

Solving the problem of road fund licence abuse

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It is [less than a month ago that the FT reported](#) that £400 million is being lost to evasion of the new paperless road fund licence, a matter of some concern to me as it shows all the weaknesses of on-line systems.

The subject came up in conversation with an old friend, Peter Dawe (who formed the UK's first internet service provider), yesterday and he offered an obvious solution. Every single garage in the UK now photographs cars as they arrive to buy fuel and almost without exception the systems they use can read the number plates of the vehicles in question. Given the high speed connections almost all such places also have for processing payments there was, he suggested an obvious solution to the issue of the road fund tax, one of the major reasons for which continues to be a check that cars have MoTs and insurance. First he suggested putting the tax charge onto the fuel. Second, it should be made illegal to sell fuel to any car without it first being real-time checked that the vehicle in question was both insured and had an MoT certificate. This check could be very quick indeed, and guarantee almost 100% compliance.

We agreed there was a minor issue with foreign plates: it's one that would be easy to resolve as almost all comply to an EU standard.

Technology can't solve all tax problems, but in this case it might. And the objections from the libertarians can be easily overcome: those without an MoT and insurance are infringing the liberty of others. It is simply not safe to let them drive: denying them fuel ensures that it would be pretty hard for them to do so. Not impossible, I agree, but pretty hard.

And the road fund licence revenue would also be fully replaced.

I thought it worth sharing.