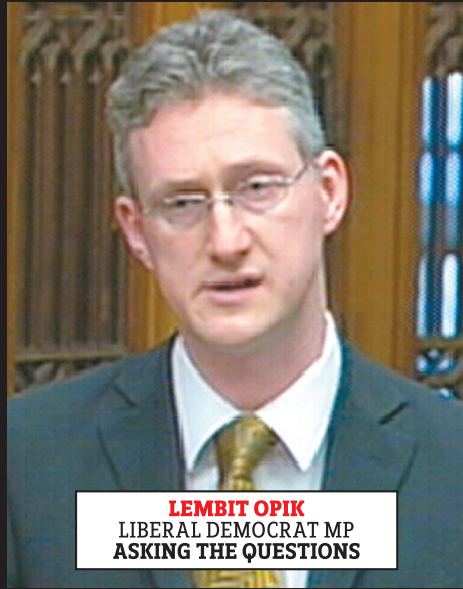
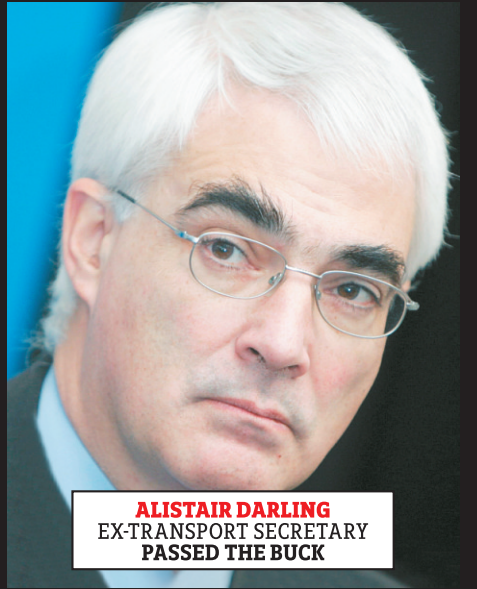


SPEED CAMERA SCANDAL

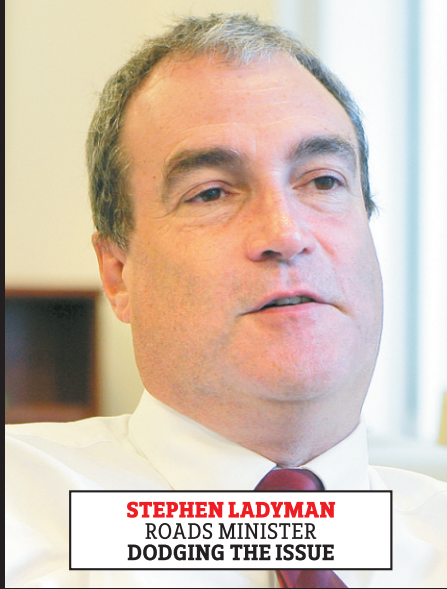
MCN TAKES ON THE GOVERNMENT



LEMBIT OPIK
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MP
ASKING THE QUESTIONS



ALISTAIR DARLING
EX-TRANSPORT SECRETARY
PASSED THE BUCK



STEPHEN LADYMAN
ROADS MINISTER
DODGING THE ISSUE

MP vows to fight on as roads minister sidesteps our questions over speed traps misreading bikes' speeds

BY STEVE FARRELL

THE Government has snubbed motorcyclists by brushing off crucial questions about the accuracy of speed cameras on bikes. But Liberal Democrat MP Lembit Opik says he will not rest until he's used evidence gathered by MCN to open the Government's eyes to the raw deal motorcyclists are getting.

Last month, Opik submitted questions about speed cameras and bikes to then Transport Secretary Alistair Darling. His questions were based on our findings that the Home Office has never tested speed cameras on motorcycles, that cameras can get

a bike's speed wrong, and that riders have been wrongly accused.

Opik asked Darling what he'd done to assess the accuracy of speed cameras on motorcycles and how he intended to reduce the chances of riders facing inaccurate speeding charges.

Roads minister Stephen Ladyman, who Darling delegated to deal with the questions, responded to both by rehashing a single answer.

First he boasted about the "rigorousness" of UK Type Approval testing before saying: "No specific test is prescribed that involves motorcycles, or any other particular sort of vehicle, because they are not considered to present any distinct problems.

The operational tests do however involve measuring the speed of any passing traffic, including motorcycles."

The admission is almost identical to one previously made by the Home Office.

The claim that bikes don't represent more of a problem for cameras than other vehicles has been disputed by speed detector experts and by MCN's own tests. The "operational tests" on bikes are allegedly conducted by police, but every force in the country has confirmed to MCN it has no records of such tests.

Opik said: "You get the sense they don't have any worries about it. It doesn't keep them up at night, whereas anyone who's been

falsely accused of speeding will lose sleep over it.

"The next step is clear. I need to write to Ladyman with the specific examples that MCN has highlighted and ask him to consider the contradiction between the answer he's given me and the events which have affected the motorcyclists.

"I read their answer as, 'We dare you to prove there's a problem.' MCN has and I will. We've got a pathway here. We can get it right and we can change things."

We've sent Opik complete details of all the evidence we've uncovered and put him in touch with a rider who we proved had been falsely accused based on speed camera evidence.

NEW RIDER BY SIMON JOHNSTON



ROOKIE rider Simon's opting for safety over style

Kit essentials

Last week Simon listened to some of your advice on the basics, now he turns his attention to finding the right kit...

FROM my experiences of Sunday league football, quality shinpads are essential. So when I received loads of e-mails this week talking about the correct riding kit, I took notice. After all, I wear a decent helmet when I ride a bicycle, and I'm not doing 60-70mph on that.

Reader Henry Poole advises: "My instructor told me that a good rule of thumb is to spend around 20% of your total biking budget on clothing." Sounds fair enough. While Richard McPherson from Let's Ride! in Bournemouth sums it up well for me with: "I see so many people spending thousands of pounds on beautiful new motorcycles and then bummer all on themselves. Remember, the motorcycle is covered by your insurance company, you're covered by the NHS... need I say more?"

To this end, I've set myself a budget of around £600-650 to find me safe, comfortable, long-lasting gear. Now I'm lucky in that - unlike many mid-20-somethings - brand names don't matter that

much to me. As long as I'm not dressed in pink leather with tassels then safety is more important.

So this £600-650 needs to buy me a helmet, jacket and trousers, gloves, boots and ideally a back protector, too. Considering some people spend £500 on just a lid - with the latest paintjob of a rider whose name they can't even pronounce let alone emulate - I think that for the amount of kit I'll get it will be money well spent.

So here's my shopping list: a jacket (with CE-approved armour at the shoulders, elbows and preferably a built-in back protector); trousers (leather or textile with built-in CE-approved armour) gloves (thick padding and armoured); boots (solid construction, but still flexible enough at the ankles); helmet (ACU gold approved).

These final few words from Anthony Drew really sum it up for me: "In my opinion, a 60mph spill on a 125 learner is going to remove just as much skin and cause just as much damage as binning a new Gixer."

As always, e-mail me your ideas and opinions on kit, finding the right bike and any other random thoughts to simon.johnston@emap.com

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