



**People for Proper Policing in North Wales**

## Road Pricing: Money for nothing

- \* **Road pricing can only reduce congestion if it 'prices the poor off the roads'**. Any imaginable system of road pricing would be very highly regressive and have its largest impacts on the low-paid.
- \* **Road pricing requires massive infrastructure, including the biggest IT project ever.** Issuing and collecting over 30 million monthly bills will be extremely costly. In short road pricing itself is extremely expensive. The likely annual running cost is in excess of £4 billion. £4 billion is about half the sum that we are spending annually on the entire road network.
- \* **Congestion is mainly the consequence of economic activity. This economic activity is highly desirable** and pays for many things including our schools and hospitals. Proper transport policy should seek to maximise economic activity rather than minimise congestion. They are not the same thing.
- \* The government case does not properly allow for the self regulating properties of congestion. **Business already works hard to avoid congestion because it costs money, the rest of us work hard to avoid it because we value our time.** The road-space market is already extremely well regulated by travel time. Adding 'special costs' in a road pricing scheme changes the balances, but does not eliminate congestion. Travel time will remain the primary regulator.
- \* **Once the poor have been priced off the roads, the better off will soon take full advantage of improved travelling conditions, tending to restore the congestion balance.**
- \* The threats of future gridlock are false. Who would be stupid enough to sit in gridlock going nowhere day after day? If traffic got that bad, people would find alternatives, which of course reduces the traffic to a level that people find acceptable.
- \* **We are facing congestion difficulties mainly because of decades of underinvestment** by successive governments. This government appears to wish to use road pricing as an excuse for another decade of underinvestment.
- \* The green arguments simply won't wash. If we need a road transport 'carbon tax', then fuel duty is literally perfect, because each litre of fuel burns to give a precise and equal quantity of atmospheric carbon. Road pricing would cause folk to seek longer but cheaper routes, the opposite of the desired 'green' effect.
- \* There are far better alternative methods for managing traffic growth.
- \* There is only limited truth in the idea that 'new roads quickly fill up with cars'. A 6 lane motorway built along the west coast of Scotland would not fill up in the foreseeable future. Roads only fill up with cars when there is 'latent demand'.
- **Private motor transport is the leading form of transport throughout the modern world.** It is heavily taxed, while alternative public transport systems are heavily subsidised.

There's nothing wrong with that but it is essential that government recognises that a) Private motor transport is highly cost-efficient, and b) it's the most desired form of transport in all of the world's leading economies.

**\* It will be difficult or impossible to avoid transferring traffic to less safe routes.**

\* "You can't build your way out of congestion" isn't exactly a lie, but it's an extremely poor excuse for under-investment. Congestion is a sign of successful economic activity. When building more roads encourages more economic activity that is very likely to be a good thing for society as a whole. We need to measure and manage the economic activity before we worry about the congestion. Congestion largely looks after itself.

\* They claim that 'people in rural areas will pay less under a roads pricing regime, and it is likely true that there would be 'winners' on immediate transport costs. But the hugely expensive system would have to be built, operated and paid for. This means that on average we will be paying much more because of the cost of the system.

**\* A national system of road pricing would encourage a massive range of evasion and frauds.** Quite simply, many people would consider that they were better off outside the system and find all sorts of subtle and creative ways to avoid, evade and defraud the system. This would add considerably to the costs both through direct revenue losses and through high costs of enforcement.

\* We are not reassured by government claims that privacy would be safeguarded. It would be hard to persuade people that non-itemised bills were correct, yet an itemised bill is in itself a major invasion of privacy.

\* Managing non-payment is difficult and worrying. What sanctions would be applied to those who cannot or will not pay?

**\* The protesters and objectors couldn't be more right. The government wants to waste countless billions of our money on impossible dreams.**

Commenting on the findings, Paul Smith, founder of the Safe Speed road safety campaign said: "The pro con balance sheet of road pricing proposals is all con and no pro. There's nothing in the proposals which could possibly justify the massive expense. It will price the poor off the roads yet only have a limited effect on traffic growth. The central flaw has been to ignore the fact that all of us are already doing what we can to avoid congestion."

"The people can see the fantastic folly - why can't the government? Is it because it's not their money they are proposing to spend? Or is it because they are not the poor people who would be worst affected?"

**"Road pricing is a grand political design that would cost unimaginable billions and deliver next to nothing - except misery and perhaps 'toll tax' riots."**