

Newsletter ~ August 2025

St Helens Group of Advanced Motorists
Working to make our roads safer every day...

Welcome

Hello everyone and welcome to the August edition of the newsletter.

I was not able to put together a newsletter in June since my wife had to go into hospital for a major operation. Thankfully the operation was successful and she is making a good recovery. My first missed newsletter in 31 years! So, for this newsletter I have four months worth of catch-up!

During the last 12 months great progress has been made with the setting up of an advanced riding element within the Group. National Rider Observer Alan Douglas has been instrumental in setting this up. To support this development we have allowed rider Associates to join the group to support rider Observer training. To

date, we have had eight Advanced rider test passes, two of which have achieved the IAM F1st. Two of our rider Observers have also passed the rider National Observer assessment. This is a fantastic achievement for our rider team. For his stirring efforts Alan Douglas was awarded the prestigious Observer of the Year trophy at our AGM in June. Well done Alan and also congratulations to Ken Nevitt and Simon Brook who were awarded the Driver of the Year and Observer of the Year trophies.

IAM HQ has given notice that it will close all of the IAM branded websites at the end of August. This will affect over 50 of the IAM Groups including us. We are in the process of developing a new website

which will shortly be in place but there may be a period when we have no website during the transition period.

In November, the Group celebrates its 40th anniversary. To still be an active Group after 40 years is a fantastic achievement and testimony to generations of Observers and Committee members. Sadly, some of our neighbouring Groups of 40 years ago have closed down. To keep going we are always on the lookout for new Observers and Committee members. If you are interested in supporting the Group in this way then let me know.

Safe driving ... and riding

Mark Farnworth
Group Chairman



St. Helens Group website

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More Information (click links)

[SHGAM News](#)

[IAM News Releases](#)

[SHGAM Driving Tips](#)

[IAM RoadSmart Advice](#)

[Our Courses](#)

[Course dates](#)

Record numbers of cyclists send footage of dangerous driving to the police as more than half of motorists admit they don't know how much space to leave when overtaking IAM Press Release

- The Highway Code was updated in 2022 recommending that drivers give cyclists at least 1.5 metres of space (about the width of a compact car) when overtaking cyclists at speeds of up to 30mph
- 58 percent of motorists don't know the correct distance to leave when overtaking a cyclist
- Video footage submissions to the police have doubled since 2021
- Cycling UK is the UK's cycling charity. Ride with us for happier, healthier

and greener lives. Cycling UK enables and inspires people from all backgrounds and abilities to experience cycling's joys and benefits. We speak up for all who cycle to make sure it's a safe and easy choice for everyone to travel, explore and have fun. For more information, visit: www.cyclinguk.org

Record numbers of cyclists are reporting close passes to the police as more than half (58%) of motorists admit they don't know about the 1.5 metre rule. [\[1\]](#)

The numbers of cyclists submitting video footage of poor driving to the police have doubled from 7,249 in 2021 to 15,779 in 2024, according to a Freedom of Information request from road safety charity IAM RoadSmart.

The Highway Code says drivers should leave at least 1.5 metres of space when overtaking a cyclist at speeds of up to 30mph, with a larger gap at higher speeds. Cyclists may have to move out to avoid potholes or debris on the road – passing closer puts lives at risk

and drivers could be charged with careless or dangerous driving, which could result in an unlimited fine, disqualification, or imprisonment.

Worryingly, separate research from IAM RoadSmart, which provides Advanced Driver and Rider training, shows that more than half (58%) of 655 motorists polled in the UK are not aware that the correct distance to give cyclists is at least 1.5 metres. Almost a fifth (18%) incorrectly think that just one metre of space is the recommended distance to give cyclists when overtaking.

Don't linger around lorries; know your HGV zones

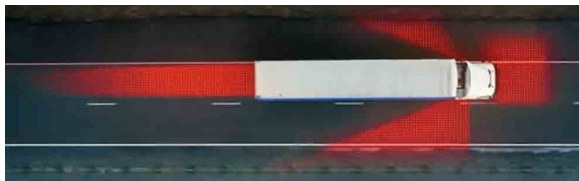
IAM Press Release 6th March

National Highways has launched a new road safety campaign aimed at educating drivers on how to safely navigate around heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). These large vehicles, including trucks and HGVs, are significantly longer, heavier, and more powerful than standard vehicles, requiring extra caution.

Truck drivers face four potential blind spots or zones: the front, rear, and both sides of their vehicle. While lorries are now equipped with additional mirrors as standard, which have enhanced driver visibility, they have not completely eliminated blind spots.

To keep you safe on the road when driving near lorries and other large vehicles, remember these three simple tips:

Stay Visible: Avoid lingering in HGVs' blind spots. If you can't see the vehicle's external mirrors, the driver likely can't see you. HGVs have larger blind spots than regular vehicles.



Pass with Care: Ensure you have enough space to complete your overtaking manoeuvre before committing, as it takes longer to pass a large vehicle. After overtaking, make sure there's ample room in front of the HGV before pulling in, so the driver can see you and brake safely if needed.

Know the Zones: HGVs have four areas with limited visibility: the front, back, and both sides. If you're unaware of these zones, you could be in one without even realising it.

Leave a large gap: Never tailgate an HGV. It will prevent the HGV driver from seeing you and mean you can't stop safely if there's an incident.

IAM RoadSmart's Chief Examiner Richard Gladman said: "Driving

safely around HGVs is crucial due to their size and the potential risks they pose. Always be mindful of their four blind spots: the front, back, and both sides. Remember, if you can't see the driver in their mirrors, they likely can't see you. Give HGVs plenty of space by extending your following distance to improve your view, avoid cutting in front of them, and be patient when they are manoeuvring. The motorway and major A-road network managed by National Highways is vital for economic growth, with tens of thousands of lorries relying on it daily to connect products to people and businesses."

For more information visit <https://www.nationalhighways.co.uk/>

KnowTheHGVZones
YouTube - [HGV know the limited vision zones](#)

Notice Board

Congratulations

Congratulations to the following for passing the Advanced Driving/Riding tests.

Alan Taylor (rider)
Alan Fletcher (rider)
Phil Marrow (rider, F1st)
Andrew Mavin (rider)
Liza Berry (driver)
Przemyslaw (Shamak) Trzeciecki (rider, F1st)
Darren Williams (rider)

Welcome

Gary Holmes (rider)
Jay Nicholas (driver)
Chris Gaskell (rider)
Shaun Rowley (rider)
Christine Buxton (driver)
Noreen Sullivan (driver)
Mark Ryan (rider)
Neil Correia (rider)
Andrew Holmes (rider)
Richard Davies (driver)
David Housley (driver)

Next Advanced Driver Course

Thursday
28th August
Course Introduction
8pm Ibis Hotel, Haydock

Course programme on [website](#)

Congratulations



Congratulations to Graham Roberts who has passed the Rider National Observer Assessment

Our 40th Anniversary

On the 12th November the Group will be celebrating its 40th anniversary! 40 years of providing advanced driver coaching to members of the public. To mark the occasion we will be having a group meal (details later in year) and I will be putting together a special edition newsletter. This is where I need your help. I'd like to put into the newsletter testimonials from Associates, Observers and Committee members both present and past. Within the testimonials you could address some of the following. Why did you get involved in advanced driving? What are your thoughts about the Group? What impact does passing the advanced test have on your current driving. Why have / did you volunteer to be an Observer or Committee member? What do you get out of this volunteering? Please email me your testimonials asap.

Mark Farnworth
Group Chairman

AGM 2025 - Thursday 12th June

The 40th AGM of the St. Helens Group of Advanced Motorists was held at the St. Helens Town Hall on Thursday 12th June. There were approximately 25 attendees. The Mayor of St. Helens Councillor Gomez-Aspron attended along with our President Lady Kirsty Pilkington. Our guest speakers were Mike Newman BEM and John Galloway, Speed of Sight.

The Mayor graciously accepted the invitation to Chair the AGM which he did with great efficiency. The AGM business was concluded after 25 minutes. If you are a member and would like to see the AGM Minutes then please let me know.

Following the AGM various awards and trophies were presented by the Mayor. Ken Nevitt was presented with the Driver of the Year trophy, Alan Douglas with the Observer of the Year trophy and Simon Brook was presented with the Associate of the Year trophy.

Following the AGM a talk was given by Mike Newman BEM (accompanied by John Galloway) from the [Speed of Sight](#) organisation. Mike told us about the journey that he has taken through the years as he tried to fulfil his

dream of driving even though he has been blind since birth. The persistence and dedication that it took. For 40+ years he had had an interest in high performance vehicles and through this passion he wanted to do 200mph in a car! He wanted to experience the exhilaration of getting out of the passenger seat and into the driver's seat! He started by riding a bike and his first run was 75mph on a Kawasaki on an airstrip in Yorkshire and went on to break the world record on a bike. He then went on to break the 154mph work record in a car (a Jaguar) and eventually achieved over 200mph in a car – fulfilling his lifelong dream. Both he and John spoke of what the charity "Speed of Sight" (founded in 2012) has done and will continue to do for people with different disabilities and particularly for those who are sight challenged. They hire race circuits across Scotland, Wales and England. There was a Q and A session at the end.

**Mark Farnworth,
Group Chairman**



Observer of the Year: Alan Douglas



Associate of the Year: Simon Brook



Mike Newman, Speed of Sight



Left to Right: Stephen Dumont, SHGAM Treasurer, the Mayor, Lady Kirsty Pilkington, Mike Newman, John Galloway.



IAM RoadSmart Skills Day, Croft Circuit - 1st July 2025 - By Simon Brook (Observer)

IAM RoadSmart offers an exciting series of Skills Days at various racing circuits nationwide, catering to both car drivers and motorcyclists. I recently experienced one of these first-hand, attending an afternoon car session at Croft Motor Circuit in North Yorkshire on a beautiful, sunny day. All session dates can be viewed and booked via the [IAM RoadSmart website](#).

Following registration and a quick brew in the excellent on-site café, all participants gathered for a mandatory briefing. Our host, Shaun Cronin (RoadSmart South regional service manager), covered essential track safety, marshalling flags, and how the IPSGA system applies to all driving, both on and off the track.

While the sessions take place on race circuits, the primary aim isn't to train racing drivers. Instead, participants leverage the track's advantages—its width, absence of oncoming traffic, and smooth surface—to safely explore their own and their vehicle's capabilities, all within a 90mph speed limit.

After a Q&A session, participants were assigned in pairs to one instructor. This 'two participants to one instructor' format is ideal, allowing for five track sessions of approximately five laps each, with valuable time in the clubhouse to relax and reflect on feedback between sessions.

It was particularly encouraging to see five young drivers, whose attendance was funded by the charity, participating through the RoadSmart young drivers' scheme.

My instructor, Carolyn, was exceptionally qualified, having achieved all RoadSmart certifications, including Master Mentor, and being a qualified examiner. She took the time to understand our individual goals for the day; for me, it was to refine my smooth and safe high-speed driving for occasional track days.

The track became 'Live' for 3 hours from 2pm. We initially each jumped into Carolyn's MX5 as passengers while she took us for 2 sighting laps to point out various features. Somebody in the morning session had taken a slight detour onto the surrounding grass, but no harm done.

At the end of the first session Carolyn pointed out how my right hand dominates the steering wheel, with my left hand just "*along for the ride*". This was corrected by moving the hands to the 9-3 position (clock face positions) encouraging them to both contribute equally. This immediately felt much more controlled. In a later session, I learned a valuable technique called 'hinting' – an initial small steering wheel movement designed to pre-load the suspension of the outer wheels before committing to the full turn. This immediately made the car feel much more stable both entering and throughout bends. Crucially, this is a technique directly applicable to everyday road driving.

Attendees bring a variety of vehicles from small vans to sports cars. Just as on public roads, it's vital to mentally 'profile' other vehicles on the track, assessing factors like their entry/exit speeds, driver confidence, and overall driving style.

Many of you will be aware of Reg Local (John Gregory) from the training videos. He was one of the instructors on the day. I discovered during the day that these sessions are not strictly limited to IAM members. Had I known that earlier, I would have invited my sons to join in their cars. They'll be getting entry tickets to a 2026 session in their Christmas stockings!!

I wholeheartedly recommend attending one of these skills days. Whilst there is a cost, the excellent facilities, the unique opportunity to access a racetrack, and the instruction from highly qualified RoadSmart instructors—whose primary focus is on techniques applicable to everyday road driving—make it an invaluable experience.



Simon (left) with John Gregory (Reg Local)