



Mid Wales Matters



The Newsletter of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists

New Web site: mwam.btck.co.uk

I AM a better road user ...

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IAM
DRIVING ROAD SAFETY

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From the Chairman

I've been fined £100 – not for anything really bad, but just because of an oversight. One of my cars was off the road for some time for repairs, and I allowed the insurance policy to lapse, totally forgetting that I should have made a SORN (Statutory Off Road Notification).

A SORN is valid until the relevant vehicle is taxed, sold or scrapped. If you buy a car that already has a SORN from its previous owner, You will need to make a new SORN. If you fail to make one, you will be fined, need to get a new tax disc and pay any tax arrears. So there you are – you have been warned.

On a lighter note (forgive the pun), you may like to guess what this is:



Is it the world's most confusing junction? A scene from your worst motoring nightmare? No – this is a work of art, a sculpture on a roundabout in Canary Wharf. The lights flash on and off at random in what must be a rather distracting way for approaching first time visitors.

Editor's Spot

It's unlikely to have escaped your notice that Wetherspoon's has just opened a pub, The Hope and Champion, on the service area at junction 2 of the M40. Predictably this new arrival has attracted a fair bit of disapproval, but this is an illogical reaction. After all, every pub in the land stands at the roadside, and drivers will have passed by many en route to the motorway. Also, the determined drink driver can fill up at home or buy alcohol at service area outlets such as W H Smith or M&S. Responsible drivers are unlikely to be tempted by the Beaconsfield Wetherspoon's.

Of far more concern is the result of a survey which reveals that 31% of drivers admit to "head nodding" or micro sleeping while at the wheel. 7% have actually fallen asleep. 49% of responders said they had driven with fewer than 5 hours' sleep.

The survey of 1000 drivers was carried out by the road safety charity Brake and Direct Line Insurance.

****Don't forget AGM on Saturday 8th March 2014****

Annual General Meeting

You are cordially invited by the group committee to the 10th Annual General Meeting of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists which this year is being held at 2:00pm on Saturday 8th March 2014 at the Bracken Trust, Cefnlllys Lane, Llandrindod Wells, LD1 5LJ. This is to enable the trustees of the group to present their annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2013 for approval by the members and also to conduct an election.

This is your opportunity to find out how we have spent your money and to question the committee on its activities. We are nothing without our members and we need support and guidance on what we should be doing for the groups and your benefit. If you don't like what we are doing, come along and say so; if you do, please come and let us know. Your continued support is appreciated and we would encourage as many members as possible to become involved in the running of the group. This year we need to appoint a replacement for our Treasurer, Nigel who undertook this vital role for the last two years only to ensure that the group could continue. We would also welcome new committee members who are able to give their time and energies to the future success of the group. If you feel that you cannot play an active role, please continue your financial support by renewing your membership of MWAM. A formal notice for the AGM and nomination forms has been sent to members who do not have computer access and copies are available for download from our website for those who have this facility. If you have not received these or you would like a printed copy, please contact the secretary.

Geoff Smith

Replacing an Icon

When Nissan revealed its NV2000 Taxi for London, you could have been forgiven for thinking that the company had announced plans to paint Buckingham Palace pink or concrete over Hyde Park, such was the extent of the frenzied social media comment.

But then, the Japanese car giant had announced a rival for the traditional black cab – a vehicle that has become a part of the fabric of London life. And it's true that with round headlights and a huge chrome grille grafted on to what is clearly the slab-sided body of a van, the NV200 isn't how most people imagine a London taxi should look

The fact is, though, that the current taxi fleet is out of step with modern technology and doesn't fit in with Mayor Boris Johnson's plans to significantly reduce emissions of CO2 and particulates over the coming years.

Remember too that the definitive London taxi remains the Austin FX4, which was built between 1958 and 1997, and not its successor, the LTI (now London Taxi Company) TX. And although the newer model has now been around for 17 years, it's still saddled with a 2.5-litre diesel engine that will struggle to meet forthcoming legislation.

The regulations have evolved, but one thing that hasn't changed is the requirement for a 25ft turning circle - designed to ensure that taxis are easy to manoeuvre and don't clog up the streets when turning. Nissan had to employ some clever engineering to meet this challenge: the NV200's standard front suspension has been replaced by a design that allows greater articulation, plus the track is wider.

The NV200 is built in Barcelona, but the engineering work took place in the UK and production versions will be converted in Coventry. Prototype models retained the standard NV200's front headlights, bumper and grille, but "in response to feedback from the Mayor's office, Transport for London and other key organisations" Nissan UK created the taxi's new and distinctive "face". Inside, the NV200 has a familiar seating layout, with a three-person bench and two fold-down rear-facing chairs. The two sliding side doors allow wheelchair access from either side. It is powered by a 1.6L petrol engine.

When it is launched at the end of this year, the NV200 will become one of only three options for licensed cab drivers; the other is the Mercedes-Benz Vito, a van-based model that meets the turning circle criteria thanks to a rear-wheel steering system. At £42,370 it costs almost £10,000 more than the TX4; the NV200 is likely to be cheaper than both, at about £30,000.



Membership Renewal 2013

We thank the 80% of members who have already renewed their membership for 2014 and for their continued support. Annual subscription for group membership is due on 1st January each year and renewal notices were sent out at the end of last year requesting payment of the £10 fee. Over 75% of our membership now pay their subscription by banker's standing order and this is the preferred method to ensure that membership does not lapse. If you have not received your membership renewal notice and MWAM membership card for 2014 please let the membership secretary know and these will be sent to you again. Members are also asked to return the 'Renewal of MWAM Membership' form in the addressed envelope provided. This contains the details held on each member and affords the opportunity to amend any of these. This form should be returned to the membership secretary even if all details are correct as its primary purpose is for each member to declare that they are current members of the IAM. They are asked to enter the expiry date of their IAM membership from their IAM membership card (not MWAM) on this form. Unfortunately, unless you hold current IAM membership you are not allowed to be an associate or member of a local group and we are not permitted by the IAM to accept your renewal. However you can apply to the group committee to transfer your membership to that of Group Friend at the same annual rate of £10. This classification is intended for those who may wish to support a local group whilst not willing to commit to either IAM membership or advanced driver or rider training. If you wish to transfer to the Group Friend class of membership please indicate this when you return your form. Any member who has or lets their IAM membership lapse and has paid their MWAM subscription will be transferred to a Group Friend unless they advise otherwise. Equally if for some reason you have decided not to renew membership of our local group please return your membership card with your resignation confirmation.

Geoff Smith - Membership Secretary

Driverless cars – a small step forward

Induct Technology, a company based just outside Paris, launched an all-electric self-driving shuttle called Navia at the recent Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

You will not see a fleet of Navias gradually replacing London's Boris Bikes – not at this stage, anyway. Nor will your neighbour be buying one as a cheap-fuel vehicle for the school run – not when it costs \$250,000 (£170,000). Anyway, international regulations prevent driverless cars taking to public roads, and the Navia is as yet unable to recognise traffic signals.

But it is being billed as a 'first-mile, last-mile' solution for use around college campuses, hospitals, industrial sites or shopping malls where conventional cars are impractical or just plain unwelcome. Induct also sees potential for Navias to add to the mobility of elderly and disabled groups. It requires no maintenance and no driver, so it is 40 to 60 per cent cheaper to operate than a manned shuttle.

The prototype doesn't look particularly futuristic, although the drive components could be housed in more or less any body the customer chooses. There are no controls and no seats. As a result the top speed is restricted to 12.5mph. Passengers summon the car using a smartphone and tap their destination into an onboard tablet computer.








The Navia finds its way around using laser-based lidar (light detection and ranging) sensors, once Induct engineers have set up a baseline map of where it is going to operate. The sensors give a 200-yard sweep of the road ahead, accurate to within a centimetre, while cameras serve as the shuttle's eyes. If the Navia detects an obstacle it stops and metaphorically strokes its chin, then decides whether it is safe to proceed and the best way to do go about doing so.

Navia, which picked up the Popular Science Product of the Year at the Consumer Electronics Show, has been tested at a polytechnic in Lausanne, Switzerland, and at a technical college at Nanyang, Singapore, as well as in Oxfordshire. And despite the seemingly prohibitive price, the first four buyers, in America, are soon to be announced.



Associate Course Dates 2014

 Denotes Car Course  Denotes Motorcycle Course

Course	Start Date	Day	Times		Location
 14/1 	19/03/2014	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
 14/1 	21/05/2014	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
 14/1 	23/07/2014	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
 14/1	24/09/2014	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

Static Observer Training Dates

Date	Day	Times		Location
22/03/2014	Saturday	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
02/07/2014	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
25/10/2014	Saturday	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

Please note that all the above-published dates and venues may be subject to change due to circumstances beyond the committee's control. For the latest information, visit our web site: mwam.powys.org.uk or contact the group secretary. **Please contact our Secretary Geoff Smith if you require any further details.**

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Mid Wales Advanced Motorists (MWAM) publish this Newsletter to provide a means of communication within the group to Members and Associates. The opinions are those of the Editor and individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the view of MWAM or the Institute of Advanced Motorists to which it is affiliated.