

News from the Motorcycle Action Group

MAG makes progress on Harlow injunction

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The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG), the UK's leading voice for riders' rights, met with representatives of Harlow Council on 16th August in a continuing effort to resolve issues over an injunction introduced by the Council to stop anti-social behaviour. The injunction included wide ranging powers which MAG regarded as disproportionate and discriminatory against riders.

Lembit Öpik, MAG's Director of Communications & Public Affairs, attended the meeting, which he described as intense but productive. 'Both sides were very direct in laying out our positions, and initially it looked like there may be an unbridgeable rift. However, everyone kept their cool and we eventually identified a pathway which could actually work better in the long term interests of the local community, and avoid the elements which caused alarm and discontent in the motorcycling community. I particularly liked the suggestion of a twin track approach - whereby we work with the Council on biker awareness and safety while updating the injunction to take this work into account.'

Lembit believes that Harlow Council is genuinely motivated to seek this creative solution. 'I relate to their desire to prevent anti-social behaviour. Some hooligans were on bikes and it's not MAG's job to defend the indefensible. "Our role is to work intelligently to ensure the Council's commitment to law and order is carried out without compromising riders' rights. We CAN achieve that.'

Harlow Council's Head of Governance, Brian Keane, said, 'we are in no way prejudiced against motorcycles. If we can find a way to work this through in partnership, that would be best for us.'

The next meeting is set for September, to establish the campaign and changes to the injunction to achieve that, with three possible dates under consideration. Lembit adds 'we're not out of the woods just yet. But the fact we're still talking and we have formed a strategy with the officials is good news. We're not looking for a victory over the Council. We're looking for a victory with them, so the only losers are those who caused the injunction to be introduced in the first place.'

A full update will appear in the next issue of Network and The Road.

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