

# Dorset IAM RoadSmart



August Newsletter - 2021 (edition 76)

## The Return of the Angry Holidaymaker

Last month I wrote about how our roads are returning to their pre-covid state. Infact, they may be even busier for the time of the year compared to a couple of years ago due to the boom in 'staycations'. As many will know, cycling or running heavily features as part of my weekend activities (it's a good excuse to eat cake!). Two weeks ago, on Sunday morning a group of us left Weymouth at 9.00am, stopping off in Dorchester to pick up another rider and then we headed out towards Bovington, and over to Corfe Castle. We popped out from the side road just south of the National Trust carpark a short while later. Needless to say the carpark was full, as it was a lovely sunny morning and there was a long queue of traf-

he had got up earlier, he wouldn't have been stuck in queueing traffic and could have been in the grounds of Corfe Castle enjoying the wonderful views.

Why do I sound less than sympathetic? We are taught that driving isn't just about the skills behind the wheel, but about planning and preparation too. That isn't just limited to going to the toilet before you leave the house, but checking your car (tyre pressures, fluid levels, clean windows, lights all working), and also planning your route. Consider that you might not be the only person who wants to visit the beach or a tourist attraction on a sunny day for example. I'm sure that most people wouldn't plan to drive around the m25 anywhere near rush hour if they could avoid it, so why be any less thoughtful when planning your 'holiday' driving.



fic waiting (somewhat fruitlessly to drive around the carpark only to find there were no spaces). Heading north towards the 'Nordon Station' roundabout we encountered the first of our angry drivers. The driver was in a red Ford Fiesta, queuing with his family for the aforementioned carpark, when he decided to shout abuse at us - we were heading in the opposite direction, not causing any issues to north bound traffic. Needless to say he was even less impressed when we suggested he was the problem and not us! Maybe if

The week before, my twin brother, his wife and son came to visit for a few days. Obviously, I was put on the spot to think of some suitable touristy things to do which would entertain both the young and not-quite-so-young! Thankfully, Lewis my nephew enjoys anything water related, so it would have been wrong not to take advantage of some of the lovely beaches - Weymouth, Ringstead Bay, Durdle Door plus its partner in crime Lulworth Cove and Studland were all on the list. With Studland came the opportunity

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to visit Corfe Castle – we planned an early departure from Weymouth, to get to Corfe before it was busy for easy parking and to take in the Castle before the crowds arrived. After that a few hours were spent at the beach before heading back via East Creech Cake Shop/Café for a slice of Dorset Apple Cake. A well planned and executed drive which resulted in not getting held up anywhere and no queuing!



Hot on the heels of my “car tax” reminder landed through the letterbox two weeks ago, to the tune of £130, IAM Surety have now been in contact to remind me that my car insurance will be due next month. Looking at their quote, it has risen yet again – which is hardly a surprise! All seems like a bit of a con to me. Most of the time my car sits happily tucked up in my garage, and it now covers many thousands of miles less per year. My house insurance policy was renewed recently also increased – yet the house is now rarely empty as I work from home, you would imagine it should be safer from a potential break in. Is the insurance industry just a scam? What are your experiences. Who like me now spends much more time at home? I’m almost wondering if I need a car anymore. I know that I would miss the convenience factor it brings, but that is now at an ever increasing premium, something to consider...

*Matt Ames*  
Newsletter Editor

## Test Passes -Congratulations

Welcome to the Dorset IAM RoadSmart as Full Members, congratulations on your recent test passes:

Full Member	Observer
Graham Chase	Paul Nicholson
Poppy Davey	Paul Nicholson
Jocelyn England	Ian Lingwood

Your certificates should be in the post from IAM House (if they haven’t yet arrived, they will do shortly).

## Self-driving cars could be on our roads this year

The self-driving technology – known as Automated Lane Keeping Systems (ALKS) – aims to make driving safer and easier. But insurance experts are expressing concerns. In April, the government announced that cars with self-driving technology could be on our roads later this year.

The self-driving systems referred to are Automated Lane Keeping Systems or ALKS. These are automated systems that can take control of a vehicle at low speeds. The Association of British Insurers (ABI) and Thatcham Research have questioned the government’s decision. They say that the systems aren’t fully selfdriving, but only assist drivers. This could put drivers at risk, as when an ALKS is enabled drivers might assume that the vehicle is fully in control of itself.

### What will the ALKS do?

ALKS are an example of driver assistance technology. An ALKS will keep the car in lane on the motorway at low speeds, controlling its movements for extended periods. Driver assistance technology is common in most new cars. One example is adaptive cruise con-

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trol. This monitors the vehicle in front and controls the car, so it keeps at a fixed distance. Other examples include parking assistance and even blind spot warnings. But none of these systems have been classed as 'self-driving' and they were always designed to support the driver, not replace them.

For the first time, the ALKS will be classed as 'self-driving', giving drivers the choice to delegate control of their car. This means drivers risk not paying attention to the road and conduct tasks like checking their emails while the system is working.



## Should ALKS be defined as self-driving?

In 2020, the government discussed whether the systems should be defined as self-driving. After a safety review, the government confirmed this year that they could legally be defined as self-driving. But only if the vehicle is GB-type approved and there's no evidence to challenge the vehicle's ability to self-drive.

Thatcham Research has expressed concerns about this decision. Matthew Avery, Head of Vehicle Research at Thatcham says: "Automated Lane Keeping Systems (ALKS) as currently proposed by the Government are not automated. They are assisted driving systems as they rely on the driver to take back control.

Aside from the lack of technical capabilities, by calling ALKS automated our concern also is that the UK Government is contributing to the confusion and frequent misuse of assisted driving systems that have

unfortunately already led to many tragic deaths. A widespread and effective ongoing communications campaign led by the automotive industry and supported by insurers and safety organisations is essential if we are going to address current and future misconceptions and misuse."

## Are ALKS safe?

The government believes that the system could improve road safety by reducing human error, which contributes to over 85% of accidents. Transport Minister, Rachel Maclean, says: "This is a major step for the safe use of self-driving vehicles in the UK, making future journeys greener, easier and more reliable while also helping the nation to build back better." But there are still uncertainties around the self-driving tech.

Thatcham and the Association of British Insurers (ABI) believe that there four key areas the government needs to change before they can be classed as self-driving and safe:

- The vehicle must be able to change lanes to avoid an
- incident. This would have to pass through legislation too.
- The vehicle must be able to stop in a safe space or "safe harbour" and not stop in a live running lane.
- The vehicle must be able to recognise UK road signs. This needs to be verified by an independent organisation.
- Data from the vehicle must be available to work out who was in charge – either the vehicle or the driver – if there is an accident.

The Transport Minister goes on to say: "We must ensure that this exciting new tech is deployed safely, which is why we are consulting on what the rules to enable this should look like. In doing so, we can improve transport for all, securing the UK's place as a global science superpower."



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## **Significant rise in newly qualified drivers losing their licence**

**from the IAM RoadSmart Newsroom**

There has been a significant rise in the number of newly qualified drivers losing their driving licence within the first two years of passing their test reveals a Freedom of Information (FOI) request by IAM RoadSmart.

The worrying finding by the UK's largest independent road safety charity shows disqualifications have risen sharply among this group in 2018, 2019 and 2020 to 5,401, 7,484 and 7,975 respectively.

Driving without insurance is one of the top reasons newly qualified drivers are falling foul of the Road Traffic (New Drivers) Act, with more than 12,000 caught driving without insurance documents since 2018.

The new drivers Act, was introduced to give newly qualified drivers a probationary period of two years after passing their driving test. During this time, drivers will lose their licence if they commit offences leading to six or more points on their licence. For example two PCNs (penalty charge notices) for speeding would mean automatic disqualification. Once the newly qualified driver reaches six points they need to retake both their theory and practical driving tests again.

Speeding was the second highest reason for newly qualified drivers to lose their licence, with more than 5,500 being convicted of this.

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart Director of Policy & Research, said: "These figures paint a worrying picture. It is the responsibility of all drivers, whether they are newly qualified or more experienced behind the wheel, to drive safely and within the law at all times and to ensure the vehicle is roadworthy and insured for the purpose it is being used."

Other main reasons for new drivers losing their licence within their probation period, include failing to provide information about who was driving the vehicle when an offence was committed, and not being in control of the vehicle such as by using a mobile phone.

Neil added: "Driver education is something that drivers should want to continue and develop as they gain experience behind the wheel. Post-test driver training such as an advanced course or driver training through employment allows the driver to continue to improve their confidence, skills and ability to drive safely on our roads."

## **IAM RoadSmart warns road users over confusion around Highway Code changes**

**from the IAM RoadSmart Newsroom**

IAM RoadSmart the UK's largest independent road safety charity, is warning all road users, to be patient and cautious when it comes to the Highway Code this summer. While changes are coming, they are not here yet, they were simply announced today, but are yet to be put into law. We therefore all need to be mindful of the current rules that will apply for the foreseeable future, and not confuse the proposed changes with the Summer of Cycling campaign which was also announced today.

The Summer of Cycling campaign, however, offers us a key prompt to brush up on the current rules to make sure the summer staycation can be as safe as possible, sharing the road with respect and courtesy for all.

Rebecca Ashton, Head of Policy and Research at IAM RoadSmart said: "The Department for Transport's proposed changes announced today to the Highway Code have been designed to improve road safety for cyclists, pedestrians, and horse riders. However, they need to be explained properly to get the desired outcome of increasing safety of the most vulnerable road users. Without a well-funded education programme,

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we have concerns that the changes could instead increase conflict and potentially reduce the safety of the vulnerable road users the rule changes are intended to protect.”

In a recent survey, conducted by IAM RoadSmart, it was revealed that 71% of drivers and motorcyclists believe the new proposal to give pedestrians priority when turning into and out of junctions, for example, will increase conflict rather than reducing it, with more than half (57%) thinking this will be a significant issue.

Almost three quarters (73%) think that the new Highway Code should make it compulsory for cyclists to wear a helmet, in contrast to the proposed Code itself which, while restating the evidence that wearing a cycle helmet reduces the risk of sustaining a head injury in certain circumstances, stops short of making them compulsory.

Meanwhile, 71% of people agree with the general concept that drivers and riders should give motorcyclists, cyclists, horse riders, horse drawn vehicles and pedestrians walking in the road at least as much room as they would when overtaking a car.

On the new Code's most controversial suggestions - to establish a hierarchy of road users, where those in charge of the vehicles that can cause the greatest harm should bear the greatest responsibility to take care - the majority (56%) agree that this is the right way forward, but 26% are against and almost one in five (19%) are still to be convinced either way.

The new Code doesn't suggest any obligation on cyclists to use cycle lanes or tracks when they are present, and a resounding 80% of IAM RoadSmart's poll respondents believe this is a mistake.

However, some of the proposed changes were met with widespread support, with 63% of those surveyed agreeing with the new advice that when riding a bike

on busy roads, when vehicles are moving faster than them, cyclists should move over and allow traffic to overtake them. There is also strong support for every proposal that contains clear guidelines on passing distances, with 78% in favour of the one and a half-metre gap between cyclist and vehicle travelling below 30mph, with a two-metre gap when above 30mph.

And 90% agree with the new Code's advice that drivers and motorcyclists should give horse riders at least two metres' space and pass at speeds under 15 mph.

Finally, just over half (57%) agree with the new proposal to include the 'Dutch Reach' in the Highway Code. This is a technique which advises motorists leaving their vehicles to do so by using their left hand to operate the door handle, allowing the driver to naturally twist their body, making it easier to look over their shoulder and check for cyclists or other road users approaching.

Rebecca continued: “Regardless of what changes are introduced, it is clear there will be a need for a huge education campaign to ensure any amendments to the Highway Code are understood and fully adopted by the millions of existing UK drivers, motorcyclists and road users. At IAM RoadSmart we believe an online resource to help with this re-education in an engaging way would be helpful.

“The simple truth is that most of us don't read the Highway Code unless we drive or ride professionally or are about to take a test. The Department for Transport needs to be realistic about the impact simply changing a seldom read document will have on the behaviour and safety of road users.”

IAM RoadSmart has recently published two pieces of advice on their website for road users to brush up on some of the facts, rules and dispel myths. Read both articles here: [Part One: Highway Code Confusion](#) and [Part Two: Highway Code Confusion](#)