



Mid Wales Matters



The Newsletter of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists

Web site: mwam.btck.co.uk

I AM a better road user ...

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From the Chairman

IAM
DRIVING ROAD SAFETY



This photo shows an impeccable example of the world's most famous and sought-after classic cars – the Ferrari 250 GTO. The car is said to have been in the care of one family since 1965, and is due to be auctioned during the Monterey Car Week in California. The market is buoyant, so it could well beat last year's record price, when a similar one was sold for \$52 million. Naughty, but nice!

Campervan Hotel

Volkswagen has created a "hotel" by placing six California SE camper vans on Temple Island in Henley-on-Thames. Each vehicle can sleep up to four people.

VW says guests will get the first ever chance to sleep on the beautiful island made famous by the Henley Royal Regatta and its ornamental folly. This temple boasts, among other features, wall paintings that are thought to be earliest surviving Etruscan works in Great Britain.

"Rooms" at the Hotel California meanwhile include free Wi-Fi, iPod docking stations and climate control.

Volkswagen is running Hotel California at Henley-on-Thames in conjunction with LateRooms, offering anybody the chance to book one of the six "rooms". And if you miss out this time then fear not - the hotel is touring the country and so is destined for what are described as other "adventurous locations" around the UK.

Haynes Motor Museum Discount

I was pleasantly surprised to discover on a visit last month that the Haynes International Motor Museum in Sparkford, Somerset gives a 25% discount off their normal entrance fees on production of your current IAM Membership Card. It's worth a visit, details at <http://www.haynesmotormuseum.com/>

Geoff Smith

Should you keep your diesel car?

Boris Johnson, mayor of London, could be about to increase the London congestion charge for diesel vehicles in order to lower pollution in the capital by pushing drivers towards cleaner petrol and electric models. But does it hold wider implications for motorists who run, or are thinking of buying, a diesel car?

"Not if I don't drive in London," would be the obvious answer, but where the capital goes others towns and cities tend to follow.

Oxford already has a low emission zone for buses, which could be extended to other vehicles, and at least 20 other cities are considering congestion charges of their own. These include Leicester, Sheffield, Birmingham and Bristol. While these might not penalise diesel cars specifically to begin with, it could just be a matter of time.

The current situation is the result of legislation over the past 15 or so years that was intended to lower carbon emissions by pushing people towards diesel. As a result of government tax incentives, not to mention huge improvements in the driveability of diesel cars, sales have exploded.

"In the last 15 years we've seen dieselisation of the car fleet, switching from under 10 percent of the market to more than half," Matthew Pencharz, the mayor of London's senior environment advisor, told us in May this year. "But diesel has exacerbated greatly the air quality problem in London."

The comments came at the same time as the London Mayor's office released figures showing that diesels emit the bulk of emissions that endanger health, with cars (including private-hire taxis) contributing to 39 percent of smog-forming nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), 28 percent of related oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and 54 percent of PM₁₀ particulate matter

The solution? "A bit less diesel and a bit more petrol," said Pencharz.

Hence the latest proposal, which could come into force as early as 2020 and mean that diesel drivers would pay a minimum of £20 to enter the congestion charging zone. Petrol cars built before 2006 will also have to pay the additional charge, although more recent, Euro 6-compliant diesels with much lower NO_x emissions will pay the standard rate.

Of course it's not just private car ownership patterns that the London Mayor's office wants to change; plans have already been announced that by 2018 all new official Hackney Carriage taxis will be required to have an electric-only capability to cut localised emissions, and business users could see diesel incentives further reduced, too.

But what about private car owners? Should you keep that diesel, or is it time to change? The answer remains, as ever, a numbers game, where you must balance the argument between petrol versus diesel cars in terms of cost, and increasingly diesel versus hybrid.

If the constantly moving goalposts make that difficult, take comfort in the knowledge that the solution is likely to stray little from the current state of play. That being, if you cover a lot of motorway miles (at least in excess of 20,000 a year, and perhaps in the future more like 30,000) a diesel is generally going to work out as the more cost effective option. If the majority of your driving is done in a town or city, with lots of stop and start traffic, a hybrid or electric car could be worth considering.

And for anything in between, which is most people, a petrol model will remain the way to go.

Saving Money – Not The Environment

Norway, with a population of only five million, now has on its roads 35,000 electric vehicles (EVs), which also represent 14.5 per cent of new vehicle sales. Figures show another spike last month with 1,346 sales. And one of the most prized benefits of ownership is the right to drive in bus lanes.

In a central Oslo café, half a dozen electric cars parked up nearby, Marina Maneas Bakkum of Nissan, manufacturer of the electric Leaf, a five-seat family car, explains: "Our customers here aren't early adopters or even necessarily environmental evangelists, though that's important. They are ordinary working people."

The biggest attraction for many are tax breaks, incentives and perks that electric car drivers receive, said Christina Bu of the country's Electric Vehicle Association. "The small, plastic-box electric cars are a thing of the past," she said. "The uptake has nothing to do with the Norwegian psyche or love of the environment, it came when people started to realise there were huge savings to be made."

Those benefits are incredibly generous, including exemption for VAT and car tax as well as access to bus lanes, free parking, free toll-road use, free ferries and employment tax benefits. A recent study suggested this equals as much as £1,000 a year in savings over the life of an EV.

"Whiplash Away!" **

Car crash victims with minor whiplash injuries should receive medical care rather than cash in order to help combat fraud and bring down the cost of premiums generally, a major insurer has urged. Aviva estimates the move would wipe around £32 off the typical motor insurance premium and said it would also act as a strong deterrent to "crash for cash" scams, which are based around fraudsters making money by staging a motor accident in order to make false whiplash claims.

Instead of the typical £2,500 payout that someone gets for a minor whiplash injury claim, they should be offered an assessment of their injuries and treatment to help them recover, it suggests.

More than 475,000 whiplash claims were made in 2013, according to figures from the Association of British Insurers (ABI).

(* ** Fans of the musicals will recognise this subtle quote from "Calamity Jane")

The mobile scourge

Motoring experts say collisions caused by drivers making calls, texting and using social media on hand-held mobile phones will be the main cause of death on the road by next year.

Use of mobile phones at the wheel has become such a problem that Transport Minister Patrick McLoughlin wants to double the number of penalty points people receive when they are caught, from three to six.



Recent research from the RAC shows an alarming level of ignorance about the law relating to the use of hand-held phones; with 12% not knowing texting and driving is illegal and 21% not realising it is illegal to check Facebook and Twitter while driving.


In fact, there is greater awareness about the illegality of the new offences of tailgating or middle lane hogging on the motorway than texting whilst stopped in traffic, with a nevertheless disturbing 31% and 42% respectively, not knowing they have been outlawed.

Department for Transport figures reveal 17 people died in the 378 accidents caused by mobile phone use in 2012, but the true number could be as high as 213 fatalities - as many cases go down as in-car distractions instead.

According to Simon Marsh, the managing director of vehicle journey recorder firm SmartWitness, many accidents are being wrongly recorded, suggesting mobile phone use is already close to being the largest single factor in road deaths.


New Members

Congratulations and a warm welcome to the following associate who was successful in the IAM Advanced Driving  or Riding Test 

Name	Location	Observer	Date
Jan Davies 	Rhayader	Geoff Smith	June 14

Associate Course Dates 2014

 Denotes Car Course  Denotes Motorcycle Course

Course	Start Date	Day	Times		Location
 14/4	24/09/2014	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

Static Observer Training Dates

Date	Day	Times		Location
30/08/2014	Saturday	10:00 AM	1:00 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.