



TRUCKERS' TOILETS UK

Campaign to improve the health & wellbeing of lorry drivers

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NEWSLETTER 2-11

ELECTIONS! Well, the battle has been won or lost depending on the way you look at it.



Some of us are disappointed whilst others are euphoric. Whatever you're feeling we must look at the outcome as an opportunity. Now the dust has settled and the Cabinet formed we should certainly begin to make our presence felt. The existence of *TTUK* is spreading and *TTUK* needs YOU to do your bit. In the first instance it would be good for you to get to know your MP - whether or not you agree with his or her politics! Need some suggestions? Please contact *TTUK* for ideas.

HEALTH & SAFETY: An awareness of various recent studies and discussions with supporters has led *TTUK* to believe that highlighting 'Health & Safety' issues is now the way forward. Under the umbrella of 'Health & Safety' *TTUK* will also be able to address concerns such as parking problems and other matters relating to toilet access. What do you think? *TTUK* is making a plan.



CAMBRIDGE NEWS [11 May] Thanks to the encouragement of our Cambridge supporter, Gill's letter in response to Brian's about access toilets for lorry drivers was duly published.



This was a golden opportunity to highlight the aims of *TTUK* and the partnership with Blue Arrow's *Drive with Pride* and also raise the health issues that can affect drivers if toilets are not available or access is refused. Readers were encouraged to sign the petition. Have YOU signed it? www.tinyurl.com/drivewithpride

COMMERICAL MOTOR: Chris Tindall wrote an excellent article [23 April] in Commercial Motor headed '*Blue Arrow and Truckers' Toilets UK launch minimum standards campaign*'. Highlights of the article include details of the petition and the correspondence our Ed has had with the DfT. In addition it was exciting to read that Blue Arrow's CEO is very understanding of the drivers' 'basic right of access to clean, working toilets'. Bringing the issue to the attention of the public was also mentioned – and this is important because in our Ed's experience the public is unaware of the working conditions of those who bring in the goods they buy.



BLUE ARROW: Blue Arrow, like *TTUK*, has been collating evidence alongside the petition for improved facilities. It is often forgotten that a number of drivers are female and an opportunity to attract more into the profession is being missed. '*Drive with Pride: A Woman's Perspective*' [April 27 online] discusses the experience of Annemarie who having gained the appropriate licence has never used it commercially because of the lack of toilet facilities. She has however found alternative employment which allow her to make comfort stops – and she has access to clean toilets! She also mentions the word 'safe' which highlights the need for not only access to toilets, but also to *safe* toilets. She feels that the availability of toilet facilities is getting worse because of closures of roadside cafes and service areas. Annemarie believes that the lack of thought given to the health, safety and comfort of drivers compounds the problem of the driver shortage and *TTUK* supports her view. She also mentions the fact that needing a loo urgently affects a driver's concentration whilst on the road! [This is also a serious matter that is being ignored – Ed]



DEHYDRATION: The serious effects of becoming dehydrated have been highlighted in research by Professor Ron Maughan and his team at Loughborough University [The Independent 20 April 2015]. Apparently drivers who don't drink enough water make a similar number of mistakes whilst driving as those who have been drinking! This is incredibly serious. Many drivers – understandably – reduce their fluid intake whilst driving in order to reduce the need for the toilet. The lack of toilet facilities is compounding the problem. It might be OK for male drivers to use a bush but women don't find it that easy – and why should this be the case anyway? The result of dehydration can affect all of us on the road and it's about time that such safety issues



are addressed and working conditions for lorry drivers are significantly improved! [Our Ed contacted Professor Maughan re: the research and has been invited to a European Hydration Institute network meeting in June. More info in the June newsletter]

TRUCK & DRIVER [June 2015] The shortage of drivers and the lack of toilet facilities is the feature of Lucy Radley's article in this magazine. A truck driver herself and freelance writer, Lucy describes how an outing with her daughter and visiting poor quality toilet facilities en route gave her the opportunity to explain her own experiences of being on the road – such as difficulties in finding a loo and trying to keep clean when not only is there a dearth of facilities but some of those that are available are poorly maintained. Lucy writes: 'I can safely say she [Lucy's daughter] will be working very hard at school from now on to avoid having to follow in her mother's footsteps'. Knowing there is a lack of toilet and shower facilities will not attract anyone, let alone more women, into the industry, says Lucy.



RHA: Lucy also mentioned in her article that the affect of poor toilet facilities on lorry driver recruitment should hopefully be taken seriously now that the RHA's Chief Executive Richard Burnett has spoken about the problem on Breakfast TV [24 March]. The RHA has since been in touch with *TTUK* and it is anticipated that discussions on improving the situation will follow shortly



CABBIES: Lorry drivers are not alone in their need to improve access to toilets. Cab drivers at Birmingham airport are being forced to share one toilet for around 300 drivers [Birmingham Post 5 May]. Apparently the situation has been going on for several months and any requests to address the situation has put the cabbies in fear of losing their contracts. According to a spokesman it seems that new facilities are being developed and that in the meantime they can use facilities in the terminal. Whilst this situation is unacceptable it appears to be focused on one particular area. The position of our lorry drivers is that they are covering the whole of the UK with a number of organisations involved [eg HSE, DfT] – or not, as the case may be – and it is so easy for these organisations to pass the buck and leave it to some other group to deal with. We must not let this situation continue and *TTUK* will fight to improve working conditions for this vital sector with the support of the lorry drivers, their own organisations and other agencies who are keen to help,



PARKING ISSUES: The situation with regard to human waste being deposited in Aviemore [Strathspey & Badenoch Herald 17 April] and parking difficulties has caused much discussion on *TTUK*. Drivers were apparently parking in unofficial areas and leaving their waste behind which has prompted intervention from the local authority and the police. We all agree it is not acceptable to leave any form of rubbish behind but once again instead of looking at what is causing the problem – why the drivers are tempted to do this in the first place- , the powers-that-be are focusing on the symptoms, ie the unsightly mess. Whilst in this instance there were public toilets nearby the question arises as to whether these were actually acceptable to the drivers. Was parking available? Could the lorries be safely left unattended whilst the drivers visited these facilities? And how 'nearby' is 'nearby'? Bins may have been available but all too often laybys have nowhere to deposit rubbish of any sort. And yes, drivers should perhaps think twice before leaving their poo on the roadside – but would you want to carry it around with you in your cab, especially if you had foodstuffs on board? The outcome in this report is that the local SNP candidate has written to Transport Scotland asking for a meeting to which Highland Council will also be invited to discuss roadside maintenance. *TTUK* agrees that the situation is unacceptable for locals and tourism as mentioned in the article but it is also unacceptable for drivers to have 'nowhere to go'! If anyone hears of the outcome of such discussions please let *TTUK* know.



MORE PARKING ISSUES: Back in February 2014[!] an article in Kent online described how Kent County Council was planning a number of 24hour lorry parks to stop illegal overnight parking. The sites under consideration were to be easily accessible from the M2 and M20 close to Dover and the Eurotunnel. Have there been any improvements to date? Please let *TTUK* know.



TOILET SITUATION 1: Too many of our drivers continue to face dire situations when it comes to accessing a toilet. One woman driver was refused the use of the toilet and was forced to drive for 45 minutes to a service station. As reported before, 'urgency' affects concentration. This one refusal could have led to an incident not only affecting the driver herself but also other road users!



TOILET SITUATION 2: TTUK often receives photographs showing the state of some of the toilet facilities that are offered to drivers. The latest shows a peeling 'room' with a chipped wash basin, single tap, no soap or towels apparently available, a broken toilet seat and what looks like leakage on the floor – apparently the toilet was unflushable, the contents of previous users were visible and the visitor noted the 'stench' on entry. If these are the conditions facing drivers when they need the loo no wonder there is a driver shortage. There is no excuse for poor maintenance and it's about time the working conditions of our drivers are taken seriously.



LEGAL STORY: There has been an article reporting a lawsuit in Portland Oregon where a worker died in from carbon monoxide poisoning in the back of a company truck whilst using a bucket as a toilet [Steven Dubois Katu.com 13 May]. The lawyers involved in the case stated that the company's conduct in providing just a bucket was 'demeaning, debasing and dehumanizing'. Apparently the bucket was provided by the employer for workers at sites that lacked facilities. *'The nearest off-site toilet was eight minutes away at a commercial establishment, according to OSHA report'*. This is not the whole story but it demonstrates how the bucket scenario is considered acceptable in some working environments. Let's hope that the response from the lawyers will bring about positive changes – which may hopefully spill across The Pond!



TRUCKERS' TOILETS UK
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Next issue of the **Truckers' Toilets UK** newsletter will be June 2015
Gillian Kemp

The British Toilet Association < www.britloos.co.uk >