



A networking tool for Activists and other interested parties

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EDITORIAL

I'm a bit pee'd off I had to miss the London DEMO but I'm waiting to go into hospital for a knee replacement and riding the trike is painful to say the least. Well, riding it is no problem, its getting on and off which is.

I would like to think that Sadiq Khan took notice. Maybe he should realise 'Bikers are voters' and give that serious thought!

The intrepid MAG members who took part in the "Daft Way Up" did an amazing job, despite some of the most atrocious weather. Well done you guys.

I see some disturbing pictures on social media of bike thieves quite blatantly sticking a finger up at the police & owners and crime, per se, is up and yet we are assured that this is not due to the reduction in police numbers. Now, I don't pretend to be ultra intelligent, in fact, just your average person but I'm thinking anyone with half a brain cell would be able to realise that is exactly the reason why things seem to be getting so out of hand.

However, that's a discussion for a different forum to this one I'm sure.

Ride free, AG

*Acknowledgements: George Legg. Selina Lavendar. Lembit Opik. Colin Brown.
Plus anyone else I've forgotten*

[Please send copy for the June edition to:- aine@mag-uk.org subject heading:
Network]

Report: Political Unit

Here's the latest from MAG's Policy Unit – Colin Brown and Lembit Öpik – after what's been very busy month. Just so you know, Colin is Director of Campaigns & Political Engagement and Lembit is Director of Communications & Public Affairs. And since Colin came on board, things have got even busier.

Clean Air Zones (CAZs) – the biggest threat to biking: you wouldn't think a campaign for clean air could endanger motorcycling – but it is doing exactly that. There's currently an obsession with reducing air emissions, and the main target of the environmentalists is transport. It's not even logical – most emissions come from other sources, and you could even get a grant for central heating systems which produce the very gases which vehicles are being punished for emitting. MAG isn't against clean air – we're against stupid policies. And the fact you can be taxed £12.50 per DAY for riding an older bike in central London

shows how dumb it's become. A pre-2007 Honda C50 owner will find their commuting go up from about a quid to £13.50, while someone driving a brand-new Aston Martin with its mammoth engine will pay nothing. MAG had a demo about this in London, but the heavy lifting starts now. **Please find out if there's any plan in your area for a Clean Air Zone and tell Lembit at MAG HQ.** This is a massive issue that is spreading like a cancer. Early diagnosis is vital, so we really need your eyes and ears out there flagging up anywhere that there is a suggestion of charging or even exclusion zones that affect riders. We have to make sure local politicians see motorbikes as part of the solution not part of the problem. If we don't act, older machines will effectively be priced out of the market.

Crime and inactivity: Colin is leading our work on crime, with Tim Fawthrop heading up matters in London. There's still no real movement at the Home Office and that's something MAG is dealing with in the next month. Expect to hear more on this shortly. In the meantime, we're looking for examples of crime which has affected bikers. If you know of such stories, please get in touch with Colin Brown either directly or through MAG HQ. We want to create a portfolio of evidence to illustrate just how bad things have got. That way, nobody can accuse us of scaremongering, because we'll have shown that bikers are victims too. If you have any local initiatives or are working on anything bike theft related and need support, Colin is keen to be hands on helping in all parts of the country. This is a national issue not just London centric. Colin is already working and supporting on projects in Humberside, Bristol, Essex and the West Midlands. Get in touch with him if you need support in your area. We're also keen to ensure that the public understand the criminals aren't bikers, they're just scummy criminals and have nothing at all to do with biking. Look out for our new poor and lazy terminology in the media campaign coming imminently.

Autonomous vehicles: Lembit met Iain Stewart MP, who's heading up a project involving Milton Keynes, Oxford and Cambridge on technological innovations. It's part of our continuing watch on the development of autonomous vehicles which could be very convenient but which might also tempt the authorities to snatch even more space away from ordinary vehicles, including bikers. We get the feeling that these devices aren't going to be with us on a mass scale because of the technical challenges they have to overcome. All the same, we have every reason to believe that there will be pressure to deliver progress, and that means we've got to stay on the ball in case lanes vanish in favour of robot cars.

Vision Zero = zero credibility: you may have heard of the Vision Zero initiative. That's a fanatical dream to prevent ALL road fatalities. While safety affects everyone, the idea that you could have absolutely no deaths at all in any transport system is the stuff of fantasy. However, it can be used to ban bikes, simply to cut fatal accidents. MAG has taken a firm line on this: safety, yes, but no Vision Zero, no. If you hear of this Vision Zero nuttiness in our area, please let us know because it could be used to get rid of riders locally.

Membership Drive Amongst Politicians: Have you asked your local MPs or Councillors to join MAG? Please do this. The more members we have in elected position, the louder our voice. It's the single most important thing you can do increase our influence amongst policy makers. Any questions? Call Lembit through the HQ and he can help with any issues you may have prior to seeing your local MP or Councillors.

Potholes and manhole covers: Please, please can you report any potholes or slippery manhole covers, which have been causing a danger locally. When you report them, they have to act, and that's potentially lifesaving to riders. It only takes five minutes, but could stop injuries – or worse.

Radio days: Lembit says: 'I know I say this every month, but I'm asking you to pick up the phone and call your local radio stations, commercial and BBC, and say something about biking. They're very keen to hear new callers and I'd say you have a very good chance of getting on air.'

LembitÖpik & Colin Brown. Motorcycle Action Group

PRESS RELEASES

MAG calls for greater partnership-working and tougher action against bike crime in the West Midlands

Director of Campaigns & Political Engagement for the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG), Colin Brown, met Assistant Police & Crime Commissioner, Lynnette Kelly, this week to call for increased priority in tackling motorcycle crime in the West Midlands.

Despite recent dramatic increases in car theft, motorcyclists in the West Midlands are still eight times more likely to fall victim to theft than car owners. Recent reports also demonstrate rising levels of threatened violence and actual assaults by thugs targeting vulnerable riders whilst on their machines.

"Perception of vulnerability is very important to any individual, and bikers are no different" says Colin; "we all have a right to feel protected by the police. West Midlands bikers do not feel that the response to defend and protect them from this criminal behaviour is sufficient. They see reports of arrests, but it is often months before there is a prosecution, and there seems to be a complete lack of reported convictions in the West Midlands. This is doing nothing to give confidence to the biking community."

MAG is calling for greater partnership-working to tackle the issue. In these days of austerity and stretched budgets we recognise the need for police forces to look to partnership initiatives to combat crime. MAG is up for the challenge and is already working on many initiatives of this sort around the country, but we can only achieve significant results where this kind of initiative is fully embraced and endorsed at a senior level. In the West Midlands, much great work is being done, but we feel there is potential for even more.

Colin added, "I am hopeful that today's meeting will pave the way for a renewed and increased effort to bring the bike theft epidemic to an end."

MAG meets West of England Regional Mayor in breakthrough summit

The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) met Mayor Tim Bowles in Bristol to ask: why aren't motorbikes in his transport strategy?

MAG's Western Region Political Officer, Geoff Mills, teamed up with MAG's Director of Communications & Public Affairs, Lembit Öpik, to meet the Mayor of the West of England Combined Authority, Tim Bowles.

Geoff says 'the main question we had was: "Why have motorbikes been reduced to a footnote in the latest West of England transport study? Is it a deliberate marginalisation or just an oversight?" We got our answer. It turns out that the Mayor is more than willing to include us as part of the solution to the congestion and access problems of the sub-region, and that's very encouraging.'

Geoff is inclined to take the Mayor at his word. 'It's not so important why we weren't recognised. What matters now is that we will be. I'm already on a committee which is discussing these points. With Mayor Bowles' endorsement, we can make sure that sensible and relevant inclusion of powered two wheelers will happen. That's why we went to engage with him; so you could say the meeting was 100% successful.'

Looking ahead, MAG has agreed to provide a summary of key facts about motorcycling, which Geoff and Lembit will be preparing. They're also submitting a specific set of amendments to ensure inclusion of motorcycles and scooters. It seems clear that MAG will occupy an advisory role from now on, in the same way it does in many other parts of the UK. 'This is how politics is supposed to work,' observes Geoff. 'To be honest, I was impressed with the Mayor and I do feel that if we do our part for bikers, he will do his.'

London demo calls on Mayor Khan and Government to come to their senses about motorcycle-enabled crime and unfair pollution taxes.

The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) held their biggest demonstration in years last Saturday to highlight the unfairness of a new pollution tax that London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, is threatening to introduce and which will hit some of the poorest workers in the capital. The demonstration, organised by MAG's London Regional Representative, Tim Fawthrop, drew support from all elements of the riding community including dispatch riders, delivery riders, commuters and leisure bikers.

Selina Lavender, MAG's Chair, said 'A big thank you to the MAG members who put in the hours to bring the demo together. It was great to see riders turn out in support of the event and I really enjoyed riding with you all. Hopefully Mr Khan will get the message!'

Keith Prince, Chair of the Greater London Authority Transport Committee and a motorcyclist himself, added his voice to the call for common sense: 'I am disappointed that the Mayor of London has chosen to punish the most vulnerable with his ULEZ tax by again not keeping

his promise to work with the motorcycling community. Ironically as a socialist, he is taxing the least well off; the low-paid essential workers and night workers who need their small-capacity bikes to get to work and cannot afford to replace them. Transport for London's "Easy Rider" report of 2015 states "powered two wheelers are part of the solution." Why, two years later, are we now part of the problem?'

Other speakers included Peter Ramsbottom, London Deputy Regional Representative, who is equally disappointed by the actions of the Mayor: 'We need to view motorcycles as a solution to the problem, and that's what MAG has been campaigning for since these recent threats emerged.'

MAG's President, Ian Mutch, summed up the campaigning commitment of MAG: 'The Mayor really does need to think about motorcycling because he made many promises to us before being elected. Now we invite him to talk directly with MAG. Currently, his policies on motorcycling are counterproductive: they ignore the benefits that motorcycles of all kinds bring to the commuting mix.'

Colin Brown, MAG's recently appointed Director of Campaigns & Political Engagement, said of the event 'this was a peaceful, good natured demonstration but there is real anger amongst bikers who don't understand how the Mayor can think it's fair to charge riders of old mopeds £12.50 a day to enter the city, while someone with a six-litre sports car gets in for free, as far as the pollution tax is concerned, if it's a new vehicle. We believe we have a strong legal case based on discrimination. We hope it doesn't come to that but if the Mayor is willing to damage his own reputation to defend a tax on the poor, then MAG will take him on, all the way to court if necessary.'

Highways England, MAG and others turn concerns into action

Highways England continues to be a role model for action following its Motorcycle Infrastructure Sub-Working Group meeting on 17th April 2018.

Lembit Öpik, MAG's Director of Communications & Public Affairs, regards this as 'amongst the most productive project groups in our Political Unit's calendar. Rarely have I seen a team which delivers so much and so well – in this case with a task list 28 pages long.' These include:

- Recommending a review of roadside advertising, which can easily draw the attention of drivers – after all, that's the purpose of advertising. Highways England already refuses advertising within their highway boundary.
- Assessing the danger of signposts and trees present near the roadside - with a request for inclusion of clear standards in safety planning. Data shows 91% of impacts with trees by motorcyclists led to death or serious injury.
- Highways England is assessing the extent to which 'armadillos' and 'orcas,' present a danger. They've been raised with the Safer Roads Team Specialist.
- 'Turbo roundabouts,' which introduce raised separation of lanes, will not be included in

the plans of Highways England.

- On potholes and manhole covers the committee recommends clear standards of repair and a review of the frictional qualities of manhole covers. Law already exists but possibly isn't being enforced (Street Works Act, Section 81). Other legislation says 'Ironwork must (have) similar friction qualities to that of the road surface (TD 54/07 Paragraph 4.9).' Safety inspection protocols were also covered.
- They're issuing advice on differential heights on road surfaces where rutting and raised edges present a danger to riders. Slippery joints between road sections – known as 'overbanding' - were also discussed.
- 48% of rider accidents at roundabouts and 47% of rider accidents at T or staggered junctions result in death or serious injury. The group recommends guidance in the 'Guide to Road Safety Route Treatments.'
- A notable statistic is that, on the Strategic Road Network, 14% of rider accidents are caused by vehicles pulling out on bikers.

'We got through a lot,' adds Jimmy Torrance, another MAG supporter and fellow member of this sub-group. 'You know, they actually listen to riders. Road surface issues are a direct test – if Highways England does repair more dangerous potholes and resurfaces slippery manhole covers, that would prove the group's usefulness.'

If you have specific concerns about major roads, please let Lembit or Jimmy know, and they can raise these issues at the sub-working group.

Advanced Stop Lines - what are they and can I get fined for entering one?



Bike boxes - or as they're officially known, Advanced Stop Lines (ASLs) - are one of many causes for confusion among drivers and cyclists sharing the road.

Exacerbated by grey areas in the law, differences of opinion and seemingly steep fines, do ASLs fuel unnecessary tension and confusion between users of the road?

We ask are they right measure to have in place and should they be policed differently?
What are Advanced Stop Lines (ASLs)?

Advanced Stop Lines ASLs (also referred to as bike boxes) are common at UK traffic lights and are put into place to give cyclists a safe place to stop at busy crossings and allow them to be positioned ahead of other traffic so they have more time to pull off as the lights change.

Is it illegal to enter an ASL?

Motorists could receive three penalty points and a £100 fine for stopping inside the Advanced Stop Lines (ASL) when pulling up to a red light.

Rule 178 of the Highway Code states: "Motorists, including motorcyclists, **MUST** stop at the first white line reached if the lights are amber or red and should avoid blocking the way or encroaching on the marked area at other times, e.g. if the junction ahead is blocked.

"If your vehicle has proceeded over the first white line at the time that the signal goes red, you **MUST** stop at the second white line, even if your vehicle is in the marked area.

"Allow cyclists time and space to move off when the green signal shows."

Although the Highway Code states you must stop at the first white line, it offers an exception to the rule, saying that if the lights change and the driver is forced to brake quickly, if it's safer for motorists to stop in the box, rather than risk braking too suddenly.

Also, if a vehicle enters the box while the lights are on green but is unable to clear the area before they turn to red – no offence has been committed.

Furthermore, this makes prosecuting offenders difficult.

PC James Aveling, a city bike patrol officer for more than 15 years, said in a Guardian article on the same subject: "Booking cars which enter the zone is tricky as it's not illegal if they stop in one if a light turns red and they're part-way in. Officers thus have to watch a driver creep in on an already red light."

There are occasions when motorists flout the rules and drive straight up to the second solid white line at traffic lights, but there are also occasions where cyclists enter the zones illegally in the first place.

It is only legal for a cyclist to enter an ASL from the break in the solid white line, usually found as a small gap on the kerb-side edge.

So if a cyclist enters from the centre or right, they are committing an offence and potentially putting themselves in danger by weaving in and out of traffic to get there.

The Cycling Embassy acknowledges the negatives of ASLs, stating there are many disadvantages including the fact that they may encourage people to filter past traffic when it may not be always safe, and to position themselves in dangerous positions in front of HGVs and other vehicles with poor visibility.

With the many contentions and confusions around Advanced Stop Lines, how they are used and whether they are being enforced by the police, we ask should they be used at all?

Please let us know where you sit in the comments below.

RAC: https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/advice/driving-advice/advanced-stop-lines/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=CHUB_SUBS_W1_2018-04-25_170044_8623835&cid=eml-email-CHUB_SUBS_W1_2018-04-25_170044_8623835-Drive_NL_MEMB_1st_Feature

Tim Falthrop found this in BikerandBike:- The maker of a tyre deflation device used by UK police forces considers stinger use against motorcycles to represent ‘deadly force’.

Federal Signal, the US makers of the Stinger tyre deflation device used by many police forces to disable speeding or dangerous vehicles, claim the use of their product against motorcycles should be considered as ‘deadly force’ and brings into question use of the devices in the UK.

A training manual on the manufacturer’s website makes it clear that “Stinger Spike Systems are designed to work on all types of vehicles, including cars, tractor-trailer rigs and city buses. **However, the deployment of the system on two-wheel vehicles is not recommended unless the use of deadly force can be legally justified.**”

<https://www.bikerandbike.co.uk/deploying-stingers-against-motorcycles-is-using-deadly-force-according-to-manufacturer/>

MAG National Clubs Liaison Officer (NCLO) – Job Specification

Core Objectives

1. Recruit motorcycle clubs as MAG Affiliated Members.
2. Encourage individual members of such clubs to upgrade to individual membership of MAG.
3. Provide a link between MAG and its affiliated clubs, ensuring provision of timely information on MAG campaigns and encouraging participation in those campaigns
4. Encourage involvement in MAG events and fundraisers.

Main Duties

1. Ensure that all clubs (including non-affiliates) receive a regular flow of information on MAG activities and campaigns and to encourage participation in these.
2. Liaise with Regional Reps to encourage appointment of Regional Clubs Liaison Officers (RCLO) and, where such officers are appointed, provide appropriate training and work with them to ensure that all clubs in each region receive a regular flow of information from MAG.
3. Develop and maintain the ‘Affiliated Clubs Package’ and to promote this package to clubs via information media and the RCLOs.

4. Contact, or ensure relevant RCLOs contact, nominated club representatives of any club not renewing its affiliation within one month of the due date, to encourage re-affiliation.
5. Provide high quality communications, including material for clubs, for inclusion in MAG publications and social media outlets.
6. Provide regular reports to the NC detailing activity between meetings and feedback to assist in the future recruitment/retention of clubs.
7. Submit all proposals and materials to the NC for approval before dissemination to the intended recipients.

FEMA

Stockholm City introduces one of the world's highest parking fees for motorcycles and mopeds without any kind of investigation or impact assessment for the citizens.

Even though Stockholm City has concluded that motorcycles and mopeds are small vehicles that reduce congestion and are better for the environment. The cost will rise from zero to € 2,000 per year for each vehicle owner who chooses to commute with a powered two-wheeler to make the everyday journey to work.

2018 is an election year in Sweden. The treatment of owners of motorcycles, scooters and mopeds in parking issues and exclusion from traffic management and traffic strategies will become hot topics when riders are about to vote in September.

The number of motorcycles and mopeds has doubled in Stockholm County in the last fifteen years. About 60 000 citizens in the Stockholm region use these smart vehicles. The motorcyclists in Stockholm use motorcycles to commute more than anywhere else in Sweden. The increased numbers of powered two-wheelers have not led to congestion, deterioration of the environment, costly infrastructure initiatives and investments in P-houses. On the contrary, the increased number of powered two-wheelers has made the everyday commute easier for thousands of citizens.

Stockholm has been a role model for a motorcycle friendly town. The town was first in the world to open bus lanes to motorcycles. The town has, like major cities in the rest of the world, offered free parking for powered two-wheelers in hundreds of shared spaces. This way of thinking is now history.

The reason for Stockholm to introduce parking charges for motorcycles and mopeds was paradoxically enough to reduce car traffic and increase available car parking by fifteen

percent. It also wanted to reduce the 'search traffic' when motorists drive around in cars looking for free parking space, which leads to stress, increased congestion and a poorer environment. The solution in Stockholm is to charge the road users who create the least problems – riders of motorcycles, scooters and mopeds. For SMC, the reasonable solution would be to increase the number of free parking spaces for mopeds and motorcycles.

The decision has been appealed at the highest court without success for motorcyclists in Stockholm. The city is now determined to introduce the parking fees in April-May 2018 with a cost of €0,50 – €1 per hour in the different zones. People who live in Stockholm can apply for a parking permission for their powered two-wheelers but they are not allowed to use them in the dedicated parking spaces where motorcycles and mopeds share space. This is not the case in an ordinary parking space where every vehicle must pay the full cost. This means that the new scheme might lead to less parking space for cars.



Olle Henriksson, chairman of SMC Stockholm, says: “I am very disappointed that none of the promises made by the chairman of the City Traffic Council, Daniel Helldén, have been upheld. Nor have the promises been kept regarding cooperation with SMC Stockholm in finding empty space in parking garages and dead spaces around the city to find solutions for parking motorcycles and mopeds. There is obviously no interest from the city of Stockholm to work for reduced congestion, better environment and increased accessibility.”

SMC is FEMA's Swedish member organiz

London Bikers' Protest Against Congestion Charge

FEMA member the Motorcycle Action Group in the UK (MAG) held their biggest demonstration in years last Saturday 21 April 2018 to highlight the unfairness of a new

pollution tax that London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, is threatening to introduce and which will hit some of the poorest workers in the capital.

The demonstration drew support from all elements of the riding community including dispatch riders, delivery riders, commuters and leisure bikers.

Selina Lavender, MAG's Chair, said: "A big thank you to the MAG members who put in the hours to bring the demo together. It was great to see riders turn out in support of the event and I really enjoyed riding with you all. Hopefully Mr Khan will get the message!"

Keith Prince, Chair of the Greater London Authority Transport Committee and a motorcyclist himself, added his voice to the call for common sense: "I am disappointed that the Mayor of London has chosen to punish the most vulnerable with his [ULEZ tax](#) by again not keeping his promise to work with the motorcycling community. Ironically as a socialist, he is taxing the least well off; the low-paid essential workers and night workers who need their small-capacity bikes to get to work and cannot afford to replace them. Transport for London's '[Easy Rider](#)' report of 2015 states 'powered two wheelers are part of the solution'. Why, two years later, are we now part of the problem?"

MAG's President, Ian Mutch (see picture below), summed up the campaigning commitment of MAG: "The Mayor really does need to think about motorcycling because he made many promises to us before being elected. Now we invite him to talk directly with MAG. Currently, his policies on motorcycling are counterproductive: they ignore the benefits that motorcycles of all kinds bring to the commuting mix."



Colin Brown, MAG's recently appointed Director of Campaigns & Political Engagement, said of the event: "This was a peaceful, good natured demonstration but there is real anger amongst bikers who don't understand how the Mayor can think it's fair to charge riders of old mopeds £12.50 (€14,25) a day to enter the city, while someone with a six-litre sports car gets in for free, as far as the pollution tax is concerned, if it's a new vehicle. We believe we have a strong legal case based on discrimination. We hope it doesn't come to that but if the Mayor is willing to damage his own reputation to defend a tax on the poor, then MAG will take him on, all the way to court if necessary."

Contact MAG at central-office@mag-uk.org

Watch the video below to get a great impression of the protest.

Motorcycle course puts education before enforcement

Norfolk Police and Norfolk County Council's road safety team are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Safe Rider training course, which has been delivered to more than 3,000 riders.

Safe Rider runs from April to October and comprises a 'relaxed and informal' two-and-a-half hour evening workshop followed by a five-hour road session. The course is aimed at fully qualified riders (either full A or A2 categories) who want to improve their skills to become better and safer riders.

In a 'conflict free environment', riders are introduced to the police Road Craft system, the 'cornerstone of police riding'.

The workshop provides individuals with professional advice and confirms their strengths and identifies their weaknesses as a rider.

The road session includes a demonstration ride by a police rider and an opportunity for the participant to have their riding assessed with written feedback – with options for further skills enhancement outlined at the conclusion of the course.

Norfolk Police says that in 1998 when Safe Rider was first introduced, 17 motorcyclists were killed – and a further 139 seriously injured – on the county's roads. In 2017, six motorcyclists were killed and 101 seriously injured.

Despite these reductions, Norfolk Police says motorcyclists still represent a big proportion of all KSI casualties. Statistics show that between 2013 and 2017, riders represented 26% of all KSIs.

Chief inspector Kris Barnard, head of the Norfolk and Suffolk Roads Policing Unit, said: "Reducing the number of people who are killed or seriously injured on the county's roads remains a priority for us and sadly the statistics speak for themselves that each year a high percentage of those killed on our roads are motorcyclists.

"The underlying message of the workshops is that education is key, not enforcement.

“The workshops give motorcyclists greater awareness of the hazards they may face when out and about to help them become better and safer riders.”

Safe Rider: <https://www.norfolk.police.uk/news/latest-news/13-04-2018/safe-rider-celebrates-20-years-success>

MOT inspection manual: motorcycles (Updated 26 April 2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mot-inspection-manual-for-class-1-and-2-vehicles>

Harsh winter leads to ‘one of the worst quarters’ for pothole breakdowns

The RAC says motorists are still suffering the effects of the harsh winter weather after revealing its patrols attended more than 5,500 pothole-related breakdowns between January and March.

The figure includes breakdowns ‘likely to be attributed to damage caused by potholes and poor quality road surfaces’ – such as damaged shock absorbers, broken suspension springs or distorted wheels.

At 2.3%, the percentage of total RAC breakdowns caused by potholes in Q1 2018 was the third highest since records began in 2006, but represents a marginal 0.1% fall compared with Q1 2017.

Despite the slight decline, the RAC ‘Pothole Index’ – a 12-month rolling average of pothole-related breakdowns – worsened slightly in Q1 2018, for a fourth successive quarter.

As of Q1 2018, the index stands at 2.63, having begun at a base of 1.0 in 2006; in Q1 2017 it stood at 2.08.

The RAC says that while the volume of pothole breakdowns may not have been as high as might have been expected considering the severity of the cold weather, it expects the second quarter of the year to be a better indicator of the true state of the country’s roads.

David Bizley, RAC chief engineer, said: “Few would disagree that the harsh cold weather experienced over the last three months has led to a further deterioration of road surfaces.

“While RAC patrols saw the third highest quarterly share of pothole-related breakdowns in the first three months of 2018 the figure was not as high as we had been expecting, probably due the fact that the weather hit relatively late in the quarter.

“For this reason we feel we are likely to see more vehicles suffering pothole damage in the second quarter of 2018 compared with recent years.

“We will be monitoring the situation very closely to see what effect the harsh winter weather has had. If the index doesn’t reduce or, worse still, continues to increase then this will be a very strong indication that our roads are still in a dire state of repair.”

RAC: <https://www.rac.co.uk/press-centre#/pressreleases/harsh-winter-weather-leads-to-one-of-the-worst-quarters-for-rac-pothole-breakdowns-2480254>

Campaign calls for inclusion of motorcycle awareness in theory test

A new campaign has been launched calling for the vehicle theory test to include a mandatory section on how drivers and bikers can look out for each other on road.

The campaign, which features on the BBC News website, has been set up by Ria Brisland whose 19-year-old son Nick was killed in a collision in Southampton three years ago.

Ms Brisland says the collision was a result of 'negligence' by a driver who 'pulled out and onto the road claiming he didn't see him coming'.

As part of the campaign, Ms Brisland is running an online petition outlining the proposed changes to the theory test, which to date has received more than 93k signatures.

An example, the petition says, could be a short video showing how there is a lack of vision from a driver's perspective.

Ms Brisland says more incidents could be stopped if only drivers and cyclists learnt how to better interact on roads.

Speaking to BBC News, she said: "The way in which he died could have been so easily avoided, so that's what has spurred me on to help other people."

BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-hampshire-43642065/mum-launches-motorbike-awareness-campaign-in-son-s-memory>

Petition: https://www.change.org/p/make-roads-safer-for-bikes?recruiter=552066878&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=psf_combo_share_initial.nafta_milestone_share_ask_victory.control

[I understand, via social media, that this has now been adopted by the Minister for Transport but yet to have confirmation]

Tyre ageing to be researched

It is a popular question among GEM members – when does a tyre become too old? Sadly, we cannot provide a definitive answer, because it depends on so many variables, including storage and usage conditions. Whenever we have queried premium tyre manufactures about age limits, the answers are, understandably, vague.

Research commissioned

Yet, the first publically-funded study into the safety of ageing tyres has been announced by the Roads Minister, Jesse Norman. This follows the death of three people, in a coach crash, when one of its front tyres failed. The post-accident investigation revealed that the tyre in question was 19 years-old.

The independent organisation, Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) has been charged with carrying out the research over the next 12 months, to check whether, or not, tyre integrity degrades to an unsafe level over time.

Unfortunately, GEM understands that the research will be applicable to heavy vehicles only and we urge that similar research is undertaken for car tyres as well, especially as the sale of dangerous part-worn tyres continues virtually unchallenged.

Competition seeks to capture the essence of motorcycling in London

Riders across London have the chance to win a track day for two at the legendary Brands Hatch circuit as part of a new competition.

The 'SNAP' competition, organised by 2Wheels London, is very simple to enter; the only criteria is that the photo must contain at least one powered two wheeler – motorcycle, scooter or moped – being used in and around the Capital either for leisure, commuting or at work.

Photos that contain any dangerous or illegal activity will not be considered.

The prize for the winning entry is a track day at Brands Hatch to a maximum value of £200. Alternatively, the winner can choose to receive £200 of vouchers from Infinity Motorcycles.

The runner-up and third placed entry will receive £100 and £75 Infinity Motorcycles vouchers respectively, with a further five £25 Infinity Motorcycles vouchers for the 'best of the rest'.

The competition is being promoted on the 2Wheels London website and social media channels (Facebook and Twitter).

Liz Brooker MBE, chair of 2Wheels London, said: "We're hoping to engage with more of the Capital's riders through this competition, and deliver some important safety messages and information along the way.

"This competition provides riders with an opportunity to get creative and show off their photography skills – while at the same time capturing the essence of motorcycling in London."

The closing date for entries is 30 April.

*2Wheels London works in partnership with London boroughs and local businesses to provide powered two-wheeler (PTW) riders with useful safety information and advice. 2 Wheels London: <http://www.2wheelslondon.com/index.php/snap-photo-competition/>

MCIA supports Met Police campaign to make it harder for thieves

The Motorcycle Industry Association is fully supportive of the latest phase of the Met Police's campaign to ask riders to lock, chain and cover their bikes. This makes a bike harder to steal so is less attractive to thieves.

The campaign, which includes a new video, urges the public to join the Met in the fight against crimes committed on scooters, by reducing the risk of their bike being stolen which could later be used by criminals to commit further offences.

In a communication issued today, the Met Police explained:

Almost 23,500 crimes were committed in London last year, using over 14,000 stolen scooters, motorcycles and mopeds. Along with offences such as robberies, burglaries and theft-snatches, in some cases these stolen vehicles were also used in violent crimes, and to transport weapons and drugs to be used in further crimes.

Policing activity is making a difference. In October 2017, the Met introduced new tactics including scrambler bikes, automatic tyre deflation devices and DNA sprays, to support ongoing concentrated policing operations. Since spring/summer 2017, there has been a significant reduction in these crimes. Scooter, motorcycle and moped theft has reduced by 52 per cent and there has been a 47 per cent reduction in crimes committed using these vehicles.

But by stopping these vehicles being stolen in the first place it is hoped that this, along with policing activity, will reduce further crimes being committed.

This new campaign builds on the success of the previous 'Be Safe' campaign, giving a specific method ('LOCK, CHAIN, COVER') which the public can use to secure their vehicle against theft.

This time, Londoners will also see prevention advice in advertising across screens on petrol pumps, on the back of buses and online.

The 'Be Safe' campaign supports Operation Venice, the Met's response to scooter, motorcycle and moped-related crime, and is particularly targeting the boroughs experiencing the highest amounts of scooter theft: Brent, Camden, Islington, Ealing, Haringey, Westminster, Wandsworth, Tower Hamlets, Lambeth, and Hammersmith and Fulham.

Assistant Commissioner Martin Hewitt, Territorial Policing, said: "We have put a huge amount of effort into stemming the rise in moped-enabled crime, and are now seeing reductions, which is great. However, we are not complacent. All the new tactics and technology we have introduced will be backed up by really proactive policing.

"We will keep arresting offenders and running proactive intelligence led operations to make the streets more hostile for criminals to operate. Also, through focusing our efforts on dismantling markets for stolen goods we will make these crimes less financially beneficial.

"Today, I'd like to ask all scooter or moped users in London to become a part of our effort to make life harder for these criminals. Lock, chain, and cover your bike when you leave it. It is simple, yet effective, and if it makes a thief think twice before stealing your bike then it's worth it."

Tony Campbell, CEO of the Motorcycle Industry Association, said: "The motorcycle industry is working closely with the Metropolitan Police and the Home Office to help tackle scooter theft and associated crimes, and spread the message that locking and covering a motorcycle or scooter will make it a less desirable target to opportunistic thieves. We are therefore calling on all owners of powered two wheelers and everyone working in the industry to get behind a culture of always using physical security."

The advice being given through the campaign is:

- Lock: use a disc lock to help secure the front brake disc, or a grip lock to secure the brake and throttle controls.

- Chain: use a chain lock through the back wheel (the front wheel can be removed). Secure your bike, with the lock taut to an immovable object such as a ground anchor or street furniture.
- Cover the bike as it makes it less attractive and harder for thieves to steal.

Notes:

The highest number of scooter, motorcycle and moped thefts on record was 1,512 in one month, April 2017. In less than a year the number has reduced, the month of February 2018 saw 787 thefts (-52 per cent).

In July 2017, the number of crimes committed using these vehicles peaked at 2,591, this reduced to 1,237 crimes in February 2018 (-47 per cent).

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