

News from the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG)

Criminals are Criminals: not Bikers

This version: 2018 05 10

Embargo: IMMEDIATE

The Motorcycle Action Group is launching a campaign to persuade the media to stop referring to those committing crime on motorcycles or scooters as 'bikers'.

How often do we see news reports describing dangerous “biker” gangs doing wheelies down residential roads, terrorising local residents, snatching mobile phones or robbing jewellery stores? The reports come out daily. The reality, as any biker knows, is that the individuals carrying out these acts are normally on stolen machines and often have no licence, no insurance, and no understanding of what a biker really is.

Lazy media coverage and poor editorial rigour is reinforcing all the negative stereotypes with which motorcyclists have always been branded to a point where it seems that the mainstream press see the terms “biker” and “criminal” as interchangeable.

“Legitimate law-abiding bikers are fed up with being associated with criminal behaviour” says Colin Brown, MAG’s Director of Campaigns & Political Engagement. “We have to work extremely hard to improve the public and political perception of bikers; the last thing we need is to be branded as, or associated with, the criminal elements of society. Lazy use of language has an enormous and subconscious detrimental impact on public perception. We are often viewed as intimidating faceless people because we have to wear helmets and safety gear, but the vast majority of us are friendly, warm, caring members of society.”

MAG has begun its campaign to educate and edify news editors and reporters by writing a formal letter to the Director General of the BBC, Tony Hall. In the letter signed by National Chairman, Selina Lavender, it was explained that not all bikers are criminals, and therefore the term should not be used to describe criminals. In his response, the DG said: “You make some important points I will let our News and programme teams know of the work that you and the Motorcycle Action Group are doing”

MAG will be formally writing to the editors of any news media, be they local or national, online, newspapers, radio or television stations, pointing out examples of poor use of terminology and requesting that they refrain from referring to these “crims” as bikers. Any publication responding and cleaning up their act will then be recognised, celebrated and may be nominated for MAG’s Media Award.

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