

7th June 2005

Sir,

Road pricing

I support congestion charging, but my pleasure in the Government's conversion to it is mingled with anxiety that it will be implemented in ways that are unnecessarily intrusive. Both scenarios depicted in the press (satellites and roadside gantries) involve a central store recording where every vehicle has been for every minute of the day.

This is as unnecessary as it is objectionable. The black box in the vehicle, which of course records location and time, can also work out the charge and report it periodically to the central database. This need then do no more than deduct the charge from prepayment (and render the vehicle unstartable when prepayment or credit run out).

Only in the case of dispute would the vehicle owner need to extract the location information from the black box (where cryptography could keep it accessible only to that owner).

Congestion charging deserves public support. To achieve it will require demonstrable respect for privacy.

Yours faithfully,

Nicholas Bohm