

**AA**

# AA MOTORING MANIFESTO 2017

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May 2017

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# INTRODUCTION BY EDMUND KING OBE, AA PRESIDENT

The UK relies on its roads to connect communities and enhance economic growth. In the General Election, the AA calls on the next government to be bold with their policies for drivers.

The UK is at an important point in its history. The economy is doing well, but many factors have the potential to knock back the progress already made.

With uncertainty around leaving the European Union, the value of the pound being squeezed and rises in household bills, drivers across the UK will look to a future government to help ease their burden, especially those who are just about managing.

In 2015/16, drivers across the UK contributed over £33 billion to the Treasury through Fuel Duty and Vehicle Excise Duty. This was more than the total receipts for Council Tax [1].

After contributing such a large proportion of government income, drivers are unsurprisingly asking what the next government will do for them. Our Manifesto aims to shape the debate and challenge parties to think about the needs and desires of drivers, rather than simply seeing them as a wallet on wheels.

This AA Motoring Manifesto 2017 reflects the views of our 120,000 strong AA-Populus Driver Poll, the largest dedicated motoring panel in Europe. This has helped us tap into the mind of drivers across the country and establish what is most important to them as they head to the polls on 8 June.

The AA is apolitical but, as the voice of the motorist, we want drivers to get the best deal possible, whatever party delivers it.



The AA Motoring Manifesto 2017 focuses on the following areas and calls on the party, or parties, that form the next government to address them;

- Motorists top priorities
- Motorists concerns
- Policies drivers would like to see
- Policies drivers would not like to see
- AA Motoring Manifesto 2017 policy summary

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[1] [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/597467/spring\\_budget\\_2017\\_web.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597467/spring_budget_2017_web.pdf)

# OVERVIEW OF THE AA

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## Our History

The AA has been around for more than 110 years and was formed when a group of motoring enthusiasts met at the Trocadero restaurant in London's West End. This group was initially intended to champion the cause of the motorist and particularly to help motorists avoid police speed traps. As motoring became more popular, so did we – the AA's 100 members in 1905 grew to 83,000 by 1914. As AA membership expanded, so did our activities.

Today, the AA is the largest breakdown organisation in the UK with around 14 million roadside assistance customers. Other services and products we provide include: car insurance, telematics services, maps, travel guides, campsite guides, home insurance, savings accounts, smart phone and tablet apps and home emergency breakdown cover. We have also expanded our roadside services to include assistance with mis-fuelling, lost or stolen keys, and batteries.

We have two driving schools, the AA Driving School and BSM, with a combined force of over 2,600 driving instructors.

We also represent our members' interests and have established Europe's largest dedicated motoring opinion panel, the AA-Populus Driver Poll, which receives up to 20,000 responses each month. Through this we test member opinion on policy issues like those covered in our proposals.

## DRIVERS' TOP PRIORITIES



Road maintenance is the most important issue for drivers across all four corners of Britain. The next government must invest in fixing and improving our roads.

By a significant margin, the most pressing motoring issue for drivers in every region of the UK is the condition of our roads. Roads take the strain more than any other mode of transport. Be it the daily commute by car and bike, or the high levels of freight moved across the UK, the road is undoubtedly the principal transport lifeline.

However, the condition of our roads has deteriorated at a significant rate, and they are in need of substantial repair. The 2017 ALARM report issued by the Asphalt Industry Alliance [2], indicates that a £12 billion one-off spend is required to bring English and Welsh roads back to the levels they should be, warning that one in six roads will need to be resurfaced, or closed, within the next five years.

The AA has consistently said that our roads, especially local roads, are in desperate need of resurfacing and upgrading, **so we call on the next government to invest in a large scale road improvement strategy.**

AA members tell us that levels of driver behaviour have slipped over the past five years. Tailgating, middle lane hogging and using a hand-held mobile phone are the most irritating habits of other drivers [3]. These are dangerous, but should be preventable through a mixture of policing and driver responsibility.

Between 2005 and 2014, the number of specialist traffic officers has fallen from 7,104 to 4,356 [4]. Drivers feel that things have got so bad that more officers are needed to help redress the balance and keep the minority of badly behaved drivers. Therefore, **we would like to see the number of specialist traffic officers increased to help tackle bad drivers and improve road safety.**

Over previous years the levels of traffic have been steadily increasing. Current statistics from the Department for Transport shows that during peak times, on average you need to allow an additional 42 minutes for a one-hour journey due to the weight of traffic [5]. Drivers feel they would like to use public transport more, especially for the school run, but feel the current infrastructure isn't available to support them. Improvements to public transport would also bring environmental benefits, which are crucial with the UK continuing to exceed air quality limits in many cities

**We would like to see a commitment to improving public transport, especially making access for school children a priority, to help ease the levels of congestion.**

[2] [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/597467/spring\\_budget\\_2017\\_web.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597467/spring_budget_2017_web.pdf)

[3] <http://www.asphaltuk.org/wp-content/uploads/ALARM-2017.pdf>

[4] <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmtrans/518/518.pdf>

[5] [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/593885/travel-time-measures-srn-2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/593885/travel-time-measures-srn-2016.pdf)

## DRIVERS' CONCERNS

Drivers fear further increases in both motoring taxes and motoring costs. Pressures on family budgets are intense. This is the ideal time to become the 'friend of the driver' and commit to keeping the cost of driving affordable.

Drivers fear that the next government will seek to levy further increases in motoring taxes such as fuel duty and Insurance Premium Tax (IPT).

Between 2015 and 2017, drivers have seen the level of IPT double from 6% to 12%. No other tax has increased at such a rate in modern tax history. The increases have raised the cost of insurance premiums as well as the cost of breakdown cover.

Motor insurance is a compulsory purchase, and the AA has passionately campaigned against further rises in IPT. Such high rates of IPT impact new drivers the most and as such tempt drivers to act illegally, either by 'fronting' [6] their policies, or by driving uninsured. **We call on all parties to commit to, at least, freezing the current level of IPT. However, we believe the IPT rate should be reduced back to 6% at the first opportunity.**

Since 2011, successive Governments have consistently shielded UK drivers from duty rises because fuel price volatility creates significant uncertainty for business and family budgets, while the VAT increase to 20% has been a particular and constant drain on the private motorist.

Since mid-February 2015, the price of petrol has gone up by more than 18 pence per litre. As well as driving the bulk of UK business, the cost of motor fuel remains a significant part of a driver's weekly spend. A year ago, a typical family with two petrol cars was spending around £200 a month petrol. Now it is more than £240.

The AA does not believe fuel prices will reduce significantly in the short-term because of crude oil price volatility and the weakness of the pound against the dollar. These issues are likely to keep pressure on the pump price of fuel, as negotiations to leave the EU continue.

As the price of fuel continues to rise, the Government will receive more money from VAT on fuel. We estimate that the Treasury has already received a post EU-Referendum 'windfall' due to the increases in the pump price of fuel.

**We therefore believe that, because of the fluctuation of fuel prices, the next government should continue to freeze fuel duty.**

[6] [http://www.theaa.com/motoring\\_advice/news/car-insurance-economy-with-the-truth-costs-drivers-dearly.html](http://www.theaa.com/motoring_advice/news/car-insurance-economy-with-the-truth-costs-drivers-dearly.html)

## POLICIES DRIVERS WOULD LIKE TO SEE



Drivers want to see the next Government take steps to improve older driver safety, improve air quality and introduce regulation of private parking enforcement.

Drivers are clear that road safety is of paramount importance to them. They are also sensible when it comes to how improvements can be made for the benefit of all road users.

Driving will always provide independence to people, regardless of their age. However, as we age our eyesight can change considerably with little warning or notice. In general, older drivers are safer than younger drivers, but their eyesight is more likely to significantly change. Drivers of all ages [7] feel that it would be sensible for **drivers aged 70 or over, be encouraged to take a free NHS eye test\* when they renew their licence**. This is a reasonable suggestion and will help keep older drivers on the roads and keep their independence for longer while protecting others from those who's eyesight might have deteriorated without them necessarily being aware.

Air quality will be an important factor in arguably every policy decision made over the next parliament. AA members are clear that air quality is important to them, however they should not be penalised for buying diesel vehicles in good faith when previous governments have encouraged them to do so. Some consideration has been given to introducing charging zones to towns and cities with poor air quality. Charging zones are not trusted by drivers, who see them as a money making scheme for local authorities. Local authorities have many other policy options available, and the AA argues that charging zones should be the point of last resort rather than the position of first response.

Currently there are grants to encourage people to buy new electric and Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, however these only go so far. It is clear that more effort must be made to entice people in areas of poor air quality to exchange their older vehicles for cleaner, greener ones, which must be affordable. Therefore, **we call on the next government to provide more financial incentives to help drivers to purchase greener, cleaner vehicles to improve air quality**.

Parking enforcement on private land can, for some drivers, feel like a lottery. Some providers act professionally, but more and more parking providers behave appallingly and issue tickets on a grand scale. It is also incredibly unclear to many how the appeals system works. AA investigations have unearthed that some private parking firms manage both the parking bays and the appeals process.

**We call for the private parking sector to be regulated so that practices are kept to a high standard and that appeals are treated by a separate body to the providers.** This action is long overdue and would be welcomed by drivers across the country.

[7] <http://www.roadsafetyfoundation.org/media/33073/modsfl-single-page-printable-version.pdf>

\* People over 60 are entitled to a free NHS eye test - <http://www.nhs.uk/cha/pages/895.aspx?CategoryID=68&SubCategoryID=157>

## POLICIES DRIVERS WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE



Road safety targets and All Lane Running Smart Motorways need urgent action.

The UK has some of the safest roads in the world, however we should not become complacent. The decision to scrap road safety targets under the coalition government was a backwards step, and one that needs to be redressed. In 2015 there were a reported 1,730 road deaths [8], but there has been little progress in reducing road deaths in the past few years. The AA believes that **parties should commit to reintroducing road safety targets with a zero road deaths ambition at its heart.**

Previous parliaments have been keen to accelerate the progression of All Lane Running schemes to improve motorway congestion. While the AA is keen to support improvements to road infrastructure, safety should not be compromised.

The AA has been the lead voice in warning about the design of All Lane Running Motorways, and drivers have told us their fears about the lack of Emergency Refuge Areas (ERA) [9]. The AA believes that until more ERAs are planned and installed on smart motorways, the safety of road users is significantly compromised. The Transport Select Committee backed the advice given by the AA on this matter [10]. **The next government must commit to installing twice as many ERAs on stretches of All Lane Running motorway schemes.**

While drivers are willing to consider using public transport, many feel that roads maintenance and investment has become the poor relation to other transport projects, like High Speed Rail. While the AA does not take a view on HS2, drivers feel that they have been hard done by when comparing roads investment to rail investment. **The next government should not treat drivers and road investment unfairly when producing their budgets.**

In the quest for air quality and economic value, previous governments have promoted the virtues of diesel car ownership and actively encouraged people to purchase such vehicles. However, the testing of vehicles hasn't always matched real world emissions. But, it is now accepted that modern Euro 6 diesel engines produce much lower levels of pollution than their predecessors.

Diesel drivers are nervous that they have become the scapegoats in the much needed drive to improve air quality. They also feel that air quality plans will, on the whole, penalise them. Motorists are clean air advocates, and as such want to do their bit. But, they must be helped, rather than beaten with a stick for decisions encouraged by previous governments.

Additional taxes on diesels will be met with anger if they are imposed without a means of helping those exchange their cars for cleaner, greener cars. **We call on the next government to avoid increasing tax rates on diesel vehicles.**

[8] [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/556385/rrcqb2015-00.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/556385/rrcqb2015-00.pdf)

[9] <https://www.theaa.com/breakdown-cover/news/nothing-smart-about-deadly-lay-bys.html>

[10] <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmtrans/63/63.pdf>

# **AA MOTERING MANIFESTO 2017 POLICY SUMMARY**



- **Invest in a large scale road improvement strategy**
- **Increase the number of specialist police traffic officers**
- **Commit to improve public transport, with special focus on school children**
- **Commit to freeze or cut IPT to 6%**
- **Continue to freeze fuel duty**
- **Encourage drivers aged 70 or over to take a free NHS eye test when they renew their licence**
- **Provide more financial incentives to drivers to purchase greener, cleaner vehicles**
- **Introduce regulation of the private parking enforcement sector**
- **Reintroduce road safety targets with an ambition of zero road deaths**
- **Commit to installing twice as many Emergency Refuge Areas on Smart Motorways**
- **Treat drivers and road investment fairly when producing their budgets**
- **Promote greener vehicles without disproportionately hitting diesel vehicles**