

Dorset IAM RoadSmart



May Newsletter - 2021 (edition 73)

Being tracked by your numberplate...

A couple of days ago a letter dropped through my letterbox. Nothing unusual with that I might hear you cry, and I would tend to agree. Normally I can recognise the standard letters/statements/etc I get based on a bit of a letter head showing through or the return address. This letter I couldn't however place, so it moved closer to the top of the pile for being opened sooner rather than later.

The letter head artwork was that of Birmingham City Council. Ok fair enough, we all know that I've been to Birmingham a few times recently. Infact I've ever covered it in previous editorials. Reading down past my address, the subject of the letter was "Birmingham's Clear Air Zone Notice". The word "notice" now had me worried! I skimmed down the letter and saw that Birmingham City Council is going to start operating a 24/7 clean air zone, which is chargeable from 1st June with a daily fee.

Pheew, it isn't the 1st June yet, so I'm not going to be charged. Turning the letter over, I see that the daily charge is a £8 for any vehicle which falls below Euro4 (petrol) or Euro6 (diesel). Given the council had also charged me £2.30 to park; that would have meant a very expensive trip into the City to see a solicitor for 5 minutes. I'd estimate that the time I spend within the zone with my engine running was under 15 minutes. A tad harsh for an 'passing visit' one might feel. This got me thinking, the cost of train ticket varies from £4.80 (return) to £7.50 (anytime return), plus a 10 minute walk each way at the Birmingham end vs the convenience of parking on the street outside the office. Cheaper to use the train!

This is where the argument for electric cars comes into play, and I can see that for short inner city journeys they are immensely good, however if we factor in the initial drive up from Dorset and the extra 170 miles before the trip into the "Clean Air Zone" along

with time for a re-charge I'd be better off using my dirty diesel and then hopping on the train. All well and good when you know about such schemes, but as a non-local to the area I would have been most upset to be clobbered with such a charge. The letter points to a gov.uk site which also shows Bath as an area with similar charges (although my car is clean enough not to get charged there). It says you can pay up to 6 days before driving in, and 6 days past after, any further delay may result in the debt being passed to a collection agency. I can only hope the City Council are bit faster at sending their bills out than the letter I received was about 20 days after driven past one of their ANPR cameras.

As time and technology moves on, I am sure that we can look forward to more ANPR monitoring, and more than likely more clear air zones which will adjust the way we opt to travel. However, as with all such changes, I am sure there will be some motorists which will go out of their way to avoid being charged – be that taking a shortcut down a smaller/residential road so that they can skirt around the edge of a zone, or more drastic measures. I believe there are some areas where larger/commercial vehicles are already being charged, and many have started taking smaller roads to avoid said charges. I am sure that individually they believe they are causing no harm, until 2 of them met heading in opposite directions or get stuck. At that point, I am sure the spotlight will end up focused on them more than they'd like!

Normally I'd end up redirecting this editorial piece towards something a little less motoring related, but to spice it up it won't be around be around running or cycling. Least not the actual partaking of such, but instead a behind the scenes look at event organisation. The running club for which I am a member organises a number of low cost events thought out the year – the Egdon 10k, Weymouth 10, the PJ Jaunt (which is a charity fund raiser for Dorset MIND), and we also support the Puddletown Plod Half Marathon which raises funds for the middle school. Obviously 2020

and the COVID pandemic put pay to all the events apart from the PJ Jaunt which we run “virtually” allowing runners to pick a course, run it, and submit their times. That meant we were still able to raise funds for Dorset MIND at a time when their services were in even more demand than normal. The Easy is traditionally held on the Saturday for the end of May Bank Holiday weekend (ie. This weekend), so it has been a case of all hands on deck to create an event which classifies as COVID secure. Given the modest entry fee, and all the additional equipment needed, it will probably be a challenge to break even, but we felt that we should give it a go and hopefully signal a return to the idea of events starting up again.

Normally we’ve relied on a team at the finish line with a stopwatches and clipboards to record all the finish times which then get entered in a computer to generate the final results. However, to be able to start the event with number of staggered starts, we have had to go down the Chip Timing route, where each runner has a small RFID chip which we can detect passing over a mat. This gives us start and finish times for every runner, but such technology isn’t cheap!

A secondary issue is that we have to post out race packs to all the runners in advance, to avoid a mass gathering in a reception area. Plenty more admin overheads there. You’d be amazed at how long it takes to address, stamp and fill 370+ envelopes with everything required (clue: it took a team of 3 of us over 10hrs in total). One might hope that with the packs in the post that would be the end of it, but then there are a people who have moved and not updated their address, or injured and can’t run.... Or those who simply forgot to enter before the well-publicised deadline. Hopefully next year we can return to a really busy on-the-day race entry table!

It certainly keeps us on our toes for sure, and has once again caused a delay to this newsletter. Maybe next month I’ll catch up and get it out sooner!

As always if there are any articles or topics you would like to see covered, please do get in contact – otherwise you’ll have to put up with my random ramblings!

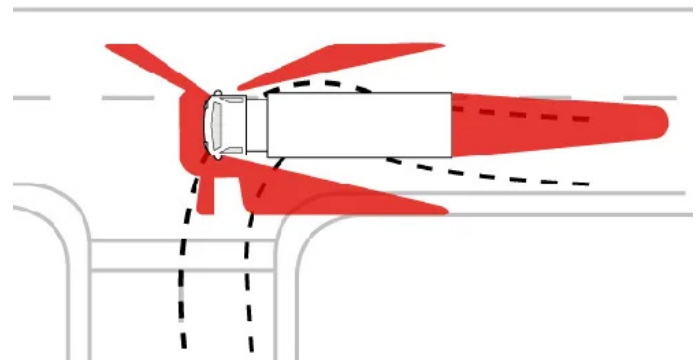
Stay safe out there, especially now that the tourists are likely to start visiting again!

Matt Ames
Newsletter Editor

IAM RoadSmart welcomes Direct Vision Standard to reduce lorry blind spots from the IAM RoadSmart Newsroom

IAM RoadSmart, the UK’s largest independent road safety charity, has welcomed the enforcement of rules to raise driver visibility standards in lorries to reduce incidents caused by blind spots.

It follows moves that now require all lorries over 12 tonnes to have a Direct Vision Standard (DVS) safety permit which is enforceable across inner and outer London in a bid to provide more protection for vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists.



An example image of an HGV’s blindspots

More than 90,000 heavy goods vehicles have already been awarded permits.

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The legislation is part of London Mayor Sadiq Khan's 'Vision Zero' initiative aimed at eliminating road deaths and serious injuries on London's streets by 2041.

The legally required safety permit is based on a Vision Star rating which shows how much a driver can see other road users directly from their HGV cab and, subsequently, if any safety equipment needs to be fitted to the vehicle.

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart Director of Policy & Research, said: "Once again Transport for London is leading the way on the use of procurement standards to drive road safety.

"If direct vision standards can be a requirement in London, then IAM RoadSmart can see no reason why they should not be specified in transport contracts across the UK."

Safety technology to bring non-compliant lorries up to the required standard includes blind-spot cameras with in-cab video displays, audible left-turn warning systems and prominent warnings on the rear of the vehicle.

Meanwhile, IAM RoadSmart is urging that direct vision should be a contractual requirement for companies buying in transport services in urban or sensitive areas where they know pedestrians and cyclists may be at risk.

Neil added: "While a few companies understand that good road safety helps them deliver on corporate social responsibility, every company understands financial benefits and these can be substantial for fleets who embrace a safer culture. The new standards are a big step in the right direction, but they could be enhanced even more if TfL was to insist on mandatory training for HGV drivers. Educating cyclists and pedestrians on the risks to them caused by limited vision from large vehicles must also continue."

Most ridiculous excuses given by drivers caught by Dorset Police from the Dorset Echo

Police officers in the Dorset Police No Excuse team are always on the lookout for illegal driving while out on patrol.

They often stop motorists suspected of a motoring offence and allow them to at least explain why they may have broken the law.

While there is no excuse for driving without insurance, hence the team's namesake, some can offer some ridiculous reasons why they have committed a driving offence.

Here are some of the most ridiculous excuses given by drivers to police officers in Dorset.

Speeding Audi driver caught over 100mph claims 'passenger needed a wee'



An Audi driver stopped for travelling at 101mph said he was in a rush because his passenger "needed a wee."

Officers stopped two speeding Audi drivers on the A35 over the recent Bank Holiday weekend. One driver was caught driving at 97mph, while another was captured travelling at 101mph.

Police say the driver caught speeding at 101mph claimed he was travelling so fast because his 'male passenger needed a wee'.

But police were unsure of his story because he had just driven past a service station.

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The driver was one of a number stopped by officers from the Dorset Police No Excuse team during patrols in the Poole and Purbeck areas.

Driver told police her texting was 'important'



A driver on her phone at a set of traffic lights told police it was "important" before driving away with her phone still in her hand in February.

Officers from the Dorset Police No Excuse team saw the woman in Castle Lane West, Bournemouth in a white Fiat Punto.

They caught the driver's attention with their blue lights and asked her 'politely' to put the phone down when the driver said 'it's important' and carried on texting.

No Excuse team said: "While in the area of Castle Lane West, Bournemouth, outside Bournemouth hospital, at the traffic lights heading towards Christchurch we pulled alongside the vehicle at a red traffic signal where we spotted a 62-year-old female driver texting away.

"To grab the driver's attention, we illuminated our blue lights and siren where we asked politely for her to put the phone down, to which she replied, 'it's important' and put the window up and carried on texting, we captured a picture at that moment.

"The lights turned green, she moved off with the phone in her hand - we stopped her further down the road to which she was very apologetic, it wasn't important and admitted texting away.

"The driver received a ticket for using a phone whilst driving, six points and £200 fine."

'Why are you holding an iron out the car window?
Passenger: 'To cool it down obviously'



In a bizarre incident in September 2020, police officers stopped a car after they spotted an iron being held out the window.

When approached by the police about why an iron was in such an unusual place, they were told it was to cool it down. Police officers were not impressed.

A spokesman said at the time: "The mobile ironing service - you stand outside and they drive past and iron anything for you.

"On first view, we thought these were legs hanging out the window, when we stopped to ask why they were hanging an iron out the window - they were cooling it down.

"We offered words of advice suggesting to keep the iron in the car or wait until it's cooled down before driving."

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Speeding driver was 'in a hurry to view a house'



A BMW driver was caught speeding, after overtaking an unmarked police car at 105mph.

The driver sped past police on the A35 Puddletown Bypass in October 2020 and was promptly pulled over by police.

A police officer said that the driver claimed he was 'in a hurry to view a house'. Officers were having none of it and issued him summons to appear in court.

Dorset Police's No Excuse road safety team said: "The driver was in a hurry to view a house.

"Would he have seen it if he was driving slower? Yes, maybe.

"Would he have arrived quicker and safer if he was driving slower? Yes.

"Would he not be waiting for a court hearing date if he was driving slower? Yes.

"Was it worth it? No."

'Honest' driver admits he hasn't paid vehicle tax on BMW for a year

An "honest driver" was fined after he admitted to police officers that he had not taxed his BMW for a year.

Police officers say they came across a vehicle, which

they had been aware for some time, in Christchurch on Monday, December 14, 2020.

The BMW X3 was discovered to have an expired MOT certificate and had not been taxed since November 30, 2019.



The driver admitted to police officers that he "simply couldn't afford to run the vehicle" and knew he would eventually get caught.

A spokesman for Dorset Police No Excuse said: "The vehicle below was reported to us as there were some issues regarding documents.

"The vehicle had been on our radar but we were never in the right place, today we were.

"The vehicle showed no insurance, MOT expired on December 7 and the tax was November 30, 2019.

"The honest driver admitted he simply couldn't afford to run the vehicle and stated it was a matter of time before being caught.

"The driver received a ticket for the offences."

article reproduced from the Dorset Echo