

The Big State gone mad? Drivers will be pressured over organ donation before they can have a licenceBy Louise Eccles

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Plans to force motorists applying for a driving licence to answer a question about organ donation have met with a furious backlash.

From today, applicants must state if they want to sign up to the NHS Organ Donor Register or not, or defer a decision.

The Government hopes the move will double the number of potential donors, but critics claim it is one step closer to compulsory organ donation.

Tory MP Peter Bone described the initiative as 'Big State gone mad'.

Previously, the question was optional and applicants were able to ignore it.

If the pilot scheme is successful, it could be rolled out to those seeking to renew their passports.

Less than a third of all Britons are registered to donate their vital organs. But ministers believe far more are willing to.

Critics yesterday claimed it was a 'back door' attempt to force people to make an instant decision over organ donation.

Mr Bone said: 'A Conservative-led Government should be reducing the size of the state and reducing the amount the state involves itself in people's lives.

'I don't remember this being discussed in Parliament.

'What they are saying is, "We're going to stop you getting something you're entitled to and ask you about something which is not relevant at all to what you're applying for".'

'They could extend this to when you apply for a passport or anything.

'It's a back door way of forcing people to decide whether they want to go into organ donation. It doesn't apply to everyone.

'I may not need a new licence, so I won't answer the question. It's Big State gone mad.'

One million new donors sign the register every year, of which half come via the driving licence form.

Similar systems – so-called prompted choice schemes – in the U.S. have seen a significant rise in registrations.

Motorists will have to answer a question about whether they want to donate their organs after death before getting their driving license

In Illinois, the percentage of donors has increased from 38 per cent to 60 per cent since its introduction in 2008.

Three years ago, Gordon Brown supported a move to allow hospitals to 'presume' they had consent to take the organs from dead bodies unless people had specifically opted out of the national register, or family members objected.

The plans were thrown out after patients' groups lobbied against it, arguing that it took away

people's rights over their bodies.

Sally Johnson, director of organ donation and transplantation at NHS Blood and Transplant, said: 'Around 8,000 people are waiting for a transplant and around 1,000 people die each year while waiting or because they have become too ill and are removed from the list.'

Public health minister Anne Milton said that although just 29 per cent of Britons had registered to donate their vital organs, 90 per cent had expressed interest in doing so.

She said: 'Being an organ donor is a truly selfless act and a life-saving gift to someone in need.

'We want to make it easier for people to sign up to the Organ Donor Register when they apply for their driving licence.

'We hope to encourage everyone to discuss their organ donation wishes with their loved ones.'

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2020958/Drivers-pressured-organ-donation-licence.html#ixzz26Qz8jsVi>