

Fight to end menace of dazzling xenon headlights

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A campaign group with the backing of medical and driving experts says the ultra-bright lights put the lives of road users at risk



The petition against the headlights has around 1,000 signatures

Government ministers are being urged to tackle the problem of dazzling xenon headlamps by a campaign group with an online petition to gather public support.

The group, started by a night-time London taxi driver, has the backing of medical and driving experts and says the ultra-bright lights put the lives of road users at risk.

The campaigners want ministers to change the rules governing how xenon lights are assessed in the MoT headlamp alignment test. They claim that seven out of 10 xenon headlamps are positioned in a way that dazzles road users yet this is legal, because it meets the requirements of the test.

The campaigners have also written to Mike Penning, the roads minister, demanding he issue new guidelines to vehicle manufacturers and MoT testers.

Among the groups supporting the campaign are the Driving Instructors Association, which represents the interests of independent driving instructors and the CTC, the national cyclists' organisation. The Association of Optometrists also supports the group's argument that xenon lights can impair vision.

Xenon headlights have become an increasingly popular option with buyers of new cars because they illuminate the road ahead far better than conventional halogen lights. Some types can be up to three times brighter than standard halogen lights and emit a distinctive blue-white light.

The lights are especially popular on top-of-the-range models from Audi, BMW and Mercedes-Benz. Car makers claim they are safer than standard halogen lights and are also more environmentally friendly, because they use less energy. However, critics claim that, while they may improve the safety of the occupants of the vehicle that has them fitted, they dazzle other users.

Ken Perham, the London cabbie who started the campaign, has been overwhelmed with support since launching the petition. It also demands changes to the rules governing daytime running lights, which he also considers to be too bright.

"People think that it's just them when they are dazzled by these lights, but when they realise that other drivers feel the same, they want to make their voice heard," he said.

The petition, which has so far attracted around 1,000 signatures, is at lightmare.org.