

Bournemouth & Dorset Advanced Drivers



May Newsletter - 2026 (edition 131)

I never drink... wine

Can you guess where I currently am based on the above quote? I am sure that many of you will instantly know the line, taken from the 1931 film Dracula.

Mind you with our road safety hat on we should maybe adapt the quote to be “don’t drink and drive”. Obviously, this is a phrase that I recall hearing around the festive period when I was a child, but I think that as a nation we have adapted our views on drinking and driving since my childhood days and it feels like the phrase has fallen out of use.

Prior to my arrival (by plane), I had a quick search on the internet for driving rules in Romania. Most, unsurprisingly are pretty much the same as ‘home’. I did notice that they have a zero tolerance for drink driving. The quick AI overview I initially read suggested that you needed to drive with headlights on all of the time, but further research revealed that this is just for when you are on the autostrazi (aka the motorway) and outside of built-up areas during the day.



One fact that I found particular interesting was: for novice drivers, who have had their license for less than a year, the speed limits outside built-up areas, on expressways, and on motorways are 20 km/h lower.

I’m not sure how learner drivers are identified, but those who have passed a test within the last year must display on the windscreen and the rear window of the car the distinctive sign (a black exclamation mark on a yellow disk).

This offers an interesting segway into how Romanian’s learn to drive. This differs somewhat from the UK for what I understand, where you must attend a number of classes in a traffic law school before beginning the actual practice. At the end of the classes, the candidate is tested, and after the test is passed, the candidate is able to proceed with the driving practice.

Romanian law fixes the required number of driving classes, a class lasting approximately two hours, at 15. The driving instructor is required to teach the student each manoeuvre and assure they are capable of properly driving a car. After the 15 driving classes, the candidate proceeds to the theory test. The candidate may, if needed, take additional classes.



Back to being out on the road, one other thing I did read is that overtaking on bridges is generally prohibited. A bit of googling suggests there are a number of reasons which are listed below. Additionally, the speed limit on the road is often reduced on the approach, presumably to help mitigate accidents.

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- **Restricted Visibility:** Bridges often have structural elements (like railings, arches, or cables) and approaches that limit your view of oncoming traffic.
- **Narrow Lanes:** Many bridges are narrower than the rest of the road, meaning there is not enough physical space to safely pass another vehicle without crossing into oncoming traffic.
- **Higher Accident Risks:** Collisions on bridges are incredibly dangerous as they lack an emergency shoulder and can lead to severe multi-car pileups or restricted access for emergency vehicles.

Enough about the rules, how is it really? Based on the practical experience of driving in more rural areas is that speed limits seem to not be very closely followed, overtaking is a favourite pastime of the locals and cutting corners is equally high up too! Many of the roads are constructed with large drainage ditches to the side, so avoidance manoeuvres, if required, need to be carefully considered if you wish to keep all four wheels touching the ground and the body work of your hirecar dent free!



A curious takeaway was that driving a hybrid in the mountains seemed to be remarkably efficient on fuel, maybe all the downhill breaking provided enough energy to get up the otherside for free, even with all the hairpins!

Stay safe & happy motoring,

Matt Ames
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New Associate Members of the Bournemouth & Dorset Group

We welcome the following new Associate member(s) who have recently joined the Group. Observer allocations, where known are shown below:

Jhoiever MADRID (pending)

IAM Test passes for the Group

Congratulations to our latest Full members of the Bournemouth & Dorset Group who have recently passed their IAM RoadSmart test (observer is listed beside them if known at publication):

Ahmed Mohamed Shakeel	Keith Bowers
Jessica Dennes (FIRST)	Wendy Hawkes
Rhiannon Booth	Sue Whitcher & Chris Dale
Richard Knight	Keith Bowers
Paul Doroi	Peta Steadman-Bee
Tim Spirit	Alan Glover

Great driving and thanks to our Observer Team for helping you achieve your pass and becoming a new member of the IAM RoadSmart family.

Forthcoming Social events

4th June 2026

Sergeant Guy Nicholas of Dorset Police's missing person support team will be talking to the Group.
Time: 1900

2nd July 2026

(tbc)

August 2026

No social is planned for August

3rd September 2026

(tbc)

1st October 2026

(tbc)

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5th November 2026 (provisional)

David Sidwick, Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset will be talking to the group finishing off with a Question and Answer session.

Time: 1900

Drinks can be purchased from the bar from 1900, talk starts at 1930. Accessing Wimborne Town football club can be a bit of a fine art. Recommended access is to follow Lonsdale Road (from the B3073) through the new housing estate, and then turn left onto Ainsley Road, and park in the ground's carpark on the right.

As always the latest information about Group Social evenings can be found on our website at: <https://www.bdiam.org.uk/social-events/>

IAM RoadSmart appoints Mark Armitage as Chief Executive

from the IAM Newsroom

- Mark Armitage takes up the position on a permanent basis following successful interim spell

The UK's leading independent road safety charity IAM RoadSmart today welcomes the appointment of Mark Armitage as Chief Executive Officer (CEO).



Mark has worked as interim CEO for the previous six months and before this was a Trustee of the road safety charity. He brings a wealth of experience from both the motoring and education sector having worked in senior roles for industry giants such as the RAC, Ford Motor Company, Autotech Group, Skillnet and the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI). He has also served as a T-Level panel member for the UK Department for Education.

Mark replaces Antony Kildare who left IAM RoadSmart in 2025.

New IAM RoadSmart Chief Executive Mark Armitage said: "I'm delighted to be permanently joining the IAM RoadSmart family following an interim period, particularly in its milestone 70th year. In the last six months, I've had the pleasure of meeting many of our wonderful volunteers and groups who continue to selflessly deliver many of our courses. I am also grateful to our wonderful staff who have made me feel welcome and who are working so diligently to achieve our key deliverables.

"Improving road safety is at the heart of what we do, and with more than 30,000 people killed or seriously injured on UK roads in 2024, there has never been a more important time for IAM RoadSmart to work with Government, stakeholders and the public to reduce this number through education. I'd also like to thank the Trustees for putting their faith in me and the team to deliver this."

IAM RoadSmart Chair Shona Johnstone said: "We are delighted that Mark will be joining as CEO on a permanent basis. Over the past six months he has given the charity a clear sense of direction and it was this vision that impressed the Trustees. Mark is passionate about road safety and is committed to our goal of zero deaths and casualties and he also understands the need for modernisation and enhancing what we offer as an organisation. We look forward to working with him in this permanent role."

IAM RoadSmart calls for 'cheese cutter' cable barriers to be replaced with a more motorcyclist friendly option

from the IAM Newsroom

- The road safety charity has launched a petition calling for Highways Authorities across the UK to commit to their decommissioning by the end of the decade

New figures show that almost 150 miles of cable barriers – which pose a safety threat to motorcyclists – remain on England's roads.

The cable barriers are known for their 'cheese cutter' effect on bikers unlucky enough to hit them on colli-

sion while any unprotected posts that hold the wires in place can cause major trauma to those who hit them at high speed.

Road safety charity IAM RoadSmart is calling for them to be scrapped and replaced with a safer alternative by the end of the decade.

Barriers, which can be constructed of cable, concrete and steel, can be found alongside roads or constituting the central reservation. They account for three quarters (76%) of fatalities or serious injuries when impacted by those on two wheels. This compares to just 16 percent of other road users, demonstrating the risk barriers in general pose. Motorcycles are also 33 times more likely to become involved in a fatal single barrier incident than cars. [i] When cable barriers come into play, the risk is magnified.

A Parliamentary question dated February 26 found that 143 miles (230 kms) of cable barriers are present on motorways and on the wider strategic network in England. These cable barriers are also present on roads in Wales, and Scotland, however they are being removed in Northern Ireland. [ii]

Cable barriers present an issue for motorcyclists because of their upright posts, whereas a standard guardrail has no protruding parts. These posts are more likely to seriously injure or kill a motorcyclist, sometimes by decapitation. Additionally, the jagged edges of wire ropes put riders at risk of laceration. [iii]

Norway, which has a “vision zero” approach, meaning that no person should be killed or seriously injured in traffic, banned the future installation of cable barriers in 2006, with Norway’s Motorcyclist Association (NMCU) arguing that they are dangerous for motorcyclists. [iv] National Highways, which manages the strategic network in England, has already taken a proactive approach on some motorway stretches, replacing wired reservations with concrete.

IAM RoadSmart has launched a campaign for Highways Authorities across the UK to commit to their decommissioning by the end of the decade. To sign the petition, click here: <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/safer-barriers-for-safer-roads/>

IAM RoadSmart Director of Policy and Standards Nicholas Lyes said: “Motorcyclists have long been calling for these dangerous cable barriers to be removed, and yet across England, almost 150 miles of wire rope remain. We are calling on the Government to remove and replace them with a Motorcyclist Protection System (MPS) which includes protected posts. In addition, whenever a barrier is installed, the distance from the road should be as large as possible to allow for evasive manoeuvres and maximum emergency braking in the event of a collision which might reduce the force of the collision impact with the barrier. Motorcyclists are among the most vulnerable road users in Britain, with fatalities rising by 8 percent in 2024 despite an overall decline in road deaths, according to Department for Transport data. [v] We need to be doing everything we can to make their journeys safer.”

National Motorcyclists Council Executive Director Craig Carey-Clinch said: “Cable barriers have been a controversial risk to motorcyclists since their introduction. Their basic design represents a very serious injury risk for any motorcyclist who comes into contact with them as a result of an incident. Although collision attenuator systems do exist, they are only a partially effective compromise and not widely used. Given the relatively low mileage of wire ropes which remain in the UK, the NMC feels it is time that wire rope barriers should be consigned to history and is today supporting IAM RoadSmart’s call for them to be replaced by more motorcyclist friendly options. Their removal will also help reduce glare from oncoming headlights which would be a further safety benefit for all road users.”

[i] 76% of motorcycle-to-barrier impacts resulted in killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties between 2014 and 2018 compared with 16% for non-motorcycle-to-barrier impacts: TRL - Motorcyclists and Barriers on the National Highways Road Network

[ii] The Federation of European Motorcyclists’ Associations: <https://www.femamotorcycling.eu/wire-rope-barriers-n-ireland/>

[iii] Duncan et al (2000) TRL - Motorcyclists and Barriers on the National Highways Road Network

[iv] The Federation of European Motorcyclists’ Associations: <https://www.femamotorcycling.eu/wire-rope-barriers-removed/>

[v] Department for Transport: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2024/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2024>