



# NETWORK

**FEBRUARY 2015**

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

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## Editorial

A really good piece of news announced by Mike Penning, Minister of State at the Home Office and Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice, means that, when sentences are handed down along with driving bans, the bans will now take effect once the guilty party is released from prison. Which, of course, makes sense - its hardly a punishment to be banned from driving whilst doing time.

Durham and Cleveland police forces are having a major crackdown on drivers using mobile phones behind the wheel. However, I'm not sure why this should be 'news'. Its no secret this is one of my pet hates and in my humble opinion every police force should treat this as a priority.

Remember, in the July edition, we featured the High Beech Tea Hut Campaign. The City of London Corporation had declared that the

lease was not being renewed but going out to tender. Whilst this is nothing unusual there suddenly major changes were required, including the provision of toilets (despite not giving permission for several years now for water and electricity to be supplied to the site), unofficial hints were allegedly that "it's too cheap" that "it needs modernising..." etc., etc., etc.

The great news is the bikers tea hut will stay in the hands of the family who have had it since 1930.

Paul Morris, whose petition to save the tea hut gathered more than 9,000 signatures, is happy with the decision to award the lease to the current owner, Bradley Melton. Well done Guys.

Ride free, AG

[Copy for the next edition to [aine@mag-uk.org](mailto:aine@mag-uk.org) subject heading: March Network]

**Acknowledgements:** George Legg. Selina Lavendar. Leon & Lembit. John Mitchell and anyone else I've forgotten

## LEMBIT - Excellent Progress on key campaigns

1 Leon and Lemit have been hard at work focussing on ramping up MAG's electoral activities as the May 7<sup>th</sup> General Election gets closer. The key request is: please organise local election debates with candidates. You'll find details of how to do this in the next edition of The Road – or get in touch with HQ to receive the complete FREE 'Make the Debate Happen' guide.

2 Tony Cox & co in Manchester created an outstanding presence at the Ultimate Custom Show in the Manchester Central venue in early January. Ever-active Tony has now achieved another first: a prime slot for an election debate at the Manchester Bike Show on 29<sup>th</sup> March at 1pm. Lemit has already secured Nigel Evans MP (MAG member) to represent the Conservatives. UKIP have confirmed their participation too, with John Leech MP (MAG member) being invited to represent the Lib Dems. Labour will doubtless be able to provide a speaker too. 'Manchester is really active,' comments Lemit, 'and it's immensely motivating to spend time with Tony, Jimmy and the team. Their secret is a sense of common purpose. It's also paying off in recruitment of new members.'

3 Jimmy Torrance, again in the North West, is organising an intensive evening of visits to local bike clubs in late March. 'The aim is to build links and get new MAG members,' explains Lemit. 'Jimmy is incredibly well connected with the local scene, and we've already visited a very MAG friendly group in Lymm. We're going to test some recruitment approaches – and I'll let you know how we get on.'

4 Leon has virtually taken up residence in Transport for London. His efforts are bearing fruit. 'I think we're likely to cause a rethink on the Cycle Superhighway proposals which stand to snarl up the whole of Central London. We've got good allies on our side now, and the whole process is having the side effect of massively increasing MAG's profile in the official corridors of power. More info to follow as I get it.'

5 Leon is also working with the Department for Transport on the bus lanes issue. Minister Robert Goodwill has expressed his interest in creating a consistent policy on the matter across the land. This is a BIG opportunity, and the goal is to secure progress BEFORE the General Election. If successful, it's a huge contribution by MAG to where bikes can go – which also has a knock-on effect on reduced congestion and improved safety.

6 More MPs are seeking to join up with MAG. Lemit is discussing this with a couple of Parliamentarians in the South West and one in the North West. Hopefully, we'll have more news for you in the next Network.

7 The manhole covers campaign is hotting up, with volunteers beginning to contact councils to ask for action on these killer surfaces. Our loose association with Preformed Markings Ltd. means we have a cost effective solution which is less than £50 per cover for the materials. We ask you to contact YOUR local council and ask for action.

8 MP Mike Weatherley is set to test ride some British bikes for MAG as a feature. This is part of our strategy to utilise high profile members while also building our relationship with the manufacturing sector. 'We're using our MPs better, but we could do five times more with the right resources,' remarks Lemit. 'It's a happy problem to have, and I'm working on it!'

9 The next edition of The Road is more campaigns orientated and packed with more good news about what L&L have been doing. But credit to the membership as well – for really getting going on developing the MAG story across the country. L&L are always on-hand – just get in touch if we can help.

## CAMPAIGN

### Will you help us fix the manhole problem?

This version: 2015 01 27

**MAG asks you to engage with your local authority to fix the deadly problem of slippery manhole cover surfaces. We've found a cost effective and quick fix. Lembit Öpik explains.**

We've all experienced that horrible sense of doom, as our wheels slide sideways on a slippery, wet manhole cover. A metal manhole cover doesn't have the same gripping characteristics as a normal road surface. So, if you're leaning into a corner, the metal can easily cause you to go sideways, with potentially serious consequences.

There are two practical solutions: replace the manhole with one made out of something which isn't slippery; or coat the slippery surface with a higher grip material. This second option is much cheaper and quicker than replacing the whole cover. A new manhole can cost up to £1,200. The coating costs under £50.

Please will you send your local Highways Department a letter, along the lines of the one suggested below? This ought to get you a meeting with the officers. An accident is far more expensive for everyone than covering the manholes with this gripping material. So, the Council will actually save money as well as lives.

Problems? Call us at MAG Central on 01926 844 064 or email us at: [central-office@mag-uk.org](mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org). remember, this is a problem which can be sorted out in minutes and for a relatively low amount of money. MAG also receives a small amount from the Preformed Markings company, to help cover the administration costs of our efforts. MAG and the firm both win – as does every rider who doesn't fall off.

Please get writing – or make an appointment by phone to see the Highways Department or the Councillors in charge of the policies of your local authority.

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SAMPLE LETTER TO SEND TO YOUR LOCAL HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### A SOLUTION TO DANGEROUS MANHOLE COVERS

*As a motorcyclist, I have a much greater than average interest in the state of the roads. In the past, I've had some worrying moments when encountering manhole covers, particularly where these are situated on bends in the middle of the road - and most especially in the rain.*

*I do accept these access covers often have to be exactly where they are. I also try and avoid them when I can, but sometimes at night one can be caught out, with potentially dramatic consequences. I am getting in touch with you now because I have recently heard about a treatment that can be applied to metal covers in a matter of minutes. These then offer the same skid resistance as the surrounding road and that is critically important for those on two wheels – whether pedal or powered.*

*I wonder if you had heard of this or experimented with it, or are willing to do so? The manufacturers are Preformed Markings Limited. As I say, this treatment is extremely cheap compared to replacing the cover itself, with a unit cost of under £50 and a treatment time of minutes. These factors remove the potentially limiting consideration of cost in time and in money, while hugely improving the safety of our roads for riders.*

When would it be convenient for us to visit and discuss these matters with you?

Best regards,

## MAG Volunteer Vacancies

At MAG we rely on volunteers to get things done. We currently have spaces available for the following positions:

**MAG Foundation Trustees**, the Foundation is looking for Trustees to re-energise this registered charity.

**MAG Media Directors**, if you have experience within publishing media (especially magazines) this could be your opportunity to get directly involved with The ROAD.

**National Finance Officer**, you'll ideally have financial qualifications for this role.

**Volunteers** who have **experience of the motorcycle testing industry** to help us with our work in making the testing regime fair for all

All of these roles are voluntary positions, if you are interested then in the first instance please email [central-office@mag-uk.org](mailto:central-office@mag-uk.org)

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## FEMA appoints new Secretary General

The Directors of the Federation of European Motorcyclists' Associations (FEMA) are pleased to announce the appointment of a new General Secretary.

In February 2015 Mr. Dolf Willigers will take over this position from Ms. Aline Delhaye, who has been General Secretary since September 2006. Aline Delhaye will remain as Project Coordinator of the RIDERSCAN project until its finalisation in April 2015 and will be available to FEMA until September to ensure that Mr. Willigers is fully briefed on all FEMA business.

[<http://www.fema-online.eu/riderscan/IMG/jpg/dolf\\_willigers.jpg>](http://www.fema-online.eu/riderscan/IMG/jpg/dolf_willigers.jpg)

Dolf Willigers (58), a Dutch national, has had a legal and economics education and worked for a long period as a business controller in the Netherlands. He has been a rider for many years and became involved in the Motorrijders Actie Groep (MAG) in the Netherlands in 2001. Within MAG Netherlands he held several positions before becoming a member of the Board of Directors in 2005. In 2012 he organised the campaign in the Netherlands against the imposition of a periodical technical inspection for motorcycles by Europe. After resigning from the Board in 2013 he became a FEMA delegate, a specialist on European affairs and editor of Mag-a-zine, the periodical of MAG NL.

Commenting on his appointment Mr. Willigers said: "I am very glad to be able to represent the riders at EU level and to defend their rights as General Secretary of FEMA. Whilst on a global level the use of motorcycles is becoming more important for every day travel, especially urban areas, in Europe motorcycling is under pressure. The use of motorcycles in daily traffic should instead be promoted as a smart and fast alternative for other kinds of travelling and I am looking forward to doing this."

On behalf of the Directors Anna Zee said: "We are pleased to be able to appoint Dolf, someone who has an excellent track record in supporting riders in his home country and already has considerable knowledge of European affairs. We also thank Aline for all the hard work she has put in over the last 8 years, helping to establish FEMA as the 'go-to' organisation representing motorcyclists."

The new FEMA General Secretary will make his first public appearance at the European Parliament session organised in the context of the European Motorcyclists Forum. The Debate-Session entitled Safer Motorcycling in Europe now! How can we tackle motorcycle safety challenges for the next decade? aims at discussing RIDERSCAN outcomes in the context of the European Commission's Mid-term evaluation of road safety policy orientations for 2011-2020. The long awaited OECD/ITF report on motorcycle safety will also be presented and discussed at this occasion.

The RIDERSCAN project, A European Scanning Tour for Motorcycle Safety is an EU co-financed project, aiming at taking a magnifying glass and look at country's expertise on motorcycle safety, to draw recommendations for EU and national concrete action (more information on [www.riderscan.eu](http://www.riderscan.eu) <<http://www.riderscan.eu>> ).

The European Motorcyclists Forum is a European platform for discussion set up by the European Commission and FEMA to enhance discussions on issues of common interest related to PTWs. The platform has been focusing on safety matters for the duration of the RIDERSCAN project.

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**Following a campaign by MAG activists** ITV have pulled a news article that mis-represented riders. The news item was supposed to highlight a victory for residents of a village in Wales who were fed-up with noisy bikes.

Instead of reporting the matter in a balanced fashion the report used sensationalist language and a photograph believed to be of bikers attending a funeral in Germany. ITV News Cymru Wales have apologised for the feature and have arranged for the article to be removed .

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### **Motorcycle theft is reduced to zero in Westminster 'hotspot'**

Motorcycle thieves are now avoiding St James's Square in London, thanks to a series of anti-theft initiatives.

The Square was identified as one of four 'hotspots' for motorcycle theft by Westminster City Council, with around 52 motorcycles or scooters stolen each year from its parking bays - around one a week.

£1 million worth of motorcycles, scooters and mopeds have been stolen from the whole of the City of Westminster since April 2014 - a total of 191.

Since September though, **none have been taken from St James's Square**, as a result of a series of measures put in place by Westminster City Council through working in partnership with the Metropolitan Police and security marking specialists Datatag. This could be rolled out to other 'hotspots'.

For the full report please go to the MCIA website on the following link:-  
<http://www.mcia.co.uk/Press-and-Statistics/Press-Releases/Article/Motorcycle-theft-is-reduced-to-zero-in-Westminster-hotspot.aspx>

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Farms will soon have driverless tractors, Environment Secretary has said  
*Liz Truss, the Environment Secretary, says that farmers are less dependent on migrant labour because of a revolution in technology.*

For the full report please go to the following link:

Ed: Scary if they ever get on the road!

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## **Department for Freedom of Choice?**

A Government Minister has shone a welcome beam of liberty into proceedings, by rejecting the idea of compulsory high visibility clothing. Dan Jarvis, Shadow Minister of Justice and Labour MP for Barnsley Central, posed a 'Parliamentary Question' to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Robert Goodwill MP. Jarvis, who has served in the military, engaged with the Minister by asking: 'what steps he is taking to encourage cyclists to wear high visibility clothing.'

Goodwill, who is also the Conservative MP for Scarborough and Whitby, gave a response which will be welcomed by all freedom loving riders everywhere: 'The safety of vulnerable road users is a priority for this Government and we recommend that cyclists wear clothing that makes them sufficiently visible to other road users. However, wearing high visibility clothing is a matter of individual choice, and I would want to resist imposing additional regulations which could lead to people choosing not to cycle and would be difficult to enforce. We encourage the wearing of high visibility clothing through the Highway Code, THINK! Cyclist campaign, and Tales of the Road.'

In addition, children who take part in Bikeability cycle training courses have discussions on safety equipment and what to wear; this includes high visibility clothing.' MAG Chairman, John Mitchell, is very encouraged by the Minister's commentary. 'Robert Goodwill is on very good terms with Scarborough MAG. I'd be surprised if he's not a member before long.' President Ian Mutch agrees. 'Not all politicians are against us, and the Minister's opposition to compulsory hi-vis attire is proof of that. I hope it's a sign that at least one department still values freedom of choice. Dare I say it, this is also an example of common cause between cyclists and bikers. Sometimes working together can have its advantages.'

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## **Manchester bikers praise John Leech MP as Parliamentary 'Champion for riders' rights'**

**This version: 10<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

Manchester motorcyclists have applauded the work of local MP John Leech for his consistent and energetic efforts to stand up for their rights as road users in Greater Manchester. Mr Leech, MP for Manchester Withington and a member of the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG), attended the Manchester Ultimate Custom Show in Central Manchester to meet with key representatives of MAG. He has raised a number of issues on behalf of motorcyclists. These include concerns about the use of dangerous road dividers – called armadillos – which present a hazard to all road users, especially those on two wheels. Mr Leech also held a meeting with veteran motorcycle campaigner – and constituent – James Torrance, to understand the issues facing riders in the area.

MAG's regional representative, Tony Cox, has praised Mr Leech's efforts. 'John Leech is part of that rare breed of politicians who are genuinely dedicating to doing the right thing and standing up for the rights of people who might otherwise suffer discriminatory treatment at the hands of the authorities. Bikers are certainly in that category. John's strength of character and personal resolve mean that bikers in his constituency - and across Manchester as a whole - have a powerful voice in Parliament. We're very pleased to have developed a close working relationship with him. The city is lucky to have such a man as

their spokesman in Westminster. And MAG is fortunate to be working with such a champion for riders' rights.'

Mr Leech is keen to represent the interests of riders in the area. 'MAG does a great job of presenting the concerns and interests of motorcyclists and scooter riders in a way that makes compelling sense. They're right when they say that powered two wheelers are part of the solution to the economic, ecological and traffic problems here in the North East. Schemes like the poorly thought out 'armadillo' separators only serve to make the roads more dangerous for everyone, including cyclists. I'm keen to do my level best to get some common sense into highways policy. Working with MAG, I'm confident we can make a real difference to riders in Manchester, and that's good for everyone who uses our roads.'

Mr Leech has submitted a number of Parliamentary questions to establish how much research has actually been done into a number of road safety schemes. He meets with MAG regularly and welcomes riders to attend his constituency surgeries at any time. 'I'm here to help.'

For more information: Tony Cox (mag Regional Rep) on 07836 519391

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### **MP urges petrol prices enquiry.**

The Government has been urged to launch an inquiry into petrol pricing as motorists continue to face "significant" regional differences in price.

Iain McKenzie, Labour MP for Inverclyde in Scotland, says petrol and diesel prices in his constituency vary by as much as 3p or 4p depending on which forecourt drivers use.

He said many independent fuel retailers have had to close in recent years because large supermarkets such as Tesco and Asda have come to dominate the market, effectively ending competition in many areas. For the full report go to:

<http://www.rac.co.uk/advice/motoring-news/mp-urges-petrol-pricing-inquiry>

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**TRL is currently looking for participants** who feel their riding has been affected by stress in the last six months and particularly looking for motorcyclists who ride all year around.

They are looking for participants to start on/ around 18th January and who are able to travel to TRL (Crowthorne House, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 3GA) on more than one occasion.

If you are interested in taking part in this research, please click on the following link to complete a short screening questionnaire containing some questions about you and your riding experience. Please note that completion of the following questionnaire does not guarantee you will be selected to take part in the research.

[www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/128773LLFIC](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/128773LLFIC)  
<[http://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.smartsurvey.co.uk%2Fs%2F128773LLFIC&h=EAQHmC6di&enc=AZOY-MXgPR3XLgm\\_BQokVlqiD5Dye9tzImu8OURBTkzPluR\\_B6K-0meEGLdCZgWL4OAE\\_MAxNVs5aHr2MirnHbGjT45kZqTJloNy6efUr7kWJracuHwrgELZTFKxYwK-GVf11N72DRIPpZPIqYr7zcDLajQFQonNYzKR4zC2PyWNaA&s=1](http://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.smartsurvey.co.uk%2Fs%2F128773LLFIC&h=EAQHmC6di&enc=AZOY-MXgPR3XLgm_BQokVlqiD5Dye9tzImu8OURBTkzPluR_B6K-0meEGLdCZgWL4OAE_MAxNVs5aHr2MirnHbGjT45kZqTJloNy6efUr7kWJracuHwrgELZTFKxYwK-GVf11N72DRIPpZPIqYr7zcDLajQFQonNYzKR4zC2PyWNaA&s=1)>

Read more here

[www.thebikerguide.co.uk/.../trl-stress-management-study.html](http://www.thebikerguide.co.uk/.../trl-stress-management-study.html)  
<[http://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.thebikerguide.co.uk%2Fmotorcyclenews2014%2Fread\\_123109%2Ftrl-stress-management-study.html&h=XAQGKIArU&enc=AZMiOmCAgoLVn0Ah3cvwdtZ3RhM6GEatz4hmj\\_mYRT9clcv4eIAISupW MQ\\_EZyBOaKUrws2UQe3b1EhnbZcutbeY5YsdUw3mFWzsrN5G1NBGM9s-xun\\_-DZCtNzjLQ-usDWWKAesRD9cWS8uUjhKtdTjKam7f6RI6gTLRO1XbUSPfw&s=1](http://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.thebikerguide.co.uk%2Fmotorcyclenews2014%2Fread_123109%2Ftrl-stress-management-study.html&h=XAQGKIArU&enc=AZMiOmCAgoLVn0Ah3cvwdtZ3RhM6GEatz4hmj_mYRT9clcv4eIAISupW MQ_EZyBOaKUrws2UQe3b1EhnbZcutbeY5YsdUw3mFWzsrN5G1NBGM9s-xun_-DZCtNzjLQ-usDWWKAesRD9cWS8uUjhKtdTjKam7f6RI6gTLRO1XbUSPfw&s=1)>

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## Early Day Motion 72458

### Introduce mandatory noise complaint waiver for anyone who buys or rents a property close to motorsport venue

Responsible department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

There are innumerate cases of people knowingly moving within close proximity of motorsport venues, only to try to have their planning permission revoked or have them closed completely when they take exception to the noise.

It is extremely detrimental to the UK's motorsport heritage, when all the motorsport venues start disappearing. Motorsport and the associated mechanical/engineering business is a key British export and second to none in the world of motorsports.

As such, anyone who wishes to buy or rent a property within a determined distance of a motorsport venue should have to read and sign legislature that waives their right to complain about the noise from the nearby venue. If they do not wish to be bothered by something that was a fixture of the community long before they arrived, they should not move there in the first place.

<https://submissions.epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/72458>

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### **MCIA member GEFCO, makes sure its fleet drivers 'think bikes' at all times.**

20th January 2015.

Motorcycle Industry Association member GEFCO is placing 'Think Bikes' stickers in all its fleet vehicles, including car and van transporter vehicles.

GEFCO is a specialist in logistics for the motorcycle industry and has a large fleet of vehicles which help transport close to 50% of all new motorcycles across the dealer network in the UK. GEFCO is also encouraging its partners to adopt the same position in supporting this initiative.

'Think Bikes' stickers consist of two small separate line drawings representing a bicycle and a motorcycle. They remind drivers to look out for cyclists and motorcyclists, by being placed somewhere visible within a car or lorry cab, usually on the wing mirrors.

The stickers, which [were launched last year](#), are produced by the AA in association with the MCIA and British Cycling and have been made available free at Halfords stores. A million stickers were produced initially but have been reprinted several times, due to ongoing demand.

Roy Fenner, GEFCO UK's 2Wheeler Key Account Manager commented on the initiative, "We wholeheartedly support the MCIA's initiative as road safety is paramount in our business and industry and is something GEFCO takes incredibly seriously. We have been operating in the 2wheeler sector for over ten years now and therefore understand the great importance of always being on the lookout for motorcyclists and cyclists. By using these stickers, motorcyclists will be front of mind to GEFCO's drivers and partners and ensures an even higher level of care and diligence when transporting goods."

Steve Kenward, CEO at the MCIA said, "GEFCO show real commitment to the industry and to the safety of riders by backing this initiative. We would like to see other fleet operators follow its example by making sure, that along with car drivers, professional drivers 'think bikes' at all times."

For more information contact Stevie Muir [press@mcia.co.uk](mailto:press@mcia.co.uk)

And, more from the MCIA

## **12 months of continual growth for sales of new motorcycles**

Year-end figures for new motorcycle registrations show sales for 2014 were up 10% compared to 2013, with an increase every single month throughout the year - the highest for five years.

101,277 new motorcycles, scooters and mopeds were registered during 2014, compared to 91,908 the year before. Of this year's new registrations over 48,000 were smaller commuter-sized machines.

The figures, which are collated by the Motorcycle Industry Association (MCIA), show that certain styles were particularly popular. 'Naked' bikes\* were up 32% on the previous year and 'touring' bikes\*\* up 13%. Larger motorcycles sold well too, with an increase of 18% in the sale of models between 651cc and 1000cc.

There is also an upward trend for the number of powered two wheelers (PTWs) being used on the road. Government statistics show the number of PTWs licensed for the road has increased to 1,326,500 – the highest figure registered for 5 years, and nearly double the number on the road in 1994.\*\*\*

Full report at:- <http://www.mcia.co.uk/Press-and-Statistics/Press-Releases/Article/12-months-of-continual-growth-for-new-motorcycle-sales-.aspx>

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## **SMART Cameras**

New 'smart' speed cameras on the M25 have already caught 700 drivers in just two months – and they could be coming soon to a motorway near you.

The devices, which use digital technology for the first time, have been introduced on one section of London's orbital motorway between junctions five and six in Kent to catch motorists breaking the 70mph speed limit.

And the new gantry models, which are painted grey to make them harder to spot than the standard yellow, seem to be working – with 668 drivers receiving fines since they were introduced last year.

Of those, 148 penalties related to drivers exceeding 40 to 60mph variable speed limits, but the majority, 520, were for breaking the 70mph limit, *The Times* reported.

More of the devices, which have been dubbed 'stealth cameras' by some critics, were installed on a northern stretch of the M25 before Christmas, and are set to be rolled out to parts of the M1, M3, M6 and M60.

It means that thousands of motorists could be at risk of paying out at least £100 in fines and getting points on their licence if they stray over the limit.

It is part of a plan by the Highways Agency to expand 'smart' motorways and so ease the flow of traffic. Other steps include using the hard shoulder as an extra lane at peak periods.

Full report at:-

[http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/stealth-speed-cameras-on-motorways-to-be-rolled-out-after-catching-700-drivers-in-two-months-9979101.html?utm\\_source=digg](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/stealth-speed-cameras-on-motorways-to-be-rolled-out-after-catching-700-drivers-in-two-months-9979101.html?utm_source=digg)

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## **IAM appoints new Chief Executive Sarah Sillars to champion driving and riding skills**

(part)

The Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) has appointed Mrs Sarah Sillars OBE, one of the leading women in British industry, as its new Chief Executive Officer as she returns full-time to the automotive sector.

Sarah's mission will be to improve driving and riding skills and to campaign for legislation to improve road safety.

Sarah Sillars, OBE and Hon FIMI, joins London-based IAM next month. The IAM is one of the most regarded and well-established bodies in British motoring.

Sarah takes up her role on 5 February having overseen the commercialisation of Semta, the sector skills council for engineering and advanced manufacturing.

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## **Drink Drivers over the Xmas period.**

More than one in 25 motorists asked to provide a breath test over the Christmas period were found to be over the alcohol limit - the highest number in three years.

National roads policing spokeswoman, Chief Constable Suzette Davenport, says a more "intelligence-led" approach contributed to the rise in positive drink-drive tests.

But the RAC urges that more still needs to be done to eradicate such behaviour from our roads.

A total of 133,996 samples were taken in England and Wales last month, with 5,885 motorists - or 4.39% - testing positive. That's a significant increase on the figure for December 2013, when 3.42% of drivers failed a drink-drive test.

RAC spokesman Simon Williams said: "While many high profile government publicity campaigns over the years have helped to make drink-driving socially unacceptable, more still needs to be done and it is vital that society as a whole - from government through to every individual - takes responsibility over this issue.

"If you're over the limit and behind the wheel, the car becomes a lethal weapon and you have no control over it. Any death caused by drink driving is needless and totally avoidable, which is why it is encouraging that the police are working more effectively to stop people suspected of being over the limit and that these figures are no doubt a reflection of better policing methods, rather than an increase in the number of people drink driving."

Those aged 25 and over were less likely to be caught driving under the influence than younger drivers, with 6.33% of under-25s failing their test.

Chief Constable Davenport said 60,000 fewer breath tests were carried out in December last year compared with the same month a year earlier because officers were now using "targeted testing" to help officers catch offenders more efficiently.

She added that officers have a very clear and simple message for drunk drivers, which is that they are putting their own lives and those of others at risk - and that they may have to bear the consequences for the rest of their lives.

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## **Bikers of Greater London, MAG needs you!**

We have a lot of things happening in the Greater London area – from the Fred Hill run on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February (11.30 for midday start from the Ace Café) to the General Election. MAG needs people on the ground who can either help with political research or just be *there*. We also have people wanting to attend groups but don't know where to start.

I know there are also people who have done their bit for MAG over the years, and I would like to see if they are interested in giving MAG a go again. I am looking to get a couple of groups going in London but can't do it alone.

I am currently taking on Boris Johnson (which you'll see by the letter on the next page) – getting him to remember his promise of 2008, when he said he didn't have a problem with bikes in bus lanes throughout London. Speaking on behalf of London's motorcyclists (whether they're couriers, commuters from outside the city or those who ride bikes and scooters as an alternative to the tube) – I would like him to do what he can to sort out this bus lane mess before heading back to Parliament.

He already has the tools at his disposal – TfL (after the Roads Task Force – including our own Dr Leon Mannings – report was released) has said that it would compel councils to open bus lanes to bikes, so there seems to be no reason why his this cannot be realised. I would like to hold him to his promise.

Sadly, there is currently no representation – for the Greater London Region – on MAG's National Committee and this has been the case for a number of years.

This is where you come in.

If you're a Greater London Region MAG member, and want to get MAG re-established in the region, please get in touch.

Best to email me on [chair@mag-uk.org](mailto:chair@mag-uk.org) and I'll get back to you.

Cheers!

John Mitchell, MAG National Chairman.



The Motorcycle Action Group Limited

Boris Johnson, Mayor of London  
Greater London Authority  
City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
More London  
London SE1 2AA

21 January 2015

Dear Mr Johnson,

**MP Boris Johnson says motorcycles in bus lanes a "no brainer"**

When searching for something on the *Motorcycle News* website recently, I found an article from February 2008 (when you were previously a member of Parliament) with the above headline\*, which implied that you – as a cyclist – could not see a problem with motorcycles having access to London's bus lanes and you would allow bikes to use them if you were elected as Mayor.

In the seven years since that article was written – according to the media – it looks like you are seriously toying with the idea of becoming an MP again; meanwhile, the subject of bikes in bus lanes has become more of a convoluted mess in London, with some boroughs – such as Westminster – opening their bus lanes; along with all red routes which are open to motorcycles; however, councils such as Brent and Islington are rather reluctant. This in turn leads to confusion from motorcyclists from outside those boroughs, who end up receiving fines when they ride into the lanes by mistake.

I – as the National Chairman of the Motorcycle Action Group – represent motorcyclists all across the country (my organisation has such members as Steve Baker, Mike Penning and other Conservative MPs who I'm sure you're aware of), but on this occasion I'm writing from a London perspective. My work for MAG is voluntary; and to earn a living, I work for a design studio not far from Tech City.

Living in Seaford, East Sussex like I do, I often bring my 1998 Triumph Speed Triple into London – especially if I'm on my way to MAG's office in Warwickshire for a Board meeting that evening or just fancy a break from the tedious two-hour train journey. I'm happy to say that there is a decent amount of motorcycle parking in the area, of one form or another.

Contd...

\*<http://www.motorcyclenews.com/MCN/News/newsresults/mcn/2008/February-1-3/25-29/feb2608borisbacksmotorcyclesinbuslanes/>

Twenty years ago, when I worked as a Yorkshire-based motorcycle courier, I used to come down off the M1, through St. John's Wood, etc. on my way to Knightsbridge, Oxford Street or wherever to deliver my parcels and was able to make the trip there and back to West Yorkshire in about six hours. Nowadays of course, congestion has got so bad, that the same journey would be impossible.

I notice that the A41 to the M1 has quite a few bus lanes and not all of them seem to be open to bikes, whereas travelling up the A23 from home, I'm able to make my journey in two thirds of the time it took me ten years ago, thanks to bus lane access, especially through Brixton and Streatham where my journey time has greatly improved.

To be honest, I'm quite disappointed. I feel that you've not really stood behind your convictions in the years since you were elected as Mayor – despite some worthwhile meetings between your deputy for transport, Isabel Dedring; MAG's Dr. Leon Mannings (of your London Roads Task Force) and the DfT's Michelle Dix in February 2013; and when you head back into Westminster later this year, all of your promises might seem forgotten.

While I wish you well with what seems like your future parliamentary campaign, I – along with all of London's motorcyclists (whether they're couriers, commuters from outside the city or those who ride bikes and scooters as an alternative to the tube) – would like you to do what you can to sort out this bus lane mess before heading back to Parliament. You already have the tools at your disposal – TfL (after the Roads Task Force report was released) has said that it would compel councils to open bus lanes to bikes, so there seems to be no reason why your "no brainer" cannot be realised. Otherwise it seems that all effort that was put into the various reports has been wasted.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course with your plan of action.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Yours sincerely,

John Mitchell  
National Chairman  
The Motorcycle Action Group

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