

SEPTEMBER NETWORK

Sadly, there will not be the usual Network for September.

I had more or less finalised it when my ancient laptop decided to die. By 'die' I mean nothing, nada, caput. 18 years work, photos gone. I expect I can get some wizard to retrieve what's important from the hard drive but all in good time.

Things have not gone well for the Network team on the IT front.

Firstly, George Legg, down in the wilds of North Somerset, who is my Network proof reader and your MAG National Research Officer, texted me to tell me his PC had literally gone bang on Wednesday of last week. Then Friday, after speaking with George, I went to finalise Network only to find my laptop was totally unresponsive – no amount of switching off/on, ctrl/alt/del got it working.

So, it seems the West Country is well and truly blighted by some invisible IT bug. Of course, it didn't help we were both working on ancient technology.

George's computer is in the shop awaiting what we think is a new transformer and I'm typing this on a new laptop.

I have asked Julie, at the MAG Central Office, to attach my 'editorial' to this month's Campaigns Report from Colin and Lembit, an AGC notification from the Chair, MAG Notice Board and the Contacts list so you, at least, get something and for the October edition I promise to try and salvage as much as I can of what would have been contained in September's.

Meanwhile, Ride free, stay safe and ride often, *AineG*

Network – Political Unit

2020 08 21

Mixed messages from Government about Covid-19 combine with an attempt to use the pandemic to enforce serious restrictions on our road space. MAG's Political Unit – Lembit Öpik and Colin Brown – gives you an update on what's happening and what's coming up in the politics of riders' rights.

Green recovery – but what does this actually mean for biking?

A continuing theme of creating a 'green recovery' for the UK after the Covid-19 pandemic appears to have two elements to it that cause concern. Firstly, it's not at all clear what the timing of this is going to be – so bikers (and indeed all British citizens) continue to live with a mixture of lockdowns, arbitrary road closures (see below) and employment uncertainty.

At the same time, motorcyclists would be right in thinking that we form PART of the green recovery, given our low eco-footprint and congestion-busting mobility. It seems that the Government partially agrees, judging by helpful comments from Ministers, including the Secretary of State for Transport, Grand Shapps MP. But MAG needs to focus policymakers' minds on getting this thinking totally clear. That's why MAG is repeatedly appealing to MPs to remind Ministers that one of the quickest ways to 'go green' is to 'go riding.'

As bikers already know, motorbikes are an efficient, economical and clean way to get around. They already do the job of cutting emissions and they don't need special routes to be built them. All they need is some secure parking and access to bus lanes.

Three demands goes local

The three demands letter writing campaign has undeniably brought results. The job is far from done and we now need further support from members.

The campaign so far has opened doors at the DfT, albeit only a crack, but enough for us to get a foot in. There will hopefully be good news to report in coming months, but for now we need to remain circumspect in what we say. Rest assured that there is dialogue starting and a few glimmers of hope on the horizon.

Publicly as many of you will be aware from responses from the DfT via your MPs, the Department is playing the slopy shoulder game with respect to bus lane access and secure parking. We therefore need to take the fight to local authorities whilst still continuing our efforts at the DfT.

Centrally we have gone to the Local Government Association (LGA), Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), and Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), asking them to share our slightly rebranded "Transport Restart Proposals" (find the document here: https://wiki.mag-uk.org/images/6/6a/Transport_Restart_Proposals_-2020_07_29.pdf).

The LGA and WLGA have already confirmed that this has gone out in their bulletins to their members (this covers virtually every local authority in England and Wales). We are awaiting confirmation from NILGA and COSLA

We now need local constituents to reinforce these proposals by specifically asking for the measures in their local towns and cities. It is important that local politicians see local bikers asking rather than a faceless national organisation that they can choose to ignore.

We are therefore asking all MAG members to write to their local councillor to ask for secure parking to replace any that may have been lost, and access to any new bus and cycle routes that are popping up. Please be specific naming roads and locations – we cannot do this centrally, but you have the local knowledge in your area.

We have generated a template letter which you can see here: https://wiki.mag-uk.org/images/c/cb/Three_demands_Template_letter_for_Councillors.docx but feel free to do an entirely personal plea adding anything you wish to the mix.

Then let us know how you get on, or call on us if you need any help answering questions from your council or speaking directly about the cost free benefit that they can gain.

Three Demands to continue to the top

Prepare yourselves for the next step on the national level. We are pausing to see if the DfT make any commitments that modify what exactly we will be doing, but the national campaign will continue unless we see some significant DfT comments come to fruition.

Apologies if this seems a little cloak and dagger, but please bear with us on this for now.

ABS European intervention

Credit to Jon Strong, a keen and avid rider who knows more about Antilock Braking Systems (ABS) than many professionals! Thanks to his work, and the support of MAG representatives, including our European representative Ian Churchlow, we're looking for ways to make the cost of ABS lower, through some technical changes. We'll keep you posted on progress.

We Khan't believe it's not better

A strange claim has been made by Transport for London, namely that thousands of responses were received to the incredibly brief consultation – lasting just a handful of days - on the reintroduction of the Congestion Charge and Ultra Low Emissions Zone tax in London.

MAG has been told that 14,000 individuals and groups responded. It seems very hard to believe that so many replies were received, unless of course the majority were opposed to the reintroduction, but even then it beggars belief to think that a consultation that MAG only discovered by chance garnered so many replies. We are working with local politicians and others to get to the truth of who said what, and how many.

Did you respond? Let us know, so we can compare what they share with us and what you sent them. Given the opacity of the process so far, we really feel that, for such an important decision, the transparency should have been a great deal better. It's a pity we have to work so hard to uncover information that really has to be placed in the public domain, given that these decisions are costing those driving and riding into the Capital millions of Pounds at a time we're all told to socially distance by travelling in private vehicles (assuming that's still the instruction when you read this...).

Equality and the Highway Code

Colin is working very hard on formulating a response to the latest Highway Code Review. There is a program of discussion taking place behind the scenes with road safety bodies, professionals and collective groups covering road safety. There will be a great deal more published on this subject over the coming weeks.

For now please do speak to your local and regional reps with your thoughts opinions and ideas on this subject. The timescale is relatively short on this one and we want to influence the responses going in from other road safety organisations. This is part of our "leading the debate" strategy discussed at the last NC meeting. If you need any more explanation on this new strategic approach please do get in touch.

A new tool - thanks to a MAG member

Getting your local MP to take an interest in motorcycling matters can be difficult in some constituencies. If you have an ambivalent, disinterested MP you may well have thought that it would be really useful to know how many bikers there are in this constituency. After all MP's first interest is how many votes they can win.

Well thanks to the efforts of MAG member Stuart Loveless we now have a list of the number of registered motorcycles in every parliamentary constituency in the UK. You can find the document here: https://wiki.mag-uk.org/images/5/5e/UK_Motorcycle_Registrations_by_Parliamentary_Constituency_July_2020.pdf

Yes, some voters may own more than one motorcycle, but no need to point that out to your MP who may well have a smaller majority than he has motorcyclists in his constituency.

Now you can hit them where it hurts (their tenuous hold on power) if they won't listen.

Our thanks goes to Stuart for his work in collating this valuable resource.

Furlough changes presenting the chance to restart postponed projects.

The end of August sees a drop in Government furlough contributions meaning many furloughed staff will be returning to work. Many of the projects put on hold because of key people being on furlough can be re-started.

The political unit will be pouncing on contacts who have had their out of office switched on for many months now. Does this return to work offer you the chance to contact civil servants and others who have been out of reach during the lockdown? Now is the time to pick up any projects that you started before the lockdown. Your political unit will be doing just that.

Why we ride

Many thanks to those who responded to Colin's "Why do you ride?" article in issue 89 of The ROAD. We still need more answers though. We are not looking for literary masterpieces (though that won't hurt). This is a longer term project to develop a paper exploring the motivations of riders to choose motorcycling. The responses will help us to formulate surveys and get to a clear understanding of the motivators and driving factors that affect your relationship with motorcycles.

If you have a few minutes spare drop Colin a line at cbrown@mag-uk.org with a few lines explaining what motivates you to ride motorcycles.

Annual Group Conference (AGC) 2020:

POSTPONED

As published in issue 89 of The ROAD: In light of ongoing Government-imposed restrictions on large gatherings, due to Covid 19, MAG's National Committee (NC) has- in accordance with Constitutional requirements -suspended the sections of the Constitution relating to holding its Annual Group Conference and has taken the decision to postpone AGC 2020 until further notice. Our members come from all four countries of the UK and until we are all permitted to meet indoors, in numbers, we are not able to re-schedule the event.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM), which takes place *within* the Annual Group Conference, is a legal requirement of the Company. In lieu of a physical meeting we will issue the following reports in the next issue of The ROAD:

- Political report
- Finance report
- Board report
- NC report

All reports will be an overview of the year 2019/2020.

We invite members to submit any questions to the Board or NC via email using central-office@mag-uk.org and we will endeavour to answer them alongside the AGC reports. Questions will need to be submitted prior to the 10th of September to meet publication deadlines.

The NC are bound by the constitution to meet at least every three months, due to the postponement of the AGC that would have left a gap of four months between meetings. The NC have therefore re-instated our October meeting. The June meeting was held via Microsoft Teams, and the August and October meetings will be in the same format. If you would like your Regional Rep to bring anything to the NC, then do let them know; they are your representative at a national level.

For a full copy of the Constitution visit the MAG wiki and look under „Toolbox“

<https://wiki.mag-uk.org/index.php/Toolbox#Constitution>

MAG Notice Board

Next ROAD
deadline
10th September

NEW
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Free Magazine Offer

Are you a non-MAG member? Would you like to receive a free copy of a back issue of "The Road", the magazine of the Motorcycle Action Group? It features road tests and news from the motorcycling world as well as details of our campaigns and membership activities. To receive a free, no obligation copy of a back issue please email your name and address to magazineoffer@mag-uk.org.

One copy only per person, while stocks last. If you enjoy what you read, and would like to receive further copies, please see membership details included with the magazine.

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