

LED Lights

Eddie kindly drew my attention to an interesting but worrying article in *'Classic Car Weekly'* of 30th November 2016 that suggested we shouldn't fit LED 'bulbs' because they are illegal. The article says that bulbs are one of the few aftermarket replacement parts that have to comply with compulsory technical standards and LED bulbs do not do this because they don't carry an appropriate 'E-mark'. The UK's Road Traffic Act (1988) states that it is an offence to supply, fit or use vehicle parts that do not comply with the required Construction and Use Stipulations – suggesting that an LED conversion might cause us to commit the offence of 'driving an unroadworthy vehicle'.

The British Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations 1989 specify dates before which lamps and light sources do not have to be 'type approved' therefore you are not breaking the law to fit a non E-marked new old stock tungsten filament bulb in a 'vintage' lamp. However, the Department for Transport (DfT) suggests that 'because LEDs are not mentioned in the UK regulations, they are not permitted unless they comply with European legislation' i.e. they are approved by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The DfT is also quoted as saying 'there are also requirements for minimum power for certain lamps and LEDs would be unlikely to meet these requirements'. It's no surprise that Private Eye refers to the DfT as 'DaFT'. The Department's first assertion above simply reflects (no pun intended) the fact that LED headlamp 'bulbs' were not around in 1988 and its second is clearly rubbish because we would be hardly likely to fit anything that offered less light.

The CCW article also quotes the Head of Technical Policy at the Institute of Advanced Motorists – who says 'Purchasers might think they are enhancing their safety by fitting LEDs – but their good intention is misplaced'. Perhaps this gentleman should consider how much safer he would feel doing 60 mph on a rainy night in a six-volt Austin Seven fitted with LED headlights, compared with one illuminated by conventional tungsten filament bulbs.

This all sounds delightfully reminiscent of late 1926 when Austin very sensibly moved Chummy headlights to a forward position between the wings and the radiator. The legality of this obvious improvement was questioned by Hampshire Police and plod's intervention forced the factory to move the headlights back to their almost useless former position by the scuttle. Happily, common sense prevailed some months later.

Perhaps we should apply common sense here, it might be some time before we hear something illuminating from DaFT?

I would welcome comments on this topic Ed

