

News from Motorcycle Action Group (MAG):

Police and MAG take sting out of Kent biking

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The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG), the UK's leading voice for riders' rights, met Kent police to resolve a dispute about the use of 'stingers' in Kent. A 'stinger' device deflates vehicle tyres to stop a vehicle from escaping detention by the police. Earlier in the summer, the device had been displayed by a police officer at the Oakdene Café - a very popular meeting place for riders in Kent.

MAG's Deputy South East Representative Steve Mallett and Director of Communications & Public Affairs, Lembit Öpik, met a delegation of officers, led by Kent police's Police Sergeant Gary Easton, at Oakdene Café to discuss what happened on that occasion and what the police policy is towards use of stingers in the context of powered two wheelers. 'We were pleased that the police were willing to discuss this issue,' says Steve Mallett. 'Stingers amount to a potential death sentence to anyone on a bike who rides over them. I was reassured to hear they had never used a stinger against a motorbike and wouldn't do so, except in the context of something like a life threatening terrorist situation.'

PS Easton confirmed this assessment: 'a stinger has never been used against a motorbike in this county. It would only happen in a very unusual situation, like a suicide bomb or someone trying to attack a group of people with lethal force. In everyday life it's just not going to be used.'

PS Easton and his colleagues discussed the circumstances in which the original incident occurred. 'It appears the display of the stinger was a response to exceptionally irresponsible behaviour by a small group of riders who don't normally attend the Oakdene venue,' says Steve. 'I suspect showing the stinger was something of an act of desperation in difficult circumstances, but there was no serious possibility of its actual deployment. For safety, we're asking the police to provide a written statement of their policy on use of stingers. This could help ensure a similar situation will not arise elsewhere. A bit of common sense is the order of the day and some self-discipline from the police and bikers to not bring motorcycling into disrepute. A joint approach and light touch policing attitude are probably the best combination.'

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