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Get us moving, Tony.

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Dawn is a happily married brunette. But she would like to get Tony Blair alone in her car. She would need only an hour and ten minutes.

Don't worry, Mrs Blair. All Dawn wants is to give Mr B the ear-bashing of his life.

Every day at 5.30am, Dawn has cornflakes in her kitchen in the Cotswolds. She hits the road soon after. Seventy minutes later, she arrives at headquarters in Wokingham. Is our heroine an insomniac? Is she hoping to be the new Patrick Moore? Does she prefer the danger of driving in the dark or dislike her daughters' taste for Marmite so much that she aims never to see them? Thrice no. Dawn does this because if she leaves home 15 minutes later then it takes her two hours of total misery. And she cannot move home, because house prices are double.

Traffic congestion is ruining our lives. There are literally countless other Dawns out there. They have to fume their way, in both senses, into southern England. In the Thames Valley alone, literally millions of human beings get to stare at one another motionless every day. And for what, exactly?

Act, Prime Minister. Have you never seen the M4 on Monday morning at 8am? It is a sad testimony to the 21st century, and things worsen every year.

Getting our infrastructure working efficiently is the natural terrain of your government. We know what kind of breakfast cereal we enjoy; we know how many lottery tickets to buy; we know how to choose a washing machine. These are all within our grasp, as private citizens. What we cannot do individually is get the transport system working. That is your job.

Everyone individually is behaving rationally in Britain. Yet collectively we have produced a kind of madness. Something has to be done if the next generation of Britons is not to be overwhelmed by jams, smog and concrete.

Building more roads would be unfair on our grandchildren. Anyway, it would not work. It would just bring out more drivers.

The answer is right in front of us. It is time to bring 'congestion charging' in all over Britain. We have the electronic technology to do so and, in reducing the traffic jams that plague our lives, the country would benefit enormously. Few things would raise the quality of life as much.

Road tolls, set high at peak times and low at other times, have the best chance of making the country flow again. It would be good for firms' profitability, for people's marriages and stress levels, for the environment, and especially for our grandchildren's wellbeing.

Moreover the money raised from road tolls could be spent in useful ways – such as reducing other taxes, including tax on fuel, and improving public services and infrastructure. Our current fuel tax penalises those on empty lanes as much as those on the M25. September 2000 taught us, too, that petrol tax is close to the point of voter rebellion.

We are currently free to use any British road -- for nothing at any time of day. That is not sensible.

Every economist knows that a queue forms when a demand-and-supply mechanism fails. Using prices to ration things is the most sensible way to go about it. We do it for apples, bicycles, cream teas, to zebras. Straightforward as ABC to Z.

It is our most productive citizens, illogically for the country, who turn out to suffer most. Traffic congestion especially distorts the lives of highly skilled workers. The latest data show that commuting time for Britons with university degrees is one and a half times as long as for others. In south-east England, a quarter of all those with university degrees spend more than 2 hours a day travelling to and from work.

London commuting times have worsened considerably during the 1990s. All this is a waste of people's lives. It also wrecks relationships.

The British shrug their shoulders and accept that it is impossible to drive to Heathrow airport at a normal time in the mornings; so we now design our lives around traffic jams. We should not.

Let us consider objections to road tolls.

One is that road pricing just could not be done. Not true. Look at Trondheim. Look at Singapore. Look at Oslo. Electronic technology works extremely well there.

Another notion is that road pricing would hurt the poor. It would not. Sensible road tolls would be high during morning and evening peaks. Those earning good wages would travel then but pay for the privilege of a quick journey. What is wrong with that? A big proportion of people in the lowest fifth of the income distribution in Britain do not even own a car. They would be unaffected by road charges.

Next worry: road tolls would raise firms' costs by making them pay extra charges. Wrong. Road pricing would make life cheaper for firms in Britain. Tolls would be set at the right level to make traffic flow freely – and no higher. Having your lorry stuck in traffic is bad for profits.

Why do road users say they are against congestion charging? It is because, perfectly reasonably, people do not bear in mind when answering opinion polls that road tolls would clear the roads -- so that Dawn could get up at a sensible hour and kiss her children goodbye. After an experimental week of road tolls, Britain would be delighted and never wish to go back to the jams of toll-free roads.

Need some more? Just take a look at the attached Table.

UK Car and Van Travel in Billion Passenger Kilometres

1950 50 billion pk

1975 250 billion pk

2000 700 billion pk

The Size of the UK in Square Km

1950 250,000 sq km

1975 250,000 sq km

2000 250,000 sq km

Not rocket science, is it?

Roads need prices. Make a mark on history come June, Prime Minister.
Your citizen Dawn has every right to sleep past it.