

“Saturday Reply – Letters and emails”, The Guardian, Saturday 26th March 2011

I can understand the chancellor would want to curb inflationary pressures, but his choice of the duty paid for fuel seems bizarre. The Department of Transport's own statistics (see Transport Trends) state "The growth in car travel [since 1997] has been accompanied by a reduction in motoring costs and rising bus and rail fares in real terms," and its analysis included 2008, when we last saw current levels of fuel price inflation.

Although fuel has become more expensive, it is the overall cost of motoring (ie including vehicle purchase) which really matters and this is down about 14% in real terms. In contrast, bus and coach fares have risen by about 24% over the same period. And all this before the planned increases in public transport costs. The more serious fuel poverty which prevents people from heating their homes is also being ignored. By slashing the cost of public transport and expanding home insulation programmes, [Mr] Osborne could have improved the lot of those suffering the greatest pain, reduced inflationary pressures and curbed emissions - all three!

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