



FIFE IAM

Kingdom of Fife Group IAM, helping improve road safety in Fife and beyond.

February 2022

Happy New Year

Happy New Year to all our members. I hope you had a good break and are back enjoying the mild winter we are having so far.

We normally take December off in terms of working as a committee but we did meet for Christmas lunch and I was glad to see many of our members there. As always, the Dunnikier Golf Club didn't disappoint and we had an excellent lunch. If you didn't make it this time, consider coming along next time as I'm sure you won't be disappointed.

Group updates

With the Christmas break and the recent Government restrictions we've haven't been too active in terms of observing but we did have one motorbike pass in December so congratulations to Martin and their observer for another successful pass.

We also have a couple of new committee members and some new ideas that we'll discuss further in the newsletter.

Santa run & your feedback

Over the last few years, the group has been organising a toy run to the Children's ward at Victoria Hospital - led by Santa and his biker elves.

Amazingly, the group raised over £700 and purchased toys that were then delivered to the hospital. More on this inside.

We are now asking if you think we should continue to support the children's ward for the Easter run or would you rather we supported a different charity?

You can contact us via social media or other contact details are at the back of this newsletter.

Christmas drink drive campaign

Between 1 December & 3 January, Police Scotland carried out a drink/drug driving campaign and caught 628 drivers for drug or driving offences. That was 21% of all the people they targeted during the time period. The [article](#) does state that the campaign was intelligence led so that high percentage was as a result of information provided by colleagues, friends family etc.

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Lighting up your life

One of our committee members, Eric Hill, sheds a little light on cats eyes on the A92.

Our Treasurer recently demonstrated some excellent observation skills by noticing that the cats eyes on a section of the A92 appeared to be illuminated without the headlights shining on them. As he knows that I work in this area, he asked me about them.



The product he was talking about was solar road studs. Similar to normal road studs, the ones used on the A92 and also seen at the M90 J10 Craighend interchange when coming from Broxden and also seen at numerous junctions on the A1 through the borders also feature a solar panel on their topside that powers a battery and LED in the colour required.

The result is that road users can see the road alignment ahead, beyond the usual scope of dipped beam headlights.

A further advantage of the type of solar road stud being used is that they have a very low profile unlike the traditional "Halifax Cats Eye" and standard reflective road stud. This makes less noise when over run, and less feedback on the vehicle. The former being a significant issue in rural areas where sound travels, and the former being a significant safety factor for motorcycles and bicycles.

These studs can also be hard wired such as the type used at Sheriffhall and Old Craighall roundabouts on the A720 Edinburgh City Bypass. In both instances they are used to improve lane delineation on large roundabouts.

Highway Code changes

As a reminder, the new Highway code changes that we talked about in the previous newsletter have recently come into place in late January. There has been a lot of publicity around it but just in case you haven't seen it yet, I'll give another quick reminder here.

I found this [publication](#) from the Government highlighting the changes to each rule so you can check that out for more information too.

The most talked about change so far is the hierarchy of road users, meaning that those most likely to cause harm e.g. cars, trucks etc. should take responsibility to protect those more vulnerable road users about them.

Another change is if a pedestrian is waiting to cross a junction that a car / cyclist is turning into, the pedestrian should be given right of way to cross and the other road user should give way.

Cyclists are also advised to position themselves more centrally in quiet roads or in slow moving traffic to make them more visible but should allow enough space for vehicles to overtake when appropriate.

Apparently not so smart

This [article](#) from the RAC shows that there is still some way to go with Smart Motorways

A Smart motorway (or an Intelligent Transport System seeing as we are in Scotland) uses technology to control the flow of traffic and ultimately reduce congestion at peak times. There are several types of Smart motorway that operate in the UK but they are all controlled by the overhead gantry with variable speed limits enforced by speed cameras. Some of the motorways control speed or add extra lanes to help manage traffic flow.



History of Smart motorways

The first Smart motorway was introduced in 2006 on the M42 Motorway in the West Midlands. It allowed the use of the hard shoulder and increased the speed limit to 60mph (previously 50) to help increase journey times and reduce vehicle emissions.

The thinking behind the system is that rather than widening roads to deal with the volume of traffic at peak times, technology could be used to manage rush hour and negate the need for building extensions to the motorway network.

There are 16 variations of smart motorways being used within the UK at this current time.

Smart motorways in Scotland

We should be very familiar with Smart motorways (or Intelligent Transport Systems) as we have an example of one on our doorstep. [Safety Cameras Scotland](#) tells us that over 13 miles of the M90 fall under the Intelligent Transport System of variable speed limits. The ITS starts at the Halbeath junction and operates all the way to the M9 Newbridge junction.

They use variable speed limits, lane closures and bus lane controls to manage traffic and the speed limits are enforced by 6 separate variable speed camera locations

What are the issues?

The Department for Transport has paused the roll out of Smart motorways for the time being due to concerns around safety and fatalities.

Data from the [National Highways Agency](#) from 2021 states that Smart motorways were the safest roads in the Country (England) with casualty rates a third higher per mile travelled on a conventional motorway than on a smart motorway.

However the challenge is primarily with concerns around finding a safe place to stop. The recent Transport Committee heard evidence from coroners that warned that the removal of the hard shoulder, as seen in Smart motorways, could lead to further fatalities.

What next

The plan is to increase the rate of technology rollout that can identify static cars in one of the lanes. Until that point, it is recommended that all-lane running motorways are paused until greater data is available and the implementation of the safety improvements has been independently evaluated. Its less of an issue for Scotland but worth keeping in mind if you are travelling South.



Renewable fuel

In the last newsletter I talked about how fuel prices have gone up significantly. I then came across these [statistics](#) from the Department for Transport about the use of renewable fuel.

As a reminder, the new E10 petrol variant introduced in the summer of last year contains up to 10% of renewable ethanol.

The Department for Transport statistics state that around 5% of the total fuel (road and non-road uses) consumed in 2021 was from a renewable source. Now some of that will come from the note above around the increase in biofuels within Petrol and Diesel and some will be bio-powered vehicles.

The benefits of bio-fuel is that it is cheaper to produce and is obviously renewable so it won't run out. For example, the majority of biodiesel was produced from used cooking oil such as from your local chippy and more than half of the bioethanol is produced from corn.

Biofuels help reduce the amount of Carbon Dioxide emitted from fuel so it has a benefit for the planet as well as the pocket. After accounting for the emissions resulting from growing the plants means that Greenhouse gas emissions were reduced by just over 80%.

I suppose its still fairly new but as new engines are designed to handle more biofuel maybe we'll see a reduction in the cost of petrol and diesel if additional biofuel is added into the mix.

Santa Run - £740 raised for Childrens Ward

Our Chief Motorcycle Observer, Mark Ellis, updates the group on the groups toy drive over December.

In December, the group rode to Victoria Hospital and presented the Childrens Ward with their presents. Thanks to the generosity of those group members who donated, £740 was raised.

We met at the Forth Bridge car park and then rode through the towns along the coast to Kirkcaldy. The motorcyclists were dressed as Father Christmas with one of their wives attending in their car as an elf to transport the presents. As we rode through the towns the public seemed to like us, tooting and waving as we rode along.



Due to COVID Restrictions we were unable to enter the ward understandably, however the presents were handed over to staff who couldn't thank us enough for what we, the group, have done.

As the organiser of this event I cannot thank you enough for your generosity, it really does warm my heart at this time of year.

As you know we carry this out at Easter time as well. So I would like to ask you the group if you are happy to continue donating to the Children's ward or would you like some other group of people to receive our donations? If you would like to change the recipients let us know by contacting the committee and we will go with the majority.

Road trip anyone?

One of the areas that we've been discussing recently is a car section road trip for all levels of membership within the group. As far as I know we've not really done anything like this before so we are planning a little taster session and if successful then it may be something that we do more often.

Initially we are suggesting a Central—North East Fife route with a few stops on route for coffee and a check in around what we have come across on the drive.

Eric Hill tells us more below



At the January committee meeting I raised the proposal to organise some roadtrips/drive outs for the car driving membership. Looking at something akin to what our biker pals regularly do. My reasoning is that lots of us 4-wheel members did our advanced tests because we enjoy driving just as much as our 2 wheeler friends enjoy bike riding.

So, to maybe put some of you in the mood, raise a bit of interest and hopefully some enthusiasm I'll briefly recount a trip I took last year with some friends in our Smart Roadsters.

The trip covered the Borders 500 (<https://www.border500.org/>), which is a route that features roads through the Scottish Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Cumbria and Northumberland.

We met up at the café in Cardrona near Peebles and started the route going anti-clockwise. This took us down onto the A708 along by St Mary's Loch and onto Moffat. From Moffat we headed north to the A702 at Elvanfoot and then west towards Stranraer via the Galloway Forest Park. Our first overnight stop was just outside Stranraer in Kirkcolm.

The second day we headed east following the Solway coastline with stops at the Isle of Whithorn (no sight of Edward Woodward or the Wicker Man) and Annan. We crossed the border in Cumbria and headed down to Alston before heading north east to Hexham for our second night stop.

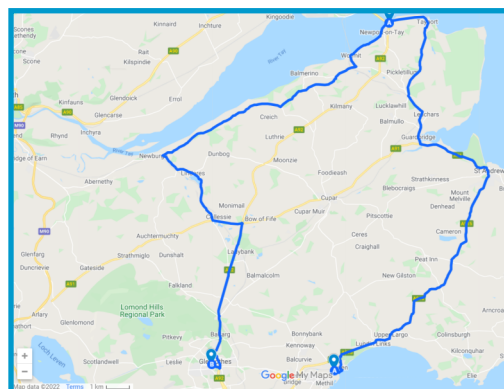
The last day was the return journey north via Alnwick, Wooler and Kelso then returning back to the start point at Cardrona.

We did the trip comfortably in three days, although day two was long and maybe a longer stint in day one would have been better. Fuel wasn't a major issue with supermarkets and filling stations along the route. Our accommodation was reasonable and low priced.

Would I do it again? Maybe not all of it, but I'd definitely like to explore the roads in Cumbria and Northumberland more. The run from Alston to Hexham on the A686 was a lot of fun.

Our proposed Fife trip won't be quite as long and will likely start at Leven, head to St Andrews and then follow the coast roads to Tayport and work our way back to Glenrothes where we can debrief and have coffee. See diagram to the right.

We will be in touch soon to identify who would be interested in joining us for this new type of event for the car section. Look out for an email and some posts on our social media channels.



Driving is a social construct

This is something I think about every so often when I'm driving along and I see someone jumping a red light, not giving way etc.

A social construct as defined by [Websters](#) dictionary is 'an idea that has been created and accepted by the people in a society'. Essentially, as humans, we agree to follow a certain code (Highway Code) and when someone doesn't follow the agreed principles it can lead to chaos.

Give way to the right, drive to the speed limit and parking spot queuing are all forms of social construct that we agree to when we enter our cars each day.

What about going back to the front page and the figures around drink driving at Christmas. Drink driving is socially unacceptable as well as being illegal however we still see lots of instances in fact nearly 240 people had been reported for drink / drug driving offences between April and September 2021. To drink and drive is to break the social construct of driving.

Why am I writing about it here? Well I believe that the IAM actually helps improve the social constructs we follow as it helps us understand more about the nuances of driving and why its important to follow some of these simple rules.

Its more than that though, I think that being an advanced driver / rider puts us in a better position to deal with those that don't follow the social norms of driving. It helps us recognise at an early stage those that are less likely to be following the rules of the road. It may be from their positioning on the road, erratic behaviour that you've noticed from a distance or as simple as realising that they haven't made eye contact and are likely to pull out in front of you.

The more people the IAM continue to train people should help us reduce our interactions with those that choose to ignore the social constructs we've put in place over the years.

Britains most dangerous roads

There was a Panorama episode the other week (17 January) called Britains Killer Roads—which you can find on [BBC iPlayer](#) for the next 11 months.

It seemed a little controversial for several reasons. I think as a group we may question the concept of a killer road and instead recognise that for the majority of the time it's the people behind the wheel that are the causation.

The programme suggested that the A82, which is the Glasgow to Inverness route, was the most dangerous in Scotland but it's a little difficult to understand how they came to that conclusion. The programme also suggested that a reduction in police officers has contributed to the roads becoming more dangerous.

I'd suggest you check out the programme and draw your own conclusions however I would be suggesting that improving driver skills would be a more effective way of reducing road deaths as opposed to laying the blame wholly on the road.

Keep in touch

Don't forget, if you want to get in touch with us to share thoughts or ask a question you can do so by:

- www.kofgiam.org.uk
- [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) or email newsletter@kofgiam.org.uk