

# Dorset IAM RoadSmart



March Newsletter - 2020 (edition 59)

## Seminars scheduled for April & May

I am sure that most of you will have seen the communications from the Group's trustees on xxx March where we announced the cancellation of the series of three free seminar evenings which were to be hosted at County Hall in Dorchester. Please ensure you spread the word to anyone that you may have mentioned the seminars, although given the current lockdown we are in, I am sure that everyone will realise they are no longer going ahead. We have emailed everyone who expressed an interest in attending.

We are hoping that we will be able to reschedule the seminars for later on the year, but at this point it is too early to speculate when that may be. Obviously all Observed Drives between Associates and their allocated Observers are on hold as these aren't classed as necessary travel. In the short term I'm afraid you will have to brush up on the theory side of things by reading your training material. IAM HQ have announced that any Associate members can have their membership extended for up to six months free-of-charge so that they can complete the course, and become full IAM Group members. For further details please contact IAM HQ directly <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/contact>

Amazingly I am still reading on the media today that the police are busy stopping vehicles on the road who are being driven by drivers are flouting the new essential travel rules. Some drivers seem to think that taking the family out for a drive is an acceptable thing to do, or that 'we always go for a coffee' somehow qualifies as essential, or driving to a local beauty spot to walk the dog. To then top it off, with the enhanced police presence on the roads some drivers who are un-insured, or without a valid UK driving license are also being caught (which is no bad thing), but how can they be so blatant about driving illegally?

In case there is any question about why shouldn't I go for a coffee, the answer is pretty simple. You might be

involved in accident. I know that most of us don't set out to be involved in an accident, but they do happen. These accidents then divert resources away from more important matters, and also put all the front-line emergency services who have to attend in dangerous position as you may well be a carrier and not know it.

Stay at Home, Protect the NHS, save lives.  
#stayhomesavelives

*Matt Ames*  
*Newsletter Editor*

## Move to BST

Don't forget the clocks move forward one-hour tomorrow morning (29th March), so that means one hour less in bed, but we will be blessed with lighter evenings and see a temporary return to darker mornings again. For the limited number of early morning commuters, keep a closer eye out for wildlife as they don't the same memo we do!

## IAM RoadSmart urges drivers and riders to undertake vehicle maintenance checks

On the 25th March the Department for Transport (DfT) has announced that due to the Coronavirus lockdown vehicle owners will be granted a 6-month exemption from MOT testing, allowing them to continue to travel on essential journeys while minimising the need for social contact with garage and testing centre employees.

From 30 March onwards, all cars, vans and motorcycles which would require an MOT will be exempted from needing a test for 6 months. However, the DfT has stressed that vehicles must still be kept in a road-worthy condition during this period, and garages will remain open for repair work where essential.

Richard Gladman, Head of Driving and Riding Standards at IAM RoadSmart, has these useful tips on how

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to help ensure your vehicle remains in good condition for any essential journeys by carrying out these simple safety checks:

## **Tyres**

There's no denying that your car and bike's tyres are extremely important, so you must inspect them frequently for cuts and bulges – and remember to include the tread depth. The minimum tread depth on a car is 1.6mm and you can test this using the '20p test.' Simply put a 20p coin into the tyre groove and see if the outer band of the coin is still visible or not. If it isn't, your tyre is above the legal limit, and if it is, your tyre needs replacing. Motorcycle tyres must have a minimum of 1mm, in both cases this must be across the central  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the tyre. Remember to check the tyre pressures as well, preferably when cold.

## **Oil**

Checking your engine oil levels is quick and easy with many new cars now having a self-checking system in place. If you have to do it the traditional way then make sure your engine is switched off and cool. You can check you have the right amount of oil by using the dipstick or on some motorcycles a sight glass in the side of the engine casing. Remember to keep the bike vertical when checking this by getting someone to sit on the bike whilst you check the oil. Bear in mind that overfilling will also cause damage, so top up slowly and check the level regularly.

## **Lights**

Making sure your car or bike lights are in good working order is essential. When it comes to checking them, you should make sure that your headlights, indicators, reversing lights, fog light and brake lights all work properly. This check is simple, but you may find it easier to ask someone to help you. Alternatively, you could park near a window or garage door and use the reflection to see if your lights are fully operational.

## **Water and screen wash**

Almost as bad as running out of oil is running low on

water – also known as engine coolant. This can usually be checked visually by looking at the side of the coolant reservoir. If the level is low or your temperature gauge shows the engine is running hotter than usual you may need to check the levels, but ideally this should be done by a professional as the systems are under pressure and can be very hot. If you do have to top up, remember to carefully follow the information in your car or bike manual.

Filling up the screen wash is quick and easy and it could save your life. Being able to see ahead of you is one of the most important aspects of driving. The earlier you can spot a hazard, the more chance you have to react to it safely and appropriately. Don't ignore that reminder displayed on your dashboard.

Richard Gladman said: "The break in MOT testing must not be seen as an excuse to neglect your regular maintenance. If there is an issue with your vehicle, get it fixed. Garages remain open for essential repairs, although they will be working under restrictions. You do not want to be stranded at the side of the road, or worse involved in a collision, because you took a chance.

"The police may also be more active in stopping vehicles during this period to check on the purpose of your journey. If they pick up on any obvious faults, it's likely they will choose to issue a fine or even seize your vehicle. Regular checks will help you stay safe, avoid being stranded and allow your essential travel to take place."

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: "We must ensure those on the frontline of helping the nation combat COVID19 are able to do so. Allowing this temporary exemption from vehicle testing will enable vital services such as deliveries to continue, frontline workers to get to work, and people to get essential food and medicine. Safety is key, which is why garages will remain open for essential repair work.