

AA chief hits govt attitude on motorists

AUTOMOBILE Association chief Phil Taylor hit out at the poor understanding the Government has shown when dealing with private motorists in a New Year statement released yesterday.

"The last decade has shown very clearly how far Government is behind the rest of the community in getting things done," Mr Taylor said.

"Restrictions on road use, bans on private cars and bus-only lanes have not got people out of their cars.

"They have created more traffic jams wherever they were introduced."

Mr Taylor stressed that the private car has an important role to play in Hongkong's future transport system.

"No alternative offering comfort and convenience exists or looks likely to in the near future."

Mr Taylor said that the middle income people of Hongkong were no longer willing to accept "the sardine can standards of public transport".

He also said that rising costs would do nothing to stop car ownership, pointing out that operating costs had already trebled in the last decade.

"There is a noticeable trend to keeping cars longer and looking after them better," he said.

"The policies on restraint and restriction on car ownership, outlined in the recent White Paper on Transport, will fail because higher standards of public transport are not being provided."

He predicted that car ownership would rise with the prosperity of Hongkong, even if extreme taxation is resorted to in an effort to fight the inevitable.

More positive attitudes would have to be adopted by the Government in the coming decade, he predicted.

"If more positive policies do not emerge in the near future, I predict that public pressure will bring about the formation of a Highway Authority, independent from Government, with powers to make and enforce better policies."

He also expressed the hope that a "meaningful parking policy" would develop fairly soon.

"Our urban streets must be cleared for moving traffic and the only way to achieve this is by building a

lot more off-street vehicle parks."

He went on to say that the standard of safety on our roads in the coming years would depend largely on education.

"Road safety education, aimed at drivers and pedestrians, will have to be tackled in greater depth and with on-going programmes, if loss of life and serious injury are to be contained."

Among other predictions, Mr Taylor said that motoring holidays in China could become very popular if and when this is allowed by the Chinese.

Motoring in the 1980s would be in smaller, more economical cars, possibly even electric cars by the end of the decade.