



Issue 14 – November 2016

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Using handheld mobile phones at the wheel – time to enforce the law

In September, the RAC launched its annual Report on Motoring (full report [here](#)). The report attracted prominent national coverage with our data showing the prevalence of handheld mobile phone use at the wheel.

The Government has announced its intention to increase the penalties to 6 points and a £200 fine, which will mean novice drivers face having their licences revoked if caught.

The RAC, however, believes that deterrent is only part of the solution. To support this, there must also be effective enforcement of the law and a high profile public awareness campaign to highlight the dangers of the use of handheld mobile phones. The Home Office data below reveals that forces are now handing out far fewer Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) than they did in 2011.



Some forces are now focusing on sending offenders on driving awareness courses instead, though we have little evidence as to whether these are changing driver behaviour. However, it will no longer be possible to avoid a fine and points by attending such courses after the introduction of the new penalties. The RAC Report on Motoring also demonstrated that the prevalence of handheld mobile phone use has increased significantly in the last two years.

Fixed Penalty Notices for using a handheld mobile phone while driving						
Force	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change 2014-15
Avon and Somerset	1,601	1,278	1,006	680	276	-59%
Bedfordshire	1,196	1,154	598	86	99	15%
Cambridgeshire	2,132	2,164	2,431	344	341	-1%
Cheshire	3,472	3,115	1,409	200	236	18%
City of London	592	284	220	184	143	-22%
Cleveland	1,117	1,001	787	152	26	-83%
Cumbria	1,124	1,077	834	315	72	-77%

Derbyshire	1,320	630	115	95	64	-33%
Devon and Cornwall	2,197	2,282	618	141	145	3%
Dorset	1,040	721	452	356	310	-13%
Durham	879	582	568	70	46	-34%
Dyfed-Powys	2,108	1,896	1,833	469	67	-86%
Essex	6,046	4,546	2,464	510	759	49%
Gloucestershire	993	480	110	81	129	59%
Greater Manchester	5,200	6,038	648	230	303	32%
Gwent	1,905	1,115	550	358	109	-70%
Hampshire	1,290	945	570	603	610	1%
Hertfordshire	3,173	1,950	326	272	252	-7%
Humberside	1,464	893	226	129	160	24%
Kent	4,213	2,579	1,068	202	219	8%
Lancashire	5,251	2,620	336	170	144	-15%
Leicestershire	1,336	1,107	531	143	93	-35%
Lincolnshire	1,537	887	239	205	152	-26%
Merseyside	5,005	3,994	431	365	290	-21%
Metropolitan Police	24,627	20,679	20,084	15,662	6,416	-59%
Norfolk	1,750	1,244	799	456	299	-34%
North Wales	1,270	1,522	1,350	311	161	-48%
North Yorkshire	2,017	1,436	964	656	297	-55%
Northamptonshire	1,348	629	104	92	52	-43%
Northumbria	1,611	1,273	1,162	693	215	-69%
Nottinghamshire	2,049	1,695	466	590	297	-50%
South Wales	3,020	1,847	1,099	1,107	557	-50%
South Yorkshire	3,397	1,559	500	178	196	10%
Staffordshire	367	248	220	91	154	69%
Suffolk	548	521	509	468	96	-79%
Surrey	3,445	2,116	429	357	243	-32%
Sussex	4,647	4,140	702	174	223	28%
Thames Valley	1,061	1,004	1,270	1,124	1,314	17%
Warwickshire	873	843	231	75	93	24%
West Mercia	2,246	120	361	288	291	1%
West Midlands	5,790	3,334	1,175	142	197	39%
West Yorkshire	5,071	3,850	1,205	215	303	41%
Wiltshire	1,809	1,267	1,364	710	412	-42%
TOTAL (ENG & WALES)	123,137	92,665	52,364	29,749	16,861	
YEAR ON YEAR CHANGE		-25%	-44%	-43%	-43%	

Following our highlighting of these statistics, the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) announced forces would use the week commencing 14th November for a week-long crackdown on phone use.

RAC Report on Motoring 2016 – reasons motorists admit to using a handheld phone

- 23% say it was an emergency
- 21% say they needed information for their journey
- 12% say they were short of time
- 8% say they do it because everyone else does
- 7% say they do it because they can get away with it
- 12% do it because they are in the habit
- Another 7% say they do it because they didn't realise it was illegal.

Calls to action

- 1 Better enforcement:** Our findings suggest a number of motorists feel they can break motoring laws because they will not be caught. There has been a 27% drop in full-time road traffic police officers (excluding London) since 2010. We urge the Government and police authorities to halt the decline in dedicated road traffic police officers and recognise that the problem will only get worse unless laws are seen to be enforced.
- 2 Public awareness campaign:** The Government has committed to a THINK! campaign to highlight the issue, which is welcome. Going forward, we would like to see the same priority attached to campaigning on the use of handheld mobile phones as has been given to drink-driving, so that use of handheld phones is seen as equally socially unacceptable as drink-driving and awareness of the dangers of handheld phone use at the wheel is raised, particularly amongst younger drivers who appear more likely to use their handheld devices whilst driving.

In defence of diesel

Owners of diesel vehicles are often deemed to be part of the problem when it comes to poor air quality; however motorists, including owners of diesel vehicles, are not opposed to measures targeting the most polluting vehicles to address air quality.

In research for the 2016 RAC Report on Motoring, we found motorists to be open to the idea of restrictions or charges for entering areas with the poorest air quality. There is, however, little appetite for blanket measures applied to all diesel vehicles.

Headline findings on motorist attitudes towards air quality are below:

- When asked on air quality, more than a third of motorists (34%) say they are worried about their local air quality, while 40% of drivers say they are more concerned about this issue now than 12 months ago
- 66% support action to cut vehicle pollution in areas with the poorest air quality
- 55% of motorists support the Clean Air Zones set to be introduced in a number of cities by the end of the decade
- Only 42% support the introduction of charges for all diesel vehicles entering areas with the poorest air quality



Diesel vehicles remain attractive to motorists and to businesses because they offer high fuel economy, and because their engine characteristics, which allow generation of high torque at low revs, make them particularly suited to movement of heavy loads or driving on rough terrain. Our research found that for 28% of motorists still intend to chose diesel when they next change their vehicle, which is unchanged from 2015 when we asked the same question.

RAC Calls to Action

- 1 Recognise the role new diesels can play:** While it has become clear that in real-world driving, diesel vehicles emit more nitrogen oxides than predicted, nevertheless, diesel vehicles compliant with the later Euro emissions standard emit only a tiny fraction of the nitrogen dioxide emitted by previous generations of diesels. New testing that will more closely replicate real-world driving is expected next year, but in the meantime we must avoid demonising all diesel vehicles as cleaner diesel vehicles have a role in both lowering nitrogen dioxide and particulate emissions and reducing the motoring sector's carbon footprint.
- 2 Phase out dirty buses and taxis:** Analysis shows that buses, taxis and HGVs are amongst the biggest contributors to nitrogen oxides and particulate emissions in our town and cities. We would therefore call upon the Government and local authorities to accelerate steps to retrofit or replace older buses so that hybrid electric and, longer term, hydrogen fuel cell powered buses become the norm. The contribution of buses to overall nitrogen dioxide levels is illustrated by the fact that during the January 2015 bus strike, pollution levels dropped significantly in some of the areas of central London with the worst air quality.
- 3 Incentivise take-up of low emissions vehicles:** Research by the RAC Foundation has shown that a diesel scrappage scheme would not only be expensive but may not be especially effective. The Government should consider implementing a Vehicle Excise Duty surcharge for the oldest, most polluting diesel vehicles, and use the revenue to expand the Plug-in grant scheme to the newest conventional vehicles with the lowest emissions.
- 4 Follow the Clean Air Zone Framework:** The Government's clean air zone framework will provide local authorities with a clear, consistent approach by which they can implement measures to target areas with the poorest air

quality. Such a framework is preferable to a piecemeal approach which would be confusing for motorists and businesses alike.

5 Rethink the 2017 VED rates: After the first year, all but pure electric vehicles will pay the same standard vehicle excise duty rate of £145 a year for a new vehicle. The RAC believes this will disincentivise motorists to buy the newest, cleanest vehicles on the market, particularly as there is still relatively little appetite for motorists to switch to a pure electric vehicle.

RAC Fuel Watch

On the last day of October and in early November, oil prices dropped from around \$50 a barrel, to around \$43 on 14th November as a result of fears that a deal amongst OPEC members to cut production was unlikely to take place. The pound, after falling to almost \$1.21 on the 25th October, rallied slightly with the rate now closer to \$1.25 (as of 17th November). There has been scope for retailers to pass on the resulting falling wholesale costs during November, though this was frustratingly slow for motorists. Only on 14th November did Asda and Tesco announce a cut in pump prices.

Year On Year: Prices are significantly higher

Year on year comparison 16th November 2015 to 16th November 2016

The average UK price of unleaded on 16th November was 7.6ppl more expensive than it was on 16th November 2015. This represents a 7% price rise in the year. The average UK price of diesel on 16th November 2016 was 7.3ppl more expensive than it was on the 16th November 2015 representing a 7% price rise in a year.

	16 th November 2015	16 th November 2016
Fuel Type	Average pump price ppl	Average pump price ppl
Unleaded	107.98	115.54
Diesel	110.11	117.43

Monthly Price Comparison: Pump prices have risen, but should now start to fall

Monthly price comparison 14th October 2016 to 16th November 2016

The average UK price of unleaded on 16th November 2016 was 0.9ppl more expensive than it was on 14th October 2016. This represents a 0.8% price rise in a month. The average UK price of diesel on 16th November 2016 was 1.2ppl more expensive than it was on 14th October 2016 representing a 1.1% price rise in a month.

	14 th October 2016	16 th November 2016
Fuel Type	Average pump price ppl	Average pump price ppl
Unleaded	114.61	115.54
Diesel	116.20	117.43

The facts - the cost of filling a typical family car:

Fuel	Petrol	Diesel
Fuel tank in litres	55	55
Avg forecourt price in per litre	115.43	117.43
Total cost to motorist	£63.49	£64.59

Duty	£31.87	£31.87
VAT @ 20%	£10.58	£10.76
Cost of fuel	£21.03	£21.95
Exc VAT	£52.91	£53.82
VAT & duty	£42.45	£42.64
% tax of fuel cost	67%	66%

*Source: Experian Catalist – UK prices as of 16th November 2016

For further information, please visit our fuel pages: <http://www.rac.co.uk/advice/fuel-prices-explained>

What is the RAC doing in your constituency?

RAC provides advice to motorists when parking

Following a number of requests from the motoring public, RAC DRIVE recently published an article which advises motorists who feel like they may be unfairly stung by parking charges from private parking operators.

You may have had constituents come to you who have felt threatened by rogue operators, or who simply want to find out more information on how to challenge these parking notices.

Should constituents come to you, please feel free to use the advice in the following link: www.rac.co.uk/drive/advice/driving-advice/how-to-avoid-and-appeal-parking-charge-notice



RAC advice on winter driving

Ahead the onset of cold weather, the RAC has been busy updating its driving advice for motorists this winter.

We now provide clear guidance for motorists on driving in different weather conditions, including fog, snow, ice and wind, hail and rain. We've also added advice on how best to demist your windscreen and have provided tips on how to look after your car this winter.

www.rac.co.uk/drive/advice/winter-driving



As the Motorist's Champion, the RAC is expertly placed to advise and guide effective road and motoring policy. Should you wish to discuss anything within this newsletter or any wider policy issues, please contact:

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