



# April 2024 NETWORK

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

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**For the May edition please submit copy by 25<sup>th</sup> April. Subject heading: Network to aine@mag-uk.org**

## EDITORIAL

News story: £38 million boost for safer roads across England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/38-million-boost-for-safer-roads-across-england>

What a joke. Our roads are a disgrace due to the potholes. Such a danger to those on two wheels. I just read of a blood bike rider who hit a 7 inch deep

pothole. Luckily, he didn't come off with £1000 worth of repairs to his bike. But it could have been worse, it could have been fatal.

So, before Government makes these pathetic headline grabbing gestures, they would do well to invest in putting right that which has and could cost lives.

And, don't even get me started on the EU's decision to introduce Mega Trucks. The European Transport Safety Council condemns this as a big mistake and I agree with them. If the EU must introduce this lunacy keep them in Europe because our roads can't cope with what we have now.

Enough ranting.

End of March we said farewell to Julie Sperling who'd been with MAG for almost 10 years. Thank you Julie for all your help and friendly emails. And, thank you to Louise, who, until Julie's post is filled gets to convert Network into a link for me and sends out to you guys. Hang in there Louise and thank you Honey.

**Before I go - please take a few minutes to respond to this consultation: - <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/motorcycles-in-bus-lanes>**

Hope you all got out over Easter on the bike between downpours. I'm going to explore if Harley produce a kayak.

Have a good one. Catch you next time round. Ride free, AG

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**Acknowledgments: George Legg. Colin Brown. Lembit Opik. Michael Armstrong. Julie Sperling. Louise Gibson. FEMA. ETSC. MCIA. And anyone else I've forgotten.**

## **Political Unit Report – Colin Brown and Lembit Opik**

**In another month of political jostling, the political parties have begun to back-pedal on environmental commitments. This is good news for MAG's chances of winning significant victories in the election, given a spirited team effort. MAG's Political Unit, Director of Communications and Public Affairs Lembit Opik and Director of Campaigns and Political Engagement Colin Brown, report on the beginning of the most important year in MAG's recent campaigning history.**

## **Lembit has now engaged with ALL known London Mayoral candidates**

Lembit Õpik has been in contact with every London Mayoral candidate he is aware of. His aim is to prevent any of them from living in ignorance of the mood of riders towards the ultra-low emission zone tax and the crazy restriction road space in favour of cycling.

Our next step is to ensure that, at the election debates, every single one has riders willing and able to stand up and challenge the candidates to explain their position on biking, cycle lanes, the ULEZ tax and the congestion charge. None of it seems to be particularly thought-out in terms of the true benefit – or cost – to the London population.

The political unit will support MAG members willing to assist with this. 'There isn't much time at all – so if you're willing to help please contact us urgently via Central Office

We will give you all the support you need to do a great job of holding these people and their parties to account. Do it now! We only have one of these elections every four years and this is the time we can maximise MAG's impact on the political debate.'

## **Northern Ireland restarts – and Martyn Boyd is on the case**

In the continuing exemplary work of MAG Northern Ireland, Martyn Boyd is making the most of the chance to influence the newly re-started administration there to make a mark on its relationship with bikers. There are a number of things going on, and we will work with Martyn to give a fuller account of affairs in the next edition of Network. Suffice to say, MAG has never been in better shape in the principality, and it serves as an encouraging example of what can be achieved through clear goal-setting and steady determination. The political team are always on hand to support Martyn's work, and feel extremely encouraged about the tremendous dedication shown by Martyn in his work with the Northern Ireland Assembly. Martyn, take a bow!

## **Transport Reality wins new allies**

April is set to be the month for Lembit to meet a specialist car manufacturer that's expressed willingness to support the Transport Reality movement we've been leading and supporting. A major car maker that's expressed deep concerns about being forced to go-electric appears sympathetic too. We will announce the names of these firms once the meetings have been held. Lembit has also reached out beyond the automotive industry to representatives in other transport sectors threatened by the net zero agenda, to seek common cause and inject a more sensible approach towards how transport is powered. Building these relationships takes lot investment, and it also requires some months to get these groups on-board. The process is complex, but it works as witnessed by the robustness of the Transport Reality team.

## **The Great MAG Road Maintenance Treasure Hunt**

We launched this concept on the day of the ALARM report publication. The 2024 ALARM report shows that the backlog has gotten worse in the last 12 months with a 16% increase to £16.3 billion. The £8.3 billion over 11 years promised by the Government is barely going to touch the sides. Proud claims that it is sufficient funds to resurface 5000 miles of road look daft when put into perspective. 5000 miles in only 2.5% of the road network, nearly half of which is expected to be unusable within the next few years. Will this be a big issue at the coming General Election? That is up to you.

You find read the 2024 ALARM report here: <https://www.asphaltuk.org/alarm-survey-page/>

The concept of the Treasure Hunt is for riders to tell us if they find a local authority area where road surfaces have actually improved over the last 12 months. The ALARM report suggests 6% of councils have made this claim, so can you find them.

We have had one candidate highlighted to us so far (the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames). Colin will be approaching them to see if they are doing anything specific to buck the trend. If they are we can then suggest other councils follow suit.

The process is simple – assess the roads in your area honestly, and if you think they are even slightly better than last year drop us an email at Central Office. We will do the rest and let you know if we uncover any nuggets of secret information from the best performing councils in the country.

Keep your eyes open for information coming on surface dressing – David Craik are meeting Paul Boss from the Road Surface Treatments Association on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> (I am writing this on 22<sup>nd</sup>) so there should be useful information from that meeting which we can share.

## **Fight Motorcycle Theft Pledge campaign slowly gathering pace**

Elections for Police and Crime Commissioners take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. Hopefully the next issue of Network will include a very long list of candidates that have made the pledge.

At time of writing (22<sup>nd</sup> March) we have just three candidates across England and Wales that have publicly made the pledge and a further ten who have said that they will make the pledge, but not yet made the announcement publicly.

We are still trying to track down any candidates standing in some force areas.

But we have found that WhoCanIVoteFor is also a useful site for finding candidates. <https://whocanivotefor.co.uk/> Given that every candidate should be vying for votes it is a source of confusion why it is so hard to find candidates and their contact details.

The candidates that have so far made the pledge publicly are:

1. Keith Tordoff (North Yorkshire)
2. Tim Bearder (Thames Valley)
3. Zoe Garbett (London)

The candidates that have shown interest or indicated support, but to our knowledge made no public statement yet (in no particular order) are:

1. Howard Cox (London)
2. Tarun Ghulati (London)
3. Rory Palmer (Leicestershire)
4. Jonathan Evison (Humberside)
5. Matthew Scott (Kent)
6. Matthew Barber (Thames Valley)
7. Nicole Ndiweni (Derbyshire)
8. Tom Plater (Hertfordshire)
9. Danielle Stone (Northamptonshire)
10. Ros Munro (Northumbria)

Help us to keep the pressure on by letting us know of any declared candidates for your local force so that we can send them the details of the pledge. Please make sure you get in touch with any candidates that make the pledge to start building relationships which could prove very valuable after the elections on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. And of course, be sure to cast your vote on 2<sup>nd</sup> May.

## **Default bus lane access is within reach**

Launched on a Sunday morning, buried in announcements from the Plan for Drivers the crumbs for riders slipped out hoping not to be noticed. Sadly, for that plan, we motorcyclists understand the value of good observations, and spotted it, even if the national press didn't.

The consultation runs till 9<sup>th</sup> June and is asking for opinions on two options. Should we 1) leave things as they are allowing councils to sink tax money into expensive trials to see if motorcycles entering bus lanes signal the end of the world as we know it; or 2) finally accept that motorcycles already use 48% of bus lanes, the sky hasn't landed on our heads and maybe we should just make motorcycle access standard across England. The consultation does not apply to Scotland, and I am confused about why they are saying England and not England and Wales, but the important thing is that we get very large numbers of riders responding in favour of option 2. The reality is that if the cycle lobby decide to try to block it, they can and will marshal a lot of people to oppose the move. It is Cycling UK's stated position that they oppose motorcycles in bus lanes. We will of course be putting in a detailed written response and engaging directly with DfT officials and hopefully Ministers.

One key point that I would suggest everyone raises is the logic of a consistent policy extending to bus gates. The simple position is that if a pedal cycle is allowed access, then so should a motorcycle.

The easiest way to respond is online and as an individual. If you respond as an organisation you will face a long list of detailed questions aimed at local authorities. You don't need to waste time on those questions.

Find the consultation here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/motorcycles-in-bus-lanes>

## **What of the rest of the Plan for Drivers?**

The other elements of the Plan for Drivers announced with the bus lane consultation include guidance for councils on LTN's and 20mph speed limits. Depressingly both issues are dealt with from the perspective of a world that doesn't recognise the differences between cars and motorcycles. There is no exploration of the impact of or on motorcycles. The singular mention of motorcycles in the guidance for LTNs is that if bollards etc can allow motorcycles through, then signage will be required as well as bollards. All the signage refers to the exclusion of motor vehicles (the red circles containing Evel Knievel clearing a car). They also point to the blue bus gate signs for bus and pedal cycle with no mention of the ongoing consultation on motorcycles in bus lanes or recognition of the potential for similar access through these traffic filters.

The 20mph guidance waxes lyrical about the safety of pedestrians and cyclists but doesn't ask questions such as do motorcyclists (the forgotten VRU group) face more unsafe overtakes and road rage if they comply?

Sadly, there is no consultation or open door for discussion on either of these topics. Guidance has been issued – they are not considering motorcyclists and that is all there is to say apparently.

There is however one other consultation. This one is on “Restricting the generation of surplus funds from traffic contraventions”. This is billed as a call for evidence, so they are not asking for opinions on specific proposals, rather just for evidence to guide future decisions on the policy of local authorities being allowed to raise fines and keep the revenue generated. No doubt surplus funds for central government will be acceptable even if it is frowned upon for local authorities.

You may well want to respond to this one, but again the questions are clearly looking for evidence from local authorities. The opinion of the recipients of fines for traffic violations are, to be fair, going to be pretty predictable, but there is room for MAG to raise questions about fines for motorcyclists who stray into bus lanes for their own safety and then get a fine for avoiding a collision.

If you want to take a look, this consultation can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/restricting-the-generation-of-surplus-funds-from-traffic-contraventions>

## **Parking charge lunacy in Bath.**

Colin is aware of the motorcycle parking charge proposals coming out from Bath. They follow the London precedent for charging based on CO2 emissions, but bizarrely the towering intellects at Bath think that a 600cc motorcycle CO2 emissions equate to those of a 3-litre car or SUV.

At time of writing Colin is checking with the Western Region to see if support is needed on educating the officers in Bath about the basic facts of life. Keep your eyes open for more detail in the coming weeks.

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# MAG PRESS RELEASES

## Act now: Motorcycles in bus lanes consultation.

*18/03/2024 in [Bus Lanes](#) / [Campaigns & News](#) / [News by Colin Brown](#)*

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The Government has launched a consultation on default access for motorcycles in bus lanes. **MAG** has been fighting for policy consistency on bus lane access for many years and urges all riders to respond to the consultation.



As part of the Government's Plan for Drivers a consultation has been launched asking for opinions on allowing default access for motorcycles in bus lanes. The announcement was made on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March and the consultation is open until 9<sup>th</sup> June.

The Government's news story led on other elements of the broad announcement. Mainstream media reported on these other issues including LTN's and 20mph speed limits. MAG will be commenting on these issues separately. However, MAG was quick to spot the launch of the long-awaited bus lane consultation.

MAG's Director of Campaigns & Political Engagement said:

*"It is perhaps not strange that a key policy for motorcycling slips past the headlines. But for motorcyclists throughout the country this really is an opportunity that must not be missed. The fight for motorcycle access in bus lanes has been fought one authority at a time for over three decades. A consistent national policy is long overdue. I would urge every rider in the country to spend five minutes responding to the consultation survey."*

The Government is suggesting two options. Option 1 is to do nothing and continue with the patchwork approach currently in place. Option 2 is to allow motorcycle

access by default in all 'with-flow' and 'contra-flow' bus lanes in England and Wales. Scotland has devolved powers and cannot be included in this consultation, but MAG will push the Scottish Government to follow suit to create a UK-wide consistency. Northern Ireland already allows motorcycle access in all bus lanes.

Since the promise of this consultation was made last autumn, MAG has been seeking to get the consultation extended to cover bus gates. Disappointingly, the Department for Transport has not accommodated what we consider to be a logical extension to the discussion. MAG will continue to push for motorcycle access through bus gates and other traffic filters. We are therefore advising riders to mention bus gates and other traffic filters in the final question in the consultation survey.

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## Notes:

The full Plan for Drivers news story can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/crackdown-on-anti-driver-road-schemes-and-blanket-20mph-limits-to-put-local-consent-first>

The motorcycles in bus lanes consultation can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/motorcycles-in-bus-lanes>

MAG resources including suggested consultation points will be published shortly on the MAG Let Us In campaign page here: <https://mag-uk.org/let-us-in/>.

## The Great MAG Road Maintenance Treasure Hunt.

19/03/2024 in Campaigns & News / News / Potholes by Colin Brown

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**Motorcyclists are being invited to take part in the Great MAG Road Maintenance Treasure Hunt. Riders will be seeking out the best performing authorities making the most positive impact to UK roads.**





Publication of the Asphalt Industry Alliance's 2024 ALARM Report has shown that the road infrastructure is continuing to decline. The amount needed to fix the backlog of carriageway repairs is now at a record high of £16.3 billion.

The Government will deliver £8.3 billion of additional funding over 11 years. The Transport Secretary said this is enough to resurface 5,000 miles of local roads. In other words, that is just 2.5% of the network. For riders hoping to see better quality roads it is going to be something of a treasure hunt.

Rick Green, Chair of the Asphalt Industry Alliance, said:

*"We need to reach the point where local authority highway engineers are able to plan and proactively carry out maintenance work in the most timely and efficient way to the greatest benefit of all road users – rather than just having enough money to address immediate and urgent repairs."*

MAG's Resurface Our Roads campaign lead, David Craik, commented:

*"MAG represents motorcyclists, one of the groups of road users defined by Government as being vulnerable and requiring extra care to be taken to prevent injury. The risks posed to motorcyclists by poorly maintained road surfaces is very real, and one of the most cited safety concerns of the riding community. Whilst MAG applauds the strenuous effort by industry to fill 40% more potholes in 2023 than in previous years, it is clear that potholes are the outcome of inefficient maintenance caused by reduced maintenance funding. This observation is confirmed, also in 2023, by the 16% increase in maintenance backlog to £16.3bn. MAG welcomes the £8.3bn diverted to roads from HS2 but notes that, without ongoing ring fencing of maintenance funding, Government will continue to fail to meet the needs of its vulnerable road users."*

The Government's £8.3 billion comes with strings. The announcement of the funding said that local authorities must publish information on their websites on a regular basis. This should explain how they are spending the funding in their area. MAG will watch to see if this transparency commitment is met. More importantly, MAG is asking riders to flag up if they have actually experienced any improvement.

MAG will ask councils for any secrets they have for delivering a bigger maintenance bang for their limited buck and continue to celebrate best practice wherever it can find it.

MAG's Director of Campaigns and Political Engagement, Colin Brown, said:

*"It is a well-worn path to point out the problem. I cannot imagine that anyone in the country is not fully aware of the issue. With our Treasure Hunt, we hope to find heroes with a 'can-do' attitude that deserve to be emulated. Given the shortfall in funding, it may be a bit of a needle in a haystack exercise. It will be interesting to see what, if anything, the riding community can feed back to us."*

## Notes for Editors

The 2024 ALARM report can be found on the Asphalt Industry Alliance website here: <https://www.asphaltuk.org/alarm-survey-page/>

MAG's Resurface Our Roads campaign page can be found here: <https://mag-uk.org/resurface-our-roads/>

The Government's £8.3 billion funding announcement can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/8-billion-boost-to-repair-roads-and-back-drivers>

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***Does anyone else see the glaringly obvious on the tables below?***

***If you notice, it's the countries with richest citizens in Europe and probably the Western World forging ahead with the purchase of EVs you'd be correct.***

***Take Norway for instance. Norway has masses of hydro electric power, whilst ours in UK barely covers our domestic and manufacturing requirements, which gives their economy a huge advantage coupled with the massive investments they made in sovereign wealth funds whatever they are from, ironically, North Sea Oil profits.***

***Whilst I appreciate EVs will progressively get cheaper do you really want to risk cheap batteries posing the risk of combusting in your garage or on your drive?***

***As I've said before, in my humble opinion, sadly, in the not too distant future our freedom with personal transport will be severely curtailed with massive gaps between the have's and have not's. The ordinary person in the street, on***

*minimum or low-medium wage in the UK and other similarly placed countries, Governments forging ahead with enforced electrification at such a rapid rate will only result in less and less people being able to afford personal transport as and when their ICE vehicle kicks the bucket.*

## Which European countries are using electric vehicles the most?

- **Norway leads the way for electric vehicle use by far, with 20.12% of all registered vehicles being electric.**
- **Denmark takes second place on the list.**
- **Sweden comes third.**

New research has revealed the European countries using electric vehicles the most, with Norway coming out on top.

The study by electronic registration portal [Vignettecroatia.com](https://vignettecroatia.com) analysed the latest 2022 data from Eurostat, to see which European countries had the highest percentage of electric vehicles.

It found that Norway is leading the way for electric vehicle use in Europe, with a whopping 20.12% of all vehicles being electric. As of the latest 2022 data, there are 3,018,728 registered vehicles in the country, of which 607,516 are electric-powered.

Denmark comes second on the list, with 4.02% of all vehicles being electric in the country. It has 2,801,076 registered vehicles in total, of which 112,674 of these are electric.

Coming in third is another Scandinavian country with Sweden. The country sees 197,709, or 3.97%, of the 4,979,761 registered vehicles being electric.

The Netherlands takes fourth place on the list, with 3.7% of all vehicles in the nation being electric. Of all 8,917,707 registered electric vehicles in the country, 330,113 are electric.

Rounding out the top five is one of Europe's smallest countries, Luxembourg. 13,909, or 3.13% of all the 444,818 registered vehicles in the country are electric.

### The European countries with the highest percentage of electric vehicles

Rank	Country	Total registered vehicles 2022	Total registered electric vehicles 2022	Percentage of electric vehicles
1	Norway	3,018,728	607,516	20.12%
2	Denmark	2,801,076	112,674	4.02%
3	Sweden	4,979,761	197,709	3.97%

4	Netherlands	8,917,107	330,113	3.70%
5	Luxembourg	444,818	13,909	3.13%
6	Liechtenstein	30,659	950	3.10%
7	Switzerland	4,812,896	110,788	2.30%
8	Austria	5,150,890	110,225	2.14%
9	Germany	48,763,036	1,013,009	2.08%
10	United Kingdom	32,169,932	620,632	1.93%

Commenting on the findings, Luka Stojčević, a spokesperson for [Vignettecroatia.com](https://vignettecroatia.com), said: “While electric cars are more common and affordable than ever, they still are an expensive purchase at a minimum for a lot of Europe. Even some of Europe’s highest income countries, as seen in this list, still see electric vehicles as a rarity compared to other fuel types. However, as technology improves and overall production becomes cheaper, we can expect this list to shuffle around as more countries buy into the market.”

**Ends**

**Source: Eurostat: Passenger cars, by type of motor energy 2022**

**Methodology:**

1. **2022 registered vehicle data of all types was sourced for each country from Eurostat**
2. **The number of registered electric vehicles by country was determined**
3. **These two values were calculated together to find the percentage of registered electric vehicles in each country**
4. **Each country was ranked based on the highest-to-lowest percentage of electric vehicles**

If using these insights, please provide a link to [Vignettecroatia.com](https://vignettecroatia.com), which ensures we can send you more stories like this in future.

All the best,

Lee Beardsley. [lee.beardsley@journoresearch.org](mailto:lee.beardsley@journoresearch.org). Phone inquires: +44208 050 0054.

## Road maintenance in England “has reached a new low point” – RAC

13.04 | 4 March 2024 | [Roads](#) | 1 comment





**Analysis shows that the length of roads given maintenance by councils in England each year has dropped by 45% over the last five years.**

The analysis, [carried out by the RAC using Government data](#), shows 764 miles of A roads were strengthened, resurfaced or preserved in 2022/23 – equating to 4% of the 17,853 miles of A roads maintained by councils in England.

The figure represents a 37% decrease (458 miles) from the 1,222 miles recorded in 2017/2018.

For minor roads listed as B, C, and unclassified, 3,380 miles were maintained in the last financial year compared to 6,288 five years before, a drop of 46% (2,908 miles).

Looking at specific types of road maintenance, 1,223 miles of all road types were entirely resurfaced by councils: a small 9% increase on 2021/22 but 22% fewer than six years ago.

Meanwhile preservation treatments – such as surface dressing and micro surfacing used to extend the life of roads – fell to their lowest level in five years.

Just 2,698 miles of roads were given preservation treatment in the last financial year, a 50% dip on the 5,345 miles treated five years ago and a 25% drop year-on-year compared to 2021/22.

Simon Williams, RAC head of policy, said: “These figures lay bare just how little resurfacing and life-extending preservation work councils have managed to carry out in the last financial year. We suspect this means road maintenance in England has reached a new low point – a sorry state of affairs considering how car-dependent the country is.

“It’s especially concerning to see that so few miles of A roads received any form of road maintenance last year when these important routes are used by millions of

drivers every day. Meanwhile, our minor roads that are essential in connecting rural areas have received barely a crumb of the pie.”

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## FEMA

# Success: riding with a motorcycle trailer

FEMA News: March 6, 2024



Some motorcyclists like to attach a trailer to their bike. In the development of the [current driving license directive](#) the fact that sometimes motorcycles pull trailers was not taken into account (unlike with cars).

The European Parliament now agreed on new, [draft rules](#) on EU driving licences and finally fixed an oversight FEMA has been pointing out for years: the possibility to legally ride a motorcycle with a trailer behind it.

The proposal that is now adopted by the European Parliament (amendment 59), says the following:

**‘Without prejudice to the provisions of type-approval rules for the vehicles concerned, motor vehicles in categories referred to in points (a) and (b) may be combined with a trailer with a maximum authorised mass not exceeding half the weight of the towing vehicle’s unladen mass.’**

The vehicles described in points (a) and (b) are:

**Category AM:**

- two-wheel vehicles or three-wheel vehicles with a maximum design speed of not more than 45 km/h (excluding those with a maximum design speed under or equal to 25 km/h).
- light quadricycles.

**Category A1:**

- motorcycles with a cylinder capacity not exceeding 125 cubic centimetres, of a

power not exceeding 11 kW and with a power/weight ratio not exceeding 0,1 kW/kg.  
– powered tricycles with a power not exceeding 15 kW.

**Category A2:**

– motorcycles of a power not exceeding 35 kW and with a power/weight ratio not exceeding 0,2 kW/kg and not derived from a vehicle of more than 70 kW.

**Category A:**

– motorcycles.  
– powered tricycles with a power exceeding 15 kW.



Photo courtesy of tourmaster.nl

Lack of clear, harmonised rules for towing a trailer means that so far every country can make its own rules. FEMA collected as much information as possible to show you what the rules are in specific countries; click [here](#) for our trailer page.

The [draft rules](#) on EU driving licences were [adopted](#) by the European Parliament, constituting Parliament's position at first reading. The file will be followed up by the new Parliament after the European elections in June 2024.

Written by [Wim Taal](#)

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## European Parliament: Driver Training Should Focus On Risk Awareness

- [FEMA news](#)

February 28, 2024



Today the European Parliament adopted new, draft rules on EU driving licences.

- No mandatory medical test will be required when a driving licence is being issued and renewed.
- The introduction of probation period for inexperienced drivers of at least two years.
- 18-year-olds can obtain a licence to drive a truck or a bus with up to 16 passengers.
- Introduction of a digital driving licence, available on a mobile phone.
- Focus should be risk awareness training.
- No higher minimum age for the A1 licence.

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) want drivers to be better prepared for real driving situations and be aware of the risks, in particular for vulnerable road users. Therefore driving in snow and slippery conditions, safe phone use while driving, blind spots, driver-assistance systems and ensuring it is safe to open the vehicle doors should also be part of driver's tests to get a licence, they add.

In a plenary session of the European Parliament, the draft rules on EU driving licences were adopted by 339 votes in favour, 240 against and 37 abstentions.

MEPs agreed that driving licences should be valid for at least 15 years for motorcycles and cars, and five years for trucks and buses. They do not support reducing the validity of driving licences for elderly people – as proposed by the European Commission -, to avoid discrimination and to ensure their right to freedom of movement and participation in economic and social life. MEPs agreed with drivers assessing their own fitness to drive when a driving licence is being issued and renewed, letting EU countries decide if the self-assessment should be replaced by a medical examination with a minimum set of checks on drivers' eyesight and cardiovascular conditions amongst others. However, MEPs want EU governments to put more effort into raising public awareness of mental and physical signals that may put a person at risk when driving.



During her press conference, Karima Delli, rapporteur on The review of EU driving licence



rules, member of the Group of the Greens, was clearly not happy with the fact that some of her proposals were voted out, such as the mandatory health check. She said the battle will continue in the negotiations with the Council (the ministers from all EU countries). She expressed hope that the ministers will be as ambitious as possible to improve road safety. In a surprising statement she accused opponents of her proposals of creating fake news, spreading disinformation and using false arguments.

Inexperienced drivers would have to undergo a probationary driving period of at least two years during which they would be subject to certain restrictions, such as stricter alcohol limits while driving and stricter penalties for unsafe driving, MEPs say. To mitigate the shortage of professional drivers, MEPs also agreed to allow 18-year-olds to obtain a licence to drive a truck or a bus with up to 16 passengers, provided they hold a certificate of professional competence. In addition, 17-year-olds should also be eligible for a driving licence for cars or trucks if accompanied by an experienced driver, the draft says.

To support the EU's single market, MEPs are in favour of introducing a digital driving licence, available on a mobile phone and fully equivalent to the physical driver's licence.

The draft rules on EU driving licences were adopted by 339 votes in favour, 240 against and 37 abstentions, constituting Parliament's position at first reading. The file will be followed up by the new Parliament after the European elections on 6-9 June 2024.

*Written by [Wim Taal](#). Top photograph courtesy of [KNMV](#).  
Source: European Parliament. This article is subject to [FEMA's copyright](#).*

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## **February L-Category (Scooters, Motorcycles & other light 3 and 4-wheel vehicles) Registration Statistics**

**MCIA News:** 7th March 2024



MCIA has today published the market data for February 2024, for new motorcycle, scooter, and other L-Category vehicles.

Continuing the positive start to 2024, February registrations are tracking 6.1% ahead of the same period in 2023, culminating in a 5.4% year to date increase.

Whilst the electric market fails to meet the demand seen in 2023, there is monthly growth in the lower <4 kW banding, although electric still trails -4.0% on last year. ICE (internal combustion engine) products continue to perform well, particularly across the road sport, modern classic, adventure and scooter segments.

As the days lengthen and the promise of warmer weather arrives, the market is poised for its annual spring upswing as enthusiasts prepare to dust off their motorcycles and enjoy the warmer, drier weather\*.

**Tony Campbell, CEO of MCIA, said:** "The positive start to 2024 is encouraging, where we are confident this trend can continue into the Spring despite the pressures on household incomes. Our market has proven its robustness during tough economic pressures and hope it will continue to in this positive vein"

More details on the February registration figures can be found [here](#).

Please credit MCIA when quoting this information.

Notes for Editors:

\* For riders returning to the road after a break, we recommend looking in to training options to ensure your skills are as sharp as they can be when returning to the road, visit [www.eliteriderhub.co.uk](http://www.eliteriderhub.co.uk) to find out more.

MCIA is the body that represents the UK L-Category vehicle industry. L-Category vehicles can be defined as motorised lightweight scooters, motorcycles, tricycles and quadricycles, typically with zero or low-emission power.

Within regulation they are defined as 'L-Category' vehicles (Regulation 168/2013) and are a great solution to the congestion and air quality challenges we all face. They are also sometimes referred to as powered light vehicles (PLV).

For more information about the work of MCIA and L-Category vehicles, or to interview MCIA's CEO, Tony Campbell, please contact Gina Evans at [g.evans@mcia.co.uk](mailto:g.evans@mcia.co.uk).

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## ALARM bells ringing for local roads

Road Safety GB: 19 March 2024



**More than half of the local road network in England and Wales is reported to have less than 15 years' structural life left as the amount needed to fix the backlog of carriageway repairs increases to a record high of £16.3 billion.**

That's according to the [Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance \(ALARM\) survey report](#), published today (19 March 2024) by the Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA).

Now in its 29th year, the ALARM report is widely respected as the most authoritative and comprehensive study into local road maintenance funding and condition.

The report highlights the scale of the challenge facing local authority highway teams who have a statutory responsibility to keep local roads safe, but don't have the funds to do so.

AIA says poor road conditions impact on people's everyday lives, from the cost and inconvenience of damage to vehicles, to potentially causing accidents and injury to vulnerable road users such as cyclists – some of which have proven fatal.

Despite local authority highway teams reporting an overall increase in carriageway maintenance budgets, they have been hit by the impact of rising costs due to inflation, meaning they have been able to do less. This has been compounded by the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, which together are accelerating the rate at which the network is deteriorating.

ALARM data shows that only 47% of roads in England and Wales are classed as being in good structural condition, with the remaining 53% – more than 107,000 miles – now having less than 15 years' structural life remaining. And, surface conditions are also reported to have declined, despite a 40% increase in the number of potholes filled over the last 12 months adding to the existing patchwork of previous repairs.

The findings, which relate to the 2023/24 financial year, show that in England and Wales:

- Local authorities would have needed an additional £1.22 billion (an average of £7.2 million per authority) just to reach their own target road conditions.
- It would now cost £16.3 billion to tackle the backlog of carriageway repairs and bring the network up to a standard from which it can be maintained efficiently and cost-effectively going forward.
- Less than half (47%) of all local roads are reported to be in good structural condition meaning the remaining 107,000 miles (53%) could continue to deteriorate to the point of needing to be rebuilt within the next 15 years without appropriate maintenance measures taking place.
- £143.5 million has been spent filling in 2 million potholes over the last 12 months.

- Roads are only resurfaced on average once every 80 years.

Rick Green, chair of the Asphalt Industry Alliance, said: “It’s clear that there is still a mountain to climb when it comes to improving the condition of our local roads, which are a key asset on which we all rely, every day.

“The Government has recognised that fixing our roads is about more than filling in potholes with its announcement of the additional Network North funding in England.

“But, while the transport secretary stated that this additional £8.3 billion over 11 years is enough to resurface 5,000 miles of local roads, this equates to just 2.5% of the network – or less than 0.25% per year. “Unfortunately, it will do little to address the scale of the issue with ALARM findings reporting that 11% of local roads are already in poor condition and likely to require maintenance in the next 12 months alone.

“That said, English authorities would be in an even worse position without this additional funding, so we sincerely hope that this promise is delivered on and that the Welsh Government honours its commitments to prioritising highway maintenance.

“We need to reach the point where local authority highway engineers are able to plan and proactively carry out maintenance work in the most timely and efficient way to the greatest benefit of all road users – rather than just having enough money to address immediate and urgent repairs.”

The full ALARM survey report is available to download by visiting [www.asphaltuk.org](http://www.asphaltuk.org).

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## **EUROPEAN TRANSPORT SAFETY COUNCIL (ETSC)**

### **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BACKS MEGA TRUCKS – BIG LORRIES, BIG MISTAKE**

The European Parliament has voted to support the expansion in the number of extra-long and extra-heavy lorries on EU roads, with serious potential consequences for road safety.

The parliament voted today on a proposal published in July last year by the European Commission to update EU rules on weights and dimensions of lorries. The updated new rules will simplify the legal framework for longer and heavier vehicles, which are currently allowed only under certain conditions as part of trials.

Graziella Jost, Project Director at ETSC commented:

*“Big lorries are a big mistake for Europe. While megatrucks may have a place under very specific circumstances in some countries, these legal changes will lead to a mass roll-out with the potential for very grave impacts on road safety.*

*“Almost half of MEPs wanted to remove the new provisions to expand the use of megatrucks but an amendment to do that failed to pass by just six votes. We strongly urge the EU to reconsider these proposed changes and instead maintain the current practice of limited trials where the impacts can be more closely monitored.”*

Typical longer and heavier lorries (LHVs) are lorry and trailer combinations 25.25 meters long, nearly 9 meters longer than standard lorries in Europe, and weighing 60 tonnes. To put that into perspective, these vehicles are as long as six passenger cars and weigh as much as a fully loaded Boeing 737 300. In Finland, 34.5m, 76-tonne configurations are permitted.

ETSC has serious concerns about LHVs' impact on road safety and says all the impacts of wider adoption haven't been fully assessed.

The potential risks that ETSC says have not been fully investigated include:

- LHVs may accelerate road infrastructure degradation, leading to more frequent maintenance and safety issues;
- LHVs require adapted infrastructure, posing challenges in work zones, parking, resting areas, and more;
- existing truck safety facilities aren't designed for LHVs, including barriers, ramps, and lay-bys;
- fire safety in tunnels is a concern, especially with LHVs potentially blocking traffic lanes in roll-over crashes;
- the impact resistance of barriers on bridges crossing above railways may not be sufficient to prevent a crash between an LHV and a train;
- LHVs can struggle with intersections. They might use space for vulnerable users during turns, potentially encroaching on pavements or cycle paths.

The proposal also contains no specific legal safeguards regarding who drives longer and heavier vehicles. That means that in several EU countries, 18-year-olds could drive them without requiring any additional training compared to what is required for a standard lorry. In a separate legal proposal on driving licences, the Commission also wants to require all EU Member States to introduce an accompanied lorry driving scheme for 17-year-olds. Data show that younger lorry drivers are at a much higher risk of crashing.

A recent study also shows that the expansion of longer and heavier road freight transport will have substantial negative effects on the rail freight sector, which has a considerably better safety record.

A final deal on the revised rules will only be agreed upon following so-called 'trialogue' talks between representatives of the Commission, EU Member States, and the Parliament, due to take place after the European Parliamentary elections in June.

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## **An observation from the Scottish Motorcycle Show**

Having just spent two days on the MAG Stand at the Scottish Motorcycle show. A couple of observations of the dozens of Motorcyclists that we talked to, not a single rider expressed any support for the ICE ban, the vast majority seeing the ICE ban for what it is a complete con which will do little or nothing to reduce emissions, will decimate biking as we know it and make not one jot of difference to the climate, whilst impoverishing anyone daring to demand their own personal transport necessary to meet their needs. It was also noticeable that not a single electric motorcycle manufacturer was in attendance.

I think that this emphatically emphasises that the ICE BAN will end biking for all but a few specific applications.

## **WEBSITES AND ON-LINE MATERIAL YOU MAY WISH TO ACCESS**

RAC: Council road maintenance in England drops to lowest point in five years  
<https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/news/motoring-news/council-road-maintenance-in-england-drops-to-lowest-point-in-five-years/>

RSGB: More police forces join National Highways trial of new safety cameras  
<https://roadsafetygb.org.uk/news/more-police-forces-join-national-highways-trial-of-new-safety-cameras/>

RAC: The RAC implores police forces to 'turn up the dial' on drivers' handheld mobile phone use  
<https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/news/driving-law/the-rac-implores-police-forces-to-turn-up-the-dial-on-drivers-mobile-phones/>

Open consultation: Smarter regulation: proposed changes to legislation for electrically assisted pedal cycles  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/smarter-regulation-proposed-changes-to-legislation-for-electrically-assisted-pedal-cycles>

EU: MEPs back updates to EU rules on driving licences to improve road safety  
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240223IPR18088/meps-back-updates-to-eu-rules-on-driving-licences-to-improve-road-safety>

AQN: Sunderland to begin trial of self-driving shuttle buses  
<https://airqualitynews.com/industry-news/sunderland-trial-self-driving-shuttle-buses/>

Official statistics announcement: Seatbelt and mobile phone use surveys: 2023 (Last updated: 12 March 2024)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/seatbelt-and-mobile-phone-use-surveys-2023>

National statistics announcement: Reported road casualties Great Britain, provisional results: 2023 (Last updated: 12 March 2024)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-provisional-results-2023>

ETSC: EU auditors say EU road safety progress is 'barely moving'  
<https://etsc.eu/eu-auditors-say-eu-road-safety-progress-is-barely-moving/>

News story: £38 million boost for safer roads across England  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/38-million-boost-for-safer-roads-across-england>

ETSC: EU set to approve 'hands off' level 2 driving systems despite safety fears  
<https://etsc.eu/eu-set-to-approve-hands-off-level-2-driving-systems-despite-safety-fears/>

RSGB: Government announces 'crackdown on anti-driver road schemes and blanket 20-mph limits'  
<https://roadsafetygb.org.uk/news/government-announces-crackdown-on-anti-driver-road-schemes-and-blanket-20-mph-limits/>

RAC: Potholes in the UK at a breaking point despite 'decisive action' from the Government  
<https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/news/state-of-the-roads/potholes-in-the-uk-at-a-breaking-point/>

RSGB: Current motorcycle licensing regime remains 'not fit for purpose'  
<https://roadsafetygb.org.uk/news/current-motorcycle-licensing-regime-remains-not-fit-for-purpose/>

News story: Farming and construction vehicles set for hydrogen-powered revolution  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/farming-and-construction-vehicles-set-for-hydrogen-powered-revolution>

Research and analysis: Review of emerging techniques for hydrogen production from electrolysis of water  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-emerging-techniques-for-hydrogen-production-from-electrolysis-of-water>



# MAG Central Office:

**MAG, Unit C13, Holly Farm Business , Honiley, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 1NP.**  
**Tel: 01926 844064 Fax: 01926 844065 Email: [central-office@mag-uk.org](mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org)**

Executive Officer		<a href="mailto:exec@mag-uk.org">exec@mag-uk.org</a>
Membership Administrator	Louise Gibson	<a href="mailto:membership@mag-uk.org">membership@mag-uk.org</a>
Director of Campaigns & Political Engagement	Colin Brown	<a href="mailto:campaigns-coordinator@mag-uk.org">campaigns-coordinator@mag-uk.org</a>
<b>NATIONAL OFFICERS</b>		
National Chairman	Neil Liversidge	<a href="mailto:chair@mag-uk.org">chair@mag-uk.org</a>
National Vice-Chairman	Ian Churchlow	<a href="mailto:vice-chair@mag-uk.org">vice-chair@mag-uk.org</a>
National Finance Officer	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:finance-officer@mag-uk.org">finance-officer@mag-uk.org</a>
Network Co-Coordinator/Vice President	Anne Gale	<a href="mailto:aine@mag-uk.org">aine@mag-uk.org</a>
President/ <i>OPEN ROAD</i> Editor	Ian Mutch	<a href="mailto:theroad@mag-uk.org">theroad@mag-uk.org</a>
Vice President	Colin Ives	<a href="mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org">central-office@mag-uk.org</a>
National Research Officer	George Legg	<a href="mailto:glegg@mag-uk.org">glegg@mag-uk.org</a>
National Political Officer	Michael Armstrong	<a href="mailto:cumbria-region-rep@mag-uk.org">cumbria-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
National Reps Liaison Officer	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:nrlo@mag-uk.org">nrlo@mag-uk.org</a>
National Clubs Liaison Officer	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:clubs-officer@mag-uk.org">clubs-officer@mag-uk.org</a>
Events (Shows and Stands)	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:events@mag-uk.org">events@mag-uk.org</a>
Director of TMAGL	Jane Carrott	<a href="mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org">central-office@mag-uk.org</a>
Director of TMAGL	Ian Churchlow	<a href="mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org">central-office@mag-uk.org</a>
Director of TMAGL	Neil Liversidge	<a href="mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org">central-office@mag-uk.org</a>
Director of TMAGL	Selina Lavender	<a href="mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org">central-office@mag-uk.org</a>
Director of TMAGL	Steve Wykes	<a href="mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org">central-office@mag-uk.org</a>
Director of TMAGL	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org">central-office@mag-uk.org</a>
Director of TMAGL	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org">central-office@mag-uk.org</a>
<b>Regional Reps</b> British Independent Islands	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:british-independent-islands-region-rep@mag-uk.org">british-independent-islands-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
Cumbria	Michael Armstrong	<a href="mailto:cumbria-region-rep@mag-uk.org">cumbria-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
East Anglia	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:east-anglia-region-rep@mag-uk.org">east-anglia-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
Eastern	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:mailto:eastern-region@mag-uk.org">mailto:eastern-region@mag-uk.org</a>
East Midlands	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:east-midlands-region-rep@mag-uk.org">east-midlands-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
Greater London	Spem McEvoy	<a href="mailto:greater-london-region-rep@mag-uk.org">greater-london-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
Herts & Essex	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:herts-essex-region-rep@mag-uk.org">herts-essex-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
Lincolnshire	Alex Bridgwood	<a href="mailto:mailto:lincolnshire-region-rep@mag-uk.org">mailto:lincolnshire-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
North East	Dave Wigham	<a href="mailto:north-east-region-rep@mag-uk.org">north-east-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>



Northern Ireland	Martyn Boyd	<a href="mailto:northern-ireland-region-rep@mag-uk.org">northern-ireland-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
North Wales	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:north-wales-region-rep@mag-uk.org">north-wales-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
North West	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:north-west-region-rep@mag-uk.org">north-west-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
Scotland	Steve Wykes	<a href="mailto:scotland-region-rep@mag-uk.org">scotland-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
South East	Steve Mallett	<a href="mailto:south-east-region-rep@mag-uk.org">south-east-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
Southern	Tim Peregrine	<a href="mailto:southern-region-rep@mag-uk.org">southern-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
South Wales	Phil McFadden	<a href="mailto:south-wales-region-rep@mag-uk.org">south-wales-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
South West	<i>Position Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:south-west-region-rep@mag-uk.org">south-west-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
Thames Valley	Peter Seymour	<a href="mailto:thames-valley-region-rep@mag-uk.org">thames-valley-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
Western	Anne Gale	<a href="mailto:western-region-rep@mag-uk.org">western-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
West Midlands	Mike Beake	<a href="mailto:west-midlands-region-rep@mag-uk.org">west-midlands-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
Yorkshire	Steve Travis	<a href="mailto:yorkshire-region-rep@mag-uk.org">yorkshire-region-rep@mag-uk.org</a>
<b>OTHER CONTACTS</b>		
MAP Ltd: Yorkshire region event organiser	Pete Walker	<a href="mailto:maphq@maphq.karoo.co.uk">maphq@maphq.karoo.co.uk</a>
Official MAG merchandise	Louise Gibson	<a href="mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org">central-office@mag-uk.org</a>
The MAG Foundation – Trustee contact	Tony Cox	<a href="mailto:info@mag-foundation.org">info@mag-foundation.org</a>