



The UK government aims to help hard-(op)pressed drivers...

Published: October 4, 2023

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/the-uk-government-aims-to-help-hard-oppressed-drivers/>



A blanket 20 mph urban speed limit now applies in Wales, but England may not follow this lead, and other restrictions on motoring are being reviewed by the UK government.
Photograph by, and copyright, Robin Roberts (WheelsWithinWales).

Government announces new long-term plans to support drivers – and put the brakes on anti-car measures – by Dave Moss

In a joint statement Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Transport Secretary Mark Harper have recently set out plans intended to help protect drivers from over-zealous traffic enforcement, which is said to be part of long-term government plans to “back drivers”.



With 50 million people holding a driving licence in Great Britain and over 40 million vehicles on UK roads, the government's new plan is aimed at supporting the majority who drive by keeping motoring costs under control, and ensuring people have the freedom to drive as they need to in their daily lives.

Amongst the measures announced is one which is likely to be controversial – given the very recent introduction of a blanket urban 20 mph limit in Wales – it's a review of guidance on 20 mph speed limits in England, with the intention of preventing their blanket use in areas where it's not appropriate.

Attached to this is the possibility of amending guidance on low traffic neighbourhoods, to put a new stronger focus on local consent as part of the current ongoing review into such areas. There's to be an emphasis on considering existing measures against what are described as "existing anti-driver policies that did not secure local consent." The plans also aim to stop councils implementing what have been called '15-minute cities', by consulting on ways to prevent schemes which "aggressively restrict where people can drive".

Measures to improve the current inconsistent patchwork arrangements for parking payments are also on the cards. Drivers across the country will soon be able to benefit from new technology to simplify such payments via a "national parking platform". Pilot testing of such a system is to be rolled out nationwide, so that drivers can use an app of their choice to pay for parking – instead of the current situation which requires downloading multiple apps for different schemes and areas.

In a continuing drive to tackle the ever-growing problem of potholes, the government says it will be supporting councils in the introduction of more "lane rental" schemes, where utility companies are required to make payments in order to dig up the busiest roads at peak times. Under the proposals, at least half of the extra money raised from these fees will now go directly towards repairing road surfaces. In a further clamp down on street works which over-run, the government is to consult on extending fines for repairs which run into weekends.



Announcing the raft of new measures Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said: “For too long politicians have focused on the short-term decisions with little regard for the long term impact on hardworking families. We’ve seen this consistently with people’s freedoms on transport. The clamp down on drivers is an attack on the day to day lives of most people across the UK, who rely on cars to get to work or see their families. This week the UK government will set out a long-term plan to back drivers, slamming the brakes on anti-car measures across England. We are taking the necessary decision to back the motorists who keep our country moving”.

Transport Secretary Mark Harper added: “Too often the private car is vilified when it has been one of the most powerful forces for personal freedom and economic growth. That’s why the government is taking the long-term, necessary decision to back motorists. We’re introducing a plan to ensure drivers can enjoy smoother journeys, park more easily, and no longer face unfair and oppressive traffic enforcement measures. Our plan will sit alongside our continued investment in public transport and active travel, as part of a package of measures designed to help people travel in the best way that works for them.

Among other measures announced was the launch of a call for evidence on options to restrict the ability of local authorities to generate revenue surpluses from traffic offences and over-zealous traffic enforcement, amongst them charges for stopping in yellow-box junctions.

To make life easier for drivers and improve traffic flow, the Department for Transport will strengthen guidance to make sure bus lanes only operate when necessary - alongside a consultation on motorcycles using bus lanes. Further measures and the overall plan will be published in full shortly.

The announcements come following the Prime Minister’s recently announced new approach to net zero, which committed to ending the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2035, five years later than originally planned, while supporting people who rely on their cars in their daily lives.



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A key part of the new long-term Government plan to back drivers is intended to protect those who rely on their cars from anti-driver policies.