

Pollution cameras to snap toxic cars

Jonathan Leake

SCIENCE EDITOR

BRITAIN is to get its first traffic pollution cameras – devices that can measure the toxins emitted by every passing vehicle to see if they breach legal limits while also identifying the owner.

The first will be deployed this week on one of Birmingham's most polluted highways. Later this month cameras will also be placed at two of London's most polluted junctions, one near Oxford Circus, the other in Blackheath.

The trials will be sponsored by the Department for Transport and overseen by scientists from King's College London and Birmingham and Leeds universities.

The devices will gather emissions data, potentially exposing car makers such as Volkswagen that lie about pollutants. They could also enforce the ultra-

low-emission zones planned for London and other cities. The cameras shine a laser beam through exhaust fumes and use reflected light to calculate levels of toxins such as nitrogen dioxide. A separate camera captures the numberplate.

Francis Pope, an atmospheric scientist at Birmingham University, said: "As the VW scandal showed, it is imperative that vehicle emissions are measured under real-world driving conditions. These cameras could transform our ability to monitor pollution."

The devices were invented by Stewart Hager, a former Nasa engineer. "My device stops car makers lying to their customers and polluting cities," he said.

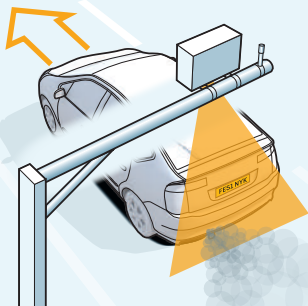
Andrew Jones, a junior transport minister, said: "It is early days, but these trials will help develop air quality testing."

@jonathan_leake

Clean sweep

1

Camera analyses toxic pollutants emitted by each vehicle and records numberplate



2

The device could enforce the ultra-low-emission zones proposed for London and other cities

Costume drama as Mirren refuses to cash in on bikini

Sharon Feinstein

DAME HELEN MIRREN prefers browsing the aisles of DIY stores to glitzy Hollywood events and rejected pleas to cash in on famous photographs of her wearing a bikini, according to her screenwriter nephew.

In an interview with The Sunday Times, Simon Mirren said: "What Helen loves is going to Home Depot [an American DIY chain], where you buy drills, hammers and plants, rather than being seen in posh Hollywood restaurants when you are the talk of the town.

"She has a house here and her gardening is amazing. When I was six, we planted carrots together in Wales and she looked up and said, 'I don't think you'll remember this amazing moment. We are making things grow together and hopefully next Christmas there'll be vegetables here.'

"That moment stuck in my mind and Helen hasn't changed with all the fame and success."

Simon, who co-wrote Versailles, a lavish television costume drama about the construction of the Palace of Versailles that is to be broadcast on BBC2 in April, said his aunt, who also starred in Prime Suspect, refused to profit from images of her looking toned on

holiday in Italy in 2008, when she was 63. "I begged her to turn us all into millionaires by marketing bikinis after everyone went wild over her fit bikini body but she said, 'Absolutely no.' She's not interested. She

won't brand herself like that," he said.

He realised any efforts to cast her in Versailles would also be doomed to failure.

"I didn't cast Helen in this series because she is too expensive," he said. "With a small budget, we introduced actors just out of college and it was nice to give them a chance. We couldn't have afforded [Helen]. She wouldn't give me a discount. We don't do discounts in our family."

The screenwriter, whose mother is Helen's sister Kate, said his aunt had been disappointed at failing to receive an Oscar nomination for her portrayal of Hedda Hopper, the Hollywood gossip columnist, in the film Trumbo.

"She was nominated for a Golden Globe for best supporting actress and all the indications were that she was in the race for the Oscars... She is disappointed [that] she's not being recognised for something she's done, but it is not a defining disappointment," he said.

The youngest of Simon's three children, Felix, 12, has caught the acting bug from his great-aunt. "He was in a movie with Helen called Hitchcock and now he wants to be an actor, which is all my aunt's fault."

Camilla Long reviews

Trumbo, Culture, pages 12-13



Mirren: Italian holiday in 2008