

The Yardstick

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Minutes as a unit of 'distance'

Ten years ago, BWMA, with help from Active Resistance to Metrication, and UKIP's Guard the Yard campaign, halted the unlawful use of metres on pedestrian signs; we thought the yard was safe. But now it appears that, unable to use metric, local councils are avoiding use of yards by indicating distance in *minutes*.

The spread of minutes on signs requires further investigation, and it would assist BWMA if readers who see such signs locally write to their council and ask why yards are not being used. Please forward replies to the Croydon address below.

Call for switch to "miles per litre"

So say the Automobile Association and *Auto Express*, after they sought views from over twenty thousand motorists on how car fuel efficiency should be expressed. Except, of course, most motorists support no such thing; the poll found that most prefer miles per *gallon*; details inside.

Kate Hoey MP

We are delighted to welcome to BWMA new member Kate Hoey, Labour MP for Vauxhall since 1989. Kate is presently chair of the Parliamentary All-Party Group on Zimbabwe, and a former Minister for Sport. Kate is also chair of the Countryside Alliance and, among her other campaigns, opposes the ban on hunting, and campaigns on behalf of target shooters affected by the 1997 ban on handguns.

Donations

Our thanks to all members who add donations to their membership subscription. This generosity has enabled us to keep the standard membership rate of £12, in spite of the large increase in postal rates.

Mini-leaflet

We have been asked by several members to produce a credit-card sized leaflet that can be kept in wallets and purses, for handing out to prospective members; please find enclosed a sheet of ten such mini-leaflets.

John Gardner, Director

BWMA is a non-profit body that exists to promote parity in law between British and metric units. It enjoys support from across Britain's political spectrum, from all manner of businesses and the general public. BWMA is financed by member subscriptions and donations.

Membership is £12 per year. Cheques or postal orders payable to "BWMA", 98 Eastney Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 3TE

The following is from Auto Express, 7 March 2012:

Call for switch to miles per litre

Poll by the AA and Auto Express reveals many motorists want to switch from mpg to mpl to make it easier to work out fuel costs

One in three motorists would prefer their car's fuel economy figures to be measured in miles-per-litre rather than gallons, an AA Populus poll conducted in conjunction with Auto Express has revealed.

Of 21,450 drivers surveyed, more than 7,000 voted to ditch the traditional mpg figure, which the AA agrees is now "outmoded, confusing and irrelevant", particularly for young drivers. Fuel has been sold by the litre for at least two decades, but despite that, fuel economy figures are still most prominently advertised and displayed as mpg.

AA president Edmund King said: "We buy fuel in litres, yet the majority of us still think about economy in miles per gallon. These two different measures don't add up. As fuel economy is vital to motoring today, I think it is time to break with the nostalgia of the past and begin using fuel economy figures which relate to what we buy at the pumps."

The AA's latest Populus poll revealed that it was younger drivers, aged 18 to 24 years, who were most in favour of that switch (51 per cent). But when it came to converting mpg into actual fuel costs at the pumps, Auto Express found motorists of all ages were confused. When we asked 10 drivers to calculate the cost of a 20-mile round trip behind the wheel of a car achieving 45mpg – with a fuel price of 140ppl – only one motorist was able to do the sums in their head. This was the only motorist who knew the conversion rate – roughly 4.5 litres per gallon.

When the same maths problem was posed, swapping the 45mpg for its equivalent 10 miles-per-litre, 60 per cent of the drivers quizzed at the Tesco Extra fuel forecourt in Watford, Herts, were able to quickly come up with the correct answer: £2.80.

Auto Express editor-in-chief, Steve Fowler, said: "When money's tight, the last thing motorists need is a fuel economy measurement that is virtually impossible for the average driver to convert into real spend at the pumps. Our findings clearly show that motorists could easily do these sums in their head if the industry started quoting fuel economy figures in miles per litre."

By law, economy figures should actually be published in litres per 100 kilometres, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. However, it says motorists are confused by this metric measure, so mpg is used more prominently alongside it. Gallons have been used for centuries, originally to measure wine and ale. But it became law to sell fuel in litres in 1988.

BWMA letter to AA President Edmund King, copied to Auto Express editor-in-chief Steve Fowler, 2 July 2012

Dear Mr King

Populus poll - miles per litre / gallon

In February, the AA and *Auto Express* held a poll into how motorists preferred to measure car fuel economy: miles per gallon, or miles per litre.

Our Association campaigns for the retention of imperial weights and measures and so is interested in this issue.

Auto Express reported the survey on 7 March 2012. Although the article said a third of motorists supported miles per litre, it did not give the proportion supporting miles per gallon. The article gave the impression that motorists preferred the litre. For example, the heading was "Call for switch to mpl" and underneath was the following statement: "*Poll by the AA and Auto Express reveals many motorists want to switch from mpg to mpl to make it easier to work out fuel costs*". The AA was quoted as saying that mpg is "outmoded, confusing and irrelevant" and "nostalgic". The AA has not reported the findings of the poll on its website.

We approached Populus for the raw data and found that 51% of those questioned thought that fuel economy should be measured in miles per gallon, compared to the 33% who supported miles per litre. Thus, while the AA and *Auto Express* have announced opposition to miles per gallon, ostensibly on the basis of this poll, neither has acknowledged the poll's chief finding, which is that most motorists prefer mpg.

Please could you help us to understand the AA's statement that miles per gallon are "outmoded, confusing and irrelevant"? According to the article, this belief is based on a mathematical question put by *Auto Express* to ten motorists while they were filling up. The article says that, due to the use of the gallon for fuel economy and the litre for pricing, most people could not answer the question, and were "confused".

We would point out that the Populus poll did not establish, or seek to establish, whether motorists would do such a sum in practice, even if car fuel economy were to be measured in miles per litre. We should have thought that motorists consider fuel economy when cars are purchased, not when filling up at the pump.

Nor has the AA considered whether the litre conveys *value* as effectively as the gallon. The litre, representing just 2% of a typical tank, does not provide motorists with distinctive price thresholds, unlike the gallon.

Why, therefore, does the AA not resolve its concern over the mismatch between gallons for fuel economy and litres for pricing by supporting a change to litre pricing?

You will be aware there has never been any popular mandate for changing from gallons to litres, and so we challenge AA and *Auto Express* to include a question on this in the next Populus poll: would motorists prefer the price of petrol to be expressed per litre, or per gallon?

Yours sincerely, etc

The findings the AA and *Auto Express* did not want motorists to see

21,408 AA members responded to the Populus online poll held between 16 and 22 February 2012. The question was: We buy our petrol and diesel in litres but fuel efficiency figures are given in miles per gallon. Do you think fuel efficiency figures should: -

	Total	Gender		Age					
		Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Keep miles per gallon (which have been used for many years)	10,850 51%	7,767 57%	3,083 40%	91 27%	544 27%	1,370 40%	2717 55%	3,355 56%	2,782 60%
Move to miles per litre (reflecting that we buy fuel in litres)	6,945 33%	3926 29%	3,019 39%	175 51%	953 47%	1,320 39%	1,462 30%	1,821 30%	1,239 27%
Move to miles per 50 litres (how far cars can go between fill ups)	739 3%	342 3%	397 5%	24 7%	109 5%	154 5%	160 3%	160 3%	134 3%
Move to litres per 100 kilometres (as used in most of Europe)	892 4%	676 5%	216 3%	7 2%	76 4%	138 4%	193 4%	279 5%	199 4%
Move to litres per 100 miles (using the UK measurement in the European format)	744 3%	494 4%	250 3%	5 1%	85 4%	127 4%	154 3%	207 3%	169 4%
Don't know	1,178 6%	414 3%	764 10%	38 11%	262 13%	311 9%	256 5%	209 3%	105 2%

AA President Edmund King did not reply to our letter of 2 July 2012. BWMA members who are also AA members should write to Mr King, citing their AA membership number, and asking why the AA is not supporting miles per gallon: Edmund King, President, The Automobile Association, Fanum House UG, Basing View, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 4EA.

BWMA letter to the Office for Nuclear Regulation, Bootle, 22 June 2011

I write regarding two extracts from *Nuclear Engineering International*:

11 November 2010: "In the report's appendixes, the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate lists tens of areas that are at risk of becoming outstanding issues post June-2011. In the case of the EPR (European Pressurized Reactor) examples include ... metrication - many of the AP1000 submissions have been in Imperial, rather than metric, units".

7 March 2011: "Also, Westinghouse and the regulator have not agreed fully on metrication. The AP1000 was designed in imperial units. Westinghouse proposes to make the reactor substantially metric, with certain defined exceptions, the regulator said. "This means that large parts of the design are metric, but some fixed elements and large components will remain in imperial units, including use of

some imperial fasteners (nuts and bolts)". For this reason, and to deal with the difference between US and UK construction materials, Westinghouse has proposed to "import a significant amount of US materials, rebar, steel sections and bolts." The regulator responds: "We are not currently convinced with Westinghouse's proposals".

[BWMA letter continues] The articles quote the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate as saying it does not want imperial units to be used in design work by Westinghouse Electric Company. Please could you provide the following information:

- (i) What is the Inspectorate's statutory authority for interceding in choice of units by a private company?
- (ii) What is the rationale for the Inspectorate's interference; why is it objecting to imperial units?

Your sincerely, etc

Reply from the Office for Nuclear Regulation, 25 August 2011

Thank you for your letter and please accept our apologies for the delay in getting back to you with our response. In your letter you raised two points related to our authority and rationale for requiring SI units. I have addressed these below.

The Nuclear regulators established the requirement for the reactor designs submitted for Generic Design Assessment (GDA) to be metric from the beginning. Paragraph 39 of *Nuclear power station generic design assessment - guidance to requesting parties. Version 3. HSE. August 2008*¹ required that documents submitted for GDA use SI units. We recognised that the AP1000 was not designed in SI units and allowed that specific non-SI documents may be accepted in specific cases with the prior agreement of the regulators.

Throughout the GDA process, we have discussed metrication of the AP1000 with Westinghouse and have re-stated our expectations that we will require any UK built plant to be essentially metric, using metric Structures, Systems and Components. This resulted in ONR raising a *GDA Issue GI-AP1000-ME-02*,² which required Westinghouse to ensure that documents submitted for GDA use SI units. We pointed out that as a corollary of this requirement we expected the design submitted by the Requesting Party would be essentially metric, using metric Structures, Systems and Components.

In the GDA Issue we went on to explain that the wide-scale use of imperial bolting/fastenings is not acceptable. We considered that although strict quality control during construction can be adopted, there is an increased risk of last minute substitutions with locally supplied, metric bolts.

I trust this answers your enquiry,

Toni Scott, Parliamentary Business Team Officer,
Bootle

BWMA response, 5 October 2011

You explain that the requirement for SI metric design and parts arises from Paragraph 39 of the Generic Design Assessment; this states the following:

"HSE requires that documents submitted are written in English and that SI units are used".

This paragraph does not refer to design or parts, only to the adoption of units and language for the purposes of documentation. There is nothing in Paragraph 39 that precludes private entities from deciding their own units for design and parts.

The nuclear regulator's justification of the expanding the remit of Paragraph 39 is that design and choice of parts is a "corollary" of Paragraph 39. According to the thesaurus, corollary means: "consequence, result, effect, outcome, upshot".

¹ <http://www.hse.gov.uk/newreactors/guidance.htm>

² <http://www.hse.gov.uk/newreactors/2011-gda-issues-ap1000.htm>

Paragraph 39 does not say this; on the contrary, its requirement that documents be in SI and English implies an expectation that SI and English are not always used for design and manufacture. We therefore suggest that Paragraph 39 means exactly what it says: "... *that documents submitted are written in English and that SI units are used*". No more, and no less.

Regarding the Government's policy on units of measurement, you may be aware that in 2010 the Government supported an amendment to EC Directive 80/181 that enables the indefinite use of non-metric "supplementary indications" (for example, allowing a "25.4mm" bolt to be described as "25.4mm/1-inch"). Neither the UK nor EC authorities supported mandatory 'hard' conversion; they agreed that metric *indications* be used, but that there should be no prevention of optional imperial or U.S. equivalents, nor any infringement of the choice of design parts by private operators.

The nuclear regulator's current practice is therefore at odds with both UK Government and European Union policy on units of measurement, as well as its own Guidance.

We are looking for the Office for Nuclear Regulation to amend its expectations of companies such as Westinghouse in this matter, and would be grateful for your comments.

Your sincerely, etc

No reply was forthcoming, so a reminder was sent in November. Still no reply was received, so a further reminder was sent on 3 December; then:

Reply from the Office for Nuclear Regulation, 9 December 2011

Thank you for your recent letters. ONR's role is to regulate the nuclear industry. Our expectation is that the industry does all that is reasonable practicable to ensure safety. Our requirements in GDA, which we have explained to you, are fully in line with those expectations. I trust that this completes our explanation as to the background and intent of our requirements in GDA with regards the units of measurement.

L Hesketh (Mrs), Parliamentary Business Team,
Bootle

BWMA response, 15 December 2011

You have not explained how the Office for Nuclear Regulation is entitled to tell private companies to change physical components when the guidance cited as its authority contains no such requirement.

Nor have you provided any explanation, still less an apology, for why the Office for Nuclear Regulation failed to reply to our letter of 5 October, or our reminder in November. Our further reminder of 3 December asked for a reply by both email and letter, yet no letter has been received. You have not provided details of the Office for Nuclear Regulation's

complaints process, nor have you identified your position within the Parliamentary Business Team. We wonder whether this lack of cooperation is normal for the Office for Nuclear Regulation, or whether it arises from a realization that its officials have been less than honest with private companies as to the meaning of Paragraph 39.

Please provide a **fully substantive** response to our letter of 5 October, addressing it point by point. If the Office for Nuclear Regulation accepts that it has been giving out advice wrongly, and we can scarcely see how it can deny it, then please have the good grace to acknowledge the mistake.

Please also provide the following:

(i) The name and position of the person responsible for the decision to tell private companies that Paragraph 39 meant they had to change physical parts.

(ii) You allude to metrication being a safety requirement; please provide a copy of the research undertaken by the Office for Nuclear Regulation that led it to this belief.

(iii) Please provide minutes of meetings, emails, memos, etc relating to the Office for Nuclear Regulation's deliberation and decision to tell private companies that they are obliged to remove imperial components.

(iv) Toni Scott indicates in her email of 25 August that the regulator is concerned with a potential mixing of metric and imperial parts, but states that the regulator has chosen not to regulate on the matter by adopting quality control. Please provide minutes of meetings, emails, memos, etc regarding the Office for Nuclear Regulation's deliberation and decision to not regulate on the matter of mixing bolts.

(v) Please confirm that the Office for Nuclear Regulation does not have a statutory mandate for metrication of the private sector.

(vi) A list of the companies regulated by the Office for Nuclear Regulation.

I look forward to receiving a full and considered reply to our letter of 5 October, and the information requested above, shortly.

To be continued ...

Downsizing – Half Pounders Confectionery

For many years, the Half Pounders brand of confectionery have been an imperial hold-out; as its name implies, each bag contained eight ounces. But in May 2012, our colleague Marc Dunkley sent in samples of old and new packaging with the following comment:

“As you can see from the original packaging, the bag initially contained a net weight of 227g (8oz) and was appropriately described as Half Pounders. On

the newer packaging, introduced last month, the description has been changed from Half Pounders to *One Pounders*, by supplementing the reference to the weight with that of the monetary unit. Unfortunately, as is often the case when imperial units are dropped from food packaging, the packet has been downsized - in this case from 227g (8oz) to 180g (6.35oz), a reduction of 21%. The price has only been reduced from £1.09 to £1, representing a per unit price *increase* of 15.5%.”

BWMA wrote to parent company Buchanans of Scotland on 30 June 2012

Our Association campaigns for the retention of imperial weights and measures. As such, we are disappointed to learn that Half Pounders has been replaced with a new brand, One Pounders. Whereas "Half Pounders" referred to the weight of the product, "One Pounders" is a reference to the price. The new weight is 180 grams. Please can you explain why Buchanans of Scotland made this change? We hope that Buchanans will consider reintroducing Half Pounders, as soon as possible.

Reply from Gold Casket Group, 2 July 2012

I refer to your letter of 30 June in which you asked us to reintroduce our 'Halfpounders'.

There are several reasons why we found it incumbent to change our brand to £One Pounders, which was a management decision.

1) Because the majority of our customers wanted the pack to be £1.

2) We retained, and maintained, the 'Halfpounders' at the same price of 99p for over 5 years and so, when the commodity market raised their prices by AN AVERAGE 53.9%, we had to change our strategy.

3) Also because one must operate in the real world and not continue, in the long term, to 'flog a dead horse'. Those who endeavoured to encourage people not to operate with decimal pricing soon lost the battle.

4) King Canute, many years ago, found that no matter what he did, he could not hold back the tide. I'm afraid that is what you would appear to be trying to do. Sorry that you are losing the battle!

However, we may well re-introduce 'Halfpounders' when inflation makes it necessary to sell them for £1.

Thank you for writing to us and I hope that we have clarified our position.

Douglas Rae, Managing Director, Greenock, Scotland

Olympic effort

Our friend Tony Leahy reported unlawful metric road signs, set up for the Olympics, to Greenwich Traffic Management, and appears to have been copied in on the subsequent email chain. At the risk of prosecution under the Data Protection Act, we reproduce the emails here, as they provide a useful insight into the wheels set in motion, on receipt of a letter identifying a metric sign.

7:58am, 2 July 2012; Tony Leahy's email to Traffic Management

Dear Sir/Madam,
I have noticed illegal height restriction signs that have been placed on temporary bridges for the Olympics that now span the A2 (Shooters Hill Road) in Blackheath and the A206 (Trafalgar Road) in Greenwich. The height restriction signs are in metric only and as so are illegal. Notification has also been sent to Highways bodies as well as departments within the Olympic committee.
Mr T. M. Leahy

8:39am; from Theresa Waller to Richard Cornell, Principal Engineer (South), Greenwich Transportation

Hi Richard
Please Respond / Action email below.
Kindest regards
Theresa Waller

11:52am; from Richard Cornell to Jennifer Impett, London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) City Operations Cluster Manager - River Zone, Canary Wharf

Hi Jen,
Please see below about height restriction sign on the new footbridges (actually, I think because the height of the bridge is above 16' 6" I'm not sure a sign is needed). Have TfL said anything about the one over Shooters Hill Rd?
Thanks, Richard

11:55am; from Jennifer Impett to Richard Cornell and Jeannine de Sousa

Hi Richard
Thanks for your e-mail. I will pass it on to the team for them to look into, but so far we have not had any concern from Transport for London.
Jen

12:0pm; from Jeannine de Sousa to Richard Plank, Commercial Manager, PHD Group, Middlesex

Guys
See mails below. We need to sort this or as suggested find out if we need at all please.
J

12:03pm; from Richard Plank to Roy Birley, Project Manager, PHD Special Projects Ltd, Middlesex

I assume you have this one in hand? Should you have any queries regarding this email please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below.
Kind Regards, Richard Plank

12:54pm; from Roy Birley to All

Dear all,
I'm not sure who Mr Leahy is or what he does but, as he has raised the query and told everyone about it, I have had to address it.

Below are extracts from firstly, the Highways Dept (.gov) website and secondly from the HSE website, which show

that signs are not needed on bridges with a clearance height of 16ft 6in (5.03M) or more.

I trust this resolves the query.

Direct.gov website; Low bridge signs: Bridges particularly at risk from strikes may have a variable message sign that is activated by high vehicles passing through an infra-red beam. When the sign is activated, four amber lamps flash, the top pair alternating with the bottom pair. Each year there are hundreds of incidents in which bridges are struck by vehicles too high to pass under them. Both rail and road users have been killed in these incidents. Look out for signs in this section and make sure that you are not a bridge basher. All bridges with a clearance of less than 16 feet 6 inches (about 5 metres) are normally signed. Both regulatory roundels and warning triangles can be used, depending on the type of bridge

HSE website; Checking your site: Carry out a visual inspection of your site to look for problems with headroom. Walk around the premises, make notes and take photographs. Mark the problem areas on a site plan. Check for damage and inspect areas where near misses have been reported. Check accident records and encourage reporting of accidents and near-misses. Ask for feedback from visitors and talk to your staff. Ask where they experience problems and where they would like additional warning signs and indicators. Try to make sure that your site keeps to the required standards for height restrictions, where possible. The standard minimum clearance over every part of the carriageway of a public road is 16 feet 6 inches (5.03m) but remember that many site vehicles may be larger than those allowed on public highways. When the clearance over any part is less than the standard 5.03m, provide warning signs both on and before the structure. The stated clearance should be at least 75mm less than the measured height.

1:24pm; from Tony Leahy to Roy Birley, et al

Dear All,
Thank you all for your responses and feedback although it seems that the email ping-pong has lost sight of the original query in that the height signs currently deployed on the temporary Olympic bridges show the height in meters ONLY. According to the 2002 Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions:

(1) it is not lawful to use signs that show distances in metres or kilometres. This applies to both road traffic signs and pavement signs for pedestrians (although not to signs on private land);

(2) it is a legal requirement that signs giving restrictions on traffic width, length and height (e.g. on approaches to bridges) have imperial units. I trust this matter will be looked into further.

Kind regards, Mr T. M. Leahy

4 July 2012; email from Darren Crowson, Strategy and Infrastructure Manager, Transport for London to Tony Leahy

Dear Mr Leahy,
Thank you for your email. This issue has been raised with the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games who will be reviewing the signage and replacing this where necessary.
Regards, Darren Crowson

Tony Leahy sent BWMA the following update on 19 July 2012

I can confirm that the signs have been removed from the Blackheath and Greenwich bridges.

House of Commons Hansard, 17 May 2012

Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con): May we please have a statement on the UK system of measurement, to enable the Government to confirm - I hope - that this country will continue to have the freedom to use the traditional imperial system of weights and measures, and not be forced any further down the road of compulsory use of the metric system, which has been recently suggested by a former Leader of the House of Commons, the noble Lord Howe?

Sir George Young: In this case, there is no solidarity between the Leaders of the House, and I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government are committed to retaining imperial units in all the areas in which they are currently legal units for trade. This includes retaining imperial units for use in dual labelling for as long as people find them useful.

BWMA note: see how Sir George refers to imperial units in "all the areas" where currently legal, as though there was some expansive array of lawful uses still to be defended. In fact, virtually the only retail transactions where imperial units are recognized are the pint for draught alcohol, and milk in returnable containers. All other uses of the pint are illegal, as are any use of pounds and ounces, and feet and inches. In the public sector, imperial units may be used on road signs, but nowhere else. Otherwise, imperial units exist only where the law does not apply, such as descriptive uses, or "supplementary indications", where information is provided at the seller's private discretion.

Cryptic reply regarding Department of Health research on measurement of children's height

The Department of Health commissioned research into "parental attitudes towards the routine measurement of children's height and weight".³ BWMA asked the following question:

Paragraph 5.2.1 says: "Parents commented that the inclusion of the data in both metric and imperial measurements was important and useful, as metric was still unfamiliar to some" ... What was the proportion or percentage of the "some" parents who found metric unfamiliar?

The following reply was received: The research undertaken for this project was wholly qualitative in nature. We work on the principle that qualitative methods neither seek, nor allow, data to be given on the numbers of people holding a particular view, therefore we cannot comment on the proportion of people who held this view.

³http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_080600

Multiyork Furniture Makers

Stuart Delvin received the following from Norfolk based Multiyork Furniture Ltd:

Thank you for your recent letter to Peter Mallinson regarding the way we express measurements in our Autumn catalogue. Unfortunately, due to the space restrictions we have in this particular publication, we have had to take the decision to restrict the dimensions to one form, which we have chosen to be metric. You will see, however, that in our recently published corporate brochure (enclosed) where space is not an issue we use both metric and imperial measurements, as we also do on our individual product leaflets and on the website. I hope this reassures you that, where possible, we do try and accommodate both Imperial and metric measurements where possible.

Sarah Herbert, Marketing Director

Another milligram/microgram mix-up

Shelia Eustace sent in a clipping of a letter to "Your Magazine", April 2012:

"I was interested to read the article, Boost your immune system, which advises readers to take 25mg of Vitamin D daily. As a nurse, I think you mean 25mcg - i.e. micrograms. Could you point this out to your readers, please? Angela Latallo, Leeds".

Your Magazine replied: "Thanks for pointing this out - it is indeed mcg, not mg".

Points and Twips

The BBC website contains the following comment: "I work as a graphic designer and printer, and we always work in millimetres as it is more precise". *Robert Carnaghan* notes: "Actually, printers' points are nearly three times as "precise" (small) as millimetres, with 72 points to an inch. For computer typography there is an even smaller unit, the twip, of which 20 equal a point (so 1,440 twips to the inch)".

Guineas

Referring to his cheque for annual BWMA membership, Christopher Pierpoint wrote in May, "I have paid my subscription in guineas for many years, so far without any problems". His accompanying cheque specified "Twelve Guineas" in the written field and "£12.60" in the numerical field.

LG Regulation

Local Government Regulation, formerly LACORS (Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services) has closed down and had its metrology co-ordination and enforcement guidance transferred to the Local Government National Metrology Focus Group. Information on the LG Regulation website (<http://www.lacors.gov.uk>) will remain as an archive until the end of January 2013, when it will be closed.

The Other Side – Warwickshire County Council, explaining metric signs, 27 April 2011

Our colleague Mike Parker put three questions to Warwickshire County Council, regarding metric signs reported previously in The Yardstick. The Council's response is reproduced below. Tony Bennett of Active Resistance to Metrication, alluded to in the reply, will respond next issue.

Dear Mr Parker

Here is my comprehensive response to your enquiry. Trinity Road, Kingsbury is a narrow road with no provision for turning large vehicles. It has a low railway bridge and is very close to a major oil terminal and a motorway. On many occasions heavy goods vehicles have reached the bridge and have been unable to reverse without police assistance. This is a regrettable waste of police time and it causes major inconvenience to local people who need to use the road for access to their properties. It also creates apprehensions about the safety of road users as the manoeuvres of large vehicles required are so difficult in the very restricted space available. Many of the drivers are from European countries and the drivers understand neither feet and inches or yards. Over the years we have been pressed by local people to improve the signs and also make them better understood by foreign drivers. A few years ago we agreed to improve the signs by providing new ones and, on the sign featured in the *Yardstick* article, to include metric distance in addition to metric height. This was to do something to help and to show local people that we care about their concerns. As mentioned previously in this correspondence, the current sign has the imperial distance only.

I appreciate that there are people passionately committed to opposing metrication, and we have to respect that viewpoint and be aware of the fact that our actions inadvertently provoked a reaction from such people. However the County Council also has strong commitments, and supporting local communities and caring for their well being is one of them. Our hesitation in agreeing to remove the signs was branded as "arrogant" by people who have no idea of the strength of local concerns which we had been trying to address. Had they attended the meetings with local people, as our officers have, they may have understood. However, when we were challenged as to the legality of the signs last year, we did agree that the inclusion of a small "550m" distance plate on the sign did not conform to the traffic sign regulations. We were also aware that the regulations are under review by the Department for Transport and we said that we would review the signs in the light of the new regulations when they are published. Amending the sign would have been simple - by using grey spray paint or by applying a small metal patch with adhesive to the sign to cover the small area containing the "550m". This would have cost only a few pounds. However, the unauthorised removal of the complete sign assembly by activists cost this Council £436.

In relation to your three questions put to Cllr Hazelton, I respond as follows.

1. "Why the sign was erected when it was known that it was illegal". I have explained above why the metric distance was included in the sign. WCC's acknowledgement, that the provision of the metric distance plate on the sign (not the sign itself) was not within the regulations, was after we were challenged by anti-metric campaigners. This was not perceived to be an issue when the sign was provided.

2. "Why they are refusing to take down the illegal sign". This is not the current position. The sign referred to is not there now. The current sign does not contain the element objected to. The new sign defers to the views expressed by the objectors. However, when the previous sign was in place, we would not have agreed to remove the entire sign - that would have been irresponsible and left Trinity Road unprotected against large vehicles. Most of the old sign was within the regulations. In view of the communications received last year we considered spray painting or plating over the very small part of the sign that contained the metric distance, but decided to wait to review the position in the light of anticipated new regulations.

3. "Who authorised the erection of this particular sign and therefore is responsible for the waste of Council Tax Payers money". The sign was authorised by the Freight Officer within my Group (Traffic Projects Group). I disagree that the sign was a "waste of Council Tax Payers money". The issue only concerns a small distance plate on the sign which was provided at almost negligible additional cost and which could have been easily covered over. However, Council Tax Payers money was wasted by those who needlessly took down the entire sign. This action caused the County Council to incur the cost quoted above.

I trust that the above answers your enquiry. Jonathan Simkins, Group Manager - Traffic Projects, Transport Planning Unit, Environment and Economy Directorate, Warwickshire County Council

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