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Network: Political Unit

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Welcome to the MAG Political Unit's summary of what's been going on and what's coming up in the world of motorcycle and transport politics. Colin Brown and Lembit have been working to keep up with the developments facing the riding community. Here's a run-down on the big stories.

London demo proves two points: Congratulations the London MAG regional group, headed up by Tim Fawthrop, who held a dramatic demonstration in London to highlight motorcycling matters in the heart of the city. Hundreds of riders turned up to underline: firstly, our frustrations about the situation regarding crime which affects so many bikers: and secondly, the discrimination against us regarding road space and pollution taxes. There'll be more to come in June and July, and we're hoping that our allies on the Greater London Assembly will support us by asking the Mayor to explain how he'll keep the promises he made to the riding community when he first got elected.

Silvertown Tunnel: The Secretary of State for Transport has approved the construction of a new tunnel under the Thames. But it's not 100% clear what the charging regime is going to be. There'll be some charging but the very important news is that MAG have achieved some movement here. 'It looks like the Secretary of State has accepted the recommendation of the investigation panel which took our interventions seriously. We're still looking at the details but it is certain that our input has had a positive effect in terms of how riders will be treated.' Lembit is looking at all the supporting document and that will take a bit of time. We'll let you know as soon as we know.

Clean Air Zones (CAZs) and foggy thinking: MAG has expanded our campaigning activity to challenge the unfair proposals to charge riders £12.50 a day to ride an older bike of any capacity in Central London. We're conducting detailed research to show that any bike of any age or size doesn't compete with the cruise ships they're trying to attract into the city when it comes to emissions. A police helicopter uses the same amount of fuel in a single hour as an average Honda 125 commuter uses in a year and a half.

We've got together with others who share an interest in challenging the madness that could tax older vehicles out of existence. Expect a significant announcement in June – because that's when we're likely to see the real fight begin.

Let us know if there are threats of a Clean Air Zone where you are. Contact Lembit at MAG HQ. It's really a struggle that could define if petrol engines are effectively banned.

Cambridge City Deal: Local Cambridge activist Alexander Nix has brought to our attention a consultation on improvements on the Histon Road. "The £6m project aims to encourage more people to use alternative sustainable modes of transport in order to reduce congestion and improve air quality." We will explore this in more detail and produce a formal MAG response, but as always, the more voices calling for promoting motorcycles to reduce congestion and improve air quality, the better. Please take a look at the details and put in a response to help amplify the message. The consultation can be found here:

<https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/transport/transport-projects/histon-road/histon-road-consultation-2018/>

Crime and non-punishment: Colin's had a number of meetings in an effort to get action from the authorities to tackle the scourge of moped-enabled crime. Around 16,000 bikes were stolen in a single year in the Capital. The problem is also reflected nationwide in cities like Liverpool and Birmingham. Our view is that there's plenty of talk and not much action. Colin is working very hard to get answers and action from the Home Office Roundtable initiative, but the long-standing suspicion that

motorcyclists are not being treated as the primary victim is not being dispelled. The next Roundtable meeting on 6th June is likely to see some very pointed questions being raised by Colin, all with the theme of what action has actually been taken that would not have been taken without the Home Office intervention.

Remember, we need your stories of crime to prove what's actually going on out there. We also need to remind the public that these thugs aren't bikers, just common criminals.

BREAKING NEWS: A new announcement reports that the police will be able to chase thugs who take their helmets off. Currently the police are worried they'll end up defending themselves in court for doing this. There is a formal consultation launched on 22nd May on these proposals. We will bring you more details soon.

Ludlow Town Council Motorcycle Parking Ban: Another Town Council bending to alleged complaints from local residents is running a consultation on proposals to ban motorcycle parking in Castle Square, Ludlow. This historic market town relies heavily on tourism, so the suggestion to ban bikers is illogical and discriminatory. Local town councillor, Andy Boddington is opposed to the proposals also. Once again MAG will put in a formal consultation response, but weight of numbers is what we are looking for. Please visit the council website to complete the online questionnaire or email your opinions to townclerk@ludlow.gov.uk

Please remember to be polite in all your communications, a reputation for being offensive will not help win this case.

Consultation close date extended to 6th June 2018. The council consultation website is here:
<http://www.ludlow.gov.uk/Contents/Text/Index.asp?SiteId=817&SiteExtra=1562671&TopNavId=824&NavSideId=16539>

Road surface campaign: How's it going with reporting those dangerous covers and holes in the road and slippery manhole covers? Take photos of the offending road surfaces and send them to us – we'll help publicise what we deal with out there. It's up to us to protect ourselves from lethal road problems by reporting them.

And the usual appeal to call your local radio stations... Don't forget to call your local radio programmes and mention motorbikes. Some areas are doing this very well, and Lembit does as much as he can to include bikers on shows he's on. But please do call them on your own initiative. We have to raise our profile to compete with those who already do this, such as the cycling community.

Get your local politicians signed up! MPs and Councillors who are members get our magazine and are also more connected to the issues we face as riders. They don't have to be bikers themselves, just sympathetic to our right to ride. Any problems? Call Lembit via HQ.

News stories: If anything's happening in your area relating to motorcycles, let us know. We'd like to share your news, good and bad, and campaign on issues where we need to. Let Lembit and Colin know through HQ.

Lembit Öpik & Colin Brown

Motorcycle Action Group