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LETTERS to the editor – 02 May 2008

## ***DRIVERS FLOUT RESTRICTIONS***

***In just 30 minutes 91 drivers put lives at risk by ignoring 'buses only' signs – why are they getting away with it?***

### **Action needed to put pedestrians first**

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum ([www.townforum.org.uk](http://www.townforum.org.uk)) has, as one of its most important and pressing aims, to persuade the council to make the town centre more pedestrian friendly.

Your front page article (25 April 2008) exposing ignorant motorists and the unwillingness of enforcement of the bus gate traffic control on Mount Pleasant is very much in line with our ongoing promotion.

What do we pay our council taxes to the police for if no one is ever cautioned?

We have police community support officers; what are they doing? Will the town's newly empowered wardens have the power to fine these people who wish to put the lives of parents and children etc at risk?

While many road signs in Tunbridge Wells are so encrusted with grime that one can hardly read them, these particular signs are very visible, yet they seem to be of no deterrent.

Frankly, it is a farce to have such imposing markers standing by the bus gate if those who are meant to ensure the law do not and those who are meant to take note ignore.

One of our members has repeatedly alarmed and alerted us to the culture of officers having the powers, but not the duty to enforce legislation in such cases.

It does not seem right to allow hundreds of rat runs daily, endangering pedestrians in the town's main shopping area.

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum would be happy to see car number plate recognition cameras be installed, which could be turned on during the restricted time zone.

As the town already has CCTV cameras we feel it would not be costly to insert such a deterrent.

We welcome any continued exposure of this thoughtless activity.

Christopher Thomas, chairman  
Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum  
Town Hall  
Tunbridge Wells

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THE REPORT about the cars using the restricted road by the opera house stated that this was within the police control, but when my wife and I went to cross the road there with the green light on we were nearly knocked down by a car coming from Monson road turning against the lights straight across in front of us.

Outside the NatWest bank was a police car. I asked one of the officers about the large blue signs saying no cars. He replied: "The council put them up, nothing to do with us." When I spoke about the car going through the red light he said "we didn't see that" .

This happened some 18 months to two years ago but nothing is ever done about all the cars that ignore the signs even since the road surface was painted red.

L Manser  
Sophurst Lane  
Matfield

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YOUR article illustrates the arrogance and lack of respect so many people have these days for the rule of law.

There really is no point in having regulations deemed to be for the benefit of the community at large if they are not enforced.

The police are conspicuous by their absence in the town centre seemingly only responding to incidents rather than also carrying out crime prevention activities.

They will, no doubt, claim they are under-resourced, have greater priorities to occupy their time and too much paper work in the office preventing them from appearing on the streets.

A couple of years or so ago I called into the Tunbridge Wells police station having witnessed dozens of vehicles blatantly ignoring the Buses Only sign and enquired why these transgressions were being ignored.

After consulting a colleague, the person on the desk informed me that it was a matter for the Highways Authority to enforce the restriction and not the police.

Your article states that the police are responsible after all, so at least that has been clarified with the passage of time.

As the location of the gateway is only a few hundred yards from the police station, a short spell of duty near the end of the gateway would be financially lucrative at £60 per ticket.

At the same time the police would be able to catch a few drivers using mobile phones (still a common occurrence despite the publicity) and others with illegally spaced lettering and numbering on their vehicle number plates.

One of the reasons people are prepared to ignore the rule of law is that the penalty for doing so is far too soft and does not act as a sufficient deterrent.

It is a much cheaper option, for example, to pay a fine and have an old car confiscated than to tax and insure it.

People might think twice if fixed penalties/fines for motoring offences started at £250 instead of £30 and HGV drivers in particular, caught using a mobile phone while driving lost their licences.

Meanwhile, as far as the bus gateway is concerned, an additional Buses Only flashing sign could be installed timed to come on at 10am and go off at 4pm. Anyone caught driving through during this period would have no excuse and should expect zero tolerance.

Graham Merfield  
Broadwater Down  
Tunbridge Wells

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**Insp Jon Kirby** said:

*"This letter raises a number of points not all of which can be answered briefly but if your correspondent would like to contact me I would be very happy to address the issues in more detail. In the mean time I can assure them there is an active police team in the town. I make no claim that lack of resources prevents us from taking enforcement action. We can and do carry out random checks and enforce the restrictions on the bus gateway and we are working with the council to address how we continue to enforce the restrictions on the bus gateway in line with the new powers available."*