



iam
RoadSmart

FORWARD

Issue 20

**The Newsletter for
Somerset & Wiltshire
Advanced Motorists**

Your Committee and other Group Contacts

President: Helen Schofield

Vice Presidents: Judith Pepler; David Gallagher

Acting Chair	Lindsay Flower	☎ 07968 126162 (<i>mobile</i>) deputychair@swam-iam.org.uk
Group Secretary	Rosemary Tandy	☎ 01985 846643 secretary@swam-iam.org.uk
Group Treasurer	Clare Hogg	☎ 01749 343059 accounts@swam-iam.org.uk
Chief Observer	David Major	☎ 01985 217050(<i>home</i>) ☎ 07743 246746 (<i>mobile</i>) chiefobserver@swam-iam.org.uk
Associates Co-ordinator	David Major	☎ 01985 217050(<i>home</i>) ☎ 07743 246746 (<i>mobile</i>) associatescoordinator@swam-iam.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Peter Huntington	☎ 07703 000263 (<i>mobile</i>) membership@swam-iam.org.uk
Minutes Secretary	Vacancy	minutes@swam-iam.org
Newsletter Editor	Clare Hogg	☎ 01749 343059 newsletter@swam-iam.org.uk
Public Relations Officer	Robin Clark	☎ 07974 764094 (<i>mobile</i>) pr@swam-iam.org.uk
Website	Neil Bannister	webmaster@swam-iam.org.uk
Young Driver Representative	David Gallagher	youngdriver@swam-iam.org.uk
SWAM Enquiries	Telephone email	☎ 07968 126162 (<i>mobile</i>) deputychair@swam-iam.org.uk
Social Media	X: @SomersetWiltsAM	Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/SomersetWiltsAM

FORWARD

Newsletter of Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists

www.swam-iam.org.uk

Registered Charity No 1050592

February — April 2025

Issue 20

Contents

Details of AGM	3	Treasure Hunt	10
Editorial	4	Welcome new Associates	11
Next publication date	4	Congratulations	11
Notice of AGM	5	Ten Driving Beliefs	12
Group News	6	Brake Campaigning for Change	14
Forthcoming Events	8	The Bright Headlight Debate	15
Special Offer	9	Editorial disclaimer	16
Email problems	10		

Details of Annual General Meeting

The AGM of Somerset and Wiltshire Advanced Motorists will be held on Thursday 20 March 2025 at Beckington Memorial Hall* beginning at 19.30. See pages 5 and 8 for further details.

Nominations for positions on the Committee (see page 5), which must be proposed, seconded and bear the signature of the nominee signifying his or her consent to the nomination, plus items for the Agenda, need to be sent to the Group Secretary to reach her by Friday 14 March **at the latest**.

After the formal AGM, the speaker will be Richard Gladman, Head of Driving and Riding Standards at IAM RoadSmart. Richard will bring a wealth of experience in improving road safety and driving standards, and we hope to be both informed and entertained by his insights.

**The address of Beckington Memorial Hall is Bath Road, Beckington, Frome, BA11 6SH (just off the A36).*

Welcome to this edition of *Forward*, with apologies for it being a bit late this month because of personal circumstances. The most important item is about the AGM, with information on pages 3, 5 and 8. Please come to this important event if you possibly can as your input at the meeting could be very helpful.

You will see on page 11 that we have some very impressive test results to report, with an excellent number of F!RSTs. This is a great credit to our fantastic team of National Observers and to the hard work of our Associates. Paul Greaves' name appears in both the Welcome New Associates section and in the Congratulations section. Well done to him for completing the course so speedily. We also have two Masters passes to announce, one with a distinction – congratulations, Robin.

We are keen to encourage new Associates to join SWAM and are giving you a chance to earn £30 for an introduction of someone who goes on to purchase an Advanced course with SWAM. For more details, see page 9.

We are not planning on holding a meeting in April, because our normal time would coincide with the Easter holidays, but we are looking forward very much to having a Treasure Hunt in May. More details will be in the next issue of *Forward*, but in the meantime take a look at pages 9 and 10 for a bit more information.

We look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

Clare Hogg, Sue Phillips

The next edition of *Forward* will be published in May 2025. Please submit motoring-related articles and/or digital photographs to the Editors (*who reserve the right to edit them*) by Friday 4 April at the latest. Names of authors and their home addresses should be disclosed to the Editors who will withhold them from publication on request.

Notice of Annual General Meeting—20 March 2025

The Annual General Meeting of Somerset and Wiltshire Advanced Motorists will take place on Thursday 20 March 2025, beginning at 19.30 at Beckington Memorial Hall.

The Committee positions, and the members currently holding them are:

Acting Chair:	Lindsay Flower
Group Secretary:	Rosemary Tandy
Group Treasurer:	Clare Hogg
Chief Observer/Associates Co-ordinator:	David Major
Membership Secretary:	Peter Huntington
Newsletter Editor:	Clare Hogg
Public Relations Officer:	Robin Clark

All the Committee members are willing to stand again.

Nominations for all the positions on the Committee, which must be proposed, seconded and bear the signature of the nominee signifying his or her consent to the nomination, plus items for the Agenda, must be sent to the Group Secretary to reach her by Friday 14 March **at the latest**. The full list of nominations for the Committee positions will be posted on the group website prior to the meeting.

Note that the election of the new committee, to serve for the year 2025-26, plus any proposed changes to the Supplementary items to the Group's Rules of Affiliation, will be effective from Thursday 27 March 2025.

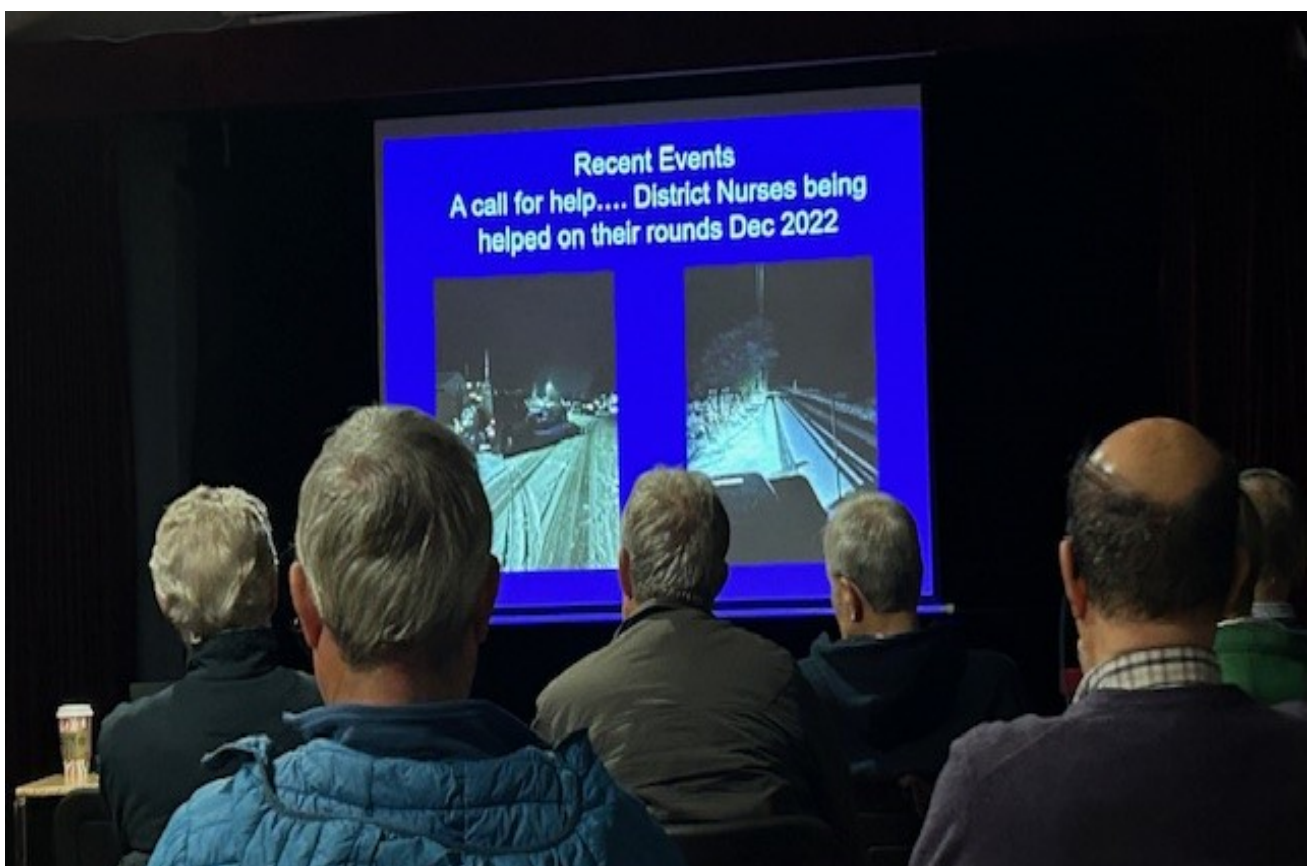
Group News

The speakers at SWAM's November meeting were Norman Dagger and Dave Edwards from Wessex 4x4 Response.

4x4 Response Groups are countrywide and Wessex 4x4 Response covers our area having around 230 members. The Wessex group covers Wiltshire, Somerset, Avon, Dorset and South Gloucestershire, and was set up in 2002. The network operates under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

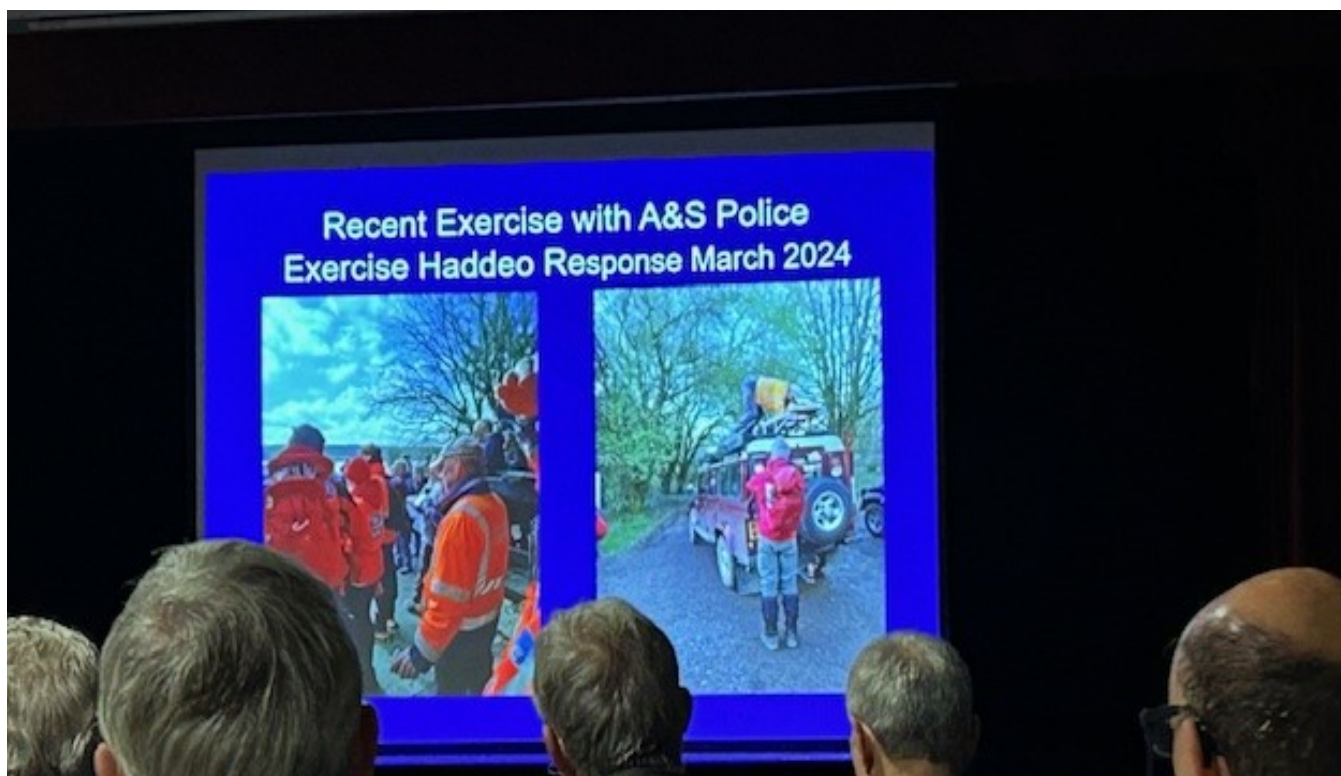
Their role is 'to provide logistical support in times of need' to First Responders (Police, Ambulance, Search and Rescue etc.) during severe weather and emergencies. In recent years, call-outs have included the Beast from the East storm, Somerset Levels flooding, carnivals, road closures, Search and Rescue and Festivals (Glastonbury is always a favourite!).

Volunteers use their own vehicles and equipment and receive training. Norman is a Trustee, a Training Instructor and Team Manager and has been a member for 12 years. Dave is a Trustee, the Quartermaster and also responsible for Risk.



Wessex 4x4 Response liaises with each County Local Resilience Forum to prepare for emergencies. This work is led by Trustees and a Liaison Team.

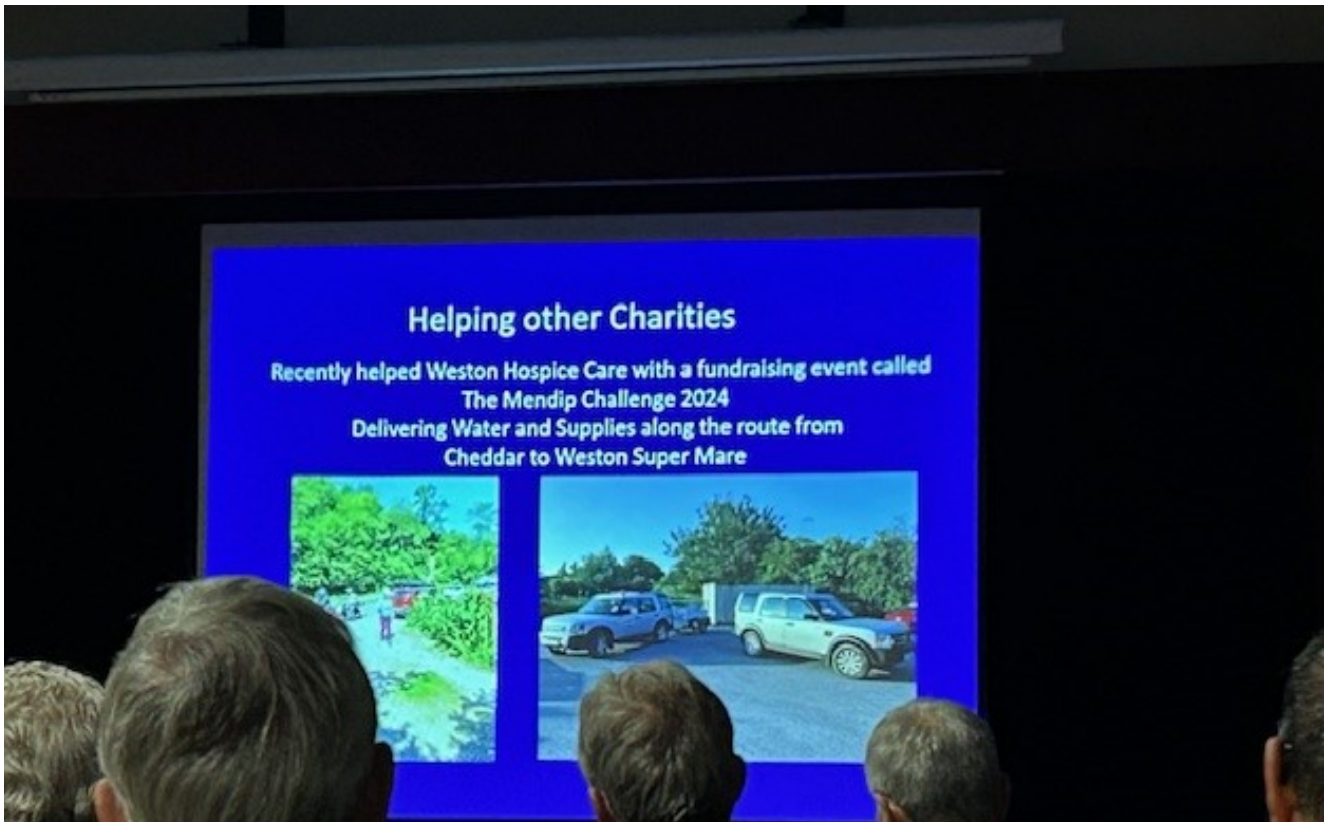
The Wessex 4x4 Response process is very risk aware. Responders are instructed to perform Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA) whenever they are on call; if they are not happy with the situation, they stop, assess, and decide on what action to take, and if necessary, find a different route or action to complete their tasking.



4x4 Response groups are set up as charities to perform a wide variety of support functions. There is no central funding so they are constantly seeking donations and doing fundraising for equipment and the running costs of groups. Responders receive 45p per mile as expenses.

Periodic exercises are undertaken, including one recently which had two planes crashing into each other (one in a Devon lake), 450 people involved (with some people injured and others in the water), and during this exercise communications by telephone and web access were nonexistent.

Future challenges for the group include: updating communications, increasing competence levels, and reducing and mitigating risk.



The talk was followed by questions from the floor.

1: **How will a transition to electric vehicles affect you?**

Answer: this remains to be seen because we don't have any yet, but they are heavier, affected by extreme cold and have variable range.

2: **What do you need?**

Answer: we always need more volunteers. Possession of a 4x4 vehicle is NOT essential to play a valuable role! People could also be controllers and general helpers.

3: **How are you insured?**

Answer: Members have their own insurance and must ensure they are covered for voluntary activities (it is essential to inform their insurers).

Forthcoming Events

Thursday 20 March: AGM at Beckington Memorial Hall*. See pages 3 and 5 for details. After the formal AGM, our speaker will be Richard Gladman. As the Head of Driving and Riding Standards at IAM RoadSmart, Richard brings a wealth of experience and insight into

improving road safety and driving standards. Known nationally for his engaging presentations, Richard often shares valuable advanced driving hints, tips and techniques through various media. We are eager to learn from his vast repertoire of knowledge and hope to be both informed and entertained by his insights.

May: Date to be announced. We are planning a Treasure Hunt, see page 10. Further details will be in the next issue of *Forward*, and members will be able to bring non-members as part of their team to the event. We hope this will be a fun evening for all concerned.

June: There will be a 3-in-a-car meeting, date to be arranged. This will be an opportunity to have a drive with one of our National Observers, and benefit from their experience and advice. You can either drive or be a passenger, so please come along to make the most of this opportunity.

**The address of Beckington Memorial Hall is Bath Road, Beckington, Frome, BA11 6SH (just off the A36).*

Special Offer

Want to earn £30?

**Let our Chief Observer know about someone you
would recommend
who buys the Advanced Course with SWAM,
and it's all yours!**

Contact David for information

chiefobserver@swam-iam.org.uk

Email problems

We have become aware recently that some members have not been receiving group emails from SWAM. We are very sorry about this and are glad to report that the problem has now been solved. We apologise to any member who has missed out on receiving advance notice of meetings, and on getting *Forward* by email, and has perhaps been feeling neglected by SWAM. As soon as we became aware of the problem we took steps to sort it out. If in the future you feel you might be missing something, please let us know straightaway, and then we can deal with the issue. You should receive *Forward* every three months, and notification of future events. Don't forget that you can check what is happening on our website too: www.swam-iam.org.uk

Treasure Hunt

SWAM Treasure Hunt

Keep your eyes peeled in the next edition of Forward, for news about a car Treasure Hunt - planned for this May.

Involving teams of two over a 25-30 mile route, collecting answers to clues set-out across the Somerset and Wiltshire countryside. Starting and finishing in Beckington, with refreshments available before and after. Feel free to get in touch for more details. We look forward to your support.

Welcome and Congratulations

We Welcome New Associates

Mary Anne Barber	[Observer: Jeff Vincent]
Paul Greaves	[Observer: David Major]
Alasdair Hutchison	[Observer: Simon Cowley]
Sue Pollock	[Observer: Neil Bannister]
Sarah Simmonds	[Observer: Peter Huntington]
William Vickery	[Observer: Dave Edwards]
Eric Vince	[Observer: John Morley]

We Congratulate

IAMRS Test Pass

Mike Dodd*	observed by Val Czerny
Paul Greaves*	observed by David Major
Tony Moore*	observed by Paul Moignard
Robert Parker*	observed by Mark Ellis
Duncan Poole	observed by Graham Bennett
Adam Westcott *	observed by David Major
Valerie Woolmore	observed by Dave Edwards

*FIRST pass

IMI National Observer Programme

Nick Elton	mentored by Paul Pywell
-------------------	-------------------------

IAMRS Masters

Robin Clark**	mentored by Andy Poulton
Simon Smedley	mentored by Andy Poulton and Martyn Buckland

**Distinction

Ten Driving Beliefs

This, and the next two articles, come from Graham Feest's newsletter – Traffic Safety Roads. Graham Feest is a Road Safety consultant and is President of the Institute of Master Tutors of Driving.

There are many driving beliefs, and much misinformation, that can lead to unsafe practices or even legal issues. The AA have published and debunked some of these by way of clarification:

Driving 10% over the speed limit without breaking the law

It's a myth that you can legally drive 10% over the speed limit. While some police may allow for speedometer inaccuracies, enforcement varies. The National Police Chief's Council suggests ticketing only when exceeding the limit by 10% plus 2mph (e.g. driving 35 mph on a road with a 30 mph limit), but this isn't guaranteed. Best advice: stick to the limit.

Drinking alcohol as a passenger in a car

It's legal to drink alcohol as a passenger, but not always advisable. Passengers can aid safer driving. If supervising a learner driver however, you must stay sober and avoid using your phone. You absolutely can't drink alcohol while driving, as even one drink could put you over the legal drink-driving limit.

Drinking alcohol-free beer while driving

While it's not against the law to consume non-alcoholic beer while driving in the UK, if it looks like an alcoholic drink, you could still be pulled over by the police. To avoid any misunderstandings and delays, it's advisable to save your drink until after your journey.

Sucking on a penny can trick a breathalyser test

This is not only false, it's also illegal to try. Eating garlic, citrus fruits or mints won't help either. The message is clear: don't drink and drive.

Eating while driving

There's no specific law prohibiting it, but if it distracts you, it could

result in a charge of careless driving. This carries a maximum penalty of £5,000, three to nine points on your licence and a discretionary driving ban. For safety reasons, it's best to eat when stationary, particularly in adverse weather conditions when stopping distances are longer.

Smoking while driving

This is illegal in private vehicles carrying anyone under 18 or in company cars. If you occasionally use a private car for business purposes, smoking is permitted. However, smoking can be a distraction and could potentially lead to a charge of careless driving.

Driving with snow on your car

While not illegal in the UK, the Highway Code stipulates that drivers must have clear visibility out of every window of their vehicle. If snow obstructs your view, this could be considered dangerous driving, which is certainly illegal. It's also advised to remove any snow from the roof as it can slide onto your windows or hit another road user.

Driving with interior lights on

There's no specific law prohibiting this. However, it can cause distractions or impair vision at night and if it contributes to careless driving, you could face charges.

Circling a roundabout

Contrary to popular belief, circling a roundabout three times because you missed your exit isn't illegal. But it's crucial to plan your route to avoid unnecessary circling, which could be viewed as careless driving. If you miss your exit, simply take it the next time after safely navigating around the roundabout again.

Lowering tyre pressures in winter

The idea that lowering tyre pressure during winter improves traction is a myth. In reality, it can increase stopping distances, cause more skidding, and reduce fuel efficiency. Instead, ensure your tyres are at the recommend pressure for safer winter driving.

Brake Campaigning for Change

Brake (a charity campaigning for Road Safety) has reinforced what their five priorities are in terms of reducing death and injury on the road as follows:

Default 20mph speed limits on all roads in built-up areas across the UK

In 2022, 593 people died on urban roads in Britain, including 385 pedestrians and 91 cyclists. Thousands more were seriously injured. Reducing default speed limits to 20mph on roads in built-up areas will save lives, reduce severe injuries and help more people walk and wheel in safety.

Progressive licensing to safeguard young and newly qualified drivers

In 2022, 4,935 people were killed or seriously injured from a crash involving a young driver. A progressive licensing system with minimum periods for learning, enhanced testing and training, and measures to reduce the risks associated with carrying peer-age passengers and driving at night, could reduce the number of deaths and injuries involving young drivers by 20–40%.

Zero-tolerance on drink-driving

Every year, more than 200 people die in drink-driving incidents on UK roads and a further 1,600 are seriously injured. England and Wales have the highest maximum drink-driving limits in Europe, including for commercial drivers. We want to change that and make drink-driving a thing of the past.

All new vehicles to have life-saving technology fitted as standard

There is no good reason for any new vehicle to be built without the latest-generation, life-saving vehicle safety technology outlined in the General Safety Regulations. In the UK, we helped shape these regula-

tions, which have now been adopted in the EU and Northern Ireland. Now it's time for us to raise the standard in Britain.

All organisations to be required to monitor and report on incidents involving work vehicles

Work-related road traffic collisions are estimated to contribute to a third of UK road deaths (565 people) and a fifth of serious injuries (5,620 people), yet there is no requirement for organisations to report incidents and near misses to the Health and Safety Executive. We're calling for change that requires all organisations to report incidents within the existing RIDDOR system.

The campaign's themes to stop road crashes and reduce harm are underpinned by robust evidence and expertise, coupled with stories from bereaved and injured road victims. This balance of evidence and lived experience is known to start important conversations and ultimately change hearts and minds, says Brake.

The Bright Headlight Debate

A survey of the AA has shown that three-quarters of its members who took part have said that LED lights on vehicles are among the factors causing them to be 'blinded' while driving.

This also follows a survey from the RAC, which has long campaigned on the issue, which shows more than four out of five (85%) drivers affected by headlight glare said the problem is getting worse.

DfT data shows dazzling headlights contributed to 216 collisions in 2023 – up from 211 the year before, but down from 315 in 2017 and 309 a decade ago. In September 2024, the Government confirmed it is commissioning independent research into the issue of dazzling headlights awarding a contract to TRL (a subsidiary of the Transport Research Foundation) to look into the factors that can cause glare from headlights of oncoming vehicles, and how it might be addressed. It is expected that the research results will be published in the summer. AA president Edmund King said its members are 'feeling the strain of

brighter headlights more than ever before, as well as brighter brake and traffic lights. Conversely, they also say brighter lights enhance road safety. The problem seems to be LED lights on higher vehicles such as SUVs.'

Meanwhile, Rod Dennis, RAC senior policy officer, commenting on his organisation's report, said: 'Few issues we deal with have triggered quite as much of a reaction among drivers as the brightness of headlights.'

The President of the Institute of Master Tutors of Driving commented: 'We have spent many years improving the lights on vehicles because drivers were saying that they were poor, particularly when driving on unlit roads. There is no doubt that tremendous advances have been made. Some of the problems may be due to the positioning of the light units now we have a range of larger cars and this may well need to be looked at by manufacturers and if a change in construction and use regulations is needed, then it should be looked at across the world. At the end of the day however, we really do need to ensure that driving in the dark and on unlit roads is part of the learning to drive process so that new drivers coming onto the roads know how to deal with the situation of being dazzled by oncoming lights.'

[The simplest advice about dealing with dazzle caused by headlights is to slow down, look to the left, and try to avoid looking directly at the oncoming cars.]

PLEASE NOTE

The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the Committee of Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists, nor by IAM RoadSmart.

Due acknowledgement is made whenever material is taken from other sources.

SWAM keeps names and addresses of members on computer to assist in group administration. This information will not be passed outside IAM RoadSmart.

SWAM may from time to time publish photographs taken at group events in *Forward* and on the website, or display them at publicity events.

If you have any concerns or wish to opt out of having your photograph taken or published by SWAM, please email or ring the Secretary (details on page 2) and request an acknowledgement in writing.