

Dorset IAM RoadSmart



February Newsletter - 2021 (edition 70)

Soon to be the end of 'essential travel'?

February has been a bit of a mixed bag so far – plenty of wind and rain down south, bit little of the sun and a fraction of white stuff. I can remember as a child, growing up on the top of Mendip that we would regularly see snow – and I mean proper good quantities which would create lovely snow drifts and close the roads – not because they had a layer of ice and were slippery, but because of the depth of the snow. Some of the side roads might remain closed for days at a time. As children we used to think it was great, but I suspect that our parents might have been a little less impressed. At the same time, power cuts were more frequent than they currently are. The pub opposite from my parent's house had its supplied from a different set of overhead cables, so times one property would be without power whilst the other was. That used to be 'rating' system as to how bad the power cut was – if both properties were off it must have been bad!

Back then we would quickly adapt – candles and the tilly lamp would come in from the shed. Heating was provided by a coal boiler, but it would still require electricity to run the circulation pump – so if the power cut was long enough an old car battery was brought in, and connected to an inverter to run the pump. Telephones still worked as they were traditional land lines, so you could ring up and report the fault – the number being previously located and stored by the phone. Fast forward to the current era, and I think that current technology has adversely affected our ability to prepare ourselves. Most people would now reach for a mobile phone to 'google' the information they need – assuming that that they had mobile coverage and that their phone had charge. I wonder how the current generations of teenagers would cope after their phones and tablets went flat, let alone the lack of access to the internet!

I'm a firm believer of being my best to be prepared. I know that it would be impossible to be prepared for

every situation, but in a motoring context, I believe that we as Advanced Motorists should certainly be a cut above the rest. We check our vehicles on a regular basis – oil level, tyre pressures, clean the windows, etc. Many people I know wouldn't even consider checking the oil level or pressure unless a warning light flashed up on the dash. Once again, a great indication of how technology has moved on – maybe engines use less oil, but now many car owners wait for the car to say "hey, I need some oil". The same applies when making a journey to somewhere new – the astute amongst us would look at a map in advance and have a pretty good idea of the route we were likely to take, before plugging a postcode into a SatNav and hoping for the best. I am sure that we have all heard stories of people miss-entering a postcode or an address and ending up in the wrong county - in some cases (although hard to achieve when living on the south coast) heading in pretty much the opposite direction than they should have been.

I have to say that I am not totally immune to such errors. Some 12 years ago I was on a work trip to an LEA in Belfast. I flew out from Southampton, collected a hire car and went off to do some work. An hour or two later a colleague flew in from Birmingham. I popped into the car and returned to the airport pick him up. A few minutes after I had arrived, he phoned me asking me where I was.... "outside", I replied. However, we couldn't find each other, it was then we realised Belfast sported two airports – City and International! Had my colleague and I exchange flight details in advance that minor error might have been avoided. Thinking about it, that was the first time I'd driven a car with an electric handbrake too. A day of several firsts!

As we all know, it wouldn't be Motoring related newsletter if I didn't hijack the conversation back to physical exercise – back in January I was taking part of RED (Run Every Day). I'm pleased to report that the mission was a success – 32 runs over 31 days, covering 186 miles in total.

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With the latest Government announcements, it sounds like that we could be heading back to our new normal. I suspect though, that it will be some time before Observed runs are able to start up again. So for our associates who are mid-way through the training, hang on in there – sure it won't be too much longer until we are allowed out, and driving isn't limited to 'essential' travel only.

Until then, safe motoring,

Matt Ames
Newsletter Editor

March Membership renewals

2021-2022 membership will be due shortly for Members who fall in the March renewal window. I shall send out a reminder to all those who are affected. There are also a number of members who appear to have cancelled their Standing Orders, so you will also be contacted. Our preference is to set up a Standing Order as that minimise paperwork and should, at least in theory, keep things simple.

The renewal form can be found on our website, at the bottom of the "Join" page - <https://www.dorsetiam.org.uk/join/>

Thanks,

Matt Ames
Membership Secretary

Electric car round up - Group Members perspective

Since the article published in newsletter issue 66 "Are EV's the way forward", a couple of members who own EVs have been in contact, so below I include their comments, pretty much un-edited.

Tom writes:

We bought a BMW i3 range extender in June 2017 and have done some 11000 miles in it to date. This has a 600cc twin under the rear floor, which will cut in when the charge is low. It also cuts in occasionally for a maintainable cycle, and I must have put about 3 or 4 gallons of petrol in it since getting it with a full tank, so you can see that running costs are minimal as far as petrol is concerned.

The engine only runs a generator and has no connection to the transmission. We charge it overnight from a 13amp socket on the economy 7 tariff and have never had to use a public charge point, as the engine gets us home from longer journeys. The projected mileage with a full charge and full fuel tank is about 180 miles or so, which has been plenty for our needs.

We have been absolutely delighted with the car, and are contemplating changing it for a fully electric version next June, as BMW have discontinued the range extender version, and upgraded the battery to improve the range.



There are one or two niggles, getting out of the rear "suicide" doors is quite difficult in a confined space, such as a supermarket car park, but OK with more side space. The road tax of £140 this year was an insult, as both our daughter and daughter-in-law drive diesels and pay no tax! Finally, the skinny tyres seem

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to be quite prone to punctures, as we have had four in the space of 3 1/2 years. The A pillar is on the large side, giving a blind spot away from a straight line, but all things considered, we love it dearly, and would highly recommend it to anyone.

Editor comment:

I'd imagine the skinny tyres are about keeping weight to a minimum, and help to improve the rolling resistance which again is a bonus for 'fuel' economy and, as a bonus perform better in the snow. In contrast I've had one slow puncture over the last few years – the cause was found when the tyres were changed (due to tread depth) – a piece of metal resembling a hinge pin was found!

The VED is somewhat a kicker though, my 2-litre diesel is a fraction of what you have pay; although back in the good old days of commuting, I'd struggle with EV range over the winter months

John also writes:

I bought a 9-month old BMW i3 (BMW Approved Used) shortly before the beginning of Lockdown 1. I traded-in a 10-year old VW Polo DSG but retained a 5-year old VW Golf Estate manual chiefly for use on holidays as there were, and maybe still are, no purely electrically powered Estate cars available. I must say I absolutely love driving the i3. Three aspects stand out: the almost silent start from rest, the immediate and totally fuss-free response during mid-range acceleration and the "single pedal", start/stop driving experience using regeneration to provide deceleration.

The last of these is a revelation which is well suited to the anticipation aspect of Advanced Driving and really helps to promote smooth progress. Unlike some EVs the i3 has no possibility to change the retardation characteristics of what is conventionally known as the accelerator pedal and quite a high degree of deceleration is available if the pedal is released fully. Under most conditions I am able to complete whole journeys without once using the brake pedal except when com-

ing to a rest downhill. Whilst the stop lamps in a car conventionally are illuminated almost as soon as the brake pedal is touched, on the i3 during single pedal driving this happens only during higher levels of retardation and as a result, when driving with anticipation, the stop lamps seldom illuminate. As a result, it is even more important to keep a watchful eye on following vehicles whose drivers may not react as well to a reduction in following distance as they would to illumination of stop lamps. If emergency braking is needed the car already will be decelerating at a high rate and the stop lamps will have illuminated before the driver's foot has even reached the brake pedal.

The i3 originally was available as an EV with a range extender IC engine (as per Tom's variant above) but since higher capacity batteries have been available this is no longer the case in the UK. My experience of the predicted range has been surprisingly good, peaking at 210 miles and well in excess of the published figures.



I have yet to drive it through the cold of winter but as it is fitted with the optional heat pump in place of a resistance heater, I am hoping the range won't suffer too greatly. I mostly charge it just once each week, simply plugged into the 13-amp supply in my garage although that clearly wouldn't suit many owners. Running costs using full price electricity are coming out at around 4p per mile. Like you I am a road cyclist and I am very aware that the previously mentioned

fuss-free response during mid-range acceleration means that there is none of the usual noise as an engine speeds up. Consequently, a cyclist has none of the usual audible warning when a driver who has been waiting for a chance to overtake begins to accelerate. I believe there might be a case for requiring EV drivers to provide a polite warning of their intentions in such situations. One other aspect of the i3 which I really enjoy is the ability to remotely command the car to heat or cool the interior in readiness for being used. Such luxury!

Editor comment:

I can remember an early comment when I attended the IAM RoadSmart Seminar evenings (some 20 years ago?), and Dougie said that with good observations and anticipation, it could be quite possible to drive pretty much without the need to touch the brakes – obviously excluding any emergency situations which might occur.

John also noted that in the September issue I incorrectly suggested the passing distance when overtaking a bicycle should be 1500cm (15m) and not 150cm (1.5m). Although I am sure most cyclists would love to see such consideration from other road users, the view might not be shared by all motorists (the current IAM Road Smart magazine contains a letter from such a person) if they had to wait until there was a 15m safe passing gap!

In closing, I'd like to thank both John and Tom for taking the time send me their honest feedback on their ownership of EVs. It is interesting to see that you have both opted for (different generations) of the BMW i3. I wonder if John has been plagued by the issues of punctures on his, or if his is running a different make or size of type which might be a bit more resilient.

Maybe in a few years time I'll make the change - or before too before I'm banned from all city centres!

New research shows overwhelming support for 12-month minimum learning period for new drivers

from the IAM RoadSmart Newsroom

New research conducted by IAM RoadSmart, the UK's largest independent road safety charity, has found overwhelming support for a 12-month minimum learning period for new drivers before they are allowed to take the practical driving test.



In its in-depth survey of more than 2,000 motorists, the charity found that more than two-thirds (68 per cent) strongly backed the suggestion that all new drivers, regardless of age, should undergo at least a year's training and supervised practice before being allowed to take their practical test.

And while the Government committed to investigating some form of Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) in 2019, including the possibility of a 12-month minimum learning period as a key component, they have still not offered any firm conclusions.

IAM RoadSmart is therefore calling for urgent action on this issue. The charity, citing the evidence presented to the recent House of Commons Transport Committee Inquiry into Young and Novice Drivers along with the strong public support demonstrated in this latest study, says that a move to Graduated Driver Licensing is a crucial step forward in improved road safety.

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart Director of Policy & Research, said: "The Government must listen to the concerns of the vast majority of motorists who

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clearly understand the long-term safety benefits that a 12-month minimum learning period for all new drivers would bring.

“A lifetime of safe driving starts by gaining the right experience behind the wheel. Even the Government’s own statistics show that one in five new drivers crash within their first year on the road, so a longer learning period can only help make our roads safer for all road users.”

Meanwhile, the study found that around two-thirds (65 per cent) of people also support more encouragement for post-test training, believing that it would be beneficial for drivers to improve their skills through advanced driver training and testing. This rises to 71 per cent among drivers aged 17 to 49.

Neil added: “Lessons learnt at the start of your driving career can pay dividends and if new drivers had longer to experience all road types, in all weathers and at all times of the day and night before their test, the benefits can only increase. Experienced license holders need to update their observation, anticipation and planning

Speeding less acceptable than five years ago, new research reveals from the IAM RoadSmart Newsroom

New research from the UK’s largest independent road safety charity, IAM RoadSmart, has revealed some positive long-term trends in relation to speeding behaviour in the UK with motorists now considering it less acceptable to speed than they did five years ago.

The findings come after recent provisional figures, released by the Department for Transport, highlighted that the number of UK road deaths was down significantly compared to the previous year due to less traffic being on the roads due to COVID-19.

IAM RoadSmart’s annual Safety Culture Report, which tracks drivers’ changing attitudes to key road safety issues over time, discovered that while there was a significant improvement towards speeding the figures were still worryingly high.



Out of the 2,000 motorists surveyed, 43 per cent (down from 55 per cent in 2016) thought it was acceptable to drive up to 80mph on a motorway and that 23 per cent (down from 28 per cent in 2016) thought it was acceptable to drive even faster than that.

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart Director of Policy & Research, said: “While there are signs of improvement, the results of this survey are still deeply concerning and there is clearly much more work to do on education and training.

“Speeding consistently causes more than 4,400 casualties on UK roads each year, which is an average of 12 people a day killed or injured on UK roads.”

The vast majority of drivers find it unacceptable to speed in towns and this has remained basically unchanged in the last five years. However, a disconcerting one in five of those surveyed still think it is acceptable to drive five miles-per-hour over the speed limit on a residential street and nearly one in ten thought it was acceptable to drive at these speeds outside a school.