

Written evidence submitted by heycar and HonestJohn.co.uk (EVP0038)

About heycar and HonestJohn.co.uk

heycar is an online car marketplace where you can find all the best quality used cars in one place. It launched in 2019 with the determination to raise the bar in the car industry. It acquired HonestJohn.co.uk in February 2020. HonestJohn.co.uk is one of the UK's largest car buying advice sites and has been the voice of the car buyer and owner for more than 20 years and has more than 2m visitors every month. It has scored a number of campaign successes including opening access to the DVSA database of MoT test results.

Our reason for submitting evidence to the Transport Committee is that we are able to survey a large number of car buyers and owners for their views. HonestJohn.co.uk is an established voice of car buyers and has been at the forefront of consumer advice when the Vehicle Excise Duty system has been changed in previous years.

Background to evidence

The principal ambition of the research conducted by [heycar.co.uk](https://www.heycar.co.uk) and [HonestJohn.co.uk](https://www.honestjohn.co.uk) was to establish respondents' views on the current Vehicle Excise Duty system. It also explored attitudes towards potential alternatives and the appetite for the introduction of road pricing or pay-per-mile systems and the attractiveness of either model to respondents.

A total of 10,067 HonestJohn.co.uk readers were surveyed between 25 January 2021 - 8 February 2021.

In excess of 66 per cent of respondents were unaware that a consultation into Vehicle Excise Duty and the future of road pricing was taking place. Some expressed surprise that this was being considered less than four years since the introduction of the current system.

Findings

- **A clear preference for a flat-rate system**
- **But respondents open to a per-mile road charging plan**
- **Traditional tolls on roads unpopular**

There was a clear preference for a flat rate system for all petrol, diesel and electric cars, with 2,806 respondents (28%) putting it as their number one choice. The option of road tolls was the public's least preferable option.

While it still lags behind a flat rate system in popularity, there is evidence from our findings that the option of road pricing may be becoming more attractive. A total of 1905 (19%) of respondents reported that it was their most preferred option and it also received the second highest number of second preference choices. It suggests that car owners are open to a system of road charging that doesn't cause tailbacks or hassle to a journey (i.e road tolls). Some respondents said that they would like to see this introduced alongside a reform in Fuel Duty to simplify what would be two per-mile charges for drivers of petrol and diesel vehicles. As take-up of electric vehicles increases, this will need to be addressed, firstly to resolve what

will become a disparity between electric car drivers and their conventional fuel counterparts and secondly to deal with the drop in revenue to the Exchequer from electric vehicles that won't be subject to fuel duty.

It's noteworthy that more than half of the respondents (55 per cent) had used the Dartford Crossing system and as a result had been introduced - at a basic level - to the payment concept of barrier-free charging and in effect a pay-per mile scheme.

Outside of this piece of research, heycar and HonestJohn.co.uk is seeing a shift in buyers' attitudes towards electric cars change from an unviable option to actively seeking out as an attractive alternative to conventionally-powered cars. Part of the appeal is the clear financial incentive on offer, so any new road pricing scheme should be sympathetic to this in order to continue the uptake of electric vehicles. One potential option to continue that is that per-mile road pricing is not only priced on the types of road that you drive on, but also the emissions/emissions class (i.e EU6>) of the vehicle, with a financial incentive remaining for zero emissions vehicles.

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