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News gathered from press releases, Headlineauto, Motoring4Media, IAAF e-Bulletin and AM-online during December 2013

Drivers' biggest motoring Worries

Nearly half of all UK motorists (48.5 per cent) think the cost of running their car is their biggest motoring concern for 2014 - and this worry outstrips other factors, such as road safety, the cost of parking and vehicle crime. The cost of vehicle maintenance is a huge issue, particularly with the winter months coming.

The Nationwide Vehicle Contracts online poll also found large differences in people's attitudes throughout the UK. North of the border, 57 per cent of Scots cited cost as their major concern, but only 5.6 per cent were worried about vehicle crime - whereas 9.5 per cent of motorists were worried about vehicle crime in England, and 51 per cent the cost of motoring. Across the UK, Wales had the most motorists worried about other motorists driving, at 50 per cent, compared to 18.4 per cent in England.

Differences emerged between male and female drivers, too. Nearly a quarter of the UK's female motorists were worried about other people's driving (24 per cent) compared to only 15.6 per cent of male drivers. More women than men were worried about road conditions too, with 17.1 per cent of females citing it as a concern, and only 12.5 per cent of men. Women were less worried about vehicle crime than men, however, with only 5.1 per cent citing it as a concern, compared to 11.9 per cent of men.

Overall, however, these other concerns were small compared to the motorists' worries about money - roughly as many motorists were worried about the cost of motoring than other motorists' poor driving, road conditions, vehicle crime and the cost of parking put together.

<http://www.nationwidevehiclecontracts.co.uk>

A third of drivers don't enjoy driving

In a similar vein a third of drivers simply don't enjoy driving anymore, according to a poll by road safety charity, the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM). The main reason given for not enjoying driving on the roads was the cost of fuel (51%) closely followed by congestion (41%), no longer excited by driving (28%) and less leisure time (25.9%).

Other findings include:

- Overall thirty-nine per cent of respondents still consider driving and riding for fun as their hobby.
- One third of respondents still go out for a spin.
- Fifty-three per cent of respondents think compared with other road users they are good drivers, with just over forty-five per cent responding that they are very good.
- Seventy-eight per cent of respondents would usually drive when out with their partner.
- Half of respondents don't always feel relaxed when their partner is in the passenger seat.

It seems that other road users are a problem with over sixty per cent of respondents stating that it's the behaviour of other drivers on the road that makes them feel the most nervous. This was followed by bad weather conditions and driving near to lorries.

Recession hitting people hard

The drop in the real value of average earnings of all employees in employment between April 2008 and November 2013 in the UK has been 13.8% a new GMB study of official earnings data shows. You can see why motorists are so concerned about costs.

In April 2008 the mean gross annual earnings for all employees in employment in the UK according to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) was £26,137. The ASHE figure for the mean gross annual earnings for all employees in employment in the UK for April 2013 was £27,174. This is an increase of £1,037 or just 4%. Between April 2008 and November 2013 inflation has been 17.8%. This means the **drop** in real value of earnings between April 2008 and November 2013 has been 13.8% for the UK.

The drop in the real value of average earnings between April 2008 and November 2013 for all employees in employment resident in London has been 20.4% the largest drop of all 12 regions in the UK. Next is Yorkshire and The Humber with a drop of 15.4 %, followed by South East and the East Midlands 14.4%, East of England 13.8%, South West 13.7%, North West 13.4%, Wales 12.5%, Northern Ireland 12%, West Midlands 10.5%, Scotland 9.9% and North East 8.6%.

In more detail the figures show that the worst drop was in Hammersmith & Fulham down 49.1%, followed by Camden down 30.7%, then Haringey 26.8%, Greenwich 24.7%, Warrington 24%, Sheffield 23.9%, Windsor & Maidenhead 23.7%, Harrow 23.6%, Buckinghamshire 22.9%, Blackpool 22.6%, Hartlepool 22.3%, Portsmouth 22.2%, Perth and Kinross 22.0%, Bromley 21.6%, Southwark 21.3%, Oldham 21.2%, Richmond upon Thames 21.1%, Scottish Borders 20.9%, Swindon 20.9% and Walsall 20.9%. The only area to increase is Moray in Scotland at 1%.

The data was published by Office for National Statistics. The raw data for 200 areas in the UK plus the GMB regional press releases are set out as pdfs at the foot of the national release at GMB website www.gmb.org.uk.

After ten years, is the M6 Toll benefiting anyone?

To mark the tenth anniversary of the opening of the M6 toll road (9 Dec), [Campaign for Better Transport](http://www.campaignforbettertransport.org.uk) has published The M6 Toll - ten years on. The report concludes that the road has produced **no net benefit for drivers** whilst causing huge and irreversible environmental damage.

The report contains a complete record of annual traffic data for the road since 2004 and found that:

- Since a peak in traffic in 2006/7, patronage of the M6 toll has fallen steadily year on year and has never come close to predicted levels of 75,000 vehicles per day
- In 2012, the average for all the count points was just 29,313 vehicles per day, 24 per cent below number of vehicles on the road in 2007
- The road has not relieved problems on the parallel M6. Between 2006 and 2012 average daily traffic levels on the un-tolled motorway increased by 1.5% (1,700 more vehicles per day)

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Sian Berry, Campaign for Better Transport's roads and sustainable transport campaigner, said: *"Toll roads don't work and the experience with the M6 Toll proves as much. Despite massive environmental damage and increased noise and air pollution the supposed benefits for drivers haven't materialised. This road has helped no one, not local people, not drivers and certainly not the company who own it. We're glad to see the Government has finally paid attention to the disastrous experience of the M6 Toll and abandoned plans to toll the A14 bypass."*

Chris Crean from West Midlands Friends of the Earth said: *"The focus then and now has been for inter-urban journeys across the countryside where it is easy to acquire land and lay tarmac. This has failed to address the real problem: traffic and car dependency in our unavoidably space-constrained towns and cities. We have not dealt with this fundamental issue"*.

"We can and should invest in all the viable alternatives to ensure we all have better quality of life, reduce car dependency and use the planning system to create truly vibrant and sustainable places in which to live. This would have seen enhanced bus, rail and metro investments, as well as encouraging walking and cycling across the west midlands conurbation, not an orbital road."

The report goes on to recommend a number of alternative options to large road-building projects that demonstrate better value for money, including 'smarter choices' programmes of travel planning and traffic reduction and a wide range of rail, bus and active travel infrastructure projects.

[http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/files/M6 Toll Ten Years briefing Dec2013 FINAL.pdf](http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/files/M6_Toll_Ten_Years_briefing_Dec2013_FINAL.pdf)

UK new car and CV registrations looking good

Data released by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) showed that new car registrations rose 7% in November to 159,581 units, the month's best performance since 2004. This gives a figure of 2,111,819 cars registered in this year-to-date, up 9.9% and already ahead of 2012 full-year figure of 2,044,609. This, suggests the vehicle producers' trade body, means the car market is on target to hit the SMMT's forecast of 2.25 million registrations for 2013.

The year-to-date CV market is up 10.9% at 294,991 units and, says SMMT, on track to top 300,000 units for first time in five years.

"Motorists have bought more than two million cars so far in 2013, a tremendous success for the industry on the back of buoyant consumer confidence and innovative new products," said Mike Hawes, SMMT Chief Executive. *"With the UK*

economy looking increasingly positive, we can expect strong underlying demand for new cars to continue into 2014, with volumes set to match or surpass those seen this year."

Chancellor George Osborne announced in his Autumn Statement that the vehicle excise 'tax disc' will be abolished. Tax discs have been rendered obsolete with the digital databases available to the police and DVLA. The new system will allow a monthly direct debit payment system. For the privilege, motorists can expect to pay another five per cent over the normal price of 12 months VED. But the cost of taxing a car in two lots of six months is likely to drop by five per cent too. This is government policy on motoring moving 'into the modern age'. The changes to vehicle tax are expected to be implemented from October 2014.

The latest fuel duty freeze announcement means that, in total, fuel duty will have been frozen for nearly four and a half years, the longest freeze for over 20 years. And the small print of the Autumn Statement confirmed that the statutory maximum price of the MoT test for a car will be frozen at £54.85 until 2015.

Plans to introduce road charging on key new roads appear to have been dropped by the Government following its decision to abandoned proposals to charge drivers for travelling along a new section of the A14 in Cambridgeshire. Originally the Government had planned to toll the new 25-mile stretch of the heavily congested A14 close to Huntingdon. Construction of the new section of the A14 is due to start in 2016 and the work will instead be funded from general taxation.

Young driver penalty points record concerning

The current way we train new drivers is clearly failing to produce safe and law abiding motorists, particularly men, according to road safety charity, the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM). Thirty-thousand, eight hundred and fifty male drivers aged 20 or under have up to six points on their license, according to data released by the DVLA. This compares with only 9, 758 young female drivers with up to six points on their license.

The breakdown by age is:

	3 points	4 points	5 points	6 points
Male 17	837	8	7	358
Female 17	36	0	0	0
Male 18	3,280	78	130	986
Female 18	705	15	25	70
Male 19	7,717	176	296	1,904
Female 19	2,542	47	73	230
Male 20	12,236	166	558	3,113
Female 20	5,229	82	117	587

During 2012, young drivers were involved in a fifth of all collisions where someone was killed or seriously injured. Yet younger drivers only account for

eight per cent of all full driving licence holders in Great Britain, they also drive, on average, about half the distance of older drivers each year.

IAM chief executive Simon Best said: *"Such high numbers committing a wide range of offences demonstrates the inability of our current system to deal with the attitudes and lack of experience which put new drivers at such high risk on the roads today. The government is currently working on a Green Paper for young drivers and this must better address the content and process of learning to drive so that our roads are safer for all road users."*

<http://data.gov.uk/dataset/driving-licence-data>.

IMI tackles literacy problems head-on

The Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) is addressing the concerns of businesses that school leavers do not possess the literacy and ICT skills necessary to begin a career in the automotive sector.

To do so, the IMI has added a free suite of literacy and ICT teaching resources themed around the motor industry to its Headlight portfolio at www.autocity.org.uk. The resources are sponsored by the Volkswagen Group Advanced Apprenticeship Programme and include lesson plans, PowerPoint presentations and worksheets, all of which are written with an Ofsted Outstanding approach in mind.

There are widespread concerns among businesses about young people's literacy and numeracy skills, with 81 per cent of organisations questioned by the Federation of Small Businesses saying they were not confident that school leavers are ready for work. The survey, which questioned almost 3,000 companies, also revealed worries about school leavers' self-management and communication skills, as well as their ability to work in teams. Over two thirds said they rated school leavers' literacy skills as poor or very poor, while over 55 per cent said the same about their numeracy skills.

Steve Nash, the IMI's CEO, comments: *"The retail automotive industry suffers more than most from the problem of poor level applicants to its apprenticeship programmes. This is often caused by a limited awareness of the great careers it offers and the level of skill required, meaning that high quality candidates are rarely directed to our sector. Our renowned Headlight programmes allow the IMI to directly address the skills gaps faced by all businesses looking for fresh talent by putting work skills back into the classroom, whilst raising the profile of the automotive sector to young people thinking about their career options via vehicle manufacturer-sponsored resources."*

The IMI's new literacy and ICT teaching resources are available under the newly refreshed Headlight programme on the IMI's Autocity careers website and complete a full suite of resources which also include business and maths skills. The Headlight programme is part funded by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES).

The end of windscreen wipers?



Supercar designers McLaren are working on plans to replace the rubber wiper with a hi-tech ultrasound device that stops anything from sticking to the windscreen. McLaren is keeping its design a closely guarded secret, according to the Sunday Times, but believes it could improve vehicle efficiency by removing the weight of wiper motors, so it could be the end of the road for the humble windscreen wiper!

Frank Stephenson, chief designer at McLaren said *"The windscreen wiper is an archaic piece of technology. We've had them since cars began and it's one of the last bastions of design to overcome."* He suggested the military had kept the technology under wraps, adding *"It took a lot of effort to get this out of a source in the military. I asked why you don't see wipers on some aircraft when they are coming in at very low speeds for landing. I was told that it's not a coating on the surface but a high frequency electronic system that never fails and is constantly active. Nothing will attach to the windscreen."*

The proposed design is understood to centre on high frequency sound waves that effectively create a force field across the windscreen preventing water, insects and mud from resting on the glass it is adapted from a similar system used on fighter jets. It would create tiny vibrations outside the range of human hearing that shake off anything debris that comes near.

We already have sound wave technology which is used in unborn baby scans and by dentists for removing plaque. The system could be introduced in to McLaren's range of cars, which cost from around £170,000 to £870,000, by 2015 and if successful there is no doubt the system will be adopted by mass produced cars. It would mean that wiper arms will end up in the past together with wind up windows and ashtrays which have already vanished from cars.

Who knows by 2015 frozen windscreen wipers and flies smeared all over the windscreen could be something we don't have to contend with anymore. No replacement wipers to be fitted when they wear out, so there will be no use for the windscreen water tank either now there is a thought no driving down the road cursing as the wiper fluid tank is empty throwing a bottle of water over the windscreen when you can't see!