

POUND NOTES

■ After peaking at 8.88% in March, personal loan rates have dropped back for the first time since August 2008, says Tim Moss at Moneysupermarket.com, who reckons the average APR has fallen to 8.68% in the past week.

"The clampdown on the sale of payment protection insurance (PPI) caused providers to hike up prices to recoup lost revenue," Moss says.

"Let's hope that the rate reductions we have seen recently are just the beginning and that we see more providers keen to attract new customers in the months ahead."

■ Although the Scots are the best savers in Britain – saving £236 or an average 45% of disposable income each month – they are pretty poor at finding the savings accounts paying better rates of interest, says a survey by ICICI Bank, a subsidiary of the Indian bank. It runs **HISAVE** Savings, an easy access account which guarantees to top Base Rate by at least 0.30% until December 2011.

The survey says savers in the Midlands and Wales are least knowledgeable of the lot about the rates which their savings are earning – whilst Londoners are savviest, with 10% of savers in the capital confident they are getting 1.50% on their savings. But Londoners haven't actually got much spare cash left to boost savings.

Despite recent cuts, the **HISAVE** two-year fixed rate account continues to pay 4.10%AER. Further details available on www.icicibank.co.uk.

■ If you are slow to reinsure your car, the chances of a policeman flagging down your car are rising.

AA Insurance says the number of uninsured vehicles stopped by police soared to 170,000-plus in 2008, against 78,000 in 2006.

Simon Douglas of AA Insurance says this success follows the national roll-out of

automatic number plates recognition (anpr) systems on police cars, which continuously check registration numbers which come into its field of detection.

"It instantly compares them against data provided by the Motor Insurers Database (MID) and alerts officers if there isn't a match."

The moment a policy expires, it is deleted from the MID, Douglas says.

"If you're late renewing, or take out a new policy after an existing one has lapsed, or if you buy a new car, it can take three or four days before details of the new policy are updated."

Despite the crackdown, leading car insurance comparison site Gocompare.com says five million UK motorists – that's one in five – could overpay for car insurance by as much as £1bn this year, and will have little idea how much they could save unless they use comparison websites.

"Hundreds of thousands of motorists still mistakenly believe that because their insurer gave them a great deal in the past, they are bound to be still competitive now," says Hayley Parsons at Gocompare.com.

■ Even children are hit by the credit crunch, says Pocket Money Purse, a survey of pocket money compiled by the pfeq (Personal finance education charity).

With the weekly total of pocket money topping £2.1bn, that means the average child receives £6.32 pocket money per week, with parents in East Anglia apparently the stingiest (41% of them have already made pocket money cuts.) Children in the north of England may see their income falling fastest from now on, with 76% of parents in the north-west and 75% in the north-east admitting they find it harder to hand out pocket money in the downturn.