickets issued at any single location, above which enforcement activity must be suspended pending a review of the scheme's design.
6. There should be compensation – perhaps to the value of the PCN – for drivers who win their appeals or where councils simply fail to contest them.
7. Parking tickets that still have time on them should be transferable.
8. CO2-related residents parking permit charges should be scrapped, with permit charges based only on set-up, administration and enforcement costs.

I hope that your department and the Government can look to restore balance and fairness to the deterrence and enforcement of parking, bus lane and box junction offences.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



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