Safer Driving

The Newsletter of RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders
Thames Valley Group

Spring 2021

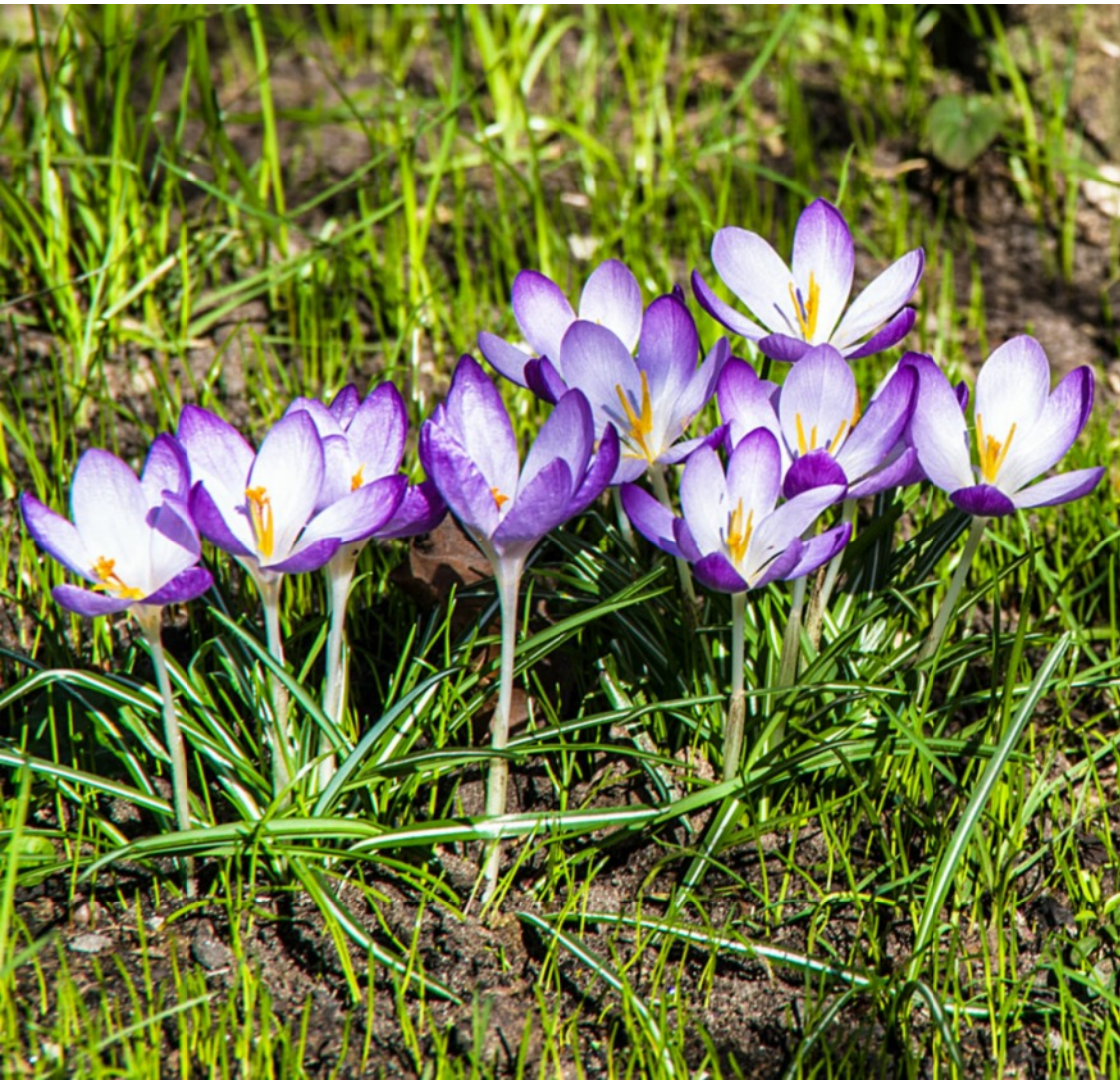

Photo by Peter Caton

Keep it between the green bits !

Using the pdf edition - quick search with hyperlinks

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Updated 15/12/20

The Editor writes...

With the series of driving restrictions of tiers and lockdowns we have had over the past year, most of us will have driven very few miles, if we have been obeying all the rules. But let us for a moment look forward to a very much brighter future when most of us will have been immunised against Covid, something my GP tells me that will have to be repeated every autumn like the flu jab.

If you are looking forward to taking your car to Europe, there are a few new things you need to remember. You will need a green card from your insurance company, which will tell anyone asking for it that you are insured. If you are driving a car you do not own, such as having it on lease or by some other arrangement, you need to get the owner's consent to take it abroad on a VE130 form. This is *not* a new requirement, but it is now more likely to be enforced.

You can still drive on your existing EU-style licence. You must also carry the car's log book if you do not have a VE130 form. I keep all of these items in an envelope-sized clear plastic folder. I have found over the years that police making spot checks appreciate neatly presented documents.

When you are driving in Britain and using Google Maps as a satnav on your phone, it must be secured in a bracket. The key point is: if you hold it, or adjust it when driving, you will be fined £200 and get six points on your licence.

More low emissions zones are being introduced this year which will affect everyone who drives a diesel car that is not Euro 6, or a petrol car that is not at least Euro 4. London's low emission zone will be expanded from 25 October. Please check the TFL website to see how it may affect you. Bath has started operating its low emission zone this month (March), but Oxford's will not start until the summer. Bristol's low emission zone was scheduled to begin in the spring, but no date has been given.

The percentage of bioethanol in petrol will be raised this year from 5 to 10 per cent. You will get fewer miles to a gallon, but the use of E10 petrol through the reduction in CO2 is estimated to be the equivalent of taking 350,000 cars off the road. If your car was registered before 2002, E30 can damage the fuel pipes and seals. So please check with your garage.

Electric cars with green number plates *may* get cheaper parking this year and free access to low emission zones. Speed limiters will be mandatory on all *new* cars from next year. They are already fitted to most cars bought in the past few years. They are extremely useful in ensuring you keep to posted speed limits.

For further information on all of this, I suggest that you log on to the RAC or AA websites as well as those of GOV.UK and the DVLA. There is also a new *Highway Code* due in the spring with fresh regulations that affect you, particularly with regard to cyclists and pedestrians.

Max Davidson

From the Spring Chair

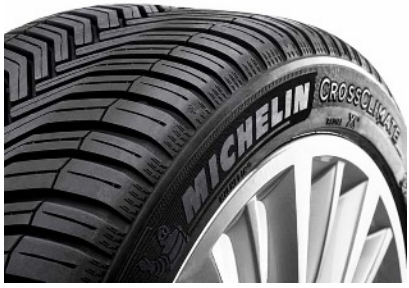
Do give Zoom events a try

At the moment time almost feels like it is standing still and the slightly optimistic tone of my last update referring to the 'end' of the English lockdown on the 2 December, allowing for some return to training feels misplaced. So no more predictions.We shall wait and see what occurs. With the vaccine roll out, my hope is that we can restart training during the second quarter.

You will have seen the notification from Samantha, relating to a reset to the membership year, and also the Committee's decision to provide a free year for all Members due to the lack of activity in 2020. Despite the difficulties experienced by everybody in 2020, our membership numbers have remained constant with new joiners, mainly motorcyclists, so that is encouraging.

If you have not yet joined one of the events which are held using Zoom, I strongly advise you to give it a try. This is a new way for us to bring Members together. The first two events attracted more than 30. Online meetings are not a substitute for the real thing, but, so far, the feedback has been positive.

This is the first winter since the harsh one of 2010 when I haven't fitted snow tyres to my main car, mainly because of lockdown induced low mileage. I did however fit Michelin Cross Climate tyres to my wife's Mini Cooper-S last summer. One reason for doing this was to try to improve the ride with the softer compound, and also to provide some mobility should the winter prove to be a cold one.

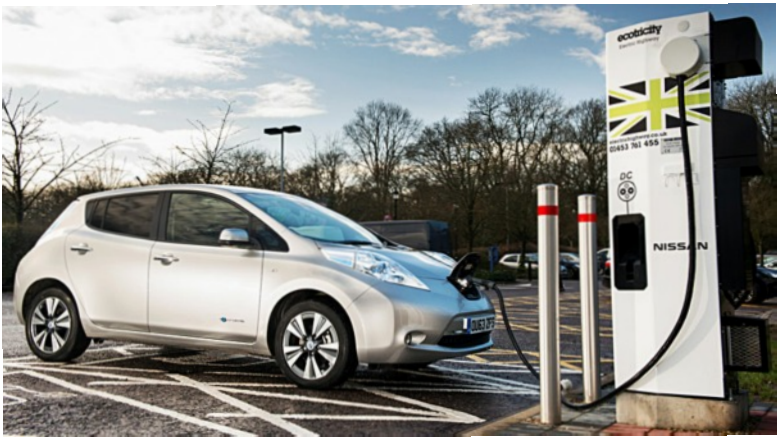


The new tyres did improve the ride. Noise levels also dropped and, to my surprise, the steering feel improved and, even during the high temperatures of summer 2020, the handling and grip felt no different to the standard tyres at normal road speed. I did, however, have a chance to try them in the recent snow and ice when, as I had hoped, they improved traction, braking distance and steering feel much as dedicated winter tyres would do.

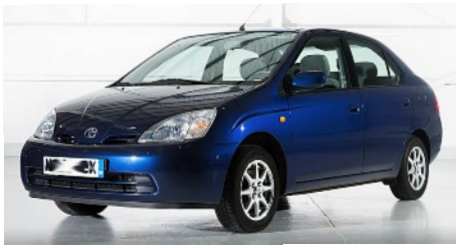
Like all compromises, they have their weaknesses and I wouldn't fit a set to my Boxster where feel and handling are paramount, but if you are planning to fit some new tyres to your everyday car, I would strongly recommend looking into this type of tyre with some of the best reviews being for Goodyear, Continental, Bridgestone and Michelin (who have updated the tyre to a Mk2 spec – apparently even better than the ones I have).

Keith Pruden, Chairman

Will you be driving electric?



Should you buy an electric car? That is a question many of keep asking ourselves. There many new models shortly to be announced. At the moment it is a choice between one with a rechargeable lithium ion battery and an electric motor, or a hybrid with a petrol or diesel engine and a rechargeable battery and electric motor. The original hybrid, exemplified by the Toyota Prius, uses regenerative energy to top up its batteries when it brakes as well as using its engine to power a generator which provides electrical power.

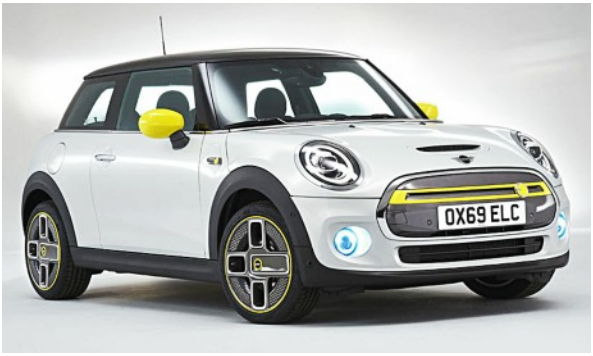


A plug-in hybrid vehicle (PHEV) also has an engine, a rechargeable battery and an electric motor. Unlike the Prius, it can only be charged from the mains. PHEVs typically have electric-only ranges of around 20 to 30 miles on a full charge. They can be a good choice for someone who usually drives short distances by using electrical power only, and yet having a petrol or diesel engine for longer journeys, such as holidays, eliminates the worries about recharging.

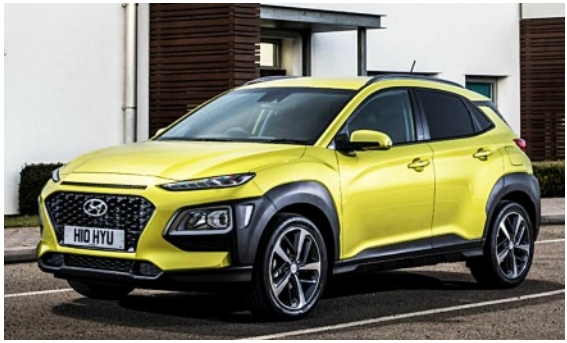
A recent introduction is the mild hybrid (MHEV). It cannot be driven on electrical power alone. Its main purpose is to store energy in an upgraded battery through regenerative braking which can be used to improve acceleration and to use with the increasing demands of all the electrical systems. Mild hybrids also get more miles to a gallon and emit less CO2. A good example of this technology can be found in the latest version of BMW's 3 Series.

A wide choice of cars

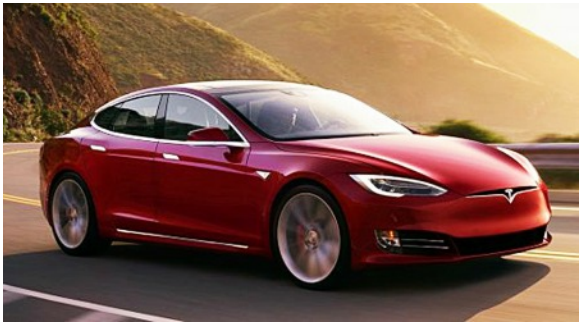
The number of battery electric cars on sale, commonly referred to simply as EVs, is increasing rapidly. The most popular is the Nissan Leaf, built in Britain. Others included the Renault Zoe, BMW i3, Kia e-Niro and Soul, Hyundai Ionic and Kona,



VW e-Golf, Jaguar I-PACE and Tesla Model S, Model X and Model 3. The cheapest is the Renault Zoe at around £25,000 with the Government grant of £3,000. The grant is available for all EVs costing up to £50,000 including VAT and delivery charges. A grant of £1,500 is also available on electric motorcycles.



EVs are available from franchised dealers, but do check before you buy that the dealer is certified to look after the car through the Electric Vehicle Approved (EVA) scheme. Electric cars may be less expensive to run through avoiding the punishing duty on fossil fuels, but they are expensive to buy. Most are 'sold' (but you do not own the car) under a leasing scheme, which is advantageous to business buyers, and less so for private buyers, who are unable to reclaim the VAT on the lease. The leases are offered on the basis of the car the being driven anything from just 5,000 to 10,000 miles annually with additional charges thereafter. After the leasing period you have to give the car back.



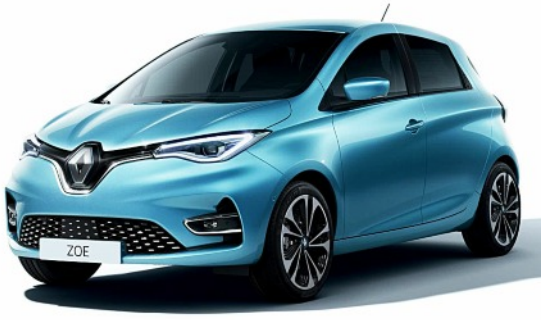
Tesla's cars can only be obtained online and cost around £1,200 a month to lease the popular S model, capable of 164 mph and reaching 60 in a little over three seconds. It may have batteries giving a range of 300 miles, but unless you drive moderately and at modest speeds, you will get nothing like that. At the other end of the scale you can lease a Renault Zoe for a more affordable £175 a month plus VAT.

Does it make financial sense?

Before we lease an electric car, we need to consider if it makes financial sense for our circumstances. Is most of our motoring in town or city, or are we more likely to be driving in the country? And what about holiday driving, will it be easy to recharge the EV at some seaside resort?

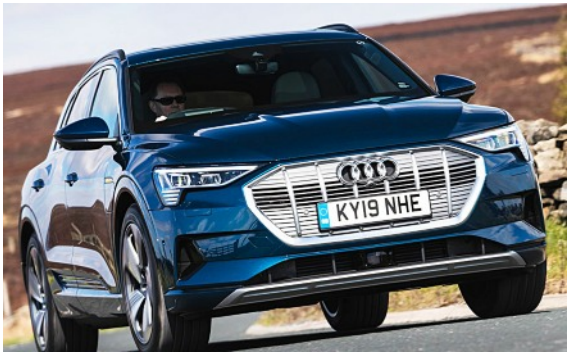
You could test the waters by buying second hand, but there are a few problems here. Scarcity makes used EVs relatively expensive. The latest new versions have longer lasting batteries, unlike the earlier ones which can deteriorate markedly. An older EV may manage only 100 miles before a recharge, and the efficiency of its battery, like that of an ageing computer, can deteriorate to 60 per cent. Since the batteries cost a considerable sum, replacing them is not really an option and the car can be a write-off.

Today most EV batteries are included in the price of the car and not leased. The Renault Zoe is an exception. It is still sold new with the choice of an owned or leased battery, but most, if not all, other new EVs now come with batteries. Renault's battery lease costs vary from £49 to £110 a month, depending on battery size and the permitted mileage.



Leasing batteries cuts out the financial risk of failures as the battery will be replaced under the lease agreement. If you buy a used EV, you are more likely to come across leased batteries. For example, some of the earlier Leafs, as well as the Zoes, have leased batteries. If you buy one of these, you will also need to sign a battery lease contract with the manufacturer.

Running costs are lower



EVs have between five and eight years' warranty on the electric motor and battery. For the rest of the car, the length of warranty ranges from three years and 60,000 miles to seven years and 100,000 miles Fuel costs are much lower. You can even charge the car at home with cheaper off-peak electricity. Topping up a typical 40kWh battery from zero to 100 per cent on a domestic

tariff of 15p/kWh would cost £6.60, whereas fully charging the same battery at a motorway service station might cost around twice that amount. You will also need a home charge point which costs around £800, but you can get a £350 Government grant towards the cost.

Compared with petrol and diesel cars, EVs need less maintenance. Servicing a Leaf costs just £132 a year, according to the makers Nissan, and Tesla aims to do most servicing remotely with software updates. If you rent the battery, Renault will guarantee a performance of at least 75 per cent of its original capacity, or pay for repair and, if necessary, replacement. If buying outright, the Renault Zoe's battery is covered for eight years or 100,000 miles, along with a performance guarantee to at least 66 per cent of its original charge capacity.

At present it costs more to insure an electric car than a petrol or diesel one due to the more limited options when it comes to repairing them, but you do not need to pay any road tax. EVs offer big savings for the company car user. The Benefit in Kind company car tax for EVs is currently zero. There are also other benefits such as free parking in some areas and exemption from congestion and pollution charges. So grab that Tesla while you can!

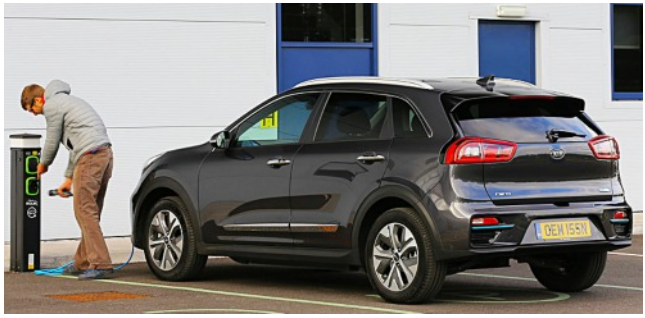
Amend your driving style

If you buy an EV, the first thing you will notice is the silence and the smooth acceleration with no clutch or gearbox to bother about. Most of the sound will come from the tyres on the road. What you will need to do is to amend your driving style, which should pose no problems for advance drivers.

Braking is principally done by easing your foot of the accelerator. You also need to drive with a very light right foot as smoothly as possible. You can drive up to 70 mph where allowed, but you will find the charge in the battery will take you further if you can limit yourself to around 55 mph.

With the weight of the batteries under the floor, the car has a low centre of gravity which helps with cornering, and the cars handle brilliantly. EVs are considered very safe. Almost all of them are a match for the best conventional cars with a five-star rating. The one fly in the ointment is the need for charging. Without a garage, driveway or dedicated parking space, an electric vehicle will be a problem, as ideally, you need at least a driveway in order to park and charge the car overnight.

Should you buy one? At present they are perfect for the commuter and local running of up to 200 miles. Charging is still uncertain and takes too long if you need a car for longer trips.



Volvo's safety gift to the world

Nils Bohlin, an engineer at Volvo, invented the seatbelt in 1959. His cross-strap design with a simple to release buckle is credited with saving more than a million lives worldwide and many more from serious injury. Bohlin had previously been an aero engineer with Saab, which made both cars and aircraft, and he knew that his device needed to provide restraint across the body as well as being easy to us. It is without doubt the most outstanding contribution to safety in the history of motoring. Seatbelts did not become compulsory in Britain until 1983. Prior to that they could be specified as an optional extra. The order to wear them was met with protests by Britons who were fat and thought their use was uncomfortable and those who felt that they would be trapped in a car fire, or drowned if their car went into a river.

1959 Volvo PV544

Nils Bohlin

Volvo decided not to patent the belt and released it to the world as a mark the company's ongoing concern with safety.

Punctured!...and no spare wheel

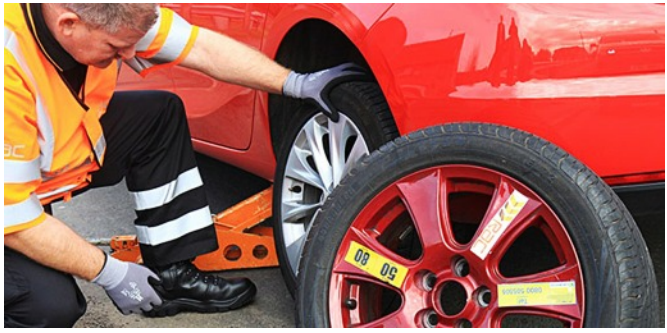
Very few cars nowadays provide the driver with a spare wheel as standard. Some offer the option of a compact wheel sufficient to get you to a tyre repair depot, but most simply give you a tyre repair kit to use at the roadside. The alternative is to have a car with run-flat tyres which, even when punctured, can let you drive on for 50 miles or so at a reduced speed of 50 miles an hour.

Replacing a tyre on a main road in Britain is dangerous as, unlike most European roads, none of ours have hard shoulders and most have soft verges which nowadays tend to have thick uncut vegetation. Do heed the advice given in the *Highway Code* about placing your warning triangle 45 metres way from your car and putting on the hazard lights, but it is safer in most instances to summon help rather than trying to make a repair or change a wheel yourself.

On the motorway it is much simpler. When you have to stop on the hard shoulder, or in the sanctuary area of a Smart motorway, do as the *Highway Code* advises and never attempt even the smallest repair, but switch on your hazard lights and ensure everyone leaves the car promptly by the nearside doors and stands on the other side of the metal barrier while you summon help with one of the emergency motorway phones which will give the operator your precise location.

Using your mobile is acceptable, provided you are able to give your precise location according to the 'chainage' information on the blue signs positioned every 500 metres. The signs reveal if you are on the A or B side of the motorway and give your precise distance from a given location. Slip roads carry their own designations. So noting the letter is vital when you summon help to ensure help gets to the correct access on your side of the motorway.

For the past six or so years, the RAC's orange vans have been carrying universal spare wheels with four or five stud fixings to suit 99 per cent of all cars. The driver leaves the replacement spare wheel at the tyre depot where he or she has the tyre replaced for the RAC to collect later.



Since carrying the spares, the RAC has had to use such a wheel to replace a million or more punctures. In just one year the RAC typically has to deal with more than 200,000 'puncture, no spare wheel' call-outs. When you consider the number of other breakdown services, it tells you that a puncture, despite the vast improvement in the reliability of tyres, is not as rare an event as you might imagine. It also underlines the need to check your tyres regularly.

Observation Post

What's around the corner?

I bet that the Government and its advisers are wishing that there was a limit point analysis for predicting the future. As I write, Mr Johnson has announced his road map for emerging from lockdown. His critics will complain that he has not produced a faster route. We share the frustration, but a moment's reflection will tell us that caution is a better option.

So what's around the corner for us as a Group? Road training in 2021 remains a distant prospect. In the meantime, we can prepare for changes that will occur for us as riders and drivers. In my previous column, I reminded readers of new editions of *Roadcraft* and the *Highway Code*. But there is more.

Technology

Lane Assist will become mandatory in new cars this year. In 2022, speed limiters are to be mandatory, but drivers will be able to override these systems. It is going to happen. So before you take sides, you might want to ask yourself whether ABS or traction control systems are a good idea.

Electric vehicles

Electric cars are becoming more prevalent. Jaguar Land-Rover has thrown down the gauntlet. Others are following. *Motorcycle News* carries reviews of electric bikes. The future is bleak for petrol heads like me! We are going to have to learn what impact the new technologies will have on the *Roadcraft* system: Information-Position-Speed-Acceleration will still apply, but what about gears? An electric car doesn't need them.

Green zones

In the meantime, Bath, Birmingham, Bristol and Oxford have announced increased restrictions to combat emissions. Do you imagine that Reading won't join in – or Newbury, or Bracknell, or Maidenhead? Electric or zero emission cars will now have green number plates. The idea is to promote the cars by making them more visible. Drivers of with these plates will probably be offered cheaper parking and free entry into Low Emission Zones.

Driving in Europe

If you're planning on driving in Europe, you will need proof of insurance (a 'green card') and a GB sticker, even if your registration plate already has a GB. If you have a photocard driving licence, you won't need an international driving permit. The gov.uk website has more information. So check there for details.

What about the Thames Valley Group?

TVG has always aimed to set standards of excellence in its training programmes. That will continue, but we are going to have to adapt. If you have information on the changes ahead, or training experience in meeting system changes, we would love to hear from you. However good we are, we could be better. So if you can see trouble, give us a helping hand to make our roads safer.

Keep safe and go well!

Paul Sheppy

How motoring came of age

Detroit is known in the United States as Motown. It is where its first petrol-powered car was built by engineer Charles Brady King in 1896. It was capable of 20 miles per hour, which was described in a local newspaper as ‘tearing along the street at a lively rate, dodging people and teams of horses.’

The move from the horse to car age was rapid and dangerous over the following 10 years. In just two months of the summer of 1908, 31 people died in car crashes and so many were injured that the authorities lost count. Thousands of cars jammed Detroit streets, driven by incompetent drivers. The city responded by leading the world in bringing in the traffic management that is now part of everyday motoring. But the battle against chaos took decades to win.

Detroit was the first city to use stop signs, lane markings, one-way streets and traffic signals. It was among the first to have police dedicated to traffic control, and second to New York in creating a special court for traffic offences It used tennis court line painting machine to mark pedestrian crossing areas, safety zones, and parking spaces.

In the first 10 years of motoring, there were no stop signs, warning signs, traffic lights, traffic police, learning to drive, street lighting in built up areas, brake lights, driver's licences or posted speed limits, and drinking-and-driving was not considered a serious crime. There was little understanding of speed and why when drivers took corners at high speed their cars skidded or ‘turned turtle’.

By 1917, Detroit had 65,000 cars on the road, resulting in 7,171 accidents annually and 168 fatalities. Three-quarters of the victims were pedestrians. Detroit differed from New York and America’s prosperous East Coast, where cars were the preserve of the wealthy and driven by chauffeurs. In Detroit everyone had a car.

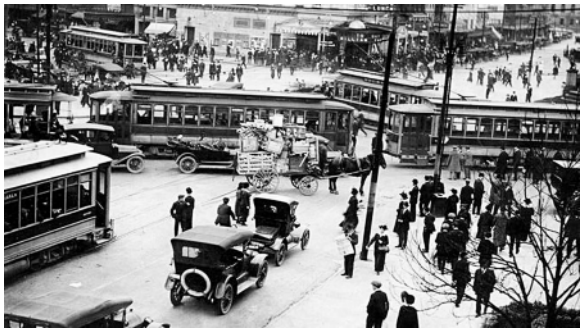
One family was driven around by their 11-year-old son, and a young woman was arrested after driving on the pavement and killing several people. It was her twenty-sixth offence of dangerous driving. Getting off a tramcar, which ran up the centre of the road, was hazardous. Passengers had to scramble out of the way of speeding cars, lorries, motorcycles and horse-drawn buggies.

The worse aspect was the number of children killed as they played in the street. By the 1920s, 60 per cent of deaths in America were children under nine. The main cause was excessive speed. Until 1909 there was no restrictions in Detroit. The courts and police solved the problem by setting the limit to that of horse-drawn carts, five miles per hour.

Britain at that time, with its own accident problems, went further. In towns the law demanded that the car driver had to notify the police of his intention to drive through the streets, and a constable would then walk in front of the car waving two red warning flags while the driver followed slowly behind.

In Detroit, as traffic became more congested, the police devised a series of hand and arm signals in a bid to try and bring order to the streets. Traffic Superintendent William Rutledge described in an annual report, ‘The upraised hand is the signal to stop, and the swinging hand across the body the signal to start.’ The signalling police drew crowds of pedestrian spectators. But the police could not keep up with the volume of traffic and began to lose the war on dangerous driving.

So many people were being killed that in 1919 bells in fire stations, churches and schools would ring twice a day in memory of those who had died. Teachers would read to school classes the names of the dead children. Safety parades, started



in the 1920s, became an emotional relief for public loss.

In addition to the dangers drivers were creating, there was also the nuisance of thoughtless parking clogging streets. Drivers just stopped and left their cars where they wished. Houses had no garages or even driveways. So residential streets too were blocked.

By 1915, the car had become essential transport. It became impractical to tell people to drive at five mph. The city was the nation's centre of car manufacture and for it to thrive it needed to improve its image. A former Ford executive, James Couzens, was given the job of helping the police to sort out the chaos.

He insisted that pedestrians must share the blame for accidents if they jaywalked. He demanded that they cross at designated corners. Couzens and others also began to develop a way to manage the streets using new technology and signposts for the streets such as how to turn at intersections.

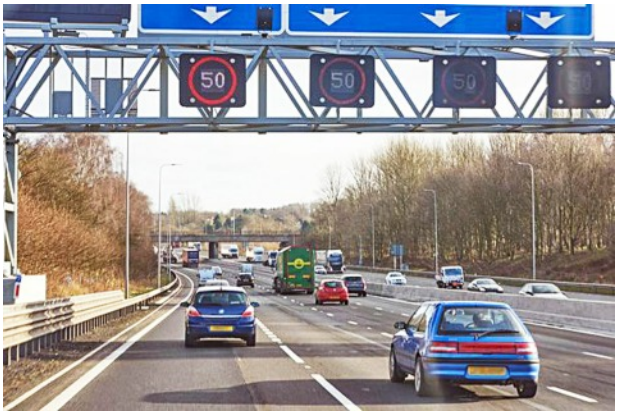
The first traffic lights, at the time called Street Semaphores, were invented and developed in Detroit. It was also the first city to have one-way streets. The first traffic lights were operated by police in crows' nests with whistles, which they blew 10 seconds before changing the signal, but they also typically whistled or yelled at drivers and pedestrians to keep things safe and moving along.

The lights were automated in 1922, and an amber light was added to show a signal was about to change. Illegal parking was solved simply by towing the offending cars away.

By the mid-1920s, US Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover produced a national approach to how streets and highways should be controlled. Car makers began to adopt safety features such as flashing indicators, brake lights, safety glass and standard head lamps. Drivers had to take tests and to have licences. By the 1930s, the days of free-for-all driving were over.

More flout M-way speed limits

Drivers caught by speed cameras speeding on the lower speed zones of the M4 at Port Talbot and Newport as well as on three nearby A-roads have escaped fines over the past two years under a scheme which sent them 'environment letters' instead. No £100 fines nor penalty points were handed out. Instead, letters were sent to drivers exceeding the 50 mph limit, explaining the benefits of slowing down.

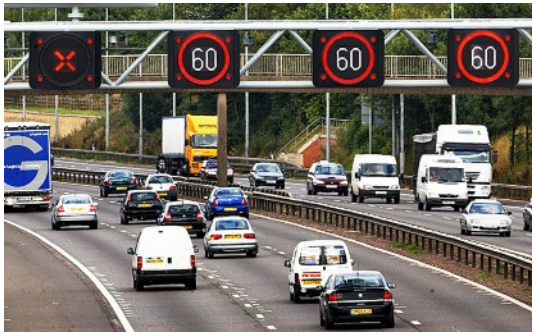


The so-called GoSafe scheme is part of a Welsh Government initiative to cut nitrogen dioxide levels in the designated areas. Road safety campaigners have called for speeding to be 'treated like real crime'.

Such environmental measures are common in Europe when weather conditions such as cold air in winter and abnormal heat in summer can cause fog or a very damaging smog which keeps exhaust pollutants close to ground level with no wind to disperse it. When smog conditions are likely, the speed limits are reduced, and notices on motorway gantries appeal to the conscience of drivers to slow down for environmental reasons.

You might just get a warning letter from South Wales Police if you fail to slow down, but if you fail to heed such warnings on Smart Motorways, you will receive a notice of intended prosecution. The creation of Smart Motorways has resulted in the number of speed cameras having trebled on motorways in the past 10 years and are now responsible for one in 10 of all speeding fines issued by the police.

The total of these fines is entirely separate from the ones issued by temporary average speed check cameras in areas of road works. In all 2.3 million speeding fines were issued in England and Wales last year. Some may see the rise in fines as an attack on drivers, but it is more accurately an indication of drivers' disregard for the legal limits.



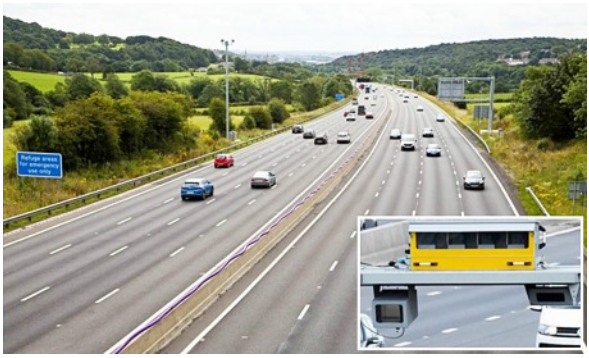
At the moment Smart Motorways account for just 416 miles of road, but they are expected to double by 2025. The advantage of variable speed limits has been very successfully proven on the M25,

where, by being able to vary speed, the huge volume of traffic can be managed to keep a steady flow past busy junctions and to reduce the number of hold ups.

Some have complained that fines are unfair as the cameras are hard to see. The problem for the errant drivers is that the cameras take the form of a yellow box about 15cm high and 35cm wide and are set on the far left of gantries where they can view traffic on up to four lanes simultaneously. Relying on 'seeing the cameras' is futile as they will clock your speed from up to one kilometre away.

The camera is known as the HADECS 3. The letters stand for Highways Agency Digital Enforcement Camera System. It has two separate radars to detect very accurately the speed of speeding motorists. It is linked to advance cameras which observe approaching vehicles and photograph the current speed limit displayed on the gantry adjacent to the speed camera and send the information to the HADECS 3. The way to avoid a fine is simply to keep a good look out for the posted limits and to stick to them.

Some drivers regard the apparent concealment of the relatively small cameras as 'not cricket', and call them 'stealth cameras'. There are now 168 in operation on the M1, M25, M3, M4, M5, M6, M20, M42 and M62. Most are on sections which have been converted to Smart Motorways to deal more efficiently with heavier flows of traffic.



Although the highest number of fines have been issued in Surrey on stretches of the M25 and M3, with a total of 40,753 last year, most speeding fines are still handed out by traffic police. In just one small stretch of the M4 near London, the Metropolitan Police issued notices of prosecution to 37,295 motorists in the first 10 months of last year, equivalent to 120 a day.

The AA has complained that, while the majority of drivers support the use of cameras used for safety reasons, there are insufficient measures in place to warn drivers of active cameras and where exactly they are positioned. The object, suggests the AA, should be to slow people down, not to catch them out.

Motoring groups highlight the unfairness of 'catching out' motorists by pointing out that some police forces only switch the cameras on when the reduced speed limits are in operation while others use them at all times including when the national 70 mph limit applies.

Highways England's response is that motorists are made aware of the speed limits by frequent signs on the gantries. The cameras are not used to 'catch drivers out', it points out, nor to make money out of fines. They are there to encourage drivers to stick to speed limits, for the safety of everyone on the road, and to help traffic flow freely.

A bid to stop tailgating

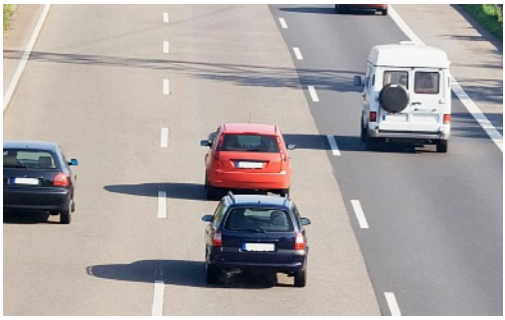
Highways England is carrying out a campaign to reduce the number of accidents caused by tailgaters. The camera technology is being tested on the M1 in Northamptonshire prior to being rolled out nationwide later this year.

From the start of operation, cameras caught more than 26,000 drivers in just two months, which is more than 400 a day. Those caught during the trial period were fortunate to have been sent warning letters, but as the system proves itself to be totally reliable, drivers will face a penalty of a minimum fine of £100 and three penalty points.

More than 100 people are killed or seriously injured each year in accidents where a vehicle has driven close to the one in front. Such 'tail-end shunts' are very common in built up areas where in busy traffic drivers drive too close or lack concentration.

In France a camera array has been developed that is housed in an innocuous-looking tall cylinder. It can check speeds, record drivers using mobile phones, and differentiate between different types of vehicles and their permitted speeds as well as catching tailgaters.

The new devices can see across eight lanes of traffic, monitor several vehicles at once, and tell the difference between cars, motorcycles and HGVs. As well as their main function in catching speeders, the cameras have the ability to take note of drivers or passengers who are not wearing seat belts, capture illegal overtaking and dangerous driving practices such as tailgating, running a red light, and driving in a prohibited lane or area.



In theory you could be prosecuted simultaneously for several offences, such as tailgating, speeding, overtaking in a wrong lane (undertaking) and not wearing a seatbelt in one click of the camera and lose your licence.

For every operational camera, there will be four decoy options, and they can switch places without drivers realising, making them almost impossible for drivers to avoid. You can spot them on roadside verges, but not if you are on the opposing carriageway of a motorway. They do not flash, but they do send photographs rapidly to the French national camera centre in Rennes, Brittany, where the results can be processed and fines issued.

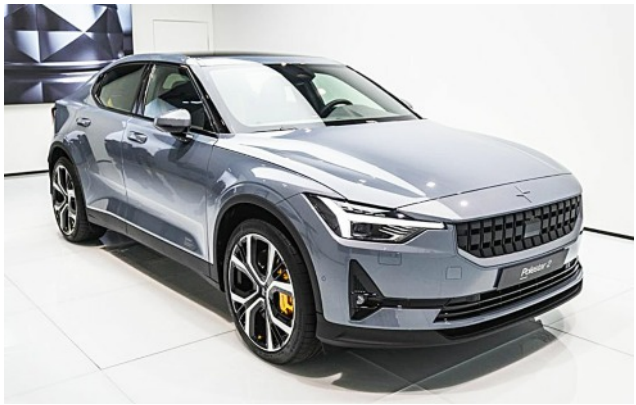
Now that the UK has left the EU, British drivers will no longer be compelled to pay these fines once back in Britain, but you will still have to pay on the spot speeding fines. In severe cases you can been banned. In the past more than 500,000 drivers from Britain have been caught each year speeding in France, more than any other nation. It provided the French Government with an annual income around 80 million Euros.

Electric cars shocker...

Making them creates more CO2 than fossil fuel models

Are electric cars really the route to a future with zero carbon emissions we are led to believe? Research has shown that making an electric car generates more carbon dioxide than in the manufacture of a petrol or diesel model. This means that some zero-emission vehicles will have to travel almost 50,000 miles before they are as 'green' as those powered by petrol or diesel, and for many electric cars that may involve 10 years of driving.

The report also suggests that the 'green' transport revolution could greatly increase global CO2 as production of electric cars is increased with the planned ban on the sales of petrol and diesel models in 2030. The research was done by comparing the production of an all-electric Polestar 2, owned by Volvo, which generates 24 metric tonnes of CO2 compared to 14 tonnes for a petrol powered, similar-sized Volvo XC40.



The study was commissioned by people who know a lot about cars and their manufacture, Aston Martin, Bosch, Honda and McLaren. It discovered that you would have to drive 48,700 miles in a Polestar before its carbon footprint became smaller than a Volvo XC40. Similar results have been obtained by Volkswagen when comparing a battery-powered eGolf against a diesel Golf.

Although supportive of a bid to lower emissions of carbon dioxide, the management of companies such as BMW and Honda have criticised the ban on petrol and diesel-powered cars as poorly thought through. When BMW chief executive Oliver Zipse launched the new all-electric iX SUV in Britain, set to go on sale in Britain in November, priced from about £85,000, he noted, 'Many people cannot afford a new electric car and may not have access to a charging station.'

Prices for electric cars by other manufacturers start at £30,000, but they too face the problem of a lack of countrywide network of chargers.

Who are most accident-prone?

How safe are our roads? The talk at January's monthly branch meeting was given by someone best placed to know the answers. He is Graham Feest, one of Britain's leading Road Safety Consultants. Due to the Covid restrictions his talk had to be given by Zoom, but 47 participants signed in, an illustration perhaps of how attendances at branch meetings might in future be better attended.

Graham began his talking by mentioning the various statistics that relate to deaths and safety on the road, such as the one million out of 36 million drivers in Britain who each year are prosecuted for motoring offences, which does not take account of the 1.2 million who are allowed to attend speed awareness courses to avoid being prosecuted for minor speeding offences and to avoid having three points added to their licences. There are also the 12 million fixed penalty notices issued for parking, driving in a bus lane and other minor offences.

Under the banner of *No need to speed*, Graham, Chairman of the Institute of Master Tutors of Driving, emphasised that most people are killed by car drivers and motorcyclists, not as one might expect, commercial vehicles. He also drew attention to the misconception that children were most vulnerable on the road. The current project he is associated with has the slogan *50 by 30*, the aim being to halve the number of those killed or serious injured in the current decade up 2030. He does not see this as being done through the automation of vehicles which he feels is still a long way off.

Graham, who is Chairman of the UK National Road Safety Committee, was pleased to note that more police and judiciary are able to accept that drivers make mistakes and that no criminal behaviour was involved, and a crash was simply a crash without any infringement of motoring law. To Graham, a crash is when one vehicle hits another or another object but not a person. To RoSPA, on the other hand, all crashes are listed as *accidents*.

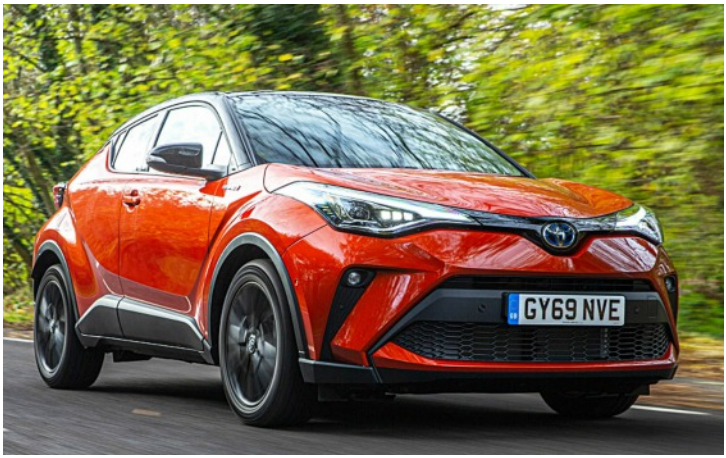
Graham thought that safety on the roads could be improved and the severity of crashes avoided by repositioning road furniture such as road signs, street lamps and telegraph poles further away from the edge of the road. At this point, as his talk was getting to more motoring related topics, the sound from his Internet link failed, and his talk came to an abrupt end.

If you would like to learn more, Graham produces a very informative newsletter each month with safety information. To get a copy, you can register your interest at www.grahamfeest.com

Max Davidson

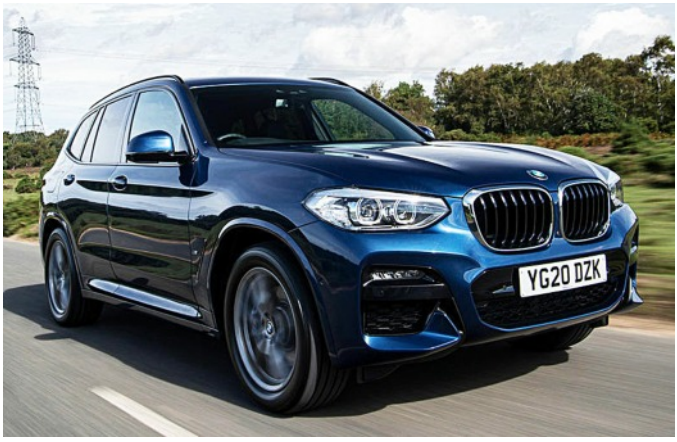
A hybrid could be right for you

Having spent so many months in various states of lockdown, many people will have found that they have driven mostly short journeys. Short journeys are bad for a car's fuel consumption as well as its CO2 emissions. It is in situations like this that hybrid vehicles come into their own. They enable the car to be run for distances of up to 30 miles by battery power alone.



A hybrid can be one like a Toyota Prius or Corolla, which combines an electric motor with a petrol engine to move the car. A small battery recaptures kinetic energy while braking, which is then transferred back to the electric engine. The electric motor powers the vehicle until its battery is drained, at which point the fuel-powered engine takes over until the electric motor is fully re-charged.

Plug-in hybrids work in much the same way, except that the battery has a higher capacity. These batteries must be fully recharged from the house mains. Their larger capacity allows for a greater distance of all-electric driving, which can markedly reduce our overall fuel consumption. If the battery becomes depleted while you are out on the road, the car reverts to running on its petrol or diesel engine.

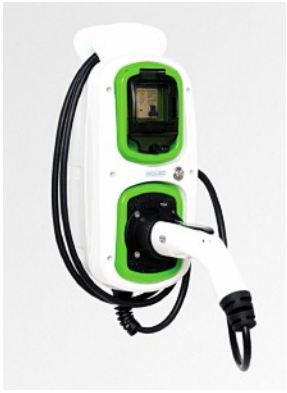


Hybrids, with petrol or diesel engines, are popular with drivers who do mainly short runs, and who are attracted to the idea of an electric car but prefer the security of a petrol or diesel engine for longer journeys such as holidays. Whether new or

used, a hybrid saloon or SUV costs more than a similar conventional alternative. However, depending on the make and model of your hybrid, this difference will likely be recouped within a five-year period based on the fuel savings alone.

Would a plug-in hybrid be the right choice for you? It is entirely down to your own driving habits. Do you live in an urban environment where you will be frequently starting and stopping? Do you do short shopping trips and the school run? The duty on petrol and diesel, although already very high, has not been raised for 10 years. It could go up again soon now that the Government needs to raise its revenue. Would achieving better fuel efficient cut your overall costs? These questions should l help you decide whether or not a hybrid would be sensible choice for you.

The latest hybrids, just like all-electric cars, are a marked improvement on some older models which were susceptible to battery deterioration if subjected to extremes of weather. Batteries perform best at 20C. This is where having a garage to park your car in is an advantage. The battery will not be subjected to either frost or excessive heat while parked on a summer's day.



Gradual overnight charging suits plug-in hybrids best. Excessive heat from rapid charging at a charging stations can also cause your batteries to deteriorate. The ideal is to try to keep your battery temperature within the range of between 10C and 30C.

The lithium batteries of plug-in hybrids are expensive, and a worry many have about buying a hybrid is that the battery will deteriorate and you will get fewer miles on battery power. A hybrid running on battery power alone has to pull a great deal more weight than the car's regular 12-volt battery. To prolong your car's battery life, it is best to treat it gently and to avoid overheating it. The simplest way to avoid stressing your battery is to develop a very light right foot. Accelerate gently and slow down mainly by taking your foot of the accelerator. Try not to have to brake hard.

The best way to keep the battery performing effectively is to drive your car on a regular basis. You will not prolong the life of the battery by not driving your car. So just enjoy taking it out for a spin as you normally would with a non-hybrid car.

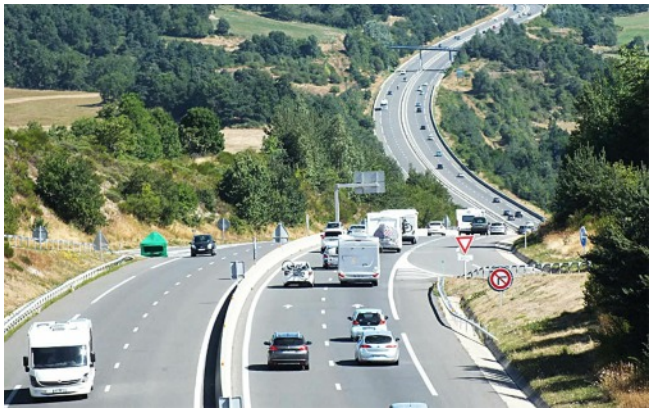
There is a myth that letting batteries almost discharge completely before charging them fully again is the correct procedure, but this is not the case. In fact, letting any car battery discharge completely or charging it up to to full capacity is not recommended. The trickle-charger for ordinary 12-volt batteries usually cuts out at 80 per cent.

The lifespan of your battery pack will last longer if it is plugged in before it is fully discharged and then unplugged before it is fully charged. Your car's user handbook will give you the details about your specific model's charging needs.

Are you ready to drive in France?

If all goes to plan, we shall soon be able to resume driving again in Europe, and France is usually the most popular destination. *Le Code de la Route* is much the same as our *Highway Code*, but there are things you should know about.

On steep hills, uphill traffic has priority. Downhill traffic must give way. At all intersections, priority must be given to traffic approaching from the right, unless there is a yellow diamond road sign indicating otherwise. At roundabouts you must give way to traffic approaching from the left. Horns can only be sounded where there is immediate danger. During the hours of darkness, warnings should be given by flashing lights instead. The drink driving maximum limit is 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. You must carry in your car a breath alcohol test kit (*less than £5*). Police are allowed to make random tests.



The speed limit on dual carriageways is 110 kph (68 mph). On *all* single-carriage way roads is now 80 kph (50 mph). It is often not sign posted. You may just see the sign telling you that you have left a town. All these limits are reduced by 10 kph when it is raining. The speed limits on autoroutes is 130 kph (80 mph), but just 68 mph when it is raining. It is reduced near large towns. France has copied Britain with variable limits. Speed camera detectors, including onboard sat nav features, are illegal in France. If you have one, leave it at home. It is an offence to have it even if you are not using it.

On the autoroutes, if you have a breakdown, you must make contact via the orange emergency phones which will put you through to the *autoroute* rescue service. You and your car will be taken to a service station, where your *own* breakdown service will take over. In event of a breakdown, you should have sufficient yellow vests for everyone in the car. Children under 10 must use a child restraint, according to their size and weight.

Whenever you go for an outing, you must have your passport, a green card insurance certificate, the log book, or proof of ownership (this is vital now that so many cars are leased), or hire certificate for a rental car. You also need your UK driving licence.

You now need a GB sticker as well as the GB on your number plate. French law also demands: a red warning triangle, a high-visibility vest for each person, and you will also need beam deflectors Cars with automatic LED lights do not need them, but you must dip the beams manually.

What's On - 2021

In line with current restrictions here are our plans for events for March to June 2021.

MARCH

11 **Speaker:** Ryan Decarteret, Advanced Riding, the Rapid Training way *(online by zoom)*

18 **Committee Meeting** *(online by zoom)*

APRIL

11 **Sunday RIDE OUT:** Ride Leader and destination varies (See Note 1 below)

22 **Thursday mid week Car & Motorcycle DRIVE / RIDE OUT:** (See Note 1 below)
Haynes Motor Museum events@roadartvg.org.uk

MAY

2 **Sunday RIDE OUT:** Ride Leader and destination varies (See Note 1 below)

13 **Speaker:** Kevin Williams - Survival Skills, the art of being seen *(online by zoom)*

17 **Thursday mid week RIDE OUT:** (See Note 1 below)
Shuttleworth Museum events@roadartvg.org.uk

JUNE

6 **Sunday RIDE OUT:** Ride Leader and destination varies (See Note 1 below)

20 **Thursday mid week Car & Motorcycle DRIVE / RIDE OUT:** (See Note 1 below)
Coventry Transport Museum events@roadartvg.org.uk

28 **Cassington Bike Night Ride Out:** events@roadartvg.org.uk (See Note 1 below)

For the online ZOOM meetings members will need to register through the link in an email sent prior to the meeting

In case of changes please refer to the website for latest information.

NOTES

1. These events are still subject to approval and compliance with all Covid regulations applying at the time.
Please contact the events organiser for the latest information before travelling.

TRAINING

Training is currently very limited due to the constraints of operating under the Covid-19 restrictions. However new Associates may join at any time by contacting the Membership Secretary.
For further information on training please contact the relevent training officer at car-training@roadartvg.org.uk or motorcycle-training@roadartvg.org.uk

Your contributions to the Newsletter either 'Letters to The Editor' or articles of interest to members are always welcome.
Please send them to The Editor, Max Davidson ...editor@roadartvg.org.uk

REMINDER

The Newsletter is also available online at www.roadartvg.org.uk

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