

# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



December 2022





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The Newsletter of the North Down Advanced Motorists Group (Group 8199)

Helping to Improve the Standard of Driving on the Roads in Northern Ireland and the advancement of road safety

December 2022

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### New Members

This month we welcome new car members Lynzi Janison, Jacqui Keery, George Gaw and David Spiers. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

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### Test Passes

Congratulations this month to car member

**Ciara Bryans**

Good luck and safe driving or riding to any Associates approaching their test.

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### November cover picture

This was Bridge Street in Lisburn (just to make it a bit more difficult - looking the wrong way down a one-way street).

Congratulations, in the order of receipt of correct answers, to Norman Shearer, Ivan Greenfield, Stewart Campbell, James O'Brien, Ralph Magee, David Harcourt and Ernie Foster.

Do you know where this month's cover is? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the next Road Observer. Submit your answers to: [leslie.ashe.LA@googlemail.com](mailto:leslie.ashe.LA@googlemail.com)

## Dates for your diary

All dates relate to the Groomsport Boathouse unless otherwise stated

- 10 January - STAC enrolment - demonstration drives and first initial drives for new Associates
- 7 February - STAC session 1
- 14 February - Group Night - possibly 10-pin bowling at the Dundonald Ice Bowl - details TBA
- 28 February - STAC Session 2
- 7 March - STAC Session 3
- 14 March - Group Night - Visit to Transport Museum warehouse - details TBA
- 28 March - STAC session 4
- 4 April - STAC session 5
- 11 April - No meeting - Easter Tuesday
- 25 April - STAC session 6
- 2 May - STAC Session 7
- 9 May - Group Night - TBA
- 23 May - STAC session 8
- 30 May - Test preparation and driving practice
- 6 June - Additional driving practice
- 13 June - Group night- Drive/ride for ice-cream at the Rhinka, Islandmagee.

STAC - Short Term Associate Course. Associate Members should ensure that you are familiar with the relevant section of the "Associate Handbook" before each STAC night so that you can get the most benefit from the theory session as well as your observed drive.

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## Group Christmas dinner

We were back at Carnalea Golf Club for this year's dinner and 37 members and guests attended. Because of a mix-up over the booking (their fault, not ours) we were in the downstairs area rather than the private room upstairs. The food was very good and it was an opportunity to talk about things other than driving and riding although was inevitable that those subjects would come up.

Entertainment after the meal was organised by Frank Robertson aided by his 2 glamorous assistants Angela and Gareth. This was a game of "Call my Bluff" which older members may remember was a panel quiz which ran for many years on BBC2. The concept is to guess the meaning of obscure English words from 3 definitions provided. Rather than operating in teams, Frank's version required us to stand up and hold up our right hand for the first definition, our left for the second and both for the third. Those that got it wrong sat down and those remaining standing went again with a different word until we had a last person standing who was declared the winner. Several rounds were played with some lasting much longer than others. A selection of prizes, mostly alcoholic, were available for the winners.





At the end of the evening Chairman David Harcourt, in his now traditional “surfing Santa” Christmas shirt, thanked everyone for attending, those who contributed to the prizes and the entertainment and the staff of the caterers for an excellent meal. We should book it now for next year!



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### Road Signs for motorcyclists

On a recent trip to Scotland, in several places I came across a road sign I had never seen before accompanied by a series of lines on the road.



These signs have appeared on some of the Scottish roads much favoured by motorcyclists. The idea is to use applied or nudge psychology to influence bikers on their choice of speed, position and braking on the approach to challenging bends. It is part of a trial as a way of reducing motorcycle casualty reduction.

So far the signs and markings have appeared at four sites on three different roads frequently singled out by riders seeking a mix of challenging bends, fast straights – and stunning scenery. They first appeared in 2020 and the trial will end at the end of 2022. If they have a marked effect on changing rider behaviour they will be rolled out across other challenging locations.

The examples I saw were on the approach to bends after a long straight. Presumably the idea is that riders should position their machine between the chevrons. The chevrons are more towards the crown of the road on left-hand bends and towards the edge of the road on right-hand bends which is the normal positioning for advanced riders.



The downside, of course, is that it is more white paint on the road which is more slippery than the road surface when wet. Also, any developing potholes on the recommended line through the bend could force a biker onto a line which crossed the white chevrons.

## E10 fuel

E10 petrol became widely available in Northern Ireland from the beginning of November. E10 is fuel which contains up to 10% renewable ethanol. Prior to its introduction fuel contained 5% ethanol. The idea is to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by using less fossil fuel. Government estimates that it will cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 750,000 tonnes a year which is the equivalent of taking 350,000 cars off the road.



The Government states that it can slightly reduce fuel economy and you may see a reduction of about 15% which is unlikely to be noticeable in everyday driving.

Not all cars are suitable for E10 fuel. Classics, older vehicles, some from the early 2000s and some mopeds, especially those with an engine size of 50cc or less. You can check compatibility by following this link: <https://www.gov.uk/check-vehicle-e10-petrol> If you find that your vehicle can't use E10 then you will have to use 97 octane petrol which, of course, is more expensive.

Now that we have had a couple of months of using E10 have you noticed any difference either in vehicle performance or fuel economy?

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## Ice and snow

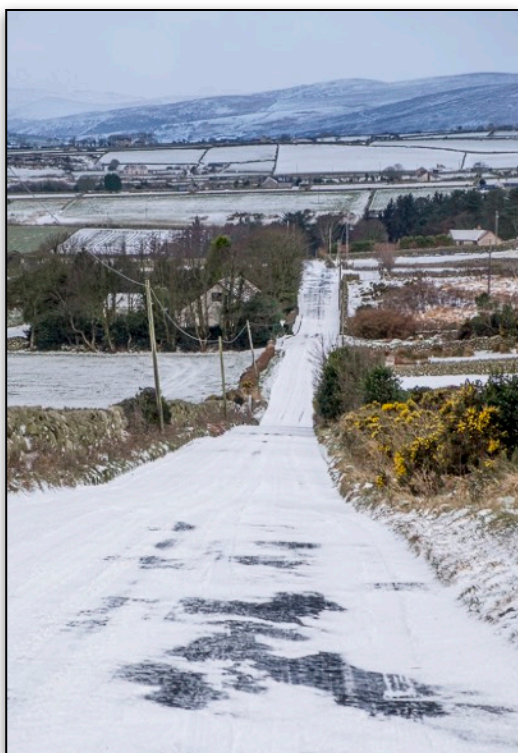
After the last few mild winters were you caught out during the recent low temperatures? After a night of snow flurries and low temperatures my driveway was like a skating rink and was difficult to walk on. No problem I thought - I've got rock salt in the garage. And after searching high and low, the result, in the spirit of the pantomime season was, oh no I haven't.

IAM RoadSmart has compiled information to enable you to better prepared to cope with driving on roads covered in frost, ice or snow.

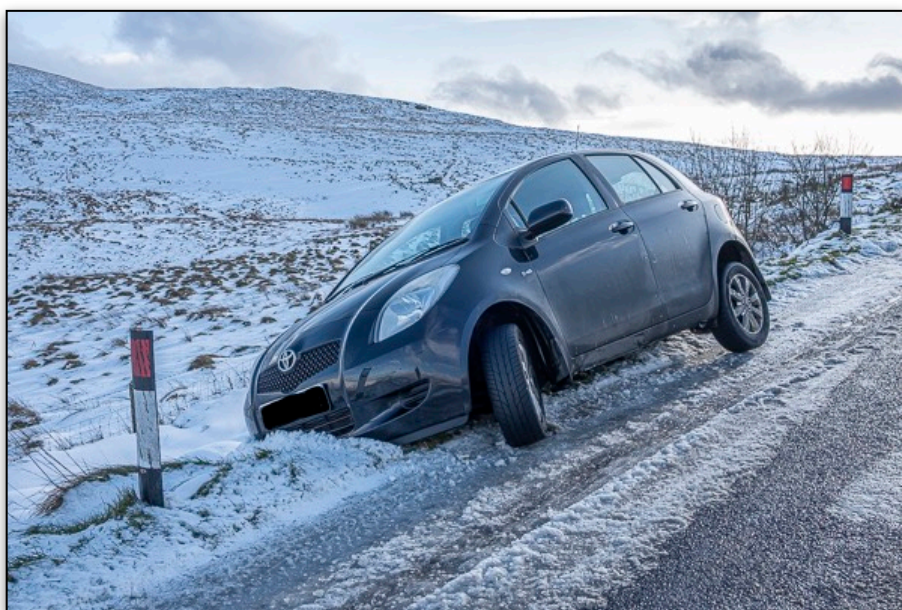


### Only travel if you need to

If the weather conditions are severe in your area, you should take notice of police advice and simply do not travel. However, in exceptional circumstances if you must go out then make sure you drive safely with extra caution on icy roads.



*Do you need to drive on roads like this?*



*Don't end up like this*



### **Triple your stopping distance**

Approach every junction planning to stop well before the stop or give way line (it can take up to ten times as long to stop according to Highway Code advice). Every steering, acceleration or braking input should be as smooth and gentle as possible, and by selecting 2nd gear when you pull away in icy conditions should mean you have less torque that will help prevent wheels spinning. Remember ABS can be ineffective in icy conditions, changing down the gearbox sequentially can be an effective way to slow, but be careful about selecting a lower gear too soon as this may cause the wheels to lock.

### **Keep your car clean**

Salt will often make the windscreen, headlights, number plate and rear parts of your car very dirty. Cars without headlamp washers, for example, will lose an estimated 40% of luminosity and possibly all their focus in about 20 miles on a damp, gritted motorway. When travelling long distances it is advised that you stop regularly at service stations to clean your windscreen and headlights and rear

lights with a clean cloth to allow you to see and be seen.

It's always worth keeping a filled bottle of water in the car boot to give your lights, windows and mirrors a quick wash over, remember in extreme conditions this may freeze so a good mix of screen wash may be the best investment – and while you are at it top up your windscreen washer reservoir too, don't let it get to the point where you are likely to run out. Also don't forget to wash/rinse alloy wheels too; the smallest scratch can quickly become a large, corroded area.

### **Never ignore warning lights**

If one appears then get it checked out sooner rather than later. Being stuck on the side of the road is never good but breaking down in freezing conditions is a high-risk situation when recovery services are in high demand. Keep your car well maintained and a winter health check is always a good investment.

### **Carry a winter driving kit**

This should include an ice scraper, de-icer, blanket and warm jacket, torch, shovel, something to eat and drink and a fully charged mobile phone – you should also consider packing your phone charger.

### **Avoid unnecessary overtaking**

When driving on a busy road avoid overtaking a gritting lorry as the road ahead may not be treated yet. If you have any doubt, don't risk it. And make sure to never overtake a snow plough in heavy snow conditions. If you see the gritting lorry stay well back from it and avoid getting sprayed with salt, remember the salt will take a while to work if the road is already icy as it relies on the salt getting into the ice, at really extreme temperatures this may not help.

### **Drive at a steady pace**

While roads may be gritted to give you better traction, some areas may not be completely treated which can leave ice patches exposed. You should therefore drive at a steady pace, ensuring the safety of you and your passengers. It's also worth remembering to watch out for water running across the carriageway as this can wash away salt or freeze over in those extreme minus temperatures.





## Watch out in the winter sun

Just because the winter sun is out does not mean the roads might not be icy. Microclimates of icy patches will linger in areas such as bridges and exposed sections, where the sun has not yet reached. Be wary of vision being affected by the low sun, not just yours but other road users.

## Watch out for your tyre tread

Keep the tread on your tyres above 2mm (ideally 3mm), the more tread you have the more water they can cope with. Letting your tyres get down to the legal limit of 1.6mm is not recommended, and don't forget you can always consider winter tyres if you are in an area where they will benefit you. The following link will give good safety tips <https://www.tyresafe.org/tyre-safety/>



*Editor's note: The picture on the left is a front tyre of the car in the ditch shown earlier - the tyres were worn down to the tread depth markers.*

Richard Gladman, Head of Driving and riding standards said: "Preparation is the key to avoiding a dangerous situation whilst driving in snowy or icy conditions. Don't rely on the performance of your car's systems to get you out of trouble – allow time, make sure you have good visibility all round and carry the right equipment. If conditions are extreme remember the best advice is not to travel."

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And finally..... spotted in Leenane, or Leenaun



**The views expressed in the "Road Observer" are not necessarily those of the Editor, the North Down Advanced Motorists Group or IAM RoadSmart**