



A networking tool for Activists and other interested parties

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EDITORIAL

Having done the job of Network Editor for around 12/13 years regular readers know my hatred of hand held mobiles whilst driving so the possibility of offenders having their mobiles seized seems excellent to me.

There's an article in this edition with exactly that heading – watch this space!

There's also an article indicating Civilian Road Patrols could get police powers. Personally, I'm not sure how I feel about that. Is this a way of the Government

getting around having less police around? I guess we can only wait and see.

'Support for tougher sentence's for those who kill on the road' – another article in this edition – is right on the button. As you know MAG has been pressing for tougher sentences for riders killed on the road which are way, way too lenient. So let's hope this progresses quickly and in our favour.

That's me for this month. Ride free and safe,

AG

Acknowledgments for this edition:- George Legg. Leon and Lembit. Andy Carrott. And anyone else I've forgotten.

[Please let me have any copy for the April edition by 25th March. Subject heading: Network to aine@mag-uk.org]

Network Policy & Campaigns - Leon and Lembit report

Overview

Crime, consultations and raising the stakes on dangerous road changes have marked the last four weeks for Leon & Lembit. Here's an update.

1. Lembit has completed the most recent submissions by MAG to the Silver Town Tunnel consultation. The main issue is user charging for motorcyclists. Lembit says 'we got our submission in well ahead of schedule and I'm glad to report that there's every reason to us to be confident of our arguments. From a logical perspective, there's no way that riders should be charged to use any crossing of the Thames. There's some way to go with this consultation but I'm quite confident we're being taken seriously, which is as much as we can say at the moment.' Please let us know if you hear of any user charging proposals in your area, or if you want to discuss our work in London on this matter.
2. MAG has also submitted a comprehensive submission to the investigation into how the process of getting a licence should be organised in the UK. We made a series of points about improving the training and instruction process. The key aim of our submission is to support the idea of 'progressive training' which would reduce the

amount of testing and increase the amount of tuition to progress from one licence to the next. The current system is confusing and puts people off continuing through the process. MAG is hoping to simplify it and is working with the Motor Cycle Industry Association to try and support each other in areas where we agree as this adds a lot of weight to what we're saying.

3. We continue to meet obstacles in London regarding Leon's efforts to get the authorities to see sense about number of problems that riders in the city are facing, including road width reductions and an almost total lack of investment for rider safety, compared to almost a billion Pounds which is allocated for cycle schemes. 'The prevailing trend is to make the roads MORE dangerous and less efficient for bikers,' explains Leon, who is frustrated with the lack of concern currently being shown by most London politicians. Leon met the Labour Group Assembly Member for Transport and amongst other things he gave her a hard copy of the Mayor's pre-election promises that we published in The ROAD nine months ago. She agreed to hand it to the Mayor in person – along with a polite message from us that bikers are getting a tad 'disappointed' that none of his promises have been kept to date. Leon is not convinced that this latest promise will be kept but he had the promise reiterated in a phone call just as this issue of Network went to press.
4. MAG has had good success at two motorcycle shows – one in Northern Ireland and the other in London. Both led to a recruiting boost. The results indicate a lot of people WILL sign up if they meet us and they're asked. Congrats to Martyn Boyd, Pat Jameson, Tim Fawthrop and Dick Penfold for their excellent efforts in these two recruitment drives. The strong growth indicates a lot of people WILL join MAG if they meet us and if they are invited to sign up. And, a chance encounter Leon had with Mark Upham – who has launched a 21st Century version of the Brough Superior, led to an offer for us to have one of his bikes at any of MAG's stands in the future.
5. The Motorcycle Crime Reduction Group's Chairman, Kevin Howells, addressed MAG's National Committee meeting in early February to discuss how we can work together to reduce crime. This is part of our continuing commitment to work with groups that can help us address massive issues such as bike crime and violence towards bikers. On the same subject, Stevie B. in the North and Lembit are getting things moving with various police meetings. These seem to be shifting police policy in a helpful way. It's quite a long process but in essence we are managing to get them to see it more our way about injunctions and there is a non-confrontational way forward with this. There'll be more to report after a key conference in Liverpool at the end of March 2016.
6. The group of bikers based around the Bike Shed are still keen to oppose threats like the Ultra Low emissions Zone charges which would make biking effectively uneconomic for anyone with an older bike. However, Leon reports that the We Ride London campaign team are starting to find that gaining high profile celebrity support is harder than they originally thought. Once again, if you can help, please get in touch with us at 01926 844 064. We need people to write letters and emails, visit some locations in London and be prepared to raise these issues with the London authorities.

7. The Government has issued its response to autonomous vehicles and the consultation they held about the future of these devices. MAG is explicitly included, showing they took our submission seriously. We need to wait and see what proposals they now put into the Modern Transport Bill later this year. It's going to be a significant campaign for sure and will occupy us on and off for the rest of this year.
8. For reference, bikers have also been mentioned in the Manchester's new transport strategy, so the benefits of consistent lobbying are finally having an impact. Our engagement began over two years ago and included persistent efforts by some highly committed local activists and a couple of meetings with key figures that Leon joined in with. Since then Lembit has been similarly engaged with assisting Regional Rep and MAG Director Tony Cox. It's not a huge shift in policy terms but it is significantly better than the zero mention of the positive role of motorcycling that was in the first draft strategy document.
9. Progress continues with our campaign to get the adverse impacts on bikers and other vulnerable road users duly recognised and taken seriously. There may be little to show for it publicly right now but Leon has spent much of this month gathering the video evidence together to dramatically prove that Light Segregation measures such as Orcas, Mini Orcas and Armadillos really are Trip Hazards with great potential to cause serious or even fatal injuries. He has also been liaising with two MPs who are keen to work with us to get the DfT's Ministers to finally take action to stop this rot.
10. Meanwhile, there is less good news regarding radical plans for roads policy in the Capital that could gradually spread to other UK urban areas. And the extent of how bad things could get for bikers was revealed in a meeting Leon had with the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Transport for London.

What Leon had hoped would be an 'informal' lunch with TfL's COO, Garrett Emerson, turned out to be a very formal affair – and it felt like his underlying agenda was to try to gauge the level of opposition by MAG to the moves that the Mayor and TfL intend to take next. However, it also seemed that news of MAG's regular engagement with MPs and at Ministerial level has filtered up to the top of TfL Towers. As to TfL and the Mayor, this is what they plan to do:

The master plan, to which the Mayor, his Deputy and TfL are now cosily signed up, is to: 'De-Traffic' London. And the latest buzzword and concept to contextualise this 'Healthy Streets':

<http://content.tfl.gov.uk/healthy-streets-for-london.pdf>

In essence the 'de-traffic' plan means they intend to eradicate motorised vehicle use from the Capital. The fact that this has never been done in any city anywhere on the planet was acknowledged – as were the impossibilities of achieving such aims and objectives.

Nevertheless, that's the plan and the Mayor and TfL are now hell bent on delivering it. Moreover there are 20 major schemes already in the pipeline that will have similar catastrophic impacts to closing Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street for starters.

The upshot of this is that TfL will be running full steam ahead to narrow traffic lanes to stop motorbikes filtering or overtaking – and simply taking traffic lanes out altogether.

Potentially good news is that Assembly Member, Keith Prince should become the next Chair of the London Assembly Transport Committee in May and if so, we will have at least one champion in City Hall who shares our concerns about the unfairness and sheer lunacy of cutting road space in the most congested city in Europe.

11. We're managing to keep a raised level of coverage in the media. This is thanks to a combination of good press releases and meaningful work which is interesting to the media. PLEASE keep phoning into your local radio stations and alerting us if you've got an interesting story involving biking in your area or nationally.
 12. Great credit goes to Michael Armstrong in the North West is actively engaging with local MPs and candidates and getting excellent written statements about biking policy from them. Why not try it in your area? Let us know if you need any advice or help. We have a super case study thanks to Michael's efforts.
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Halloween, Stingers and Injunctions

Here we are post-Christmas and New Year celebrations, many of us having taken part in traditions with their roots in ancient times and, in some instances, pagan ritual. A few minutes on the net will tell you all you need to know about Christmas trees, mistletoe, gift-giving and the winter solstice, but for most of us we neither know nor care about the history; it's just about doing things with family and friends. Take also, for example, Halloween and the ancient tradition of Trick or Treat. In the UK we appear to have fully embraced this in its American guise of kids dressing up and knocking on doors for sweets.

There's also something else with its roots in the good ole US of A that some call "Biker Life". It's based around urban riding, quite often involving dirt bikes, and as recent events have shown, some of the riders like a ride at Halloween. The way it's been developing it's not a tradition I want to see grow. In 2015 around 200 riders caused chaos in south London, jumping red lights, riding on pavements, and speeding as families were out trick or treating. In 2016 in Kirkstall Road, Leeds, a large group of riders rode at speed through busy streets. According to the BBC around 50 were involved, riding mostly off-road bikes and quads. Similar events took place again in London in 2016 and stingers were used to stop bikes and quads. These events are often promoted through social media.

This sort of behaviour has been reported through most of 2016. You can find video clips and press reports on the internet and if it's still on iPlayer you can watch a BBC programme called "Britain's Most Wanted Motorcycle Gangs?". What you will see are lots of dirt bikes, ski masks, quads and wheelies. If you are just a regular Joe Biker, what you won't see is many like you. There have been police raids and arrests with stolen motorcycles being recovered. Local authorities are resorting to injunctions to try and control it despite most if not all of the behaviour being already covered by existing legislation. The problem is that the injunctions affect all of us, as they do not differentiate between a mob rampaging through a pedestrianised area or the local bike club taking part in a charity ride. Some of the injunctions are so badly worded that they make just doing normal things illegal, like sounding

your horn, or riding in a group of two or more. You and a group of mates could ride to a part of the country where an injunction is in place and un-wittingly fall foul of the law.

It would be great to get the injunctions lifted but we have to acknowledge there is an anti-social behaviour issue that needs addressing. The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) is trying to work with the authorities to get a form of words to use in injunctions that addresses anti-social behaviour without impacting the law-abiding rider. This is, however, an uphill struggle.

Last year, riders at a popular bike meet were horrified to see a policeman apparently preparing a stinger (a tyre deflation device consisting of a series of linked spikes that can be thrown across the road) to deploy against riders misbehaving on the road to and from the bike meet. At the time it caused quite a stir on biker forums but with bike theft in some areas a major problem alongside the growth in antisocial riding, this use of what many riders think is potentially lethal force is receiving mixed support from motorcyclists. I can see no rational reason not to oppose the use of a stinger against a terrorist on a motorcycle, but to use potentially lethal force against 15 year old Johnny Scrote on a nicked Speedfight, I'm not so sure (heart says no sympathy for bike thieves, but head says the kid needs help, not a possible death sentence or crippling for life). MAG is seeking clarification on the protocols used by the Police for the deployment of stingers.

It's going to be a busy time for MAG in 2017, with these issues representing just a few of the many that require a strong voice representing riders. We really would appreciate your support and you can do so simply by joining to help fund its campaign activities or, if you want to get more involved, attend a local branch. To join call 01926 844064; single membership costs £27; joint and club affiliated membership also available.

Have a great 2017, and stay rubber side down.

Andy Carrott, MAG Vice Chairman.

PRESS RELEASES

03-02-2017 Driven to Distraction?

MAG backs tougher measures to discourage irresponsible hand-held mobile phone use whilst operating a vehicle. A survey by the National Roads Policing Intelligence (NRPI) Forum about the ban on mobile phone use while driving has enabled bikers to express their views.

MAG has already helped promote a survey into the public's views on dialing-and-driving set up by the National Roads Policing Intelligence (NRPI) Forum. Richard Davin of the Forum comments: 'we launched the survey to capture everyone's views regarding the legislation changes around using a hand-held mobile phone whilst driving. We wanted to gauge awareness of the change in law and the data collected will help plan future campaigns. We really appreciate all those who filled in the survey and shared it on social media.'



Part of the motivation is a change to the official position regarding penalties for using a hand-held phone when controlling a vehicle. Mr Davin explains 'the government is changing the Fixed Penalty Notice and penalty points for the use of a hand-held mobile phone whilst driving. The new legislation will come into effect on the 1st of March 2017. Under the new rules drivers will receive six points on their licence and face a £200 fine.

Tony Cox, MAG's North West Regional Representative, adds 'Because many of us responded, more bikers' opinions will be taken into account. Everyone I know has had a near miss or worse because a driver is chatting instead of driving properly. By being involved in surveys like this we helped ourselves and others.'

MAG has plenty of evidence to prove that accidents have occurred as a direct result of phone usage in vehicles. Steve Mallett, MAG's Deputy South East Representative, runs a regular vigil to highlight the importance of concentrating on driving rather than dialling, an initiative that has generated a lot of media coverage in Kent. MAG invites riders to run their own local campaign. All that is needed is a few people, a large inflatable phone, a sign with a suitable slogan (e.g. 'Don't drive and dial') and a way to record how many 'driver-diallers' go past during the hour or two you are at the roadside. Taking a photo could help gain publicity for the campaign and it may help to reduce the jeopardy we face for the sake of a careless call. For tips on how to run the campaign, just get in touch with Steve Mallett through MAG.

16-02-2017 Don't ban legal riding because of hooligans

MAG is currently looking at injunctions taken out by a number of local councils in a bid to reduce anti-social behaviour undertaken on motorcycles.

Steve Bolton, one of MAG's Liaison Officers, commented 'Motorcycling is an activity enjoyed by all who take part in it. It draws people from all backgrounds and age groups, with an eclectic outlook on life.



Unfortunately it is also an activity that, from time to time, attracts elements of society who exhibit some degree of over-exuberance and high spirits. It always has and, no doubt, always will - but nothing on the scale of what has been witnessed recently from these hooligans, who often organise and promote their activities via social media.

'MAG unconditionally distances itself from this anti-social behaviour, which we have seen at different times and in various locations around the country. We are about to embark on a series of meetings and conferences with Local Authorities and the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) to ensure that bikers going about their daily lawful business do not suffer as a result of mismanaged or misdirected enforcement of these injunctions. The enforcement strategy must target those whose misdemeanours have created the need for these injunctions and no one else.'

MAG seeks to meet with the NPCC to cover these points and agree a way forward that doesn't depend on blunt and indiscriminate injunctions that potentially outlaw legal riding alongside the true targets of the legislation: the hooligans who break existing laws in mass numbers and happen to be doing so on two wheels.

24-02-2017 MAG meets Motorcycle Crime Reduction group

MAG held a joint session with the Chair of the Motorcycle Crime Reduction Group (MCRG), Kevin Howells, at MAG's National Committee meeting on 11th February, 2017, in Warwickshire.



Mr Howells talked about the shocking crime statistics affecting biking. 'There are over 26,000 bike thefts a year in this country,' he explained. 'That means that during my presentation three or four bikes will have been taken in the UK. What the MCRG does is find ways to put people off stealing bikes. Tagging them is the most important one, and it's got a good track record. With a system like Datatag your bike is 60% less likely to be stolen, and the recovery rates are a lot better. That's one thing we can do and the industry has taken that up.'

The meeting looked at what can most effectively reduce crime for bikers. MAG's London Representative, Tim Fawthrop, reported that the Mayor of London, Sadiq Kahn, has blamed bikers themselves for not being careful enough; Tim observed that it's hard to see how you can protect against being pushed off your own bike in a petrol station, likening it to blaming someone for not having chained all their property down in their house in case a burglar breaks in.

Mr Howells surprised the group by revealing that a lot of stolen bikes are built around used frames with log books sold by the insurance industry. These are then sold back into the dealership network.

Selina Lavender, Chair of MAG, said: 'Kevin's talk was very informative. Fighting bike theft needs to be a joint initiative so whilst it is encouraging that some manufacturers such as Triumph are fitting additional security as standard, there also needs to be an improvement in crime detection.'

It was agreed that MAG and the MCRG will continue to work together, with the industry and the police in an effort to reduce bike crime which, suggested Mr Howells, can provoke riders into giving up bikes because they get fed up with losing them.

Contact MAG at 01926 844 064 or central-office@mag-uk.org

Penalties to increase for 'most serious speeding offenders'

A new higher penalty for the most serious speeding offenders is one of a number of new sentencing guidelines for magistrates published today (24 January) by the Sentencing Council.

The increased penalty will come into effect in April 2017 following a consultation by the Sentencing Council, in which respondents said that the previous guidelines did not 'properly take into account the increase in potential harm that can result as speed above the speed limit increases'.

The Sentencing Council has increased the penalty for the top band of seriousness to ensure there is 'clear increase in fine level' as the seriousness of offending increases.

Under the new guidelines, fines for offenders will start at 150% of weekly income rather than the existing level of 100%.

See more at:- <http://www.rac.co.uk/press-centre#/news/rac-comments-on-new-speeding-sentencing-guidelines-announced-today-215610>
<https://www.motoringassist.com/motoring-advice/news/gem-welcomes-rise-speeding-fines/>

Sentencing Council: <http://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/offences/item/speeding-revised-2017/>

Infra-red tech will provide ‘more efficient enforcement’ on unlit roads

New infra-red technology will enable safety camera teams to more effectively monitor speeding drivers on poorly or unlit roads, according to the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Road Safety Partnership.

The partnership has unveiled new infra-red lamps which came into force on Monday (23 Jan) to improve roadside speed camera efficiency in the dark.

Until now, the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Road Safety Partnership says some motorists have evaded detection because the existing technology could not pick out registration plates in the dark.

The new infra-red lamps, which consist of three small banks of 24 bulbs mounted on the rear of camera vehicles, are pointed in the same direction as the unit's camera to illuminate vehicle registration plates.

Deborah Collier, safety camera team leader for the partnership, said: "We have purchased two sets of infra-red lamps which will enable our camera van officers to conduct mobile speed enforcement on unlit roads.

"The existing technology did not work particularly well in unlit streets and there is a proportion of footage the camera guys get which they can't do anything with because it is too dark.

"These infra-red lights do not glare or blind drivers - but for the camera teams working in poorly or unlit roads the images are much clearer.

"The move has affected both rural and major roads – many of them sites where residents have reported speeding problems.

"This will increase our enforcement capability at mobile speed sites, assisting in keeping speeds down and hopefully reducing casualties on our local road network."

- See more at:- <http://www.speedorsafety.com/more-efficient-enforcement-on-our-unlit-roads/>

Should offenders have their mobile phones seized?

A senior police spokesperson has put forward the idea that people caught using a mobile phone while driving should have their device seized.

Speaking at the Roads Policing Conference 2017, PC Jayne Willetts, the Police Federation of England and Wales' lead on roads policing, expressed her concern that new legislation coming into effect in a little over a month is already 'behind the times'.

PC Willetts asked delegates to consider whether the seizure of mobile phones or SIM cards, along with a combination of education and fines, might help combat the problem.

In November 2016, the Government announced it would double the penalties for those caught using a mobile phone while driving. Under the new legislation, which will come into effect on 1 March, drivers will receive six points on their licence and face a £200 fine.

PC Jayne Willetts told the conference: "The increase of the fine to £200 and six points on a driving license will still not be a deterrent to some of the hard-core and conditioned drivers who will continue using their phones while driving.

"The legislation is still lacking for these offenses, and does not take into account the use of phone watches.

"As technology is rapidly progressing, I fear our legislation is already behind the times. Is the seizure of mobile phones or their SIM cards - along with an education system - the way forward, combined with fines? I don't know, but it's a question worth asking."

- See more at: Police Federation: <http://polfed.org/newsroom/3950.aspx>

Civilian road patrols could get 'police powers'

The Government is considering giving civilian road patrols the power to fine motorists who are spotted breaking the law, several media outlets are reporting.

In a news article published yesterday (31 Jan), the Times says hundreds of traffic officers would be given broader powers, traditionally reserved for police, in an effort to strengthen the deterrent for motorists who speed or use their mobile phone while driving.

Yahoo News says the idea has been met with mixed reactions, endorsed by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) but criticised by the Police Federation.

Affectionately nicknamed 'traffic wombles', there are currently more than 1,500 uniformed Highways England staff who monitor Britain's motorways and A-roads. However, this number would increase if the plan goes ahead.

These patrols were initially introduced in 2004 and tasked with keeping traffic flowing during traffic jams and crashes. However, while it is an offence to ignore their instructions, they currently do not have the power to arrest people for driving crimes – something that would change in the proposed shake-up.

Chief constable Suzette Davenport, NPCC lead on roads policing, told the Police Federation roads policing conference: "Some of these ambitions could be delivered by enabling Highways England traffic officers to have some extra powers.

"It is not something that is a done deal but it is something that we are exploring.

"My desire is to get the maximum safety and security on our roads."

However, critics of the proposals say that road safety is too important to be taken out of the hands of traffic police.

Tim Rogers, Police Federation, said: "If you are looking at providing something as important as roads policing, having people who are potentially unaccountable to the chief constable would be a bad thing.

"Dealing with road deaths, dangerous drivers and other risks on our major road networks is a job for the police and not a private company.

"It would also mean the Highways England officers may no longer be available to do the work they were brought in for, such as clearing debris and dealing with minor collisions."

According to Yahoo News, a Government spokesman said a consultation would be conducted before any decisions were made.

- See more at: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/traffic-wombles-to-get-police-powers-3d3rw89zj>

Yahoo News: <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/uniformed-civilian-traffic-wombles-may-soon-be-given-the-same-powers-as-traffic-police-084838996.html>

Support for tougher sentences for those who kill on the road, says IAM RoadSmart survey

IAM Roadsmart Posted on 08/02/17

A survey by the UK's biggest road safety charity IAM RoadSmart has shown road users want the law to be far stricter on those who cause death and serious injury when driving.

The survey of nearly 2,000 road users (reference 1) found nearly 80% agreed there should be a new offence of causing serious injury by careless driving.

Some 56% of those who agreed said the maximum penalty should be between one and five years in prison; 44% went further and felt the maximum penalty should be more than five years.

Many respondents also felt the current maximum penalty of 14 years in jail for causing death by dangerous driving wasn't nearly high enough; with almost 50% saying the penalty was not set at the right level.

However, when asked if the maximum penalty for causing death by dangerous driving should be increased to life imprisonment, those taking our survey were more evenly divided with slightly over 51% 'agreeing' or 'agreeing strongly' but 49% unsure or against the government's proposed new tougher sentencing proposals.

Under plans put forward by ministers in December, dangerous drivers who kill could face life sentences. It added dangerous drivers causing death by speeding, street racing or while on a mobile phone are among those now facing the same sentences as those charged with manslaughter.

Offenders who cause death by careless driving whilst under the influence of drink or drugs could also be handed life sentences - an increase on the current 14 year upper limit. A government consultation seeking views on this ran until 1 February.

A majority of those surveyed by IAM RoadSmart also did not want to see the fundamental principles of early release for good behaviour or shorter sentences for pleading guilty waived in cases involving death or serious injury on the road.

The results were much clearer on longer periods of disqualification where injury or death are involved with nearly 80% of respondents 'agreeing' or 'agreeing strongly' with this.

The government's consultation on new penalties closed last week and the issue was brought into even sharper focus with the jailing of Tomasz Kroker for 10 years last October. Kroker killed a mother and three children when he was distracted by changing music on his smartphone and ploughed into a line of stationary traffic (reference 2) in his lorry.

Sarah Sillars, IAM RoadSmart chief executive officer, said: "Our survey shows that on the very emotive issue of those who cause death by driving offences, there is public support for tougher sentencing and that many feel the law simply doesn't go far enough.

"Holding a driving licence should be considered a privilege, not a right – and those that fail dangerously to reach the highest standards should have that right taken away.

"It is very clear that in the minds of many of the UK public, the punishment often does not fit the crime – and British people think the law should reflect that in a far more fitting and appropriate way.

"We want to see the current guidelines applied consistently by the courts first. In practice the current maximum of 14 years in prison for causing death by dangerous driving is rarely used which is deeply upsetting for the families of victims. There is no guarantee a higher maximum would be used either.

"Until this happens, we cannot be sure that tougher sentencing would make a marked difference in the way people act behind the wheel."

IAM: <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/media-and-policy/newsroom/news-details/2017/02/08/support-for-tougher-sentences-for-those-who-kill-on-the-road-says-iam-roadsmart-survey>

Reference 2: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-37823457>

LONDON

New T-charge following Clean Air Consultation

Mayor of London London Assembly 17 February 2017

Last year, the Mayor invited Londoners to share their experiences of London's air quality and ideas for helping to improve it. Over 15,000 people responded here on Talk London and some of the impact of this participation can now be seen in an announcement today on a new £10 toxicity charge.

The introduction of the 'T-Charge', also known as the Emissions Surcharge, would be aimed at the oldest, most polluting vehicles on our roads and follows your input after:

- 81% of Talk Londoners favour a T-Charge, with similar levels of support regardless of where people live in London.
- 41% of Talk Londoners told us that a daily charge of £10 was about right (the most popular charge level of those proposed).

- 42% favoured operating hours of Monday to Friday 7am-6pm. A further 39% favoured longer hours, but Transport for London has elected to use the same operational hours as the Congestion Charge.

This 'T-Charge' applies mainly to diesel and petrol vehicles registered before 2006 and will come into force on 23 October 2017 in time for the start of the school autumn half-term. Residents of the zone receive a discount and many of the same exemptions to the Congestion Charge also apply to the 'T-Charge'.

You can check whether your vehicle will be affected by the 'T-Charge' by using this free online vehicle checker.

The 'T-charge' will operate on top of (and during the same operating times) as the Congestion Charge (Monday to Friday 7am-6pm. See map), so it will cost £21.50 to drive in the zone if you drive a relevant vehicle.

So, what's next for improving London's air? The Mayor has doubled funding spent on tackling air quality to £875million (over the next five years) and is consulting on bringing forward the start date of the central Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) from 2020 to 2019 and expanding the ULEZ up to the North/South Circular roads.

Your views have been central to the designing of new measures so far, and we'll be keeping you updated as plans develop. You can read more here on all the planned measures to improve air quality in London, including improvements to the bus, taxi and private-hire fleets, emissions from buildings and cycling infrastructure.

http://talklondon.london.gov.uk/blogs/talk-london-team/new-t-charge-following-clean-air-consultation?utm_campaign=T-charge_feedback_loop_17_Feb&utm_source=emailCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content

Vehicle Checker: <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/emissions-surcharge?cid=emissions-surcharge>

CCZ Map: <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/congestion-charge/congestion-charge-zone>

Improving air :<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/pollution-and-air-quality/improving-air-quality>

How UK motor insurance is set to change

GEM Assist Posted on February 23rd, 2017 by Rob Marshall

In 2007, a Slovenian farm worker sought compensation for damages, after he was knocked off his ladder by a trailer that was being reversed by a tractor. The Slovenian Court of Appeal turned-down his claim for damages, made against the tractor's insurer. One of the reasons cited was that the tractor was being used on private land and, therefore, does not require insurance, because it was being used neither on the road, nor in a public space.

So, why could this story affect your insurance? After the case escalated, the European Court of Justice ruled in the claimant's favour, meaning that the tractor's insurer had to pay compensation for an incident that occurred on private land, instead of the tractor's owner. The 'Vnuk Judgement', could, therefore, see vehicles in Europe requiring insurance, even if they are not used on either the highway, or in public places, which gives an easier route for a claim to be made against an insurer, rather than against an individual.

It could also mean that the British definition of a 'Motor Vehicle' has to be extended from the existing definition (a 'mechanically propelled vehicle intended, or adapted for use on roads')

to 'any motor vehicle intended for travel on land'. This could bring off-road vehicles into the scope of being a "motor vehicle" that includes Segways, mobility scooters, golf buggies and even electrically-powered children's toys. It is also possible that a motor car that is off the road (and declared as SORN) would require insurance as well.

It is thought, however, that insurance premiums will rise overall, not only because of an increase in claims but also due to the expected rise in fraud.

What is the UK Government proposing?

The situation is not scaremongering; the 'Vnuk Judgement' will affect the UK insurance industry. The question is 'to what extent?'. Last month, the UK government considered the judgement (the full document can be downloaded here). In essence, two options are being considered:

1. Comprehensive Option:

All motor vehicles that are used in a way that is consistent with its normal function will require third-party insurance. This, for example, would mean that a motor sports vehicle would need insurance, if competing on a private race track. While this is required on a professional level anyway, it would also be a requirement for 'grass roots' motorsport, such as banger racing, or karting.

2. Amended Directive

This is preferred by UK Government, in that third party cover is required when a motor vehicle is used when transporting goods, or persons not on private land but only on land over which the public has access.

Both options, however, would see the 'motor vehicle' definition being extended, as mentioned previously.

The Department of Transport is looking to the public for its opinion on potential changes, which closes at the end of March and can be accessed here.

Technical consultation on motor insurance: Consideration of the European Court of Justice ruling in case of Damijan Vnuk v Zavarovalnica Triglav d.d (C-162/13)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/581193/motor-insurance-vnuk-v-triglav.pdf

LGA and RAC disagree on cause of pothole 'surge'

A rise in the weight of goods being transported on Great Britain's roads will see pothole levels 'surge', local councils are warning.

DfT figures published last month show that the amount of goods lifted in the UK by GB-registered heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) in the 12-months ending June 2016 saw a year-on-year rise of 5% to 1.69bn tonnes.

In a press release issued today, the Local Government Association (LGA) suggests the increase could push the road network 'over the edge'.

However, while the RAC backs the LGA's call for increased Government funding, it says the suggestion that bigger lorries are a major factor in the pothole surge is a 'red herring'.

The LGA, which represents more than 370 councils in England and Wales, says the heavier the vehicle, the more pressure is likely to be exerted on road surfaces - causing them to crumble more quickly.

The cross-party organisation adds that lorries, particularly 'very heavy' lorries, are 'massively more damaging' to road surfaces than cars.

- See more at: DfT:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582896/road-freight-stats-july-2015-to-june-2016.pdf

LGA: http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/8255527/NEWS

Autonomous insurance and electric vehicles focus of new Bill

The Government has set out new measures as part of its ongoing campaign to ensure the UK becomes a 'world leader' for autonomous and electric vehicles.

Announced by the DfT today (22 Feb), the measures include new insurance rules for self-driving cars and improved provision of electric vehicle charge points.

Introduced as part of the Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill, the measures will come into effect immediately and are designed to break down barriers that the DfT says could inhibit companies from testing the technology in the UK.

In terms of self-driving cars, the Bill includes a single insurance product for automated vehicles that covers both the motorist when they are driving, as well as the car when it is in automated mode.

The DfT says this will give better protection to innocent victims involved in a collision with an automated vehicle, by providing quick and easy access to compensation.

It will also allow the driver to hand full control and responsibility to the self driving vehicle when the technologies are turned on.

Chris Grayling, transport secretary, said: "Automated vehicles have the potential to transform our roads in the future and make them even safer and easier to use, as well as promising new mobility for those who cannot drive.

"But we must ensure the public is protected in the event of an incident and today we are introducing the framework to allow insurance for these new technologies."

Focussing on electric vehicles, the measures set out under the Bill are designed to ensure the right infrastructure is in place for this 'growing market'.

The DfT says that under planned new legislation, motorway services and large fuel retailers could be made to provide electric charge points and hydrogen refuelling stations.

Information about the location and availability of charging stations would also be openly available, making it easier for drivers to use the different networks.

John Hayes, minister of state for transport, said: "If we are to accelerate the use of electric vehicles we must take action now and be ready to take more action later.

“I recognise that to encourage more drivers to go electric, the infrastructure needs to become even more widespread than the 11,000 charging points already in place and more straightforward.

“We are determined to do all we can to make electric vehicles work for everyone and these new laws will help make this a reality.”

- See more at: DfT: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-set-out-autonomous-vehicle-insurance-and-electric-car-infrastructure>

10,000 British motorists still driving despite picking up 12 points

New figures obtained by the BBC show that there were 10,000 motorists legally driving on British roads last month, despite having amassed 12 points on their licence.

Reported on the BBC News website (23 Feb), the figures show that more than 200 of those had accumulated at least 18 points - the equivalent six minor speeding offences.

One driver in the West Yorkshire has a total of 62 points on his licence - but can still drive legally.

The road safety charity Brake described the new figures as ‘absolutely shocking’.

Under UK law, a motorist can have licence revoked for picking up 12 points. However, magistrates can choose not to enforce the ban in ‘exceptional cases’.

Sheena Jowett, deputy chairman of the Magistrates' Association, the independent charity representing magistrates in England and Wales, told the BBC: “Magistrates take decisions under clear guidelines, impartially, and on the merits of each individual case.”

Looking at geographical areas, Greater London topped the table with 1,385 people over 12 points still able to drive, while the Shetland Islands had the least with one person.

West Yorkshire was among the top 10 counties for numbers of offenders, as was Essex, where one driver had 42 points, and another had 36.

Oxfordshire, Surrey and Norfolk were average in terms of the number of offending drivers but had motorists clocking up 51 points, 30 and 39 respectively.

David Nichols, Brake, told the BBC: “The penalty points system is supposed to be in place to protect the public from dangerous repeat offenders and it's appalling that these risky repeat offenders are allowed to keep driving.”

In January 2016, IAM RoadSmart called for tougher penalties on persistent offenders after revealing that three drivers with more than 40 points on their driving licences are still on the road.

In July last year, figures also obtained by the BBC showed that there was 213 motorists in Wales still legally driving despite having 12 penalty points on their licence.

- See more at: BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-39053658>

RAC: <http://www.roadsafetygb.org.uk/news/4810.html>

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		
Executive Officer	Julie Sperling	central-office@mag-uk.org
Membership Administrator	Carol Ferrari	membership@mag-uk.org
Director of Communications & Public Affairs	Lembit Öpik	central-office@mag-uk.org
Campaigns & Policy Adviser	Leon Mannings	central-office@mag-uk.org
NATIONAL OFFICERS		
National Chairman	Selina Lavender	chair@mag-uk.org
National Vice-Chairman	Andy Carrott	vice-chair@mag-uk.org
National Finance Officer		finance-officer@mag-uk.org
Network Co-Coordinator	Anne Gale	aine@mag-uk.org
President/ <i>TheROAD</i> Editor	Ian Mutch	theroad@mag-uk.org
National Reps Liaison Officer	Jane Carrott	nrlo@mag-uk.org
National Clubs Liaison Officer	Oliver Rose	clubs-officer@mag-uk.org
Events (Shows and Stands)	Position vacant	events@mag-uk.org
Director of TMAGL	Pete 'Veece' Davison	central-office@mag-uk.org
Director of TMAGL	Tony Cox	central-office@mag-uk.org
Director of TMAGL	Vacant	central-office@mag-uk.org
Director of TMAGL	Steve Wykes	central-office@mag-uk.org
Director of TMAGL	Ian Churchlow	central-office@mag-uk.org
Director of TMAGL	Vacant	central-office@mag-uk.org
Director of TMAGL	Selina Lavender	central-office@mag-uk.org
Regional Reps		
British Independent Islands	<i>Position Vacant</i>	british-independent-islands-region-rep@mag-uk.org
Cumbria	Michael Armstrong	cumbria-region-rep@mag-uk.org
East Anglia	Selina Lavendar (acting)	east-anglia-region-rep@mag-uk.org
Lincolnshire	Alex Bridgwood	lincolnshire-region-rep@mag-uk.org
Eastern	Michael Egerton	eastern-region@mag-uk.org
East Midlands	James Barker	east-midlands-region-rep@mag-uk.org
Greater London	Tim Fawthrop (contact)	greater-london-region-rep@mag-uk.org
Herts & Essex (acting)	Jon Metcalf	herts-essex-region-rep@mag-uk.org
North East	Dave Wigham	north-east-region-rep@mag-uk.org
Northern Ireland	Martyn Boyd	northern-ireland-region-rep@mag-uk.org
North Wales	Bill Hughes	north-wales-region-rep@mag-uk.org
North West	Tony Cox	north-west-region-rep@mag-uk.org
Scotland	Steve Wykes	scotland-region-rep@mag-uk.org
South East	Ann France-Gardiner	south-east-region-rep@mag-uk.org

Southern	Tim Peregrine	southern-region-rep@mag-uk.org
South Wales	Gareth	south-wales-region-rep@mag-uk.org
South West	Tracy Smith	south-west-region-rep@mag-uk.org
Thames Valley	Gareth Lewis	thames-valley-region-rep@mag-uk.org
Western	George Legg	western-region-rep@mag-uk.org
West Midlands	Eddie Lowe	west-midlands-region-rep@mag-uk.org
Yorkshire	Oliver Rose	yorkshire-region-rep@mag-uk.org
OTHER CONTACTS		
MAP Ltd: Yorkshire region event organiser	Pete Walker	maphq@maphq.karoo.co.uk
Official MAG merchandise	Julie Sperling	events@mag-uk.org
The MAG Foundation – Trustee contact	Ian Williamson	info@mag-foundation.org