



**October 2016  
Network**

**A networking tool for Activists and other interested parties**

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## EDITORIAL

So, the French authorities have, once again it seems, chucked their Liberty, Equality, Fraternity slogan from the French Revolution down the toilet. Apparently, as of November, gloves bearing the CE mark will be mandatory.

Now, hopefully, we'll be able to let you know exact details on this once MAG's representative to FEMA, Ian Churchlow, has attended the next FEMA board meeting in early October and we know exactly if this applies to tourists.

You've no doubt heard and can read further on about new legislation covering the use of hand held mobile phones whilst driving. And, if you're a regular reader of Network, you know it is one of my pet hates. Only

last week I saw a bin lorry driver texting at the wheel in my local high street! Doubling the existing fines/penalties will do absolutely nothing to deter these morons - especially not when a police officer has just been nicked for doing exactly that. To them life is cheap and there is nothing as important as their next call or text. Now, a 5 year ban and 5 grand fine may just about cut it.

News from the US tells us a new regulation prevents under 18's riding pillion - oh, but its OK to carry guns. Just sayin'.

Catch you in November. Copy date for that edition will be 25<sup>th</sup> October: [aine@mag-uk.org](mailto:aine@mag-uk.org). Subject heading: Network.

Ride free, AG

[Acknowledgments: George Legg, Selina Lavendar, Steve Wykes, Dave Wigham, Leon & Lembit, Julie Sperling plus anyone else I've forgotten]

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### MAG'S CAMPAIGNS TEAM – LEON AND LEMBIT – HAVE BEEN BUSY AS USUAL.

1 Autonomous vehicles: MAG submitted the most comprehensive response of any riders' rights organisation - or indeed, of any organisation involved with motorcycling in the UK, to the Autonomous Vehicles Consultation which had been set up by the Department for Transport. This matters because there is a danger that the Government might think about creating dedicated road space for autonomous vehicles - at the cost of all other traffic - just to make it work. MAG has no problem with progress - as long as it IS progress. The danger is that there is a real risk of traffic lane widths for PTW riders being cut - just like with the bicycle schemes - as the authorities try to accommodate the new technology.

2 North East Combined Authority (NECA) MAG has been actively engaging with the officers who are developing the long term strategy and plans for transport in the region. MAG's Regional representative, Dave Wigham, said 'we've spent quite a lot of time helping NECA get focussed on the positive role of motorcycling, including the attractions of a modal shift from four wheels to two. We're keen to ensure that this work isn't lost as we wait for clarity on how transport in the region is actually going to be run.

Leon accompanied Dave and his Vice Rep for a meeting with the NECA team leader and his colleagues to give a presentation based on MAG's Five Pathways Proposals. Emphasis was placed on the benefits of a unified bikes in bus lanes policy. And, a clear marker was set down regarding the thorny issues of Armadillos – that Newcastle introduced on a trial scheme basis using an article in the BMF magazine to 'justify' this move. Leon distributed copies of the hard evidence that proves these measures do create Trip Hazards. It was also made clear that the BMF have recently issued a joint statement with MAG to clarify our objections.

3 Oakdene Cafe: Steve Mallett, MAG's Deputy South East Representative, and Lembit met Kent police to resolve a dispute about the use of 'stingers' in Kent. A 'stinger' device deflates vehicle tyres to stop a vehicle from escaping detention by the police. Earlier in the summer, a stinger had been displayed by a police officer at the Oakdene Café - a popular meeting place for riders in Kent. Steve spoke to Police Sergeant Gary Easton about the matter. Steve Mallett said 'stingers amount to a potential death sentence to anyone on a bike who rides over them. I was reassured to hear they had never used a stinger against a motorbike and wouldn't do so, except in the context of something like a life threatening terrorist situation.' PS Easton confirmed this assessment: 'a stinger has never been used against a motorbike in this county. It would only happen in a very unusual situation, like a suicide bomb or someone trying to attack a group of people with lethal force. In everyday life it's just not going to be used.'

4 Solihull: the Council in this area has been active on the injunction front. They have introduced a ban on 'cruising' which includes limits on the use of horns and the introduction of prohibition on two or more vehicles travelling together. The insanity of such a measure is self-evident, but a rising number of local authorities have been imposing injunctions like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. MAG's rep, Colin Brown, and Lembit met with the Solihull local authority to discuss the matter on 15th September. The issue has not been resolved and won't be in the short term – as the local authority incomprehensibly seem to believe that including the 'convoy' point is in some way relevant. This can ONLY be the case if either the level of offence is greater if carried out while travelling with a group - or if the group is somehow collectively 'guilty' and liable to punishment. Since it was emphasised that neither is the case, the logic is clearly flawed. We're going to keep the dialogue open, but - worryingly - there's more to come as we learned that Birmingham City Council are also attempting to introduce the same legislation.

5 Northern Ireland: MAG is working with the Northern Ireland Assembly Department for Infrastructure on a strategic approach to biking in the transport mix. Lembit went to Belfast to meet with officials, and considered the interaction 'wholly productive.' The agenda includes biker deaths, recording of accident causes, the licence testing regime and road surface issues. Northern Ireland could form a case study in practical partnership with

political groupings. Lembit and Ian Churchlow, the Board's Northern Ireland 'portfolio holder,' are supporting Paul Wilson and other new activists in the region to increase MAG's profile in the 'road racing capital of the world.'

6 London: Tim Fawthrop, the newly elected Regional Rep for London, is working closely with Leon and Lembit on a series of key issues in the capital. Tim and Lembit met in Mid-September to organise the campaign to oppose the threat of tolls for bikers using a new Thames crossing at a place called Silver Town. Leon has been working with Tim to establish a new meeting and recruiting place for MAG in the Bike Shed which is in the newly trendy area of Shoreditch. This already looks likely to extend the range of bikers we can encourage to join MAG – and to take direct action to raise awareness of motorcycling and various concerns.

Tim has also been introduced to Dick Penfold who is a very well seasoned biker but has only recently joined MAG. He decided to join and become an activist having read Leon's monthly columns in MSL (Motor Spot & Leisure) which almost invariably highlight what MAG is doing for bikers.

7. Wales: Leon has spent a lot of time this month assisting Regional Rep Ian Williamson and engaging directly with Welsh Government officials to fight something of a regard action in defence of the progress we made with the Motorcycle Safety Steering Group (MSSG). Following a well received presentation of the Pathways Proposals by Leon and Ian in November 2015, the MSSG unanimously agreed to advise the Welsh Government that it should issue new guidance regarding the benefits of bikes in all bus lanes – and the pitfalls of Armadillos or Orcas.

Since then, dark forces have been at work to try to nullify that decision. In response Leon has been liaising with Ian and MAG activist Barrie Avery and is developing a plan for actions to ensure that we will not let this progress be thwarted.

8. DfT, Armadillos and Orcas: Leon has been engaged in various meetings and conversations to ramp up the pressure to get these devices recognised as the potentially fatal Trip Hazards that they are. This included a meeting at the DfT with the lead officer for central government's cycling and walking programs. He has also written to the Roads Minister to request a meeting to discuss the hard evidence that MAG was right all along regarding the need to review and reject the use of these measures on UK roads.

9 Jeremy Corbyn: Lembit spoke with current Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn (correct at time of writing), who has agreed to meet up at a later date. 'It would be enormously helpful to have the support of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament,' says Lembit. 'My guess, today, which is 14th September, is that Jeremy will comfortably win the leadership campaign - probably with an increased majority. I do respect him and it would be marvellous to have his backing for some of our key campaigns. Let's see if I'm right about the election result, and proceed from there.'

10. Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ): As things stand, plans remain in place for noncompliant motorbikes to be charged the same £12 per day as cars in the ULEZ. In response, Leon has been developing an increasingly good and mutually trusting relationship

with the new source of potential activists who see the Bike Shed as a focal point for sharing their passion for biking.

11 Harlow: a crazy injunction, like the one in Solihull, continues to cause work for MAG. Lembit is again attempting to organise another summit with the Harlow Authority and this will be in either the first or third week of October. 'Local authorities operate slightly differently to private firms,' observes Lembit. 'This is good in some ways, but it also makes getting meetings a little challenging. However, I have no choice. We must have this meeting. I'm going to get this fixed 'whatever it takes.'

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## **EDINBURGH BIKE THEFTS**

Bike thefts are responsible for 22% increase in stolen vehicles in Edinburgh against a background of falling crime figures.

An increase in young people stealing motorbikes has fuelled a 22 per cent jump in vehicle thefts in the Capital in the latest crime statistics.

Chief Superintendent Kenny Macdonald said the picture as a whole was encouraging. "Overall it's a very positive start to the year with crime falling in the city. But he highlighted the increase in motorbike thefts and associated antisocial behaviour as a cause for concern. Thefts of motor vehicles between April and June totalled 251 – a 22.4 per cent increase on the 205 stolen in the same period last year.

"Many of these thefts have involved motorcycles," said Chief Supt Macdonald. Often residents, particularly in the north-east and north-west of the city, will phone the police to complain about antisocial behaviour by teenagers on stolen bikes, revving engines and causing a nuisance. Chief Supt Macdonald said: "It's an exceptionally dangerous activity because many of them will be riding these bikes without helmets, often driving at speed, sometimes riding off road and placing themselves and other people in danger.

In July police launched Operation Soteria, dedicated to tackling motorbike theft and associated antisocial behaviour. Superintendent Richard Horan, who is leading the campaign, said it includes the use of decoy bikes. "We place a decoy bike in a location where we believe that these crimes are occurring and then when people steal the motorcycle we can act on it." He said six people had been arrested and charged as a result. It's something we're looking to do on an ongoing basis." Operation Soteria also involves the use of cameras against the motorbike thieves after reports from residents. Supt Horan said: "A lot of the antisocial use of motorbikes is in areas where there is no CCTV coverage, so we have deployed officers with high definition cameras to go into these areas.

Lothian Conservative MSP Miles Briggs said he had been contacted by motorcycle owners angry at what they described as a crime wave of thefts of motorbikes in Edinburgh and across Lothian more widely. "It appears a small group of offenders are behind these repeated thefts of bikes, some of whom are re-offending almost as soon as they are released after being charged with one theft.

However, motorbike group Riders Club Edinburgh has complained that not enough is being done to deter the crooks despite the latest crackdown. They have launched a petition to the Scottish Parliament calling on the police to get tough on offenders before more lives are lost.

Many of those stealing bikes are teenagers and are posting pictures posing with stolen bikes on social media as if these are trophies to behold with no fear of any repercussions from Police Scotland.

Carl Grundy spokesman for the group said these youngsters don't steal the bikes to sell them or make money. They steal them for the kicks and as they often don't wear helmets police will not give them a chase because of the kids came off the bikes and got hurt it is the cops who could be held responsible for the injury.

If you report a bike stolen they say they'll get back to you in five to seven days and by then the bike is truly gone.

"It is beyond a joke. They take the bikes, boast about their illegal pursuits online and even with that evidence police can do nothing."

In June, a 14-year-old Brad Williamson died and his pillion passenger suffered a serious head injury after they crashed a valuable 1,000CC bike that had been taken without permission.

Mr Grundy added: "His friends then had this great idea that they should all steal bikes and do wheelies outside his house on the day of his funeral."

The petition on the Holyrood website says: "Motorcycle theft in Edinburgh and all over Scotland is at an all-time high and peaks every summer as tourists come to visit our beautiful country.

"We would like to see motorcycle theft treated as a more serious crime, considering that many of the motorcycles stolen cost in excess of £10,000, and for it to be dealt with quicker.

"We would also like the police to have more power when apprehending motorcycle thieves as we feel they are currently lacking manpower and resources."

MAG supports the call for bike thefts to be taken more seriously and for the Scottish Parliament to put measures in place to provide effective deterrents to curb this scourge of motorcycle theft. We would also urge all riders to sign the petition, as visitors to the city frequently have their bikes targeted.

<http://www.parliament.scot/gettinginvolved/petitions/stopmotorbiketheft>

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## **MAG PRESS RELEASES**

### **07-09-2016 MAG meets NECA in biking summit**

MAG has met with the North East Combined Authority (NECA) to ensure that riders' interests are included in the strategic plans of the Authority from the outset.

The MAG team of Gordon Finney Regional Vice Rep, Andy Whitworth Political Rep and Dave Wigham Regional Rep have been working with the individual authorities for some

years on a council by council and issue by issue basis for North East riders but this was a great opportunity to speak to the people that will form the overarching policies that will shape the regional transport policy in the future.

Dave Wigham, felt the summit had achieved just about everything they had set out to do at this stage. 'NECA is going to define how our roads and transport system are operated across the region. In the past, riders have tended to be excluded from these proceedings. The meeting was therefore absolutely vital, because there is no way that the Authority can bypass the needs of riders – or the benefits which biking can bring in terms of economy, ecology and reduced congestion.'

MAG's Policy and Campaigns Adviser, Dr Leon Mannings, has been working with Dave Wigham and others to connect with the North East Combined Authority and get bikers' views into the discussions. It's thanks to a lot of work by the activist base in the region and it is a great credit to a long period of existing engagement led by MAG,' says Leon. 'This is the way the organisation really makes its mark - by being at the tables where the form and thrust of policy decisions are made. We've insisted motorcycles are mentioned throughout the strategy – not just as a separate section as some have tried to propose. We also shared clear evidence Light Segregation creates trip hazards as MAG has said all along. I'm working on similar matters in other regions, including Wales, on a similar template.'

This meeting was the first in a series designed to make the rider's voice a significant one as the strategies become action plans. Dave adds 'the evidence suggests a 10% shift from cars to bikes can lead to a 40% cut in congestion. Everyone wins when that happens, so there's no downside to MAG's involvement here. I felt the Authority understood that and so I'm cautiously optimistic about the way ahead.'

Contact MAG at 01926 844 064 or [central-office@mag-uk.org](mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org)

### **MAG develops Northern Ireland bike agenda with officials**

16-09-16

The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG), the UK's leading voice for riders' rights, has commenced serious talks with the Northern Ireland Assembly Department for Infrastructure on a strategic approach to biking in the transport mix.

MAG's Director of Communications & Public Affairs, Lembit Opik, met with officials in the Department to explore areas of common interest and to see how MAG could contribute to the policy agenda being considered by the Department.

Lembit said, 'the discussions have been wholly productive. One thing about the Northern Ireland political system is its efficiency and accessibility. That's why MAG has been able to make a lot of progress very quickly towards measurable and visible outcomes. This is a team effort where MAG is keen to work with the Department and other key stakeholders as part of the Motorcycle Forum which should lead to a win-win for road users.'

Key issues which MAG will bring forward to the next meeting of the Motorcycle Forum include:

- *Action to reduce biker deaths and serious injuries.*

- *Talks with police to improve recording of the causes of accidents*
- *Potential cross-border joint initiatives*
- *A review of the motorcycle licence testing regime*
- *Analysis of the case for and against 'hard segregation' for cycles*
- *Consideration of road surfaces in the context of safety*

'We're pleased to be a part of the process of analysis and implementation of a specific and clear agenda,' adds Lembit. 'Other groups will be involved too. The overall approach provides a great example for other parts of the UK. MAG hopes that together we'll make sure Northern Ireland remains a massively attractive destination for riders from the UK, and from across the world.'

Contact MAG at 01926 844 064 or [central-office@mag-uk.org](mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org)

### **23-09-2016 MAG steps up to address London bike thefts**

MAG is increasing its intervention in the worsening bike theft epidemic in the country's capital, following the death of rider Ricky Hayden.

Tim Fawthrop, MAG's London Representative, is like most London motorcyclists getting increasingly frustrated with the plight of the city's riders, who are under increasing threat from bike thieves who present a violent threat to the capital's 200,000+ riders. Motorcyclist Mr Hayden was senselessly murdered on Tuesday, 13th September 2016, after he and his father were stabbed by thieves who were attempting to steal his moped from outside his home in Chadwell Heath, East London.

Tim Fawthrop says "the situation has got completely out of hand. Mr Hayden's murder is an extreme and unforgivable example of the risks riders now face. The police seem ill equipped to assist, and the criminals know it. MAG is now working with riders in the city to put together some responses to this issue. We want to work with the police, councils and governing bodies to prevent further thefts and harm to riders."

MAG has been working with the UK's Motorcycle Crime Reduction Group to find lasting solutions to thefts and robberies which have seen riders being physically assaulted by these thieves. "We're going to organise a series of awareness raising events, which we hope will make Sadiq Khan the Mayor of London, the metropolitan police, the Greater London Authority and the politicians realise how serious this has become and devote more resources to this issue. Mr Hayden's death is the latest example of how the robberies have escalated and it seems almost inevitable that this might occur. We can't wait any longer - we need riders and the authorities working together to prevent further harm."

MAG is offering condolences and support to Ricky Hayden's family.

Contact MAG at 01926 844 064 or [central-office@mag-uk.org](mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org)



Welcome to another MAG update.

It's been a bit of a tricky time for me as Chair as very unfortunately Dave Hammond, my Vice Chair and also the Regional Rep for Eastern Region, had to step down from all involvement in MAG due to health issues. We all recognise that it's important he takes the time out he needs to get the treatment required and give himself the best chances of a full recovery. We thank Dave for all his hard work, he will be missed. I am thankful to the National Committee (NC) who have worked swiftly to appoint a new Vice Chair to assure I'm not left without support, and we welcome Andy Carrott to the role. Andy is no stranger to the NC and its workings, having previously served as the Regional Rep for Lincolnshire. He's also been active in a variety of roles in local and national clubs so he won't be phased by anything that comes to him as the new Vice Chair.

Summer seems to have brought with it much exuberant riding of motorcycles some of which has caused issues with local residents and drawn the attention of the police. Following the incidents in Harlow of illegal riding, there have been similar occurrences in Birmingham where riders without number plates have been riding in public areas and causing a disturbance. When I was at the Brum Demo I spoke with one of the police officers who was active in dealing with the Birmingham issue. He explained to me how he was working hard to engage with local young people and their families. He said that his worst fear was that the next time he sees one of these families he may be having to explain how the 'fun' had led to a death. Meanwhile in Kent an issue was brought to our attention where police had a stinger style device on the ground close to a local bike meeting. In case you missed this, it was a video recording taken close to the Oakden Cafe clearly showing the police with a 'stinger' styled device on the ground and riders confronting the officers. The video was widely shared on Facebook. MAG does not condone the use of stingers for the purposes of enforcing road traffic and anti-social riding issues. MAG is currently in contact with the police in Kent and looking to hold a meeting in the very near future.

Wherever concerns are raised we look to work with those in authority and open up lines of communication. Whilst we may not call the people that are causing disturbances bikers, to the general public we are all the same. Much in the way all teenagers are tarred with the same brush. It creates a debate amongst us on the NC but at the end of the day, if you are on a bike, trike or quad to the average Joe in the street you're 'a biker'. Therefore we will do our best to engage with as many people as we can to represent the law abiding rider which the majority of us are. We are of course restricted as there is a limit to our resources in both time and monies.

Any of you that are on our emailing lists will have noticed an increase in the amount of press releases we are sending you. We are very busy and we know we need to make sure we are releasing information to those interested about where we are and what we are up to. We hope to keep improving on our communication both with members and the wider world. Should you wish to be added to our Activists email list then please email [central-office@mag-uk.org](mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org)

I have good news to report from the small team in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield and York). Further to the work of a few

dedicated volunteers who have been communicating with the WYCA for some three years, motorcycles are clearly on the councils agenda. The Council has released a survey which can be found at [www.yourtravelyoursay.co.uk](http://www.yourtravelyoursay.co.uk) We encourage you to take a look and complete the survey as a rider. It would be really great if on completing the survey you could in your own words let the council know you are a motorcycle rider, thank them for addressing motorcycling concerns and politely include any other comments you wish to make. The survey is open until the 21<sup>st</sup> of October and has an option for individuals, and groups and organisations. If you could help us by sharing this with others so that the council see a measured response from riders that would be fantastic.

I made brief mention to the Brum Demo earlier in this piece, thank you if you were one of the people that came along to this years 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ride. Colin organised a slow riding event with a local training school at the finish point of the ride. This saw a number of us attempting to ride very slowly in a slalom style through cones and then a second challenge of three figures of eight in a restricted space. Both attracted penalties for putting a foot down. I have to say a Moto Guzzi Griso is not an ideal machine for such a challenge and I chicken out of completing the 3<sup>rd</sup> figure of eight. Other bikes were equally inappropriate including a Harley Davidson Road King, a Honda Blackbird and a Triumph Speed Triple which all managed to complete the two challenges in a slower time than mine. Colin managed a well deserved win on his heavily modified softail and promised us he'd had no prior practice. Well done Colin.

Hot off the press as I submit this article, I have just found out that we have defeated the proposal for compulsory helmets for all trike riders and passengers in Northern Ireland. Just one more reason for you to support MAG.

If you are not already a MAG member, you can join us as an individual, affiliate club or corporate member, contact our central office on 01926 844 064 (Monday – Friday, 9 – 5), visit a local meeting, talk to us at an event or find us via the Internet at [www.mag-uk.org](http://www.mag-uk.org)

Until next time, Ride Free

Selina, Chair of The Motorcycle Action Group

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**Perhaps you may like to read this letter and leave a comment**, Dave Wigham, NE Rep.

[http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/features/letters/14761422.Do\\_motorcyclists\\_follow\\_a\\_different\\_Highway\\_Code/](http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/features/letters/14761422.Do_motorcyclists_follow_a_different_Highway_Code/)

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### **CMA issues reminder on no-claims bonus requirements**

From: Competition and Markets Authority  
First published: 2 September 2016

Around 1,000 private motor insurance providers are now providing better information on no-claims bonus protection to drivers.

This is in response to a Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Order which came into effect one month ago.

The Order obliges all providers of private motor insurance (PMI) - both brokers and insurers - to present existing and prospective customers with information on the costs and benefits of no-claims bonus (NCB) protection, including what happens to these bonuses in the event of claims being made.

PMI providers are now required to provide the CMA with the information that they must present to customers, and written confirmation that they have complied with the Order in preparing such information. This requirement followed a CMA investigation into the PMI market, in relation to which the CMA published its final report in September 2014.

The CMA is reminding providers that complying with the Order is a legal requirement and that those which have yet to supply the required information to their customers and confirm to us that they have done so, must do so as soon as possible. Those which have complied so far include 9 of the 10 largest insurers and the 5 largest brokers.

The largest insurer yet to do so, Co-op Insurance, has informed the CMA that for a small proportion of its new business and renewals it can only at present disclose some of the information required by the Order. However it is working towards compliance, and in the meantime will be making it clear to affected customers that it is currently unable to show separately the cost of NCB protection included in the total premium in written offers and documents.

The CMA will continue to monitor all companies selling PMI to ensure that they comply with the requirement as soon as possible. In doing so the CMA will continue to work with the relevant insurance associations (the Association of British Insurers and the British Insurance Brokers' Association) and the Financial Conduct Authority.

Adam Land, Senior Director of Remedies, Business and Financial Analysis said:

- As we found in our investigation, the price and benefits of no-claims bonus protection are often unclear to consumers. This requirement will ensure that drivers can obtain better value by making it easier to compare products and costs.
- Whilst we are pleased that most providers have responded in time, we are disappointed that a large company like Co-op has been unable to - despite us giving all companies in the market well over a year to ensure that they comply with these important requirements. We expect Co-op and any other smaller companies in the same position to work towards providing this information to customers without any further delay.

The Order and an explanatory note on its requirements are available on the CMA's webpages. Businesses are requested to submit their compliance statements by email to [pmi.order@cma.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:pmi.order@cma.gsi.gov.uk) - and to send any questions to the same address.

Gov.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-issues-reminder-on-no-claims-bonus-requirements>

CMA: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/drivers-benefit-as-cma-motor-insurance-order-goes-live>

CMA: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-finalises-changes-for-car-insurance>

Order: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-motor-insurance-market-investigation-order-2015>

## Use of handheld mobile phones at 'epidemic proportions'

The illegal use of handheld mobile phones is at 'epidemic proportions' according to the RAC, whose latest research suggests 11m motorists admit to making or receiving a call while driving in the last 12 months.

Published today (15 September), the research shows that a 'shocking' five million say they have taken photos or videos while at the wheel of a moving vehicle.

Part of the RAC's Report on Motoring 2016, the research also highlights that attitudes towards handheld mobile use have 'worryingly relaxed' over the last two years.

The proportion of people who feel it is acceptable to take a quick call on a handheld phone has doubled from 7% in 2014 to 14% in 2016 and the percentage of drivers who feel it is safe to check social media on their phone when in stationary traffic, either at traffic lights or in congestion, has increased from 14% in 2014 to 20% in 2016.

The percentage of drivers who said it was not acceptable to take a quick call at the wheel has correspondingly fallen 6% from 84% in 2014 to 78%.

The RAC says that it is not just attitudes that are shifting – behaviour is changing significantly too with the percentage of drivers who admit to having used a handheld mobile phone while driving having increased to 31%, compared to just 8% in 2014.

Similarly the proportion of drivers who 'own up' to sending a text, email or posting on social media has risen to 19% today compared to 7% just two years ago.

Pete Williams, the RAC's road safety spokesman, said: "It is alarming to see that some drivers have clearly relaxed their attitudes to the risks associated with this behaviour but more worrying is the increase in the percentage of motorists who actually admit to using a handheld device when driving.

"The fact that drivers have little or no confidence that they will be caught when breaking these laws is a likely contributor to the problem and it is sadly the case that every day most road users see other drivers brazenly using their handheld phones when in control of a vehicle – a sight which should be a thing of the past.

"The use of handheld mobile phones is the biggest road safety concern among motorists today, and while the Government is progressing the introduction of stiffer penalties, we call on all stakeholders to step up efforts to shift cultural attitudes and make the use of handheld mobiles phones as socially unacceptable as drink-driving.

"With compliance on some traffic laws including the use of handheld mobile phones seemingly getting worse, the RAC calls for an end to cuts to dedicated roads policing and urges the Government and chief constables to give greater priority to enforcement of road traffic laws."

Iain Temperton, Road Safety GB's director of communication, said: "The figures published by the RAC today show that a lot of work needs to be done to resolve the issue of motorists using their mobile phone while driving.

“It’s a case of personal responsibility. Motorists know it is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone when at the wheel, even when they are stationary at traffic lights or in a queue of traffic – and most drivers adhere to those rules.

“Road Safety GB urges drivers to switch off all mobile phones when driving. Using a hands-free mobile phone can also distract drivers’ attention - the safest course of action is to divert calls to voicemail and switch off the phone.”

- See more at: RAC: <http://www.rac.co.uk/press-centre#/pressreleases/snap-chat-text-tweet-anything-goes-at-the-wheel-as-motorists-relax-attitudes-1559464>  
RAC Report: <http://www.rac.co.uk/report-on-motoring>

***AND, still they pfaff around – its not enough:-***

### **Government to double penalties for mobile phone offences**

The penalty for using a hand held mobile phone while driving is to double from three points and a £100 fine to six points and a £200 fine.

Although there has been no official government announcement, the move has been widely reported in the media across the weekend, with the new penalties expected to come into force in the first half of 2017.

The increase in penalty points would mean an immediate ban for newly-qualified drivers who have a ceiling of six points for the first two years after passing the test.

While the move has been broadly welcomed by road safety and motoring organisations, concerns have been voiced about the police’s ability to enforce it.

Talking to BBC News, Louise Ellman, chair of the Transport Select Committee, said detection rates need to be higher.

However, Jayne Willetts of the Police Federation of England and Wales, said: "Unfortunately, with fewer officers out on the roads, more of these offences are going undetected."

The Guardian says the DfT is currently working on a new ‘hard hitting’ THINK! campaign.

The RAC says the increased penalties are in response to figures it published last week which suggest mobile phone use by drivers has reached ‘epidemic proportions’.

The RAC findings, published in the 2016 RAC Report on Motoring, suggest a significant worsening in both attitude and behaviour among drivers to using a mobile for making calls and checking social media.

Pete Williams, RAC road safety spokesman, said: “The Government’s swift action to the findings in the RAC Report on Motoring shows they understand just how dangerous it can be to use a handheld mobile phone at the wheel.

“Increasing the fine from £100 to £200 and doubling the penalty points from three to six will help to deter people from doing it.”

- See more at: BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37389800>

Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/17/penalty-points-fines-double-drivers-using-mobile-phones-200>

RAC: <http://www.rac.co.uk/press-centre#>

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## **Bikesafe to return to Rockingham after success in 2016**

Bikesafe's annual road safety day will return to Rockingham Circuit in 2017 following the success of this year's event which attracted 5,000 visitors.

Organised by BikeSafe in partnership with Northamptonshire Highways, the 2016 event took place on 16 July, with attendees enjoying a mix of motorcycle activities and family entertainment.

Highlights included the opportunity for an assessed ride with a police advanced motorcyclist, who advised participants on road riding techniques.

Visitors were also able to enjoy a track experience under the watchful eye of the California Superbike School and demo rides from manufacturers including BMW, Honda, Suzuki, Triumph and Yamaha.

The event, which was supported by the Motorcycle Industry Association (MIA), also included demonstrations by the emergency services. The police highlighted techniques to stop an offender's car by using 'boxing' tactics, while the fire service demonstrated an extraction from a crashed vehicles.

BikeSafe is a police-led motorcycle safety initiative run by most forces across the UK, in a bid to reduce the number of bikers killed and injured on the roads.

The scheme's aim is to encourage post test training and improve rider attitude and behaviour. It runs under the premise that: 'the more training you get, the better and safer the rider you become'.

Although the date is yet to be confirmed next year's event is likely to take place on the weekend of the 15-16 July 2017, at the Rockingham Circuit, Corby, Northamptonshire.

- See more at: <http://www.roadsafetygb.org.uk/news/5293.html#sthash.uvxQUcec.dpuf>

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## **Was abandoning the tax disc a mistake?**

GEM Motor Assist Rob Marshall

Many of us have made the mistake of making false economies, in which a supposed means of saving money has had the opposite effect. It appears that the DVLA may have made a similar error.

When it was decided to save costs by abandoning the paper VED tax disc in October 2014, the agency anticipated that there would be a slight dip in revenue, caused by the general public adapting to the new regime.

Unfortunately, the DVLA did not foresee that tax receipts would plummet by £93 million, £13 million more than its original estimate. Unfortunately, the administrative saving of £10 million does not come close to making up the shortfall.

In its defence, the DVLA reported that not only have people taken time to get to grips with the changes but that some used car buyers were also unaware of the new policy that Vehicle Excise Duty cannot be transferred and a new owner must re-tax the car again immediately. It also cited lower emissions of new cars as reducing the tax take. The authority also admitted that a new monthly Direct Debit may be another reason for the shortfall,

although those adopters tended to pay a higher total of annual VED, instead of a single annual payment.

Nonetheless, the DVLA also admitted that removing the disc has made evasion easier, because a passing officer cannot check for the presence of a valid disc in the windscreen, which was a concern that I have held for some time, despite theories that ANPR cameras make evasion more difficult. Additionally, the DVLA has reported concerns that the evasion figure might continue to rise, meaning that further action is needed to understand the cause and restore lost revenue.

I wonder what action that might be? Bringing back the old-fashioned paper disc, perhaps? GEM: <http://www.motoringassist.com/motoring-advice/news/tax-disc-abandonment-false-economy/>

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### **Some roads 'more dangerous' as a result of 20mph**

The 'blanket' 20mph speed limit in Tower Hamlets has made some roads more dangerous, according to a councillor in the borough. (The Wharf)

Cllr Andrew Wood has questioned whether the limit has benefited road safety and called for a referendum to be held when the 18-month trial concludes in October.

He points to a survey of 427 residents in which more than half of respondents believed the borough's roads had become more dangerous.

The 20mph speed limit was introduced in April 2015 onto all the roads controlled by the council, initially on an 18-month trial basis.

Cllr Wood says that not all drivers are obeying the limits, which leads to more overtaking, in turn increasing the risks for all road users. He has also questioned whether police cars and buses are sticking to the limit.

Cllr Wood told The Wharf: "Most residential roads should clearly be 20mph but all roads including A roads? I have followed buses and police cars driving at 30mph even though speed cameras are now issuing tickets at 28mph.

"Residents have sent me videos of dangerous overtaking, including by council vehicles."

Cllr Wood also points to the results of a Tower Hamlets Council survey, in which 53% of the 900 respondents disagreed with the speed restriction.

He added: "There is a clear indication that many residents do not think it has made the roads safer and that, like other parts of the UK, we should settle the issue through a referendum.

"The council originally said before it introduced the ban that successful 20mph zones and 20mph speed limits should be self-enforcing.

"How can a ban be self-enforcing when so many people do not agree it has made the roads safer? It also means ambulances drive more slowly on emergency response as they cannot legally drive more than twice the speed limit on any road."

Cllr Wood adds that he does support the use of 20mph limits on a vast majority of the roads in the borough.

He said: "I support the 20mph speed ban on the vast majority of roads in Tower Hamlets but I worry that on its own that it won't improve road safety but that once it is made permanent that more effective safety tools will be ignored."

- See more at: The Wharf: <http://www.wharf.co.uk/news/local-news/tower-hamlets-20mph-limit-makes-11787580>

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### **M4 smart motorway decision could put lives at risk: Transport Committee**

The decision to develop a 32-mile stretch of the M4 into a smart motorway has been criticised by the Commons Transport Committee, whose chair says the scheme 'could put lives at risk'.

The Government hopes the proposed scheme, announced on 2 September, will enable proactive management of the M4.

However, Louise Ellman, chair of the Transport Committee, says the decision hasn't given 'proper consideration for safety'.

Reported by Transport Network, Ms Ellman told the Press Association: "I think lives could be put at risk. This is a hasty decision led by cost-cutting without proper consideration for safety.

"It ignores the need for a three-year trial period for safety considerations. The Transport Committee produced a highly critical report on this."

The aforementioned report, published in June, concluded that the Government should not proceed with motorway 'all lane running' schemes while major safety concerns exist.

Smart motorways (formerly known as managed motorways) use a range of technology to vary speed limits in response to driving conditions. They are divided into three different types: controlled motorway, all-lane running and hard shoulder running.

The application for the M4 scheme was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration in March 2015 and accepted for examination the following month.

Following a six-month examination during which the public, statutory consultees and interested parties were given the opportunity to give evidence to the Examining Authority, a recommendation was made to the Secretary of State for Transport in June 2016.

Sarah Richards, the Planning Inspectorate's chief executive, said: "The decision announced today supports the recommendation made by the Planning Inspectorate and is the 11th application for a significant highway project to be examined.

"To date, the Planning Inspectorate has examined 58 applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects, all within the statutory timescales laid down in the Planning Act 2008.

"This certainty of knowing when a decision will be made and following full consideration of public views, provides developers and investors with the confidence needed to plan the infrastructure improvements this country needs."

- See more at: GOV UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/m4-junctions-3-to-12-smart-motorway-scheme-given-development-consent>



Transport Network: <http://transport-network.co.uk/Ellman-says-M4-decision-could-put-lives-at-risk/13242>

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### **Biker Down conference will seek to 'set standards'**

The 2016 National Biker Down Conference will be held in Stevenage on 7 October and there are still places available for road safety professionals wishing to attend.

Originally developed by Kent Fire & Rescue Service, Biker Down provides bikers with advice about what to do if a fellow rider comes off their bike.

The free-to-attend course covers scene management, first aid and how bikers can make themselves more visible to other road users. Biker Down is currently being delivered by 24 fire & rescue teams across the UK.

In 2012 Biker Down gained a coveted Prince Michael International Road Safety Award and a year later it received a National 'Alarm' Award.

The 2016 Conference aims to help set standards for all Biker Down teams and fire & rescue services across the UK.

At present, 20 different fire services will be represented at the event along with a number of road safety partnerships and representatives from IAM RoadSmart.

For more information or to register interest in attending the conference, which is being held at the Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service Training Centre, contact Jim Sanderson on 01622 692121 or via email.

- See more at: Biker Down: <http://www.kent.fire-uk.org/your-safety/road-safety/road-safety-for-bikers/>

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***From the USA. Not sure how I feel about this – from the age of 6 days old my Son rode cosily in my sidecar, participated in all my biking adventures and I didn't start taking him pillion until about 13/14. I know other Mothers who've done differently.***

### **New Federal Regulation Prevents Children From Riding As Passengers On Motorcycles**

By George Drivas - September 10, 2016 Associated Media Coverage

The U.S. Federal government has announced a new safety regulation that will prevent minors under the age of 18-years old from riding as a passenger on motorcycles. According to government officials, the United States Department of Transportation (D.O.T) and the American Motorcyclist Association were supportive and heavily involved in developing the regulation.

The regulation will be in effect beginning 01/05/17, however according to Harold Mathers, a spokesperson for the United States Department of Transportation, local police departments throughout the country have been granted the authority to operate under an 'FYI' period until 04/05/17.

Many are not surprised by the regulation as children riding as passengers on the back of motorcycles has been a controversial topic for several decades. Prior to the implementation of the new regulation, individual states were permitted to create their own laws regarding motorcycle safety including the minimum age of passengers.

As of today, most states do not have a minimum age requirement for motorcycle passengers. The only states that currently have a minimum age requirement are Arkansas (8-years old), Hawaii (7-years old), Louisiana (5-years old), Texas (5-years old), and Washington (5-years old). According to the United States Department of Transportation representative Harold Mathers, his department acknowledges the above mentioned states for implementing parameters regarding motorcycle safety and the minimum age requirement of passengers, however doesn't believe the minimum age requirements set by the 5-states are sufficient.

Mathers told reporters at a press-conference, "A uniform law regarding the minimum age of a motorcycle passenger is long past due, it doesn't make sense that in pursuit of creating a safe commuting experience for children we have long ago implemented strict car-seat laws, however have implemented nothing in the way of motorcycle safety requirements."

According to Mathers, the United States Department of Transportation believes that this new regulation will have a long-lasting and positive impact while saving lives. Mathers told reporters, "We see the statistics each year and we know that every year children die while riding as passengers on motorcycles. In our opinion – if this regulation saves one life, we've made the right decision. We understand that many motorcyclists are aware of their surroundings and pride themselves in exercising motorcycle safety, however the fact remains – it doesn't matter how safe of a motorcyclist you are if you're surrounded by other motorists, it just takes one wrong move for a life to be lost"

Though many motorcyclists (depending upon their local municipality) will have until 04/05/17 to avoid penalties and fees for failing to remain in compliance with the new regulation, officials are asking motorcyclists to adhere to the 01/05/17 compliance date.

Mathers concluded the press conference by informing reporters that the United States Department of Transportation is working diligently to release all relevant information on the D.O.T website.

AMC: <http://associatedmediacoverage.com/new-regulation-bans-children-from-riding-on-motorcycles/>

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