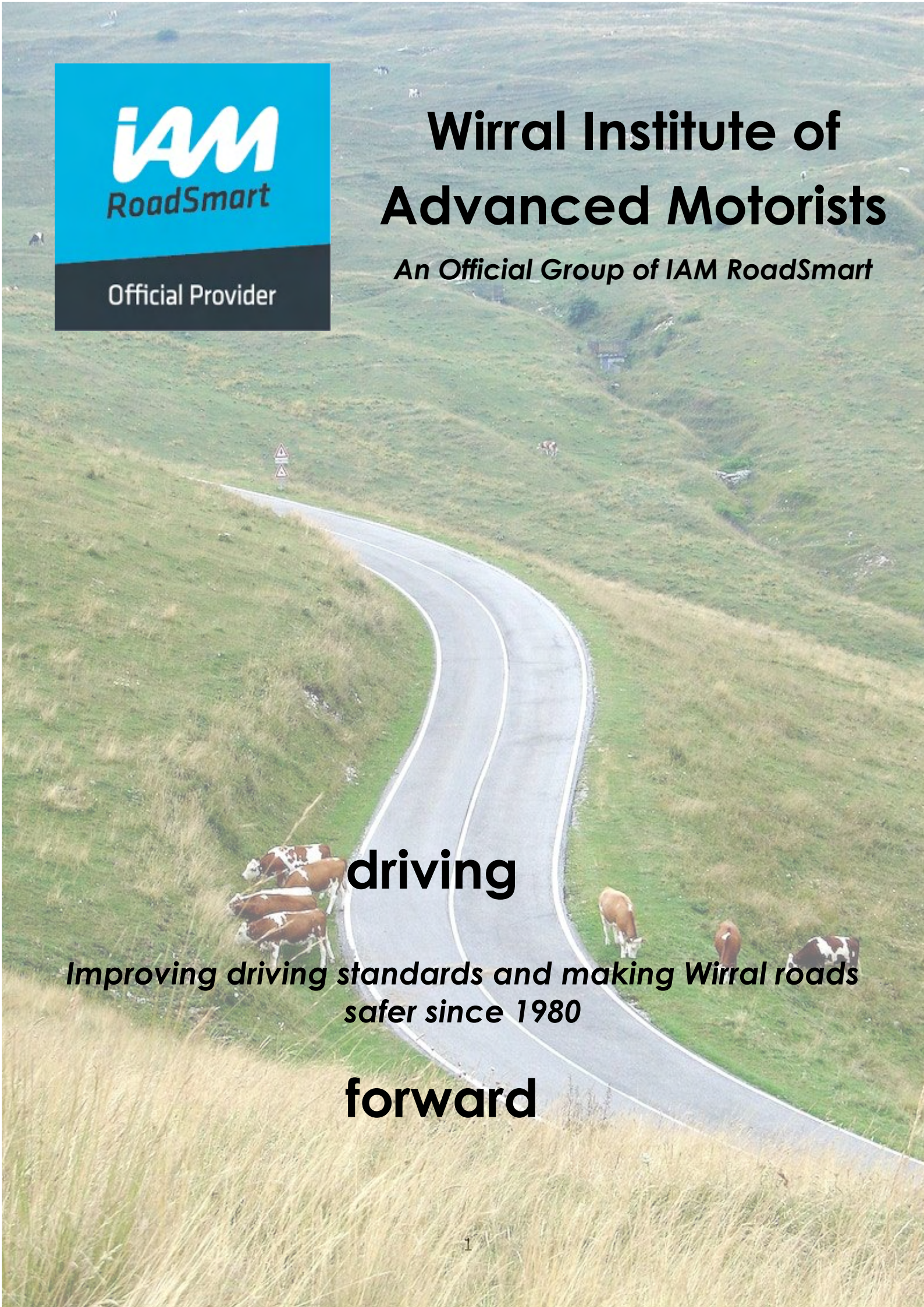


Wirral Institute of Advanced Motorists

An Official Group of IAM RoadSmart

driving

Improving driving standards and making Wirral roads safer since 1980

forward

RoadSmart

Autumn 2026

Chair's Welcome

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Wirral IAM newsletter.

Well, the weather has changed since the last newsletter – at least our gardens have recovered and are green again. Petrol prices are through the roof, making an ever-stronger case for full-EVs (though how green is the electricity we use?).

We continue to need your ideas on what you would like to see us provide to Group members like you – for example, suggestions for topics for invited speakers, Group drives, or visits to places like the British Motor Museum? Let us know.

In this issue:

- Committee update and member noticeboard
- Our Latest Advanced Drivers
- Skills focus
- Upcoming events
- Observer spotlight
- Associate Corner
- Road safety updates
- Article and photo of the month

Drive safely,

Guy Lightfoot
Chair
Wirral IAM

Committee report & Member Noticeboard

The committee continues to meet monthly via Microsoft Teams and, as before, meets face to face every quarter at the 'Community Space' at the Tesco Bidston Moss store. This facility provides local community groups with access to a free meeting room within the store.

The committee has recently been exploring several free services available through 'Google Nonprofits', a scheme that gives charities access to a range of Google services at reduced or no cost. These services have the potential to raise the profile of the group and provide additional tools to help organise events and support the administration of the group.

We have also been reviewing the data we hold to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). This involves checking all files containing personal data to confirm that the information is genuinely required and is not retained for longer than necessary. Although this is a lengthy piece of work, it will help ensure that we continue to operate in line with GDPR requirements.

In addition, we have refreshed our Facebook page and are exploring other social media platforms to increase awareness of the group. Have you joined our Facebook page?

Finally, we would like to thank all members for their continued support. Your subscriptions play an important role in helping us work towards making Wirral's roads safer for everyone.

Neil Hilton
Secretary
Wirral IAM

WAM Group meetings

We continue to hope to resurrect the indoor meetings on a quarterly basis at the Rugby Club. On the 29th September, Tony Stopforth led with the topic – Electrification of the Car Industry. Thanks to all who attended, and to Tony for a very interesting and informative presentation.

As part of future meetings, we hope to hold presentations on a variety of topics. All members and associates are invited to offer suggestions of what they may be interested in attending to hear, or if they would be interested in hosting a talk/presentation. This could be anything car related, hobbies, or any areas of interest. **Please do email the newsletter editor directly via paulhedwards@sky.com with any expressions of interest or ideas**.

Our Latest Advanced Drivers

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new Associates this quarter:

- Mr Richie Minshull
- Molly Poulter
- Mr Keith Bickley
- Mr Jonathan Geddes

We trust you will all enjoy and benefit from your Associate membership and we look forward to reporting your Advanced Driving test passes in the near future.

And we are absolutely delighted to congratulate:

Name	Date	Category	Observer
Stuart Camsey	Sep 2026	Pass	Davinder Lotay
Chris Stadames	July 2026	Pass	Derek Jeffries
Rob Davis	July 2026	Masters	Guy Lightfoot

Very well done on achieving the IAM Advanced Driving qualification 🚙 👐 🏆

This now brings IAM Wirral membership numbers to

Full	Associates	Group Friends	Hon Members	Total
121	14	2	1	138

Liz Scarff
Associate Co-Ordinator

Skill Focus (Reminder) of the Month

The System of Car Control

This month we're focusing on:

IPSGA

- Information
- **Position**
- Speed
- *Gear*
- Acceleration

Advanced drivers should:

- ***Always consider safety first***

  - *Do not relinquish safety for any other perceived advantage*
  - *Position to see and be seen*

- ***Be aware of potential hazards on both sides of their vehicle***

  - *To the nearside – cyclists, pedestrians, parked vehicles and their occupants are all examples of who and what might present a hazard, as are other drivers pulling out of junctions*
  - *To the offside – there is potential conflict with oncoming traffic*

- ***Assess their speed when moving to the nearside or the offside***

  - *For example, when it isn't possible to allow a door-width of room when passing a parked car, drivers should slow down so they have time to react if a door were to open*

- ***Be particularly aware of cyclists and motorcyclists when adopting their position***

  - *For example, they may be unseen to the nearside or filtering past on the offside*

- ***Position themselves at least two seconds behind any vehicle they are following***

  - *This allows enough time to respond if the vehicle ahead slows down. It gives them better vision beyond it, and enables them to develop an overtake, if appropriate*

- ***Take up the appropriate position for turning, depending on the size of their vehicle, the road width and layout, and other traffic***

  - *To turn left – advanced drivers should usually position themselves in the centre of the left-hand lane on the approach to a junction*
  - *To turn right - advanced drivers should usually position themselves towards the centre of the road, paying particular attention to oncoming traffic. If in any doubt, they should stay away from the centre white line*
  - *When stopping behind other traffic -advanced drivers should use the 'tyres on tarmac' guide*

Good advanced drivers observe, anticipate and plan ahead, effectively creating a safe working space or flexible "safety bubble" around their car the size and the shape of the 'bubble' needs to be varied to prioritise hazards

• Drivers should stop far enough back that they can move around the vehicle in front without reversing

- *As a guide, this is a point where they can see the wheels of that vehicle meet the road (hence 'tyres on tarmac'). This will also prove safer if they are struck from behind*

Practical tips

• Hold the steering wheel in a way that allows for a full and accurate range of movement

- *Maintain a light grip, ready to exert a tighter grip if required*
- *Keep arms slightly bent to prevent accidental movement of the steering wheel*

• Demonstrate a smooth steering action which allows for easy use of the other controls

- *Use a steering method that is comfortable and allows for a full range of movement with little physical effort*
- *Pull-Push steering enables safe and efficient use of other controls*
- *Fixed grip steering is an option for smaller movements of the wheel as long as the arms don't cross*
- *Advanced drivers should also be aware that a comfortable seating position is important for accurate steering*

• Steer the vehicle accurately to maintain a stable, safe and appropriate course with the capacity to change direction, if required

- *Advanced drivers should be aware that the type of vehicle, any power assistance and the mechanical set up may influence their steering method*
- *A straight course should require little or no steering input*
- *Positive inputs will be required to substantially alter their position or turn their vehicle*
- *Accurate and consistent outcomes are the most important factor*

Upcoming Events & Training 2026

Date	Event	Location
22nd November 2026	IAM Run Fest	Silverstone F1 Circuit

IAM Run Fest 2026 !

Start your engines, we're heading back to Silverstone!

After a hugely successful first year, IAM RoadSmart is thrilled to be returning as an **official charity partner** of Run Fest Silverstone on **Sunday 22 November 2026.**

Once again, this is your chance to run on the legendary **Silverstone F1™ circuit** and raise vital funds for safer roads across the UK. Same iconic venue. Same exclusive charity places. Bigger impact. #IAMalifesaver

This isn't just a run, it's a bucket-list experience! You'll take on the track where motorsport legends like Lewis Hamilton and Michael Schumacher have raced, powering along famous sections like **Stowe, Vale and the Hangar Straight**, all while supporting IAM RoadSmart's mission to promote safer journeys for all.

A limited number of **free spots** are available for supporters interested in running for IAM RoadSmart and committing to a minimum fundraising target (variable per distance).

Choose from three options:

- The **5K** blends challenge and accessibility, making it the ideal choice for runners of all abilities. It's the perfect distance if you want to connect with fellow participants while enjoying the thrill of running on the legendary Formula 1™ tarmac. ***Minimum fundraising amount***: £175. ***Age limit:*** *11+*

- The **10K** distance offers the perfect balance of speed and endurance. It's great for amateur runners, while more experienced athletes can challenge their timing. Enjoy the rush of running at a world-famous F1™ venue. ***Minimum fundraising amount***: £250. ***Age limit:*** *15+*

- The **Half Marathon** is a true test of endurance and determination. The flat and fast Silverstone track is perfect if you're hunting that final PB of the season, or if you're a new runner who wants to test this classic distance. ***Minimum fundraising amount***: £350. ***Age limit:*** *17+*

What you'll receive:

- A free **IAM RoadSmart sports t-shirt** to wear on the day (shipped after you create your fundraising page)
- Fundraising resources and support
- A finisher medal and a free Runna app trial (provided by Run Fest Silverstone)

Ready? Choose your distance and sign up for a free spot now! After signing up, you'll receive further instructions to set up your fundraising page and the official event registration.
Still unsure? Contact us at fundraising@iam.org.uk

#IAMalifesaver #RunforIAMRoadSmart #SaferJourneysStartHere

Register Now

Masters scheme

How long is it since you passed the IAM Advanced test?

Are your skills still up to scratch? If you think so, would you like to take them to a higher level? The IAM RoadSmart Master's scheme is designed to take you there and help you to enhance and develop your ability even further.

The Master's test is based on IAM Advanced test principles, with reference to the police driver's manual "Roadcraft", so safety and legality are foremost, implemented using IPSGA. It's difficult to define how the standard differs from the "standard" IAM Advanced test. Perhaps added "sparkle", assurance and safe progress best describes it.

It is delivered in one-to one sessions with a local Master's Mentor on a variety of roads, with an emphasis on challenging country roads. The examiner is usually the IAM Area Service Delivery Manager (ADSM) with the test being on unfamiliar out-of-area roads, with commentary / spoken thoughts throughout. Many regard it as equivalent to the police advanced driver standard (minus the high-speed pursuit element). Requalification is every five years.

The programme is not cheap, currently at £325, but from personal experience I can guarantee you would find it hugely rewarding and would learn a great deal.

If you are interested and want to register, call IAM RoadSmart on 0300 303 1134. Just fancy a chat before you decide? Call me first on 07823 479214.

Guy Lightfoot,
Wirral Group Chair,
Master Mentor

Observers Spotlight

Observer Name: Simon Richards

IAM Member Since: 1987

Why I Volunteer: Having spent 30 years responding to the consequences of road traffic accidents, my focus is to help guide people to be the safest drivers they can be.

Favourite Driving Tip: Don't forget the 'Y' part of the POWDERY check - make sure you are safe to drive.

A 'First' for Wirral's roads.

I sincerely hope that we are all familiar with the various pedestrian crossing facilities that we see on our roads but do know the subtle differences?

The Zebra crossing is an easy one to distinguish with its black and white stripes but do you know what the others are? Can you tell your Puffin from your Pelican, or even Pegasus?

A Pelican is the traditional light controlled crossing with the flashing amber for cars and green for pedestrians but what is a 'Puffin'? Well, this is a '**P**edestrian **U**ser **F**riendly **In**telligent crossing'. It is strictly for pedestrians and is the type with sensors to detect the presence of a pedestrian which should allow that pedestrian sufficient time to cross the road.

A Toucan is one where **two can** cross that is to say, it is for both pedestrians and cyclists. These are usually wider to allow the pedestrians and cyclists space to avoid each other.

A Pegasus crossing is one that can be used by pedestrians and horse riders and is usually characterised by a lower level request button for pedestrians and a higher level control / request button that a horse rider can reach without dismounting.

Now for the new one. Perhaps observers can test their associates by suggesting that they start their spoken thought as they approach this one…… Hadlow Road (B5151) in WILLASTON is the first place in the U.K. to have a 'Trixie' crossing installed and it opened this month. The name derives from the fact that there are three (tri) types of user in addition to the road traffic.

The crossing is at the point where the disused level crossing on the Wirral Way crosses Hadlow Road, next to the station and it is intended for Pedestrians, Cyclists and Horse Riders.

We have all the types of crossing on our Wirral roads. Do you know where they are, especially the Pegasus?

Simon Richards,
Chief Observer

Associate Corner

What the examiner is looking for… based on my experience of taking tests and being an Observer.

This advice comes from both sides of the passenger seat: my experience as an Observer and as an Associate who has taken several IAM tests and completed the Master's qualification.

First things first: the drive must be safe and legal. That means no speeding, no red-light adventures and no crossing solid white lines—you know the drill.

The examiner will begin with a quick walkaround, so give the car its moment to shine: it should be clean, roadworthy and ready to go. You will also be asked to complete the document declaration and take an eyesight check—for fairly obvious reasons.

They may ask why you took the course and will usually try to put you at ease. In my experience, examiners genuinely want candidates to succeed. We are all volunteers, and they are pleased that you have chosen to improve your driving.
The drive should be built around IPSGA. If the letters still look like alphabet soup, or you are unsure how to apply the system, you are not quite ready for the test yet. The examiner is likely to ask something like "describe the IAM system of car control" and you should not simply refer to IPSGA but say that it's a systematic technique, where those elements are considered and applied in that order, if possible, without overlapping the elements.

Carry out the pre-drive check you have been taught and do it without being prompted. I prefer POWDERY, followed by a cockpit check and a brief introduction to the vehicle—particularly when it is an EV with a few unfamiliar tricks up its sleeve.

Everyone reacts differently to a test: some rise to the occasion, while others arrive with enough nerves to power the car. The examiner understands this and will use the first five to ten minutes to

assess your driving while you settle in. They will usually keep conversation to a minimum and give directions in good time. If you see them writing, do not panic—they often note the good parts too. If you think you have made a mistake, do not let it hijack the rest of the drive. No drive is perfect; take a breath, reset and focus on what comes next.

Test routes vary. On the Wirral, you can expect a mixture of roads that may include the M53, dual carriageways, corners and bends, and town driving. You might also be asked to reverse into a marked bay; if that does not happen during the route, expect to reverse into a bay when parking at the end. Be prepared to perform or describe a moving brake test.

Keep a close eye on speed limits, especially where they change, and watch out for speed creep. Use aids such as the speed limiter when helpful, but do not lean on them for the entire test—the examiner will also want to see good accelerator sense. On a long 20 mph stretch, such as through Caldy, the limiter can be a useful extra pair of hands. Let the car's technology help rather than hinder and make sure you can operate it quickly without taking your eyes off the road for any significant time.

The examiner is looking for a composed, fluent drive that applies IPSGA and shows you always have a plan. Each hazard should be handled calmly and thoughtfully from start to finish. Easier said than done, of course, but your Observer should have helped you practise this during the drives leading up to the test.

Commentary—or spoken thoughts—can either interrupt the flow or make the drive considerably stronger. Aim to demonstrate about ten (or a couple of five) minutes of concise commentary, using the Information phase to guide what you say and do. The examiner will tell you when to start & stop the commentary. Do not simply announce, "Crossroads ahead," and leave it there. Explain the plan: are vehicles likely to emerge, and what will you do if a driver has not seen you? Bring together everything your Observer has taught you, and give a clear, practical demonstration of IPSGA at a straightforward junction or roundabout. The examiner will appreciate it.

It helps to have a few stock phrases ready to use, for example, on the approach to a roundabout, "Preparing to stop but looking (for information that allows me) to go" and before braking, "mirror". Don't just say what you're doing, like "changing down to third", because the examiner can see that for themselves. Include the reason or the plan, like "parked cars ahead, taking a more flexible gear". On bendy rural roads, the examiner will be looking for the application of limit point analysis. If you're doing commentary at the time, refer to limit point static / moving / matched and make sure you include, at least once, the underpinning point of it all – that "I must be able to stop in the distance I can see to be clear on my side of the road".

When the drive finishes—usually within the hour—you will receive a debrief and, hopefully, the welcome news that you have passed. Better still, you may have earned a First. Then comes the satisfying part: deciding what is next, whether that is becoming an Observer, working towards the Master's qualification, or simply enjoying the results of all that effort.

Finally, remember that there is no such thing as a perfect drive. We all keep learning, and the occasional mistake is often the lesson that sticks.

Here is a useful video link that you may find useful: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9boDxN3KRM

Tony Stopforth, with contributions from Guy Lightfoot (thank you)

Associate Feedback

We are seeking, and would very much appreciate, your feedback and thoughts on your experience as an Associate member of the Wirral Advanced Motorists Group.

How was the enrolment process? Have communications been as you were expecting? Has is it been clear about expectations and what is involved with working towards observed drives? Have you encountered any problems in your journey working towards becoming an Advanced Driver? Please do email the newsletter editor at paulhedwards@sky.com - All thoughts are feedback are welcome and will help to shape the future of the WAM Associate process. Some recent feedback we have received include

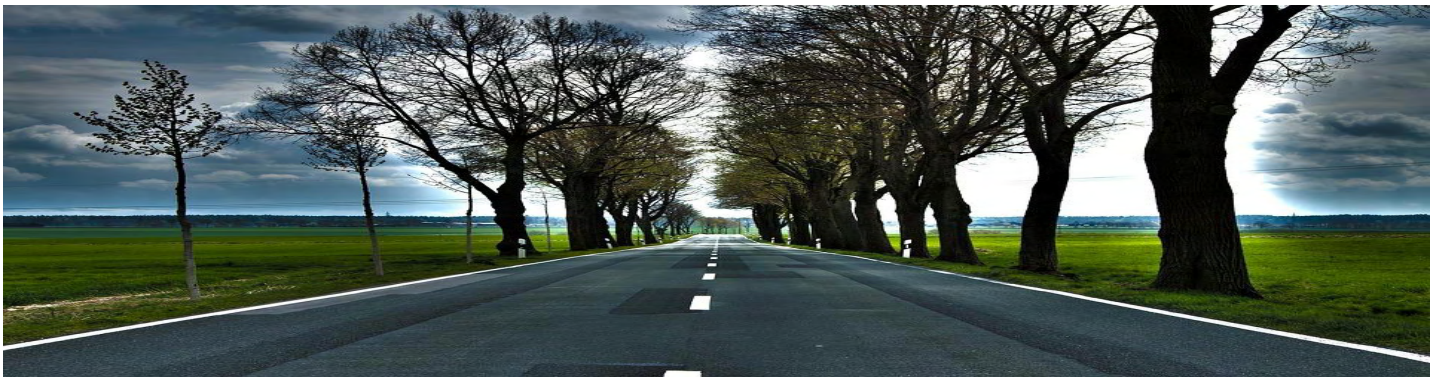
"I thought the course was far beyond my expectations in a very good way and I am extremely grateful to the volunteers who made it happen."

"Simon Richards was an amazing mentor and a pleasure to have guiding me"

"I thoroughly enjoyed the course. I really appreciate all the help and support I received from my observer Davinder Lotay. He was very professional, he was calm, he was complimentary and constructive on my driving when appropriate."

As ever, don't forget – it is your responsibility to maintain contact with your Observer, who will assist with organising convenient runs to help with the development of your advanced driving skills

Wirral Roads News & Safety Update



Causeway one.network

[Local roadworks information]

WirralGlobe

[Live Traffic & Travel News]

***Remember**: Advanced driving is not about making maximum progress, but the level of progress required for the particular journey safely in the given conditions*

M53 Bridges Work

As you may be aware, there are major works underway on M53 bridges, with more planned up until approximately 2029. This will include an upcoming and complete closure of Upton Road over the M53 for 12 to 15 months. Please use the link below for updated information and route diversions.

https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/north-west/m53-bridges/

Five risks on the road this autumn which you might not be familiar with

After one of the hottest summers on record, some of us may be looking forward to some cooler weather. The change in season always brings different road hazards but here we look at some of those that people may be less familiar with as:

Reduced grip because of leaves

Leaves on the line will disrupt train services but damp or wet leaves falling onto the road surface means a significant deterioration in grip for drivers because of the tannins associated with leaf fall. For bikers, wet leaves can be like riding on ice. Autumn is the season to start increasing your stopping distances to counter those slippery leaves.

Return of condensation

Colder mornings yet warm days are perfect conditions for condensation forming in the vehicle and all the associated visual risks attached to poor visibility. Give yourself extra time in the mornings to clear your front and back windscreens. Let your climate control do the heavy lifting and avoid using your hands to clear your windscreen, unless you enjoy seeing smears across it while driving.

Regular screen cleaning on the inside will help your windscreen demist more quickly. For riders, you should invest in a good quality demisting spray for visors.

More wildlife risk

Animals such as foxes and squirrels tend to start 'stocking up' for winter which means they are highly active during autumn months. This creates more risk for drivers – not just on rural roads – but on all roads. This is where good hazard perception and effective speed management are vital because you'd rather not slam on your brakes or swerve to avoid hitting an animal in the road as this may put you and others in more danger.

Fog

Many tend to associate fog with winter and spring, but autumn tends to be the month it returns with a vengeance. Wet surfaces and cooler ground temperatures are key ingredients to mist and fog forming.

Checking that your lights are in good working order and set at the correct aim are essential parts of driving in the winter so bring those inspections forward to September is smart move.

Clock changes

Statistics reveal the clocks going back on the last weekend of October tends to coincide with a spike in road traffic collisions as darker evenings, the school pick-up and the rush hour mix for the first time. We recommend giving yourself additional time for your journey in the week the clocks go back to ensure you can adjust accordingly to the changing conditions, while also reducing stress in the event of unplanned delays. Drivers and riders should also be prepared for glare from oncoming headlights.

🤝 Community & Outreach

Interested in a free taster session or mature driver review?

Although you may have passed the IAM test, a free and informal session with one of our senior Observers will ensure your skills don't go rusty. It's confidential and doesn't affect your membership status.

Visit: wirraladvancedmotorists.co.uk and use the Contact Us form or emai

🔍 Articles of the Month

REACTION: IAM RoadSmart responds to new data revealing road collisions cost Britain more than £50bn a year

IAM RoadSmart Director of Policy and External Communications Nicholas Lyes said: "Aside from the emotional devastation caused by road collisions, the cost to Britain in terms of lost output, insurance, damage, and medical costs is estimated to be more than £50bn a year. We call on the Government to be ambitious as it implements its road safety strategy as these figures show why investment in measures that to prevent collisions and improve driving standards should be seen not simply as a road safety priority, but as an economic one too."

Read more here - Road safety statistics: data tables - GOV.UK

Passenger restrictions top wish list of measures to improve young driver safety

Passenger restrictions top wish list of measures to improve young driver safety

- More than half (57%) of drivers back nighttime passenger restrictions for newly qualified drivers
- A third (32%) of those aged 17-24 support this measure but prefer additional training options

More than half of drivers (57%) would back introducing nighttime restrictions on newly qualified drivers carrying similar aged passengers to improve road safety, including a third (32%) of those aged 17-24, according to new research published today.

A survey of 1,045 motorists undertaken by road safety charity IAM RoadSmart found that night restrictions were among the most popular measures. Almost half (44%) of motorists would back a curfew on nighttime driving for new drivers between midnight and 5am, though far fewer (21%) of those aged 17-24 would support this.

Other supported measures included mandatory telematics insurance, backed by 29% of all respondents. Mandatory training after passing their test - similar to schemes such as the DVSA's

Pass Plus or IAM RoadSmart's Young Driver Assessment – is endorsed by a pragmatic 44% of drivers. Moreover, this option is the most popular policy among 17-24-year-olds, favoured by 42% of this age group.

The UK Government's preferred policy of introducing a mandatory learning period for novice drivers, as outlined in the road safety strategy was backed by over a third (36%) of respondents and crucially was one of the more favoured options among younger motorists (34% of younger drivers backed this).
Overall, just under one in ten (8%) of drivers of all ages said they wouldn't endorse any of the measures put forward, indicating strong public support for improving the current approach to learning how to drive.

The research also showed that most felt that, apart from younger drivers themselves, parents and guardians had the biggest influence on helping to reduce serious collisions among this age group, a view championed by 53% of motorists. Meanwhile, more than half of drivers (59%) would support exempting Insurance Premium Tax (IPT), levied at a standard rate of 12% on all policies, for those taking up telematics products in their first year.

Young drivers (17-24) make up around 6% of all licence holders but are involved in around a quarter (24%) of all fatal and serious collisions. Separate research conducted by IAM RoadSmart also showed that despite making up only 5% of all licence holders, those aged 17-24 received 18% of all drug driving licence endorsements.

Recent coverage of social media content has also shone a light on dangerous driving trends, again highlighting safety culture among some younger drivers. IAM RoadSmart's 2025 Road Safety Report found that one in seven (15%) of drivers aged 17-24 were recording videos or taking pictures with phones while driving.

Research has shown that restrictions on similar aged passengers could have one of the greatest impacts on reducing serious casualties among younger drivers because of the effect it can have in reducing distraction.

International evidence of Graduated Driver Licensing has shown that the policy, in one form or another, can reduce collisions and impact trauma involving young drivers by 20-40%.

Nicholas Lyes, Director of Policy and External Communications at IAM RoadSmart said: "It's often thought that measures to keep younger people safer on the roads are unpopular with that age group, but the evidence suggests many are far more pragmatic and are open to additional learning and a graduated approach to becoming full licence holders, which is encouraging."

"The Government's road safety strategy focuses on a minimum learning period; however, this is only part of the solution as it's just as important that they have the right skills and experience. Whether this means some post-test restrictions or additional training, younger drivers will need to not only see the benefit in their driving standards but also benefit from lower insurance premiums compared to the eye-watering amounts they face today once they pass.
"Ultimately, the goal should always be zero deaths and serious injuries. We know only too well that behind every loss of life on our roads is a grieving family, and any measures that help equip young drivers with the skills, experience and confidence to stay safe behind the wheel deserve serious consideration."

Protect Young Drivers is a growing UK initiative bringing together road safety organisations, emergency services, insurers, researchers and bereaved families with a shared goal of reducing deaths and serious injuries involving young and novice drivers.
Rebecca Morris, Communications and Engagement Lead at Protect Young Drivers, said: "Too many people are being killed and seriously injured in crashes involving young drivers, and the evidence tells us there are practical, proven steps we can take to reduce that risk.
"These findings are encouraging because they show that young people themselves recognise the need for change.

"The Government's commitment to consult on a minimum learning period is welcome, but we also need to focus on what happens after the test, when newly qualified drivers are at their most vulnerable.

"International evidence shows that a graduated approach can significantly reduce collisions involving young drivers. Passenger restrictions, better training, telematics and support from parents can all play a part in helping young people gain experience more safely and become safer drivers for life."

In July 2026, IAM RoadSmart, working with the RAC, RAC Foundation and ECM Research Solutions produced free resources for parents and novice drivers, including parental guidance, practice scorecards and agreements.

With thanks to the IAM for the above articles.

Photo of the Month

Taking the Long Way
My 1967 semi-automatic Volkswagen Beetle
By Davinder Lotay

The 1967 Beetle - a rare semi-automatic with no clutch pedal.

Some cars are about outright performance; others are about the way they make even an ordinary journey feel special. My 1967 Volkswagen Beetle 1500cc is very much in the second camp.

I have owned the car for two years. It has had some restoration over its life and, most importantly, it is a solid car that I can use and enjoy rather than simply admire. It is lightly modified, with a slight drop at the front and a set of alloy wheels, but the changes are subtle and do not take away from the character that drew me to the Beetle in the first place.

What makes this particular car especially unusual is its rare VW Autostick/Saxomat-type semi-automatic transmission arrangement. There is no clutch pedal. Instead, the clutch is pneumatically controlled and is activated when I take hold of the gear lever. The clutch disengages, I select the gear, release the lever and the clutch re-engages. It is not an automatic in the modern sense and still asks the driver to be involved. That slightly unconventional process soon becomes second nature and is a big part of the car's charm.
How it works:
• No Clutch Pedal: The system completely eliminates the need for a clutch pedal in the footwell.
• Dual Operation: It combines a centrifugal clutch (which automatically engages and disengages the clutch based on engine RPM so the car won't stall at a stop) with a vacuum-operated servo (triggered by an electrical switch embedded inside the gearshift knob when you touch or pull the lever).
• Shifting: The driver still manually selects gears using the conventional H-pattern gear lever, but pressing the clutch is replaced by simply touching the shifter.

Driving it is a complete contrast to almost anything modern. There are no electronic systems working away in the background and very little to isolate you from what the car is doing. The pace is more measured, the controls feel mechanical and you find yourself listening to the engine, preserving momentum and thinking further ahead. It is a car that encourages you to take your time rather than rush.

That also gives it an interesting connection with advanced driving. Good observation and anticipation become very obvious in an older car. Reading the road early, planning for junctions and gradients, keeping inputs smooth and showing mechanical sympathy all make the drive more enjoyable. You cannot simply rely on modern technology to tidy things up for you.

For me, though, the Beetle is first and foremost about nostalgia and involvement. The shape, the sound and the wonderfully analogue nature of it take you back to a very different era of motoring. It may not cover ground with the effortless speed of a modern car, but that is precisely the point. Every journey feels like an occasion - and it nearly always leaves me smiling.

AT A GLANCE
Year: 1967
Owned: 2 years
Transmission: Rare VW Autostick/Saxomat-type semi-automatic; no clutch pedal
Character: Analogue, nostalgic and involving
Changes: Slight front drop and alloy wheels
"It encourages observation, smoothness and mechanical sympathy."

Precision, Balance and Character
My 2002 Porsche 911 (996.2) Carrera 4S
By Davinder Lotay

Polar Silver, wide-bodied and still looking purposeful more than two decades on.

I have owned my 2002 Porsche 911 Carrera 4S for eight years, and it remains one of those cars that feels special before the engine has even started. Finished in Polar Silver with a Metropole interior, the 996.2 C4S has the purposeful wide-bodied shape that, for me, gives this generation of 911 so much presence without being over-styled.
The car is a Tiptronic and remains deliberately close to standard. The engine has been rebuilt using performance pistons, together with stainless-steel headers and silencers. The suspension has also been updated, but kept to standard specification. I have never wanted to modify it simply for the sake of it; the aim has been to preserve the character of the C4S while making sure the important mechanical parts are right.
Where my classic Beetle asks you to slow down and work with the car, the Porsche is about precision, balance, grip and performance. The controls feel much more immediate, the car responds cleanly to small inputs and the four-wheel-drive system gives it tremendous composure. There is a reassuring sense that the car is working with you, particularly when the road begins to flow.

The Tiptronic suits the way I use the car. It can be relaxed when required, but I can still take more control when the road and conditions allow. The performance is always there, yet one of the pleasures of the 911 is that you do not have to drive it hard to appreciate it. The steering, the flat-six soundtrack and the way the car settles into a corner all provide enjoyment at sensible road speeds.
From an advanced-driving perspective, a capable car like the C4S is also a good reminder that performance does not reduce the need for observation and restraint - it increases it. Speed can build very quickly, so early planning, smooth acceleration and braking, accurate positioning and reading what is developing well ahead are every bit as important as the car's mechanical abilities. Grip and four-wheel drive are useful reserves, but they are never a substitute for judgement.

After eight years, the Porsche still feels like an event whenever I take it out. It represents a very different side of my enthusiasm for cars: quicker, more precise and far more capable than the Beetle, but just as rewarding in its own way. The two cars could hardly be more different, yet both remind me why I enjoy driving in the first place.

AT A GLANCE
Year: 2002
Owned: 8 years
Transmission: Tiptronic
Finish: Polar Silver / Metropole interior
Mechanical: Rebuilt engine, performance pistons, stainless headers and silencers
"Performance does not reduce the need for observation and restraint - it increases it."

Please do continue to send through your own photos to paulhedwards@sky.com of anything car and driving related, with a short paragraph, that I hope to be able to include in future Wirral IAM newsletters.

Thank you.

Paul Edwards
Newsletter Editor

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Wirral Advanced Motorists Group was formed in 1980, having previously been part of the Merseyside Group. A Registered Charity run entirely by unpaid volunteers, our main function is to improve driving standards and to advance the cause of Road Safety. Affiliated to the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM), also a Registered Charity, we are completely self-funded.

Wirral Group works hard to inform local people of the advantages gained by becoming an Advanced Motorist. We arrange open days regularly throughout Wirral to promote Advanced Driving.

How can the Group help me?

We provide advice on improving your driving and preparation for the IAM Test. This guidance is given by Observers (an Advanced driver who has received training and has passed a nationally recognised (IMI) Observer assessment).

If you require any further information, then please contact any member of the Committee or use the contact us via the website, link at the top of the page.

Wirral Group of Advanced Motorists - affiliated to IAM Roadsmart. Registered charity number 512232 (England)