



# Consumer news



## Call for clear food scores

FOOD

**W**hich? is calling for a clear system for publicising restaurant hygiene ratings after pilot schemes have shown that food outlets are cleaning up their act.

This month, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is assessing results of scores-on-the-doors trials, which require food outlets to show their hygiene scores at the door as well as publishing them online. More than 130 councils now publish scores.

In the pilot area of Hull, the number of food businesses getting an excellent rating from inspectors rose to 138 from 39 in the past year. And the number achieving a poor or very poor rating dropped from 225 to 165.

Meanwhile, the Barnet pilot scheme has had 26,500 website visits by consumers anxious to know how clean their local cafés, takeaways and other outlets are.

But there is confusion over various systems used across the UK, ranging from smiley faces to traffic lights and involving different numbers or pass/fail measures.

Which? wants a scheme that allows consumers to compare restaurants properly. Chief policy adviser, Sue Davies, said: 'Premises shouldn't be open if they could make you ill, but we'd also like a scheme that shows the difference between restaurants with very good or poor hygiene standards.'

### TAKE ACTION!

■ Go to [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk) to find out hygiene scores in your area.

We check out Kwik Fit's service aimed at a better environment

## How green is your car?

MOTORING

**I**t aims to turn cars into greener machines, but is Kwik Fit's eco-friendly service all it's cracked up to be?

To find out, Which? motoring expert George Marshall-Thornhill booked in his Nissan Primera for Kwik Fit's Go Green service – claimed to be the first of its kind.

It costs £29 on top of a normal interim or full service, and checks brakes, emissions and that the air/fuel 'lambda' sensor works. These checks should help a car run more efficiently and cut fuel use.

Kwik Fit also includes a fuel additive, claimed to clean the engine and make it run more efficiently, and donates £10 of the service costs to the CarbonNeutral Company to offset one tonne of carbon.

So how does this stack up? Well, if you have an MOT at the same time as a service, brake and emissions tests are included anyway.

And the jury is still out on how effective fuel additives are; George's car actually did slightly fewer miles to the gallon after the treatment. Before the service, George estimated his car was doing 37.6mpg, but that fell to an estimated 35mpg four weeks after the Kwik Fit visit.

George said: 'I'm disappointed with this service. It doesn't do anything that a normal MOT and service wouldn't and if you want to add a fuel treatment, it's



George gets the blues from his green car test

available from most motoring stores for about £15.'

Kwik Fit agreed that some aspects of the Go Green service were covered in an MOT test, adding that motorists who booked both would pay only an extra £20 for the green service.

It also said the lambda test is not included in an MOT. However, we believe that an MOT's emissions test would highlight any air/fuel problems.

The company estimated that its fuel additive works for 8,000 miles and needs to be evaluated over that period. We'll continue to monitor George's vehicle.

Look out for our test of green cars next month.

### TAKE ACTION!

■ Go to [www.cleangreencars.co.uk](http://www.cleangreencars.co.uk) for the latest advice on driving in a more environmentally friendly way.

## Vauxhall sets the brakes on runaway cars

MOTORING

**V**auxhall is to modify handbrakes on a quarter of a million cars after we revealed problems with runaway vehicles (see July 2007, p5).

Owners of manual Vectras and Signums produced since 2002 are being told to contact their nearest dealer for a free modification.

After Which? first reported on more than a dozen incidents of parked vehicles rolling away, and

had dozens of other complaints, Vauxhall maintained it could find no fault. But it's now found that if you apply the handbrake by depressing the release button, the mechanism could be left partially released.

The company still maintains its handbrakes are safe, but says it will modify mechanisms to 'reduce the possibility of a partial release when incorrectly setting the handbrake'.



### TAKE ACTION!

■ Vectra and Signum owners who have concerns about their car should email [vauxhall.customerassistance@uk.gm.com](mailto:vauxhall.customerassistance@uk.gm.com) or call 0845 090 2044.

**50 times more**

pollution from a 1976 Ford Fiesta than one sold today

FORD

**70%**

of people think that ticket booking fees are too high

WHICH?

**14%**

Vauxhall share of UK car market in 2007

SMMT



Reselling tickets on sites like eBay is pushing up entertainment costs dramatically

# Gig prices are set to rocket

## LEISURE

**T**icket agents and event promoters have threatened to raise prices massively for concerts and festivals this summer due to MPs' failure to address the problem of touts.

Their warning follows a report by the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee on the growing power of individual and organised touts.

It stopped short of demanding changes to the law, despite concluding that touting was 'unfair' and that people were making huge profits from internet selling.

Many agents and promoters want it to be illegal for people to sell on tickets.

Otherwise, they say they'll sell directly on to the secondary market, which makes major profits for touts as well as individuals who often sell on eBay.

This means that buyers could see fewer tickets available at face value and, in some cases, standard prices could more than double (see 'The potential price of The Police', right).

Rob Ballantine, of the Concert Promoters' Association, told Which? that selling policies would have to change: 'Promoters, agents and artists want their part of the secondary market. It's open season, it's the Wild West.'

He added that many artists, including The Police and Beyoncé, were already auctioning their tickets to the highest bidders.



Sting may be enjoying old times with The Police but some ticket prices certainly aren't so nostalgic

His comments came last month as one major agent, Ticketmaster, bought exchange site Getmein! where tickets can be sold considerably above face value (see right).

Jonathan Brown, of the Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers, said that the growth of the tout market was now unavoidable: 'Agents will be after the deepest pockets.'

Their concerns came as a Which? survey of 1,000 members of the public, in January, found that eight out of ten favour some restrictions on reselling tickets for events and 75 per cent think there should be a limit on the profit that can be made by reselling a ticket.

## THE POTENTIAL PRICE OF THE POLICE

**Ticket prices from agents could increase to match those from exchange websites**

### The Police

**Ticketmaster £47.80**

**Seatwave.com £108.84**

Manchester Evening News Arena, Wednesday 18 June



### Mamma Mia

**Ticketmaster £47.55**

**Getmein.com £135.25**

Prince of Wales Theatre, Saturday 8 March, 7.30pm



### Bon Jovi

**Seetickets £50**

**Seatwave.com £88.24**

Hampden Park, Glasgow, Saturday 21 June

## Thanks to members who help set agenda

## WHICH?

**W**hich? members have been busy taking part in our annual survey, which will help shape the magazine in the coming months.

Thanks to the 61,000 of you who took part in the poll, which gives useful insights into your consumer habits.

For example, 92 per cent of you now have a mobile phone – most choosing pay-as-you-go tariffs.

And when it comes to choosing a phone deal, 67 per cent say they pick a tariff before deciding on the handset.

The survey also revealed that 74 per cent of members have broadband at home, while a further 12 per cent have a dial-up internet connection and 14 per cent aren't online. BT is the most popular internet service provider, with 23 per cent of our web-savvy

members, followed by Virgin in second place, with 17 per cent.

A fifth of members told us they've switched energy supplier in the past year, and 17 per cent say they've used a switching website to change insurance.

Which? Editor Neil Fowler said: 'We always try to reflect your lifestyles and views, and hope you'll see a real impact of these findings in future issues.'