

Network

JUNE 2013

views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of the Motorcycle

Action Group (MAG UK) or the Editor

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Acknowledgements: George Legg. Paul Turner. Rowan Publications. FEMA.

Editorial

Included in this edition is a Parliamentary question/response on Potholes. It appears that some £400m has been allocated over a period of 5 years for repairs. That's a lot of money. I hope Councils avail themselves of some of it soon because I don't seem to see much evidence of decent repairs so far.

Regular readers of Network will know that one of my pet hates is driving while using a hand held mobile phone. Whilst the proposed increase in fines is a start, 90 quid is by no means a deterrent – in my humble opinion, of course.

I'm afraid I find the words of an Isle of Man's Coroner, who says the lack of speed limits could contravene European Convention on Human Rights, somewhat baffling. He refers to Article 2 of the European Convention of Human Rights which reads *"Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law."*

At the time he was presiding over the inquest into the unfortunate death of motorcyclist Davy Jones, who died after hitting a stationary dustbin lorry at last year's TT.

The relevant article concerned asks for your feedback/thoughts so it may be worth going onto the website where you can read the whole report.

At risk of repeating myself, again, if your Region or Group has anything for Network please get in touch using subject heading: Network to AnneGaleMAG@aol.com.

Ride free, A

[I have included the following rather lengthy speech by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport which, though it waffles on a bit, does contain some interesting info. Ed]

Stephen Hammond speech:

The Department for Transport has published the road safety speech by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, Stephen Hammond

Delivering road safety: What does the future hold?

Opening remarks

"It's a pleasure to join you this morning.

And although I can't stay as long as I'd like.

I'm very grateful to Westminster Briefing for inviting me today.

World class record

The phrase "world class" is overused these days.

But over the past decade, Britain can certainly claim to have a world class road safety record.

Provisional statistics show that last year, the UK had the second lowest fatality rate in Europe.

Only Malta fared better.

But our performance wasn't always so impressive.

In 1966, nearly 8000 people were killed on Britain's roads - that's 22 a day.

Today (16 May 2013), the toll is less than a quarter of that.

Though there are twice as many vehicles on our roads.

So we've made excellent and sustained progress.

But that progress is of no comfort to victims' families.

We must never forget that road fatalities are not statistics.

They are someone's mother or father, son or daughter.

Real lives cut short.

Our strategic framework sets out a clear vision for reducing road accidents.

Through more innovative local measures.

Through tougher action against dangerous drivers.

And through better education - especially for young drivers.

Localism

We mustn't forget the important road safety role of local authorities, especially in terms of investment.

These are testing economic times.

So I recognise that local government, just like central government, faces tough spending choices.

But I also know that it is local communities, rather than Whitehall bureaucrats, who are best placed to design local road safety solutions to meet local road safety challenges.

And that includes deciding where to focus their resources.

That's what localism is all about. The power to choose for yourself backed by the funding to deliver.

We are giving more than £1 billion to local councils enabling them to improve the transport infrastructure - including the design of better and safer roads.

We're investing £600 million in local transport through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund - which again gives authorities greater power to deliver their own transport projects.

We have also given local authorities powers to set speed limits for the roads in their communities, making it easier for them to create 20 miles per hour roads and zones where appropriate.

Most journeys in this country are local in nature.

So a key part of our framework is to raise awareness of road safety in local areas.

We've just launched a road safety comparison site, which plots the performance of local authorities over the last seven years.

The site shows how many people have been involved in collisions on a particular road.

This gives residents a more accurate picture of each council's progress in reducing casualties.

In March, a new road safety research website called the Observatory was also launched.

Part funded by the department, it gives road safety professionals access to extensive research.

Better information is a key weapon in the fight to make our roads safer.

And together, these websites will keep us more informed, so we can target local action where it is most needed.

In short, I'm convinced that localism is a core part of our road safety agenda

Enforcement

We know that a minority of reckless drivers are responsible for a large proportion of crashes.

So both our marketing and enforcement strategies target these drivers.

We are creating a new offence of driving with a specified drug in the body above certain limits.

A consultation on the drugs to be included will be launched in the summer.

The Home Office is developing a specification for new roadside drug screeners..

So they can be introduced alongside the new offence in 2014.

We have also consulted on improving the enforcement of drink driving laws..

And on changing the treatment of fixed penalty notices.

I expect to make a further announcement shortly.

And we're consulting on making careless driving a fixed penalty notice offence.

This also proposes higher penalties for speeding..

Using a mobile phone while driving..

And not using seat belts.

Through these measures, we want to send a clear message to dangerous drivers:

If you continue to show complete disregard for the safety of other road users, we will catch you - and we will punish you.

Education

Better enforcement is crucial - but it is only one part of a multi-layered road safety programme. Better education matters too.

The better the education the more we can help to enhance the safety of all road users. It can even prevent collisions and crashes from taking place in the first place.

THINK!

Our hugely successful THINK! campaigns play a significant role in raising awareness of vulnerable road users.

Recent adverts have urged drivers to look out for motorcyclists, particularly at junctions...

And to see the person behind the helmet.

This followed a campaign to make motorists more aware of cyclists.

And you may have seen a highly effective series of ads emphasising the personal cost of a drink drive conviction.

So THINK! is also crucial to enforcing the law on our roads.

Training

We need to provide effective training for drivers..

In particular, to improve the safety and ability of young drivers.

We've already updated the driving test so it better reflects conditions on the road network.

But our forthcoming young drivers' green paper will consider a range of further proposals for reforming young driver training.

These could include temporary restrictions once they have passed their test..

Or incentives for young drivers to continue training after passing their test.

Conclusion

In the short time I've had today, I haven't been able to talk you through every last dot and comma of the government's road safety agenda.

But I hope I've given you a short overview of how we intend to keep improving safety on our roads.

I thank Westminster Briefing for organising this event to discuss the latest developments in delivering road safety.

I would also like to thank the many people at local level that have helped deliver road safety on our roads.

Road deaths are a tragedy but they are preventable.

We've proved that in this country.

But that doesn't mean we're complacent.

Our challenge is to keep raising the bar.

To find new and better ways of making our roads safer.

So ultimately we can share our know-how with other countries, and save lives around the world.

Thank you."

Parliament – 20th May.

Mike Freer [Finchley & Golders Green]: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what extra financial help his Department is making available to local authorities to help clear potholes.

Norman Baker: The Department for Transport announced on 18 December 2012 that it was allocating a further £140 million in 2013-14 and £75 million in 2014-15 to local highway authorities in England, including Transport for London, for highways maintenance which could include repairing pothole damage.

In addition, and in recognition of the damage caused by the severe winter weather of 2010-11, in March 2011 the Department for Transport allocated an additional £200 million to local authorities in England, including London authorities.

The Government also recognises the need for improved highways maintenance over the longer-term and has taken action. In April 2011 we announced a £6 million programme for Highways Maintenance Efficiency to look at longer-term maintenance strategies. This programme is providing practical and adaptable efficiency solutions, for authorities to make informed local investment decisions to support their local community and economy. As part of the Programme, an initiative was announced to help assist local authorities deal with potholes on the local highway network. A final report has been and is available for download.

Institute of Advanced Motorists

IAM response to fine increase for texting while driving

IAM director of policy Neil Greig said: "An increase in fixed penalty levels is needed to maintain the deterrent effect. But the fear of getting caught is the key to changing driver behaviour and high profile policing must be a top priority. Any income from new fines should be put back into road safety to counter recent spending cuts."

TEXTING DRIVERS WILL FACE GBP90 FINE

Sending a text message or making a phone call while at the wheel will land drivers with harsher penalties, the transport minister warned

In a move to crack down on dangerous driving, Patrick McLoughlin indicated that fines for a variety of offences would rise by 50%, from GBP60 to GBP90.

The number of penalty points offenders receive on their licence will remain at three.

The cost increase will cover fixed penalty notices for the offence of using a hand-held device while driving, the Daily Mail said, and also for speeding and going through a red light.

A new penalty of three penalty points and a GBP90 fine will also be introduced for a number of careless driving offences, including cutting up other drivers, eating a sandwich or lighting a cigarette at the wheel, driving at an inappropriate speed and needlessly hogging the middle lane on a motorway.

New drug-driving laws will also be introduced, and the current drink-drive limit will not be lowered.

Mr McLoughlin, who admitted at a road safety conference in London that he had used a mobile phone to make calls while driving, but would not do so now, said: "We want to send a clear message to dangerous drivers: If you continue to show complete disregard for the safety of other road users, we will catch you - and we will punish you."

More than a million drivers have been convicted of using a hand-held mobile phone behind the wheel since 2003, when using one other than for making an emergency call was made illegal.

Professor Stephen Glaister, director of the RAC Foundation, said: "With both texting and hand-held use of mobile phones at the wheel causing more impairment than being at the drink-drive limit or under the influence of cannabis, the police need to target the large number of motorists continuing to flout the law."

Isle of Man's limit-free roads might breach human rights

Coroner says the lack of speed limits could contravene European Convention on Human Rights

"Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law."

That is the key to Article 2 of the European Convention of Human Rights. And Isle of Man coroner John Needham has said that the Island's lack of speed limits on roads outside towns might fall foul of it.

It all comes down to interpretation but the European Court of Human Rights has ruled in the past that under Article 2 there may be an obligation for states to take preventative measures to protect lives. Speed limits might be considered such preventative measures.

Mr Needham's comments came at the inquest into the death of motorcyclist Davy Jones, who died after hitting a stationary dustbin lorry at last year's TT. Recording a verdict of accidental death, and pointing out that Mr Jones stuck to speed limits where they were applied, he said:

"I am troubled by the speed involved here. If it was not as high as 160 mph as estimated by the eyewitnesses then as I have found travelling at over 120mph along a straight and at or around 100mph around the blind bend of a country road is in my view extremely hazardous. A seemingly permissive attitude of the Isle of Man Government in choosing to have no speed limit at all applying on certain roads in

my view raises the spectre of it failing in its duty to protect the lives of its citizens and visitors to its shores under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.”

“This is the second inquest relating to a fatality at the 2012 TT Festival where I have found that speed is a factor. Indeed, I have found in the present case that speed is even more of a factor than I did in the last case. I referred to, previously in that case, how some bikers view riding the TT course as being an extension or substitute of a track day. I am afraid that such attitude is in my view fostered by de-restricted roads.”

“As coroner at previous inquests I have resisted entering into the political decision regarding a national speed limit for the Isle of Man. However the facts of this case are sufficiently stark such that I am duty bound to raise the issue that a lack of a national speed limit appears to be a policy of Government which is putting innocent lives at unacceptable risk. Motorcycles are so quick these days and the roads are sufficiently busy that the maintenance of such a policy appears to me to be highly questionable. That decision is for the politicians but I am duty bound to raise the issue. I also raise the point that a decision may be unpopular but ultimately the state has to act responsibly in a grown-up fashion to protect all people sometimes from risks that they wish to impose upon themselves.”

He made the recommendation that the Isle of Man’s Department of Infrastructure should “*revisit the issue of the imposition of a national speed limit in the interests of protecting the safety of its road users and in accordance with its positive duty to protect life under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.*”

Action: What are your thoughts? Is the Isle of Man’s attitude to speed limits a refreshing one, putting responsibility back on the shoulders of grown-up road users, or should Human Rights force them to slow everyone down for their own good and that of others?

You can read the whole verdict here: <http://www.judgments.im/content/J737.htm>

Read more: <http://www.visordown.com/motorcycle-news--general-news/isle-of-mans-limit-free-roads-might-breach-human-rights/22740.html#ixzz2TRW7e15H>

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VisorDown

Sales see no relief in April

THE setting in of warmer weather brought negligible relief as the UK motorcycle market's decline continued, with 8.8% fewer bikes sold in April compared to the same month last year.

Year-on-year new registrations for April fell from 9,318 units in 2012 to 8,497 units. The silver lining is that this figure is marginally better than the 10.8% year-on-year drop seen in the previous month.

Year-to-date new registration figures for 2013 are 28,568 units, versus 31,727 for January-April 2012 - a fall of 10%.

The Adventure Sport, Touring and Trail/Enduro segments showed growth in April, while Scooters, Supersport, Sport/Tour and Naked fell. In capacity terms, all segments fell except 126-650cc, which grew by a healthy 13.1% to 1,338 units in April (6.5% year-to-date).

Year-to-date, the most sales have come from Scooters (9,038 units, or 31.6% of all PTW sales), followed by Naked (5,166; 18%), Adventure Sport (4,097; 14.3%) and Supersport (3,792; 13.2%).

Honda kept its stranglehold on the lower end of the market in April, with its PCX125, CBF125 and CRF250L topping their segments, and remained market leader with a total of 1,427 bikes sold. Yamaha (923), Triumph (885) and BMW (657) and Piaggio (460) rounded off the month's top five.

April's single best-selling model was BMW's R1200GS, which found 271 buyers.

And

Bikers needed for Dutch-style roundabout trials

Motorcyclists are invited to have their say on a new Dutch-style roundabout design which is being planned to improve the safety of cyclists.

Transport for London (TfL) and the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) are inviting bikers to participate in research to determine the effectiveness of the new roundabout design, which is used in the Netherlands. These roundabouts are said to be safer as their tighter geometry slows down vehicles while their layout and markings separate cyclists from motor traffic.

TfL wants to introduce redesigned roundabouts in London next year. A test site at TRL's facility in Wokingham, Berks, is operational, and cyclists, drivers and bikers are invited to participate in research at the site.

Any bikers over the age of 25 interested in taking part should complete the form on TRL's website. Participants will need to spare half a day and will be compensated for their time.

Steve Kenward, the Motorcycle Industry Association's CEO, said: 'Cycling is not always an option for those commuting longer distances and therefore motorcycling needs to be factored into a two-wheel vision for London. Cyclists and motorcyclists have a good deal in common as vulnerable road users and any measures which improve the safety outcomes for all two-wheel riders would be welcomed by the MCI.'

Karen Cole, MCIA Safety Director, said: 'The areas we would be concerned about are whether a tighter geometry at roundabouts results in motorcyclists being squeezed out by cars and lorries and whether tighter turning traffic results in more diesel spillages, which would be a problem for motorcyclists. Also whether a motorcyclist giving way to a cyclist and effectively stopping mid island could then be rammed by the vehicle behind.'

AROUND GB

The **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough** Road Safety Partnership (CPRSP) is launching a new campaign to persuade powered two wheeler (P2W) riders to take additional training in order to enhance their skills and keep them safer on the roads. The campaign, called TWIST stands for 'That's why I should Think!' and it's a campaign for all powered two wheeler (P2W) riders – scooters, mopeds and motorcyclists.

In the last three years (2010 to 2012) there have been 870 P2W casualties in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. Tragically 16 were fatal.

There's a lot of debate about why these figures are so high, and who it is to blame (drivers or riders themselves) – but the indisputable fact is that if a rider has a collision with another vehicle he or she will almost certainly come off worst.

In a bid to try and address this issue, CPRSP has launched a new campaign called 'TWIST'. It encourages riders to think about taking further training and to equip them with additional knowledge and skills to avoid end up being in a collision with other vehicles where, inevitably riders come of worst.

The TWIST campaign takes a novel and tongue-in-cheek approach to what is a very serious issue and features a main piece of animation on the website www.twistandride.net.

PC Simon Burgin, spokesperson for the CPRSP, said: "We're not pointing the finger at riders, but we are saying that they have a duty of care to look after their own well-being.

"Even in situations where a driver makes a mistake, extra training whether it be ScooterSafe or BikeSafe can help a rider anticipate this and take appropriate action to avoid a collision or minimise the implications if a collision is inevitable."

'TWIST' runs throughout the summer and into the latter part of the year and training courses are being set up for both motorcycle and scooter riders.

David Frost, Road Safety Consultant for Stennik, who developed the campaign on behalf of CPRSP, said 'We've developed this partnership campaign in consultation with riders based upon the casualty data to encourage them to take additional training. TWIST (That's why I should think) training is what all riders should have on their minds every time they twist the throttle. Drivers should also pick up on the mantra 'That's why I should Think - Bike.'

Dave Hammond, Motorcycle Action Group, said 'The campaign gets it's message across in a humorous way but it's certainly not funny when riders get caught out by their own actions or those of other road users in real life. He added, 'Anything to raise awareness to rider safety, improve skills through training and reduce casualties should be taken seriously.

Transport for London

BikeSafe-London celebrates ten years of improving rider safety in London

More than 26,000 people have completed a motorbike rider skills day

Take part now at a reduced price and be in with a chance to win a BMW off-road skills course

BikeSafe-London is celebrating its 10th anniversary this month, a decade of helping **motorcyclists** improve their knowledge, skills and experience to make them better, safer riders.

Since April 2003, more than 26,000 **motorcyclists** have attended a **BikeSafe**-London Rider Skills Day. The scheme is jointly run and funded by Transport for London (TfL) and the Metropolitan Police Service, and is part of the work TfL does to reduce accidents involving **motorcycles**. The Rider Skills Days are run by highly qualified traffic police officers and combine observed rides with interactive presentations, discussions and advice on rider safety.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary, **motorcyclists** attending a Rider Skills Day will only have to pay the original 2003 cost of £25, saving £20 on the present cost of £45. This limited time offer will only be valid between 29 April and 6 September and so riders are advised to book early here.

Riders will also have the opportunity to enter a competition to win one of two BMW Off-Road Skills Level One GS courses. The off-road skills course will, among other things, improve the rider's ability to control, balance, and manoeuvre in awkward situations, improve their braking ability and ability to manoeuvre at slow speeds. The lucky winners will also have their accommodation included as part of the prize, which has been provided by Carole Nash Insurance.

Northern Ireland Executive

Attwood: Historic vehicles exempt from MOT

Environment Minister Alex Attwood today announced that he is exempting pre-1960 historic vehicles from the MOT test.

All historic vehicles with a manufacture date before 1960, which have not undergone substantial change, will be exempt from the MOT test.

This decision follows the outcome of a public consultation which showed broad support for the exemption. SucACh an exemption has been in place in Britain since November 2012.

Pre 1960 vehicles account for less than 0.14% of vehicles in Northern Ireland.

It is proposed that the enabling legislation will come into operation in September 2013 in Northern Ireland.

Welsh Government -Written statement on motorcycling safety in Mid-Wales

Edwina Hart, Minister for Economy, Science and Transport

This Statement provides an update on Welsh Government measures for improving road safety for motorcyclists in Wales.

Motorcyclists are amongst the most at-risk groups of road users in Wales. Their likelihood of being involved in a serious collision is disproportionate; in 2011 they made up 1% of road traffic, but 37% of those killed or seriously injured in a vehicle. We have not seen a significant reduction in casualty numbers amongst motorcyclists over the last decade, in contrast to the reductions amongst other groups of road users. This is not something that I consider acceptable.

Mid-Wales does have a disproportionate number of motorcyclist road casualties. Statistical analysis has shown that these tend to be male riders on powerful bikes, during the drier months of the year. We will continue to work with Dyfed Powys Police and other partners through Operation 'Darwin' which targets these riders to educate them about the importance of safety and, where appropriate, enforce the law. I have provided local authorities with £6m of road safety funding in 2013/14, some of which will be used to specifically target motorcyclists. This includes advanced rider training courses, practical safety advice, targeted publicity and engineering schemes.

I will also soon publish our Road Safety Framework. The consultation document highlighted the vulnerability of motorcyclists, included a specific target for casualty reduction amongst this group and placed an onus on partners to actively engage with riders. My officials are finalising the analysis of the consultation responses and I will determine the way forward once this is completed.

F E M A

Vital MEPs exclude motorcycles from proposed new Technical Inspection rules

Following the opinion expressed by the European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee last month, the all-important Transport Committee members today adopted an amendment excluding all L-category vehicles, including motorcycles, from the scope of the proposed new legislation on Periodic Technical Inspections. This illustrates that the European Parliament is following FEMA's views on the need for solid and unbiased evidence before imposing new costs on EU citizens. With both the Council of Ministers and the Parliament against the Commission's plans, this could represent a major victory for FEMA on mandatory PTI.

Since the beginning of the discussion in the European Parliament over the new proposal for harmonizing periodical technical tests throughout Europe, Commission's statistics have been consistently challenged by FEMA which highlighted the critical difference between PTWs accident numbers - acknowledged to be too high - and statistics regarding the causation of these accidents, with less than 1% due to technical failures in all neutral studies.

A couple of weeks ago, the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) committee formally rejected statistics suggesting that compulsory PTI would reduce motorcycle accident rates and excluded the entire L-category from the scope of the text. But this was only an "opinion"

Today, despite a strong opposition from the Socialists and the Greens, the Transport Committee (TRAN) agreed with IMCO views and similarly excluded PTWs from the scope of the Commission text while asking for more unbiased evidence with the following amendment being adopted: No later than [three years from the date of publication of this Regulation], the Commission shall submit a report to the European Parliament and the Council on the inclusion of two- or three-wheel vehicles into the scope of this Regulation. The report shall assess the road safety situation for that category of vehicles in the European Union. In particular, the Commission shall compare road safety results for that category of vehicles in Member States carrying out roadworthiness testing of that category of vehicles with those in Member States which do not test that category of vehicles in order to assess whether roadworthiness testing of the two- or three-wheel vehicles is proportionate to the set road safety objectives. The report shall be accompanied, if appropriate, by legislative proposals.

The TRAN vote took place on Thursday May 30 at the European Parliament. In view of the political context with regards to road safety and the strong lobby work of the technical inspections industry, FEMA considers this decision as being unexpected and is extremely positive about the sense of democracy demonstrated by a majority of MEPs.

FEMA will keep a very attentive eye on the evolution of the procedure as the final vote will take place in Plenary Session beginning of July.

Editor: FEMA (<http://www.fema-online.eu>)

<http://www.fema-online.eu> (<http://www.fema-online.eu>) Research shows safety improving for riders in Europe

Research by the European motorcycle manufacturers' organisation ACEM has shown a significant drop in fatalities among powered two wheeler (PTW) riders between 2001 and 2010.

For more information on this please go to:-

<http://www.fema-nline.eu/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=373&cntnt01returnid=15>

And

RIDERSCAN Project launches new questionnaire. The Federation of European Motorcyclists Associations (FEMA) and the RIDERSCAN Project have launched a new survey to gather information on motorcycle training, testing and licencing from riders across Europe. *For more information go to:*

<http://www.fema-online.eu/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=372&cntnt01returnid=57>

And

15th MEP-Ride organised by FEMA, in association with ACEM, FEBIAC and MCC

Brussels, June 26th 2013

For registration form go to:- <http://www.fema-online.eu/index.php?page=registration>

ACEM - European PTW market fell 23.4% in first quarter

ACEM, the Motorcycle Industry in Europe, reports that the first quarter of 2013 ended down by 23.8%, with Southern Europe continuing to be a motive of serious concern. In March the European PTW market posted the year-on-year decline of 30.6% over the same period in 2012. While the EU PTW market had lost 12.7% in 2012, for the first quarter of 2013, registration figures indicate the enduring effects of the current economic crisis on consumer's demand.

March Powered Two-Wheelers sales in Europe totalled 115.470 units, with first quarter sales at 228.845. In Q1 2013 motorcycle registrations fell 22.7%, while moped sales were down 26.5%.

The cause of the acceleration of this negative trend can be explained by the negative performance of Europe's second largest market, namely Italy with -37% for all categories (2-, 3- and 4-wheeled L-category vehicles). Spain also lost 22.4%, while Greece -31.3%.

Following last year's strong volume reduction in the Mediterranean countries, during the first quarter of 2013 Continental Europe seems to be following in the same wake: Germany was down 16%, France -21%, Poland -32.8%, The Netherlands -24.4%, Austria -25%.

The seasonal effect can partly explain this disappointing performance. The extreme rigour of last winter all over Europe is a textbook example of how far weather conditions can influence the PTW market. However, a worsening of the situation such as this reflects deeper economic and political uncertainty in affected European countries which translate into a loss of customers' purchasing inclination bringing the market to a halt. Eventually, the onset of spring will certainly have a positive impact on sales, possibly trimming the accumulated losses.

Statistical overview 2012.

ACEM published the statistical overview for the full year 2012. The document contains the yearly summary for registrations and deliveries, circulating park, production, and top ten models. **To download the file document GO TO:-**

http://acem.eu/images/gallery/conferences/2013/Statistical_overview_full_updated_20130418.pdf

DVLA - Drink driving rules tightened

The most dangerous drink drivers will now have to pass a medical before they are allowed back on the roads under a change in the law announced today by Road Safety Minister Stephen Hammond.

The changes, which come into force from 1 June 2013, mean that High Risk Offenders will need to pass a medical confirming they are no longer alcohol dependent at the end of their disqualification and before they start driving.

Currently, all High Risk Offenders must pass a medical examination before they can be issued with a driving licence following their disqualification. However, drivers can start driving as soon as they have applied for their driving licence. Evidence suggests that some High Risk Offenders delay their medical in order to continue driving. The changes will prevent High Risk Offenders from driving until they have passed their medical examination and been granted a licence.

The changes also mean that drink drivers who refuse to give permission for a blood sample to be analysed will now be High Risk Offenders. This means that they will only get their licence back following disqualification if they pass the required medical.

Road Safety Minister, Stephen Hammond said: "Drink drivers are a menace and it is right that we do everything we can to keep the most high risk offenders off the road.

"These changes will tighten up the law on drink driving and will mean that the most dangerous offenders will have to prove they are no longer dependent on alcohol before they are allowed to get back behind the wheel.

"The new measures will also see those drink drivers who obstruct the police by refusing to allow their blood samples to be analysed treated the same as other high risk offenders."

The changes will come into force from 1 June 2013.

High Risk Offenders are drivers who are:

- convicted of 2 drink driving offences within 10 years;
- convicted of driving when they were at 2.5 times or more above the legal alcohol limit
- convicted for refusing to give the police a sample of breath, blood or urine to test for alcohol.

Last year, DVLA were notified by the courts of just over 50,000 drink drive convictions. Nearly 22,000 of those were classed as high risk offenders.
