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Diesel drivers unfairly penalised...

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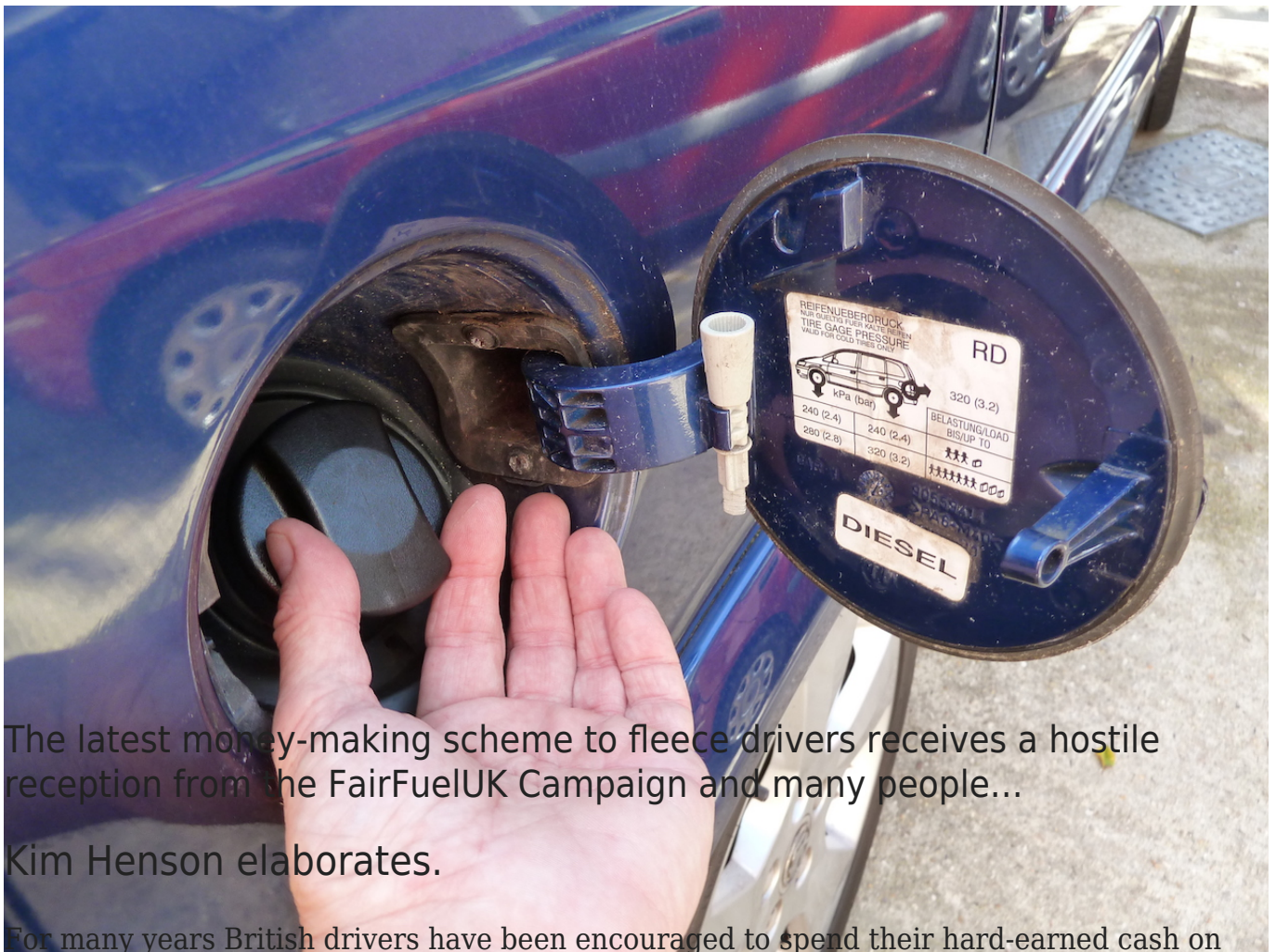
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The latest money-making scheme to fleece drivers receives a hostile reception from the FairFuelUK Campaign and many people...

Kim Henson elaborates.

For many years British drivers have been encouraged to spend their hard-earned cash on diesel-powered vehicles, being told that they were 'Cleaner, greener, more economical, etc, etc...' As a result, many buyers have done just that, with many thinking that by so doing they were doing their bit for the environment in which we live, as well as saving fossil-derived fuel (and cash, as less of it is consumed by a typical diesel motor than a petrol-powered unit).



Now, primarily in response to quite understandable concerns about the adverse effects health-wise of airborne pollution in urban environments (in particular) the advice is being reversed and – in a move seen by very many as unfair – drivers of the diesel vehicles that they were advised to buy are being made to feel that they are the ‘bad guys’. As has happened so often in the past in Britain, when it comes to environmental issues and motorists, rapid and rash decisions are being made in attempt to be seen to be ‘green’, without first taking into account the full facts (rather than hearsay) and implications.

Cynics might say that in the case of diesel vehicles (and cars in particular) an often-poorly-informed bandwagon has been set rolling and onto it are jumping various groups, councils and other organisations, frequently with the express purpose of making money from motorists, but under an ‘environmental’ conscience card smoke screen.

Let’s be clear... Of course there are legitimate concerns about the environmental effects of burning fossil-based fuels, and responsible passenger car drivers (many of whom are, of course, also pedestrians and, at times, cyclists) are keen to minimise the effect of their motoring in terms of emissions, including particulates produced by burning diesel fuel. However, extreme suggestions that have been bandied about, such as, for example, scrapping all diesel passenger cars ‘at once’, and banning the production of diesel engines forthwith, are widely viewed by more informed commentators as nonsensical and grossly unfair, both to motorists who had been persuaded to ‘go diesel’ in the first place, and to motor manufacturers working very hard and investing heavily in recent years to produce cleaner-burning engines.

Regardless of other considerations, a move such as requiring drivers of diesel vehicles to scrap them regardless would especially hurt and disadvantage those least likely to be able to afford a replacement vehicle with an alternative power source, be that petrol, electricity or anything else. In addition, what about the environmental impact of scrapping, ahead of their time, millions of perfectly serviceable diesel vehicles, and using up additional precious resources to build the alternatively-powered vehicles required to replace them? There’s another thing... In view of the relatively short service life of modern cars generally, many of



the 'borderline condition' diesel vehicles will disappear anyway within a very short time, by 'natural wastage', as even minor repairs to recent models can cost far more than the vehicle is worth in financial terms...

There are many other aspects to consider too, including the fact that a large proportion of diesel pollution in towns and cities is produced by commercial and public transport vehicles, rather than passenger cars.

What is needed is a full and careful consideration of ALL the relevant factors so that a more appropriate approach can be adopted, to arrive at a sensible solution. This has not yet happened...

There is much concern too that the 'bandwagon' effect referred to above is being used primarily to extract yet more cash from unsuspecting motorists who have no means of resisting. One example has been highlighted by the FairFuel UK Campaign, which exists to help ensure fairness for British motorists...

In response to the news that diesel drivers will be charged an extra 50% by Westminster City Council to park in this central London area, ostensibly in a bid to cut air pollution, the Fairfuel UK Campaign has issued a press release to bring attention to this blatant money-making policy. Their release includes two crucial quotes...

Charlie Elphicke MP, Chair of the Fair Fuel APPG ('All Party Parliamentary Group') said, "Charging diesel car owners up to 50% more to park is opportunistic greed. These cars are legally on our roads. If action is decided on diesels it needs to be done nationally, with a fair replacement scheme."

Howard Cox, founder of the FairFuelUK campaign said: "The decision by Westminster Council to add 50% to the cost of parking diesel vehicles is just greedy unscrupulous money grabbing using dubious emissions evidence as the reason to fleece hard working motorists. FairFuelUK has been calling for a grown-up debate regarding incentivising older diesel vehicles to change to cleaner fuels for the last 7 years. Instead we are seeing more and



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more, short sighted selfish local authorities looking at penalising diesel drivers with punitive taxation, congestion fees and now by hiking parking charges. Diesel drivers already pay more at the pumps to fill up than petrol. Other nations subsidise diesel with lower duty levels compared with petrol.”

For more information about FairFuelUK, please go to: <http://www.fairfueluk.com/>