

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



September 2020





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The Newsletter of the North Down Advanced Motorists Group (Group 8199)

Helping to Improve the Standard of Driving and Riding on the Roads in
Northern Ireland and the advancement of road safety

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New Members and test passes

This month we welcome to the Group motorcycle member James Simpson with apologies to James as he should have been mentioned in the August issue. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

Testing is up and running again with limited numbers of Examiners but we have no test passes to report this month.

August Cover Picture

The location was the A25 Ardnabannon Road looking towards the hill up to Castlewellan. Congratulations to Jim O'Brien, Bill Moore, Norman Shearer and Bruce Steele. At least this month we have one car member getting it right. The rest of you must do better!

Can you identify this month's cover? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the Road Observer. To allay any fears, no photographers were harmed in making this image from the middle of the road - there was no traffic anyway as it was in the middle of lockdown!

COVID-19 update

As you are aware, the incidence of COVID-19 cases has been increasing and the Committee is very conscious of the need to keep Observers, Members and Associate members as safe as possible. The Group Committee is continuing to meet via Zoom to keep operations under review in light of the evolving Covid-19 situation.



IAM RoadSmart advice is that the health and safety of Observers and Examiners is paramount, and in light of recent Government announcements on the increase of the transmission rate, groups should take a pragmatic approach to any activities. They acknowledge that some people will be hesitant about returning to in-car coaching and have made it clear that activity should only resume when Observers, Examiners and Associates feel it is safe to do so, according to their individual circumstances.

In terms of meetings they encourage groups to explore all realistic virtual meeting and engagement options first, because they pose no risk of infection.

Motorcycle Members

On the motorcycle side some Associate training on a one-to-one basis is continuing as there are no indoor sessions and it is easier to maintain social distancing on bikes than it is in cars. The bike social runs are continuing, however, as is normal we expect numbers participating to decline as the winter weather approaches and some lay up their bikes to wait for better weather.

Car Members

On the car side IAM RoadSmart gave the go-ahead for observing to restart from 15 September and the Council gave the go-ahead to open it's community facilities, including the Boathouse, from 5 October.

We issued questionnaires to Observers and Associates on a range of options for continuing car training with the result that we have only one Observer available for in-car observing and among Associates the majority were opposed to resuming in-car observing at the present time.

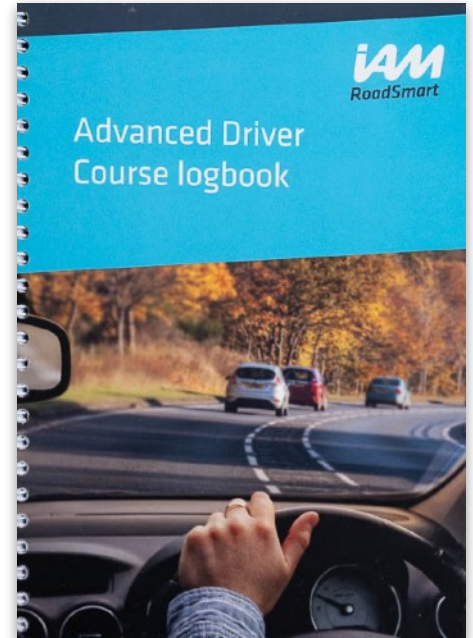
In the circumstances of very limited Observer capacity, we agreed that priority would be given to Associates whom we regarded as being fairly close to test standard when we went into

lockdown and those will be contacted shortly (if they have not been contacted already) to restart one-to-one observed drives.

We appreciate this will be disappointing for the remaining Associates and, taking account of IAM RoadSmart advice, until such time as we can get you restarted on in-car observing we will offer Zoom meetings on various aspects of advanced driving. These are likely to comprise a short presentation followed by a question and answer session and we hope as many Associates and Observers as possible will take part.

We are planning to hold the first of these on Tuesday 6 October when we will focus on the first two chapters of the logbook - IPSGA (Information, Position, Speed, Gear, Acceleration). We will provide both Observers and Associates with the information to enable you to join the meeting and to participate. We would like these sessions to be as interactive and relevant as possible so please feel free to raise points for discussion during the Zoom call, and if you're not comfortable speaking up, there is a chat function where you can directly message the presenter.

In the meantime we encourage Associates to continue to study the Advanced Driving Logbook, the Highway Code and Road Signs and to put the guidance into practice and especially in any areas for development which your Observer will have communicated to you before lockdown.



Groomsport Boathouse

The Autumn STAC and Group Nights are cancelled and we have cancelled the bookings for the Groomsport Boathouse until the end of the year.

Group subscriptions

As the Group is incurring little or no expenditure at present we have decided to further postpone the renewal of Group membership subscriptions. This will be kept under review.

IAM RoadSmart subscriptions

An extension to Associate membership will be continue to be provided to those Associates who receive their renewal invitation before 1 February 2021 and who have been unable to complete their coaching and test within their first 12 months of membership.

Associates whose membership is due for renewal between 1 September 2020 and 30 November 2020 will be eligible for a four month extension to their membership at no additional cost. Associates whose membership is due for renewal between 1 December 2020 and 31 January 2021, will be eligible for a two month extension to their membership at no additional cost.

This provision can only be applied at the time each Associate receives their renewal notice. The application must be made by the Associate, by contacting the Customer Care team on **0300 303 1134** or by emailing support@iam.org.uk between 8.30am and 6pm, Monday to Friday.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM which is normally held in October has been postponed. Under the Group rules the period between AGMs can be up to 18 months. We will review the position in light of the ongoing situation at the November Committee meeting.

Christmas dinner

This is normally an opportunity for the car and motorcycle sides of the Group to get together socially together with friends, spouses and partners. Again, respecting the need to keep people safe and acknowledging the restrictions on numbers, I'm afraid we have had to cancel this year's Christmas dinner.

We are sorry that we have had to cancel so much but we hope you will appreciate that the safety and well-being of all our members, Associate Members and their families are of paramount importance. If we all do our bit by keeping up to date with, and following, the latest rules (we know they change all the time) we can help to get through this safely.

Emergency vehicles

We can be driving to a destination, minding our own business when out of nowhere there's the sound of sirens. We tend to have to locate which direction the sound and vehicle is coming from before we navigate ourselves into a position on the road where we can move out of the way for emergency services vehicles. IAM RoadSmart's Richard Gladman, head of driving and riding standards, has some tips to remind drivers and riders how to reduce the risks we face in these situations, aid the emergency services, and make the road a safer place for us all.

Where to stop

It's important to stay calm when you hear sirens and see blue lights. You will need to find somewhere safe so you can pull over to the left and stop. If in a congested area, try to stay out of bus lanes and avoid mounting on kerbs, pavements and at traffic islands. Don't make any sudden or unexpected moves.

Slow down, move over

You may find there can be breakdowns, collisions and lots of congestion on all types of roads. These situations can be very distressing and potentially dangerous – for both emergency services vehicles as well as for occupants of stranded vehicles. When manoeuvring in these situations it's vital to help those involved by slowing down, moving over and passing to the right-hand side of the road.



Traffic lights

Emergency services vehicles can find ways to navigate around you at traffic lights. You may need to pull over to the left a little if they are passing through a congested queue. However, if you are first in the queue at a red light, it's important to stay where you are, do not pass the stop line, unless you have been advised to do so by a police officer.

Motorways and dual carriageways

When driving on motorways and dual carriageways, pull over to the left while avoiding using the hard shoulder and allow any emergency vehicles to pass in the outside lane. Ideally get ready to do this if you are stopped in a queue behind an incident before the blue lights appear in your rear-view mirror. In slow or stationary traffic, if an emergency vehicle cannot get through, their positioning of the vehicle as it approaches you will signal whether you should move left or right. Once the emergency vehicle has passed by you, stay vigilant and don't move until other vehicles following the emergency vehicle have also passed.



Motorway incidents

Highways Traffic Officer and emergency services vehicles are likely to stop in motorway and dual carriageway lanes, when attending to or approaching an incident. They can be protecting other vehicles involved or removing debris which can be blocking the road. When driving, keep an eye out for the overhead red X gantry sign or other instructions which are displayed. These signs aid in smoothing the flow of traffic, help drivers predict there could be an incident ahead and clear the lanes.

Stopped emergency service vehicles

If you see an emergency vehicle stopping or has already stopped, you should prepare for people to be exiting the vehicle as they step into action. You will need to slow down, keep your eyes open and anticipate the actions of others. This will give you enough reaction time to the situation at hand, this will give everyone enough time to stay safe.

Richard said: "By following this advice you can do your part to help emergency service teams nationwide and make the roads as safe as possible for all road users. Drivers of emergency service vehicles are trained to a high standard. They do not want you to panic and will not expect you to put yourself in danger or damage your vehicle to make way for them. If you

have caused a problem by mistake, stay calm and be guided by them, they know what space they need and will ask you for it.”

Gem Motoring Assist have developed some engaging animations showing others how to interact with emergency services, to contribute to a safer road environment. To watch these animations and find out more go to: <https://www.bluelightaware.org.uk/>

Autumn has arrived

Watch out for fallen leaves which can render the road surface like an ice rink, especially on corners and on braking areas.



Also check under your bonnet and remove leaves that might block drain holes in the area in front of the windscreen.



Some more archive pictures:



Slot car racing



MOT centre visit



NI Observer training Portadown



Ulster Aviation Centre visit

The views expressed in the “Road Observer” are not necessarily those of the Editor, the North Down Advanced Motorists Group or IAM RoadSmart