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Eight in 10 drivers struggle to get through yellow box junctions without stopping

With councils outside London and Cardiff wanting additional powers to use cameras to catch drivers who stop in yellow box junctions, new RAC research* reveals eight in 10 motorists struggle to get through them without stopping and almost half (46%) admit they sometimes get stuck in them accidentally.

Two-thirds of drivers (67%) say they find it difficult to get through some yellow box junctions without stopping, while 13% say this is the case for most they encounter. The same percentage (13%) however, believe every yellow box junction is easy to negotiate without coming to a halt on the

lines.

Among those who claim it is difficult to drive through a yellow box junction without needing to stop, more than three-quarters (78%) think this is very often due to poor sequencing of traffic lights. A third (32%) blame their infringement on the fact so many other drivers break the rules in this way that it forces them to do the same. One in five (20%) say they are badly designed and 15% believe they are often used in the wrong places.

Currently, only local authorities in London and Cardiff are able to enforce yellow box junctions with cameras and issue penalty charge notices (PCNs), but many more councils in England and Wales would like to be able to use cameras to enforce these often troublesome and controversial junctions. The rules are normally enforced by police, however declining officer numbers and the difficulty of catching offenders has resulted in little or no enforcement, leading to calls for a roll-out of camera enforcement elsewhere.

Asked whether councils across the country should be able to issue PCNs to any driver that comes to a standstill in one, more than a third (36%) of drivers surveyed by the RAC thought it was a good idea that would help prevent congestion at junctions. Another 36% agreed they ought to have this power, but should limit enforcement only to problem junctions. A quarter (24%), however, are adamant local authorities should not have these powers.

But a majority of the 1,990 drivers questioned in the RAC survey would like to see a softer approach to enforcement if local authorities were able to use cameras to issue PCNs, with nearly two-thirds saying a warning letter should be sent in the first instance, followed by a fixed amount PCN for subsequent infringements. A fifth (21%) think there should be a lower penalty charge for a first infringement, but a higher one for subsequent offences if caught again within a 12-month period. Thirteen per cent claim it should be a fixed amount penalty charge notice, reduced for early payment, no matter how many times a driver gets caught.

In separate data seen by the RAC**, Transport for London issued a total of 123,071 PCNs in the last financial year for yellow box contraventions – up from 108,164 the year before. The top location for yellow box contraventions was the exit of the Wandsworth fire station on West Hill where 16,707 PCNs were issued to drivers in the last financial year, followed by the fire station exit on Homerton High Street where 12,071 were issued to drivers.

The top five locations on TfL roads for yellow box contraventions between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 were as follows:

Location	PCNs issued
Wandsworth fire station exit on West Hill, SW18	16,707
Homerton fire station exit on Homerton High Street	12,701
Hanger Lane / Ealing Village junction, W5	8,033
Euston Road / Judd Street / Midland Road junction	5,595
Peckham High Street / Peckham bus station exit (east box)	5,432

Under the Traffic Management Act 2004 local authorities in England and Wales could be allowed to enforce ‘moving traffic’ contraventions such as disregarding yellow box junction markings. Despite a recommendation from the House of Commons Transport committee seven years ago for councils to be given these powers by 2013, [the Government said in 2015 it had no plans to activate them](#). The Local Government Association, however, has called for them to be put into place nationally, arguing the police have largely ceased to enforce moving traffic offences since the act was introduced. Scotland, however, would have to introduce new legislation to do this as the country is not covered by the Traffic Management Act 2004.

RAC spokesperson Simon Williams said: “Our research shows yellow box junctions are a very divisive issue with drivers. While the majority are in favour of councils more widely being allowed to use cameras to catch offenders, there is a strong feeling that many junctions are not set up fairly which leads to drivers having no choice but stop in them, whether that’s due to poor traffic light sequencing, poor design or being used in the wrong place.

“Box junctions can also heighten stress for drivers as those at the front of traffic lights often feel pressured to move on as a result of impatient drivers behind who don’t realise they are being prevented from doing so by the presence of yellow lines.

“If the Government was to grant local authorities the same powers that are already being used in London and Cardiff it’s highly likely we would see a massive rise in the number of drivers being issued penalty charge notices.

“The RAC is generally supportive of local authorities having the power to enforce yellow box junctions because of the value of local knowledge, but has concerns that it could lead to local authorities being inconsistent in their application of road traffic law. There is also a risk that cash-strapped authorities may see it as a lucrative revenue stream. To prevent this, we think warning letters for a first contravention would be appropriate.

“We therefore believe it is essential that every yellow box junction where a camera is installed is comprehensively tested to ensure it is easy to negotiate without stopping.”

A guide to yellow box junctions

Why do we have box junctions?

- Box junctions are used to keep traffic flowing by ensuring the road space is kept free for moving vehicles coming from different directions

How do you drive in a box junction?

- You may enter a yellow box junction when your exit from it is clear and there is sufficient space on the other side for your vehicle to clear the box without stopping
- You may only stop in a yellow box junction if you are turning right and are prevented from doing so by oncoming traffic or vehicles ahead of you are also turning right
- If your exit is not clear and you are not turning right then no part of your vehicle should enter the yellow box
- The principle and the rules are the same for a yellow box junction on a roundabout

Remember:

- Blocking a yellow box junction means that everyone else gets blocked with you

The rules around yellow box junctions are covered by [rule 174 of the Highway Code](#). You can read more [about yellow box junctions on the RAC](#)

[Drive website.](#)

Notes to Editors

* Research carried out with 1,990 members of the RAC Opinion Panel in August 2018

** Data provided to the RAC by the Transport for London following a Freedom of Information

About the RAC

First formed in 1897, the RAC has been looking after the needs of its members and championing the interests of drivers for more than 120 years.

Today it has more than eight million members and is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's [roadside assistance](#), [insurance](#), [buying a used car](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#) – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist's champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK drivers at a national level. This includes voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring, particularly the price of fuel and the high level of tax levied on it, advancing levels of road safety, and supporting the needs of all drivers, from young to old.

The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – is one of a kind and provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#). It provides a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump - and tracks these

prices daily to help drivers check if the price they pay to fill up is a fair one.

Contacts



RAC Press Office

Press Contact

press.office@rac.co.uk

Emails monitored during normal office hours. For breakdown queries, call 0330 159 0740

ISDN number on request