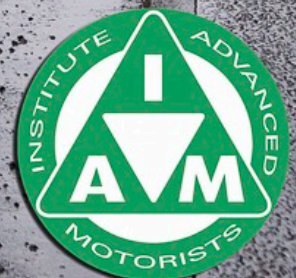


# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



October 2022







## The Road Observer

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

October 2022

<http://www.amni.org.uk/>

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<https://www.facebook.com/NorthDownGroupIAM>

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### Test Passes

Congratulations this month to motorcycle member

**Gary Barr**

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

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### September 2022 cover picture

For a while I thought that nobody would get this one. It was difficult but I thought the statue would give it away. It was of course Clifden, County Galway and the statue is of Alcock and Brown who made the first trans-Atlantic flight landing not too far away in the middle of a bog.

Congratulations to (in order of receipt) David Harcourt, Ivan McStea (Belfast Group) and Angela Bell.

Do you know where this month's cover is - it's more local. 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)

## Groomspport Boathouse

We have been advised by the Council that the work at the Boathouse has been completed faster than anticipated and we can return on Tuesday 25 October.

### Dates for your diary

25 October - STAC Session 4  
1 November - STAC session 5  
8 November - Group Night - Drive/ride out (details in covering email)  
22 November - STAC session 6  
29 November - STAC session 7  
6 December - STAC session 8  
14 December - Christmas Dinner: venue Carnalea Golf Club

Please note the Christmas Dinner will be on **Wednesday 14 December**

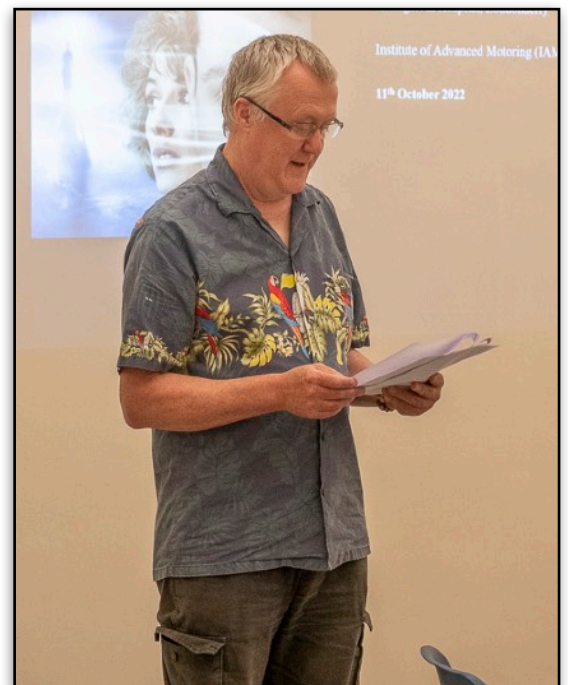
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### Annual General Meeting

The 32nd AGM was held on Tuesday 11 October in Donaghadee Community Centre and compared to recent events was relatively well attended, including 3 members from the Southern and Mid Ulster Group. Chairman David Harcourt's report highlighted the activities since the AGM and the impact of the Covid pandemic in terms of reduced numbers and the need to re-skill Observers.

Gareth Hughes presented the Treasurer's report. Our financial position remains strong with a balance at the end of the 2021/22 year standing at £1787.94.

Lisa Thompson presented the membership report which is work in progress as we are still collecting subscriptions for the period September 2022 to April 2023. We have lost 10 members but gained 24 and there is a further 27 who have not yet submitted their subscription. Total confirmed membership at the time of the AGM is 41 car members, 24 motorcycle and 9 who are both car and motorcycle giving total of 74.



Angela Bell, our former Regional Group Co-ordinator, conducted the election to the Committee for the 2022/23 year:

<b>Chairman:</b> David Harcourt	<b>Secretary:</b> Stephen Patterson
<b>Treasurer:</b> no nominations	
<b>Committee Members:</b> Leslie Ashe, Ronnie Brown, Neil Geoghegan, Ivan Greenfield, Colin Hay, Annie McFarland, John Seawright, Kyle Thomson	

David announced that the new Committee would consider the position of treasurer at its first meeting next week.

### Presentations

David Harcourt presented the 2021/122 awards

The Mervyn Bates Trophy for member of the year was awarded to: Shannon McIlroy.

The Motorcycle member of the year was awarded jointly to: Jo-Anne Crooks and Vicki Smyth.

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## Dr Ashish Kumar

Our guest speaker at the AGM was Dr Ashish Kumar who is currently a consultant in Altnagelvin Hospital. By way of background, for those who do not know Ash, he was an Associate with us on the car side whose training was interrupted by the Covid pandemic when all face to face training was suspended.

During the pandemic he was heavily involved in running a Covid Ward in a hospital in Newcastle Upon Tyne and in Scotland and is now back in NI in Londonderry. We had approached him some time ago and he agreed to give us a talk about how stress affects our driving. However, since then his personal experiences suggested an alternative subject for the talk and one that is not too far removed from stress.

Ash had been in San Francisco and flew back to London en-route to give a talk to the Society of Physicians in Bangor North Wales about surviving/thriving in the healthcare industry. His flight was overnight, arriving in London at 12.30 pm. Unfortunately he didn't get any sleep on the plane and arrived tired and jet-lagged. He picked up his car at a hotel close to Heathrow and proceeded to drive to North Wales.



Ash took a break at Banbury to the north of Oxford for food and again at Dudley to the west of Birmingham, getting into North Wales around 9.30/10 pm when it was getting dark. By this time Ash had been awake for about 30 hours. The roads in North Wales were twisty and Ash became aware that tiredness was getting to him. He looked for somewhere where he could stop for a rest but by this time, giving the twist nature of the roads there was an absence of lay-bys where he could pull in. He was about 15 minutes from his destination Portmerrion where he had booked an Air B&B and at this point he opened a window for some fresh air.



The next thing he knew, he woke up to find that the car was upside down. He managed to crawl out. Neighbours heard the crash and said that they needed to call the police. The police and an ambulance arrived and he was checked over. He was in a daze, confused, light-headed and had a tightness in his chest and had blood on his hand from a cut. He took some pictures not believing what had happened.



He contacted the owner of the Air B&B who arrived some 10 minutes later to take him to the B&B and he was able to attend the conference the next day and deliver his presentation.



Reflecting on the incident, he was not aware what happened, whether he had fallen asleep and/or whether he had clipped a rock at the side of the road. He said that he was filled with awe, gratitude and a stillness he had never felt before saying that it all felt like a dream and that time had stopped.

Ash went on to discuss the impact of fatigue on driving noting that some 37% of drivers have nodded off for at least a moment or fallen asleep at least once in their driving career and that 8% of drivers have done so in the past 6 months. He posed some questions the answers to which dismissed some commonly held beliefs about driver fatigue. The answers were:

- Stimulants are no substitute for sleep. Drinks containing caffeine such as coffee or cola can help you feel alert but the effects are short-lived.
- You cannot tell when you are going to fall asleep.
- Rolling down a window or singing along with the radio has no lasting effect on a person's ability to stay awake.
- The only safe driver is an alert driver; even the safest drivers become confused and use poor judgement when sleepy.
- You cannot stockpile sleep.
- Young people need more sleep than adults. Males under 25 are at the greatest risk of fall asleep and half of the victims of fatigue related crashes are under 25.
- During a micro sleep of 4 to 5 seconds a car can travel 100 yards - plenty of time for a serious crash.

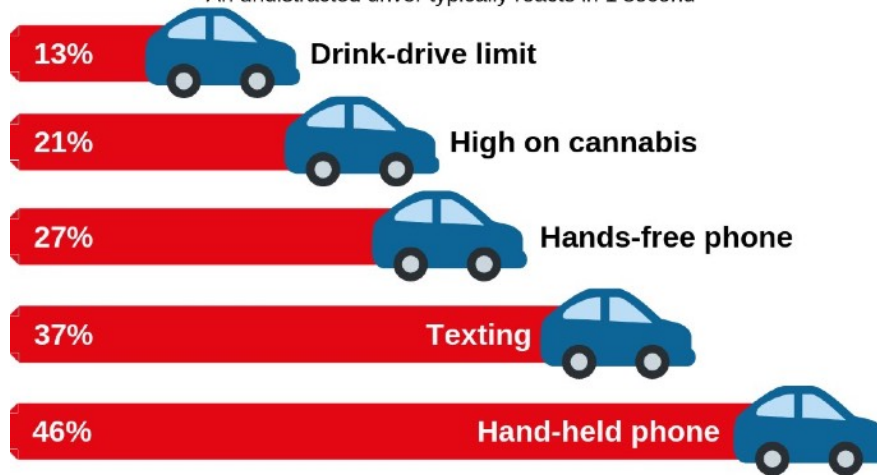
Ash said that the high-risk times for fatigue related crashes are night time and early morning (10pm to 6am) and afternoon (1pm to 3pm). He also listed some of the symptoms of driver fatigue:

Heavy eyelids	Boredom
Tired or sore eyes	Feeling irritable
Poor concentration	Missing road signs
Yawning	Difficulty staying the lane
Restlessness	Oversteering
Drowsiness	Succumbing to micro sleeps
Slow reactions	

Ash went on to discuss other issues that contribute to poor driving. These include bad judgement, road rage, running late, prescription medications, other drug use and of course mobile phone use. He compared mobile phone use with some other impacts on your ability to drive safely:

## How Our Reactions Slow

This chart shows the percentage increase in distracted drivers' response times.  
An undistracted driver typically reacts in 1 second



Driving at 56mph the stopping distance for a driver using a hand-held phone increases by 13.1m compared to an alert driver.

Source: Transport Research Laboratory

He also showed a harrowing video of the effect of mobile phone use leading to a crash with the occupants suffering serious injuries.

He has since acquired a new car to replace his trusty Honda but realises that in itself this does not improve his driving and that he is not immune from a crash.

Summing up Ash said that he has made a U-turn on his driving behaviour. He realises that he got away with it this time. From now on, no mobile phone use, he avoids driving in the dark, he is more self-aware of his emotions, if he has had a bad sleep he will not drive. He will do all he can to minimise risks and that is a message we can all benefit from.

Many thanks to Ash for a very interesting talk and for sharing with us his very personal experience of a serious accident.

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## Bike Observer Training

8 October saw us get back to observer training. A session was organised by Simon for some potential new Observer recruits in the motorcycle side. The morning started with a typical tea and coffee introduction and then straight into business with explaining what's involved in being an observer in the group.



Useful insight was provided by Don, Norman and Guy who also came along. We suspect Norman was there for the coffee and scones more than anything else. We had 5 potential observers come down and hopefully we haven't scared them off yet.

Next step is to register them with the IMI and begin their local observer qualifications. Big thanks to today's candidates for coming down and becoming more involved in the group. Always remember it's YOUR group, so get involved, look at the next challenge, help in the organising. Without you the group wouldn't exist.

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## **If your tyres don't stop you, what will?**

As part of this year's Tyre Safety Month campaign, motorists are being urged to consider the risks involved in inadequate safety checks on their vehicle's tyres and the potentially fatal consequences if they need to stop in an emergency.

This month, IAM RoadSmart is supporting TyreSafe and their annual campaign to remind motorists of the benefits and importance of tyre safety checks. But also, to consider the literal message 'If your tyres don't stop you, what will?' As the only point of contact between your vehicle and the road, tyre safety is crucial for safe and effective braking.

Protect yourself and your passengers by ensuring that all the tyres on your vehicles are fit for purpose before embarking on your journey.



### **Tyre Safety Facts**

- 1 in 5 motorists have NEVER checked their tyres.
- 1 in 4 vehicles on the road have illegal tyres.
- 2.2 million+ MOT failures are due to tyre defects annually.
- 15,000+ tyre-related convictions in the past 3 years.
- £600m-£1B wasted in unnecessary fuel due to under-inflation.
- 153 people were killed or seriously injured due to defective tyres.

### **Essential routine tyre checks**

#### **1. Tyre Pressure**

Make sure all tyres have the correct pressure. This information can be found in the vehicle handbook, and often on the inside of the fuel filler cap or driver's door sill. Failing that, a quick online search of the vehicle's make, model and year will do the trick.



## **Did you know?**

Under-inflated tyres can provide up to 50% less contact with the road.

This can result in reduced vehicle control. Low pressure also reduces the lifespan of your tyres and uses more fuel. Over-inflated tyres can result in similar outcomes. Although they may use less fuel.

### **2. Tyre Tread**

Ensure that your tyre's tread depth is at least 1.6mm for a car. We recommend 3mm for consistent wet weather performance. This must be across the central  $\frac{3}{4}$  around the whole circumference.

For motorcycles over 50cc, 1mm across  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the width of the tread pattern and with visible tread on the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$ . For bikes under 50cc, all the grooves from the original tread pattern must be clearly visible.

### **Hint!**

Place a 20p coin into the main tread grooves in at least three locations around each tyre. If the outer band of the coin is still visible, the tyres may be under the 1.6mm legal minimum.

### **3. Tyre Condition**

Vehicle tyres will drive over their fair share of glass, stones, and other roadside debris. So it's important to check them for any punctures, cracks or bulges as these are strong indicators of tyre damage.

If there are any irregularities, then the tyre should be checked by a professional and repaired if needed. In some cases, the tyre may still need to be replaced even if the tread depth is still within the legal limit. Additionally, remember to check the age of your tyres. Most manufacturers will recommend that a tyre more than 10 years old should be replaced.

4. Vehicle Overloading

Overloading a vehicle can cause excessive heat and wear on the tyres. It is essential to ensure that the vehicle's overall weight does not exceed its Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) Rating. This can be found on the VIN plate or on the inside of a door frame.

The excessive heat and wear on a vehicle's tyres will compromise the handling and could lead to a blowout. Not only putting the driver/rider at risk, but their passengers and other road users in danger too. Not to mention the potential for fines, penalty points and even prison sentences in more serious cases.

### **Check Tyres, Save Money**

Are you confident that all the necessary tyre safety checks have been made on your vehicle? By ensuring tyre safety, you are helping to keep yourself, your passengers, and all other road users safe.

With the current concerns around the cost of living, you can save yourself money by ensuring that your vehicle is regularly maintained, and any wear and tear is addressed.

*Editor's note: Irrespective of mileage, after only 4 or 5 years exposure to sunlight, tyres may start to show evidence of cracks in the sidewall and in the treads and should be replaced - see example shown).*

