

Why do so many Councils hate vans and cars?

Next week when the effectively nationalised and heavily subsidised railways go on strike more people will need to use a motor vehicle to go to work. Once again our personal transport will be the ever reliable necessary back up.

Many people need to use their vans and cars all the time to go to work, to take children to school or to carry the weekly shop back from the supermarket. The plumber, decorator, domestic appliance engineer and other home service providers need to travel with their tools and spares and need to get round several clients a day. Only a van can do that. If a parent needs to drop children off at a school not near a station and get to a place of work not near a station they need to use a car.

Private sector businesses like supermarkets, DIY sheds, garden centres and other retailers that want to make life easier for their customers provide large car parks next to the shop entrance. They do not cluster near a station or expect most shoppers to come by bike.

The Times yesterday asked people to select their main travel mode in a poll. When I read the article 63% said the car. So why then do so many Councils tax us to make it more and more difficult to drive anywhere? They specialise in cutting roadspace for cars and vans, in creating junctions that cause needless congestion, they rephase traffic lights to impede main road flows, reduce parking facilities and turn municipal car parks into technology nightmares to catch more people out with penalties.

They would say they are implementing environmental policies to get people to leave the car at home and take the bike. If they clog the cars or ban them altogether or tax them too much surely people will go by bike? Why do they think that? How can the plumber get there by cycle with all his kit? How can the Mum shopping for four put all the food on a bike carrier? How can a parent get children to school and get to work by bike?

Councils are meant to serve the public, not disrupt our lives. It adds to the insult when they send us a huge bill for trying to stop us getting around. No wonder some town centres struggle for custom because people cannot easily get there and cannot find good parking if they do. Councils should study successful retailers who do let you drive to the store and park free by the door. It is a very popular model with the public. Fewer obstacles on the roads and less congestion would also be good for the environment, cutting fuel use and exhaust gases.