

Contents

From the Editor

From the Chair

From the Training Team

From the Government

From the Press & Internet

From the Editor

Some months ago, I visited the Highways Agency Regional Control Centre (RCC) at Godstone with a group of advanced drivers. Many of you have also visited the site, though some years ago.

In case you are not aware, the RCC are responsible for smooth traffic flow along the entire M2, M20, M26, the southern part of the M25, and a part of the M3. Traffic Officer vehicles that you may have seen parked by the motorway or involved in clear up operations after an incident belong to the RCC. There are other similar control centres under the Highways Agency for different parts of the Strategic Roads Network, including one exclusively for the Dartford Tunnel and Queen Elizabeth Bridge, another at South

Mimms which covers the northern part of the M25, part of the M1 and M40, etc.

As we were around twenty attendees, we were split into two roughly equal-sized groups, one outside the RCC where a couple of Traffic Officers showed us their vehicle and explained their duties and typical day, while the other went into the control room to watch action on the motorways. After about 45 minutes, we swapped around so that everyone had the same experience.

Inside the control room, the technology is very absorbing. Large screens show a variety of scenes around the motorway. Any odd vehicle behaviour can be zoomed into with high-powered cameras. For instance, a car stopped on the hatched lines between an exit and the main M25. The driver got down and opened his boot and took out something

Contents

From the Editor

From the Chair

From the Training Team

From the Government

From the Press & Internet

large. The passenger also alighted and both of them started to walk up the side of the exit slip road with what could have been a jerry can. Many in the group assumed that the car had run out of fuel and the driver and his companion were walking with the jerry can to buy some! We saw the pair reach the roundabout at the top of the slip road and then the camera's reach became rather limited. Imagine our surprise when the camera operator in the control room zoomed in even further and we realised that it wasn't a jerry can but a wheeled hand luggage cabin bag! A few minutes later, a car (quite possibly a mini-cab or Uber) came by the roundabout at the end of the slip road and the lady passenger got into it with the bag. The man walked back down the slip road, crossed it to get into his car on the hatched box, and drove off on the M25.

As it was a Sunday morning, other than this, there was not much action.

The only other interesting event was Traffic Officers stopping all traffic on the motorway in order to remove some debris. From the cameras, we were not able to tell whether the debris had landed on the carriageway from one or more vehicles. However, the operation was very carefully executed, no doubt because the team had lots of experience. One Traffic Officer vehicle was at the scene where the debris needed to be cleaned up with the lane in which it was closed using the red **X**. Another Traffic Officer vehicle, about 5 miles away switched on its "Do not overtake" sign and gently slowed down to about 10 or 15 miles an hour. This left a gap of a few minutes for the first Traffic Officer team to swiftly sweep the

Contents

From the Editor

From the Chair

From the Training Team

From the Government

From the Press & Internet

debris off the carriageway. They completed the job with a full minute to spare and the slow-moving Traffic Officer vehicle moved to the left lane and switched off its sign, allowing traffic to overtake.

Downstairs and outside, we had two Traffic Officers showing us the equipment they carry in their Officer vehicles. Well over a dozen traffic cones, an arm protector in case there are aggressive dogs in a stranded vehicle, equipment to capture single animals such as a horse or cow that has strayed onto the road network, and the ubiquitous brooms we had earlier seen to sweep the carriageway!

Naturally, our group enquired on the Traffic Officers' views on Smart Motorways. Specifically, they were asked whether they were much more dangerous than regular Motorways with a hard shoulder. The answer

was interesting. If your vehicle stops on a live running lane on a Smart Motorway, the first thing to do is look for the "mushroom" – the radar detector for stalled vehicles shown in this

Highways

Agency

image, and

then

magnified

in the

image

from the BBC website below.



Contents

From the Editor

From the Chair

From the Training Team

From the Government

From the Press & Internet

If you can see it, you can be reassured that the Control Centre would know that your vehicle has stopped.

Shortly after our visit to the RCC, I wrote to the Department of Transport and the Highways Agency under the Freedom of Information Act, asking for statistics of fatalities on live running lanes on Smart Motorways, regular motorways, and on the hard shoulder. The response I received was they do not have the data. I am guessing that, in part, this is because in some parts of the country we have Smart Motorways where the hard shoulder becomes a live running lane during rush hour and the accident reporting form filled in by the police or traffic officer does not allow for this as a possibility.

However, as many of you would have seen from the recent works on the M25, several new refuge areas are being built on the Smart Motorway sections. Sadly, this has meant there is just a single lane for a few miles on the M25 anti-clockwise close to Junction 5.

While we heard that large numbers of the “mushrooms” have not been working for long periods, work on a number of new refuge areas must mean that the government / Highways Agency have concluded, that Smart Motorways are less safe than those with a hard shoulder.

Safe driving

Ravi Savur

Contents

From the Editor

From the Chair

From the Training Team

From the Government

From the Press & Internet

From the Chair

Dear Members, Associate Members and Social Members,

Here's an article (similar to one first submitted to Bromley Life) to share with your friends and family

Our Car.....but whose responsibility?

We loved our old cars – they generally started first time and we rarely worried that they would be missing from the car park when we returned, but thanks to ULEZ they had to go! The question arose, did we really need two cars? We decided we should instead buy a car to share. However, what started as an economy drive has ended up with a car costing more than our first house.

The rationale for buying a car to share was economy, practicality, fits in the garage and

within a budget. Somewhere between the drawing board and realisation, things went hopelessly awry.

- Budget - we couldn't get anything decent within our set budget.
- Economy - what savings made from petrol and car tax would take a long time to recoup with the price of the car.
- Fits in the garage – yes... just, but you would have to get out through the sunroof.

.....and this was only the start of our problems.

When we had our own car, it was functional, we knew it intimately and we personalised it. We did the shopping, took the kids to school or the dogs for walks in it, we knew (almost to the yard) how far we could get once the

Contents

From the Editor

From the Chair

From the Training Team

From the Government

From the Press & Internet

fuel light came on and were happy to clean it out, once the floor was full and we loved Garfield, hanging on the rearview mirror!

But when you share a car, it's like living with someone for the first time. 'Functionality' and 'personalisation' is replaced with a dirty car full of rubbish and 'intimately' often prompts the question, "Who am I, the Petrol Fairy?" Obviously, some form of compromise is now required.

After much discussion (moaning), the advice in the Highway Code may be sensible middle-ground.

- ✓ Nothing should distract the driver from the road – you must be able to see clearly through all your windows....Garfield was going to have to go!

- ✓ Driver Seat - one size doesn't fit all. Adjust your own seat so that you can reach the pedals and hold the steering wheel comfortably.

- ✓ Head Restraint – ensure it is properly adjusted for you, personally.

Now to the technical bits! It is not any one person's job to check the car. The driver is responsible for confirming the vehicle is safe to drive.

- ✓ Fuel or charge - before you start, check the gauge. If you're sharing, it's bound to be low!

- ✓ Fluid Levels - OK, I know, this means opening the bonnet and finding the support things but these are necessary. Check oil, brake fluid, windscreen washer and coolant levels. Using the appropriate fluids can prevent nasty illnesses such as Legionnaire's disease.

Contents

From the Editor

From the Chair

From the Training Team

From the Government

From the Press & Internet

- ✓ Tyres - most important! Check they are properly inflated to the manufacturers specification for the load carried. Do this when they are cold. The correct pressures will be in the vehicle handbook. Whilst you're on your knees, check the tread depth. It MUST be at least 1.6mm across $\frac{3}{4}$ of the central width of the tyre for the full circumference, with no cuts, tears or bulges in the sidewalls.

Need an incentive to check? Under-inflated tyres will:

- adversely affect stability,
- increase wear due to rolling resistance,
- increase fuel consumption,
- affect braking and steering, felt as pulling to left or right.

Still not convinced?

If you are stopped by the police and your tyres are found to be defective, you can be fined up to £2,500 and be given 3 penalty points per tyre.

Four defective tyres = disqualification and £10,000 debt before you've done the shopping... Ouch!!

So, as you rush out to buy a tyre pressure gauge, think about your driving lately. You've not even left the driveway (I would say garage, but you can't get in there now) and you're in trouble. What other areas of your driving will you choose to improve? Remember, help is close at hand. Contact RoSPA, Kent Advanced Drivers website at www.kentrospa.org.uk

Debbie Palmer

Contents

From the Editor

From the Chair

From the Training Team

From the Government

From the Press & Internet

From the Training Team

Associates

The individual “Introduction Sessions” are proving to be very successful. They have been structured to include both theory / principles of Advanced Driving as well as a demonstration drive. Given the positive feedback, unless we have a significant influx of associates, we will not go back to running the earlier “Induction Seminars.”

We currently have

- One Associate waiting to attend an “Introduction Session”
- One Associate waiting to be assigned to a Tutor. This is because the Associate cannot start drives before the end of June

Tutors

We currently have

- One Member still undergoing the practical training
- Three Advanced Tutors (One stood down)
- Ten Approved Tutors (Two are on a Sabbatical)

Results

Please remember to send me details of your results with details of your date of test and who the examiner was.

Also, if any Member has a Silver or Gold pass and would like to consider training to be a Group Tutor, please contact me: ray.rosipa@outlook.com

Ray Davies

Training Officer

Contents

From the Editor

From the Chair

From the Training Team

From the Government

From the Press & Internet

From the Government

18 March 2024

Young people urged to wear seat belts in new life-saving campaign

THINK! launches CLICK, the first new seat belt campaign since 2011, aimed at young men, that highlights how a simple click can save lives.

Every week, 4 young people aged 17 to 29 are either killed or seriously injured on our roads when not wearing a seat belt, with young men more likely to not wear one, especially on short or well-



known journeys. In 2022, 30% of fatalities among 17- to 29-year-olds were unbelted.

To help combat this, alongside targeted advertising on roadside posters, radio and social media, CLICK will collaborate with several partners, including various county football associations and local clubs to promote 'belting up' when travelling to matchdays to keep themselves and their teammates safe. View one here: <https://www.think.gov.uk/campaign/seatbelts-2024/#group-videos-1> (the full list is <https://www.think.gov.uk/campaign/seatbelts-2024/>)

Taxi and private hire vehicle companies, including Uber, are also supporting the campaign and looking to introduce direct reminders to passengers to wear their seat belt when making journeys in cabs.

Contents

From the Editor

From the Chair

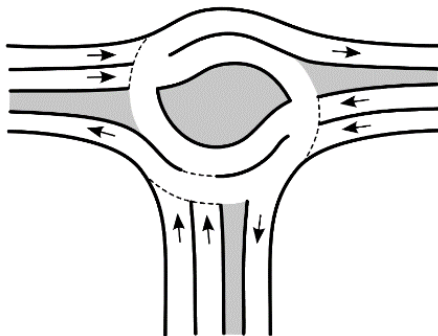
From the Training Team

From the Government

From the Press & Internet

From the Press & Internet

Running Horse Roundabout on the A229 outside Maidstone (near Bluebell Hill) is the UK's first "turbo roundabout".



Turbo roundabouts were invented in the Netherlands in 1956 (and they have over 300 installed) for roundabouts with two entry lanes.

As shown, to leave the first exit, you have to be in the left lane. If you are in the right lane, you can take either the second or third exit. Soft verges ensure compliance.

Bedford Council was the first in the country to suggest installing one in 2014 but the proposal was not approved.

More details of the Running Horse Roundabout at:

<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/is-600k-roundabout-waste-of-money-or-the-best-it-s-ever-307000/>