



**Isle of Man**  
**Government**

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**RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON  
NEW DRIVER PROPOSALS**

**DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE  
HIGHWAY SERVICES DIVISION**

## **Part 1 – Introduction**

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The Department of Infrastructure undertook a consultation exercise on its proposals for new drivers. This document is a summary of the feedback from that consultation and the Department's response.

### ***Background***

Recently qualified drivers on the Isle of Man have more accidents than any other group of drivers. This outcome is mirrored in practically every other developed country. By way of example, statistics produced by the UK Department for Transport (DfT) show that new drivers, up to age 24, account for only 12% of all drivers on the road but are involved in 24% of all serious and fatal accidents. DfT statistics also indicate that accidents tend to decline after the age of 24. This is consistent with the fact that the majority of new drivers are young. Evidence demonstrates that a new driver, irrespective of age, lacks competence.

Following a desk top study, the Department set-up a working group, which included representative of the public, the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service. The group was chaired by the Department's political member with responsibility for Highway Services. The Working Group considered the current circumstances in the Isle of Man and what other jurisdictions have implemented before developing a public consultation document containing various proposals.

### ***The Consultation Document Contained***

1. Background Information on Isle of Man accident statistics and those of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.
2. Proposals from motoring organisations and charities (RAC, AA, Association of British Insurers and BRAKE)
3. Victoria State (Australia) Graduated Driving Licence (GDL) system (currently the most stringent GDL scheme)
4. Details of the Isle of Man accident statistics broken down by age and accident type
5. The on-line questionnaire used in the survey

Over the past ten years, fatal accidents to drivers on the Isle of Man have fallen significantly, partly due to major road safety schemes, which have improved road design at known accident black spots, and partly due to improvements in the safety of vehicles. Nevertheless, there is still significant concern about the safety of new drivers; these drivers are evidenced as being particularly vulnerable to accidents in which they have made an error of judgement.

The consultation process was required to gather the public's views on how the safety of new drivers can be improved.

## Part 2 – The Consultation Exercise

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The consultation ran from 8 October 2014 until 30 November 2014. The documents were drawn up by the Department based on research and following discussions with officers in the UK and Northern Ireland.

Consultation documents were distributed to the following.

Tynwald Members	Attorney General
Local Authorities	Government Chief Officers
Isle of Man Constabulary	The Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce
Isle of Man Fire and Rescue Service	The Isle of Man Law Society
Approved Driving Instructors	Government Officers Association
The Isle of Man Employers Federation	Driving Examiners
Institute of Advanced Motorists	Island Road Transport Association
Road Transport Licensing Committee	

The consultation was made available to the public on the Government's website, a press release was issued and several interviews were given to the local media by Minister Gawne.

## Part 3 – The Responses

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The Department received 6 letters, 45 e-mails and 1,165 responses to the on-line survey.

### *Written Responses*

Most of the written responses contained suggestions for the Department to consider, including:

- restricting new drivers once they had passed the test;
- use of electronics to monitor new drivers;
- making parents more responsible;
- ensuring that new drivers have their own insurance and do not use that of their parents;
- introducing a curfew;
- ensuring there is a no-alcohol restriction for new drivers; and
- reviewing what other jurisdictions have done.

Some respondents suggested that part of the problem is parents permitting their children to drive vehicles that are too powerful for them to control. Some suggested that new drivers should have their own insurance rather than being a named driver on a parent's policy. This could, however, increase social exclusion for people from lower income families because of the increased cost of buying a car and insuring their own vehicle.

The following three topics generated more comments than those listed above.

- Training
- Engine or vehicle restrictions
- Improved enforcement of existing legislation

## Training

This was alluded to by many respondents; in order for a new driver to achieve the necessary levels of competence required to drive a car safely it was felt that if they were given more time to learn the skills required and the ability to apply them in a controlled manner, there may be fewer accidents on our roads.

This is one of the intended outcomes of graduated driver licensing, where new drivers are given a period of time to develop their competence, whilst being subject to additional restrictions such as speed limits. This has been successful in many jurisdictions and has resulted in a reduced number of accidents.

## Engine or Vehicle Restrictions

This was a very popular response, generally indicating support for reducing either the power or type of vehicle permitted for new drivers as a measure to prevent them from being involved in high-speed accidents. A similar system is currently in place for new motorcycle riders. It is noted that many new cars with engines, less than 1.0 litre, can still achieve speeds above 90 miles per hour. A further counter-argument is the fact that more powerful vehicles tend to benefit from improved safety features, such as better brakes.

A family may only have one vehicle, under this proposal, if it was of the wrong engine size, a new driver would not be able to use it. This could effectively prevent a new driver from driving and limit opportunity for driving practice.

## Improved Enforcement of Existing Legislation

The respondents who said enforcement should be improved also pointed out that recent tragic accidents involving the loss of young lives might have been prevented if the drivers had complied with existing legislation.

All three of the above suggestions appear to have been made specifically in relation to young people who are new drivers. Statistics show that new drivers of any age have similar issues due to their lack of experience, and it would appear the only difference between younger and older new drivers is that the older drivers tend to be more cautious and less susceptible to peer pressure.

## ***Results and Discussion of the on line Survey***

There were 9 proposals contained within the on line survey and there were 1165 responses.

### ***Proposal 1***

***Allow 16 year olds to hold a provisional licence but do not allow them to take a driving test until they are 17 years old. This suggestion encourages learning over a longer period of time.***

67% of respondents supported the proposal.

The success of this proposal assumes that 16 year olds would start to learn at the same time but invest in more lessons and supervised training. There is no evidence to support this assumption. The proposal is also inconsistent with the data that indicates that accident rates do not begin to drop until the age of 25. It also neglects the fact that new drivers are at higher risk as distinct from young drivers.

The impact of this proposal would be that around one hundred and eighty 16 year old drivers would be excluded from the road each year.

Next Step

The proposal will not be progressed at this stage.

***Proposal 2***

***Extend the use of R plates to two or three years with a reduction to one year if further approved training is undertaken and an accepted test is passed.***

59% of respondents supported this proposal.

This proposal would retain and extend the current R plate restrictions but would provide an incentive for novice drivers to take further training. The R plate period would be reduced to one year if the driver undertook and passed relevant, recognised additional training, such as instruction from the Institute of Advanced Motorists.

The Isle of Man Constabulary has concerns that some drivers might either remove the R plates from their vehicle or not comply with the restrictions. It follows that without a complaint of non-compliance, or the driver being involved in a collision, it is unlikely non-compliance would ever be known.

Several comments received on this item suggested reasonable support for the basic proposal of extending the use of R plates; however, there were far more comments regarding the standard of driving by R plate drivers and requesting more enforcement by the Police.

The call for better training in a variety of situations, for example at night-time, in icy conditions, in fog, etc., and the inclusion of advanced training techniques during the learning period rather than waiting and allowing bad habits to be developed, were also well represented in the survey.

The Working Group discussed the various elements of increasing the R plate period to two or three years and on the basis of the comments received decided that an increase to two years should be introduced.

With regard to additional approved and successful training which would ultimately allow a candidate to reduce the R plate period, it was agreed further investigation was needed. There is also the possibility that training facilities such as a skid pan could be developed in the future, though this would require significant investment.

Several respondents suggested a further test should be taken by drivers when coming to the end of the R plate period, which would cover the suggestions above. Should the driver fail this test, they would remain as an R plate driver.

Next Step

The Department will draft legislative amendments for Tynwald to consider increasing the R Plate period from 1 to 2 years.

The Department will also investigate methods to improve the competence of new drivers and the possibility of introducing suitable additional assessment to end the R Plate period.

### ***Proposal 3***

***Limit R plate drivers to carrying one passenger for the first six months after passing their test or to having no passengers between 8:00 pm and 6:00 am, unless one passenger is aged 25 years or more, in which case the vehicle can carry up to its maximum number of passengers.***

59% of respondents supported the proposal.

The Isle of Man Constabulary felt that inconsistent rules on the number of passengers and the time of day restrictions would make enforcement difficult. Further discussion of this proposal confirmed that if only one person was allowed in the vehicle with the driver, with no exception, then it would be easier to enforce.

The impact on young parents was recognised.

The proposed curfew element elicited good support, although the times suggested needed to be reviewed. There is good evidence to support the possible benefits of a curfew.

#### *Next Step*

*The Department will draft legislative amendments for Tynwald to consider limiting R Plate drivers to carrying only one passenger during the R Plate period.*

*Introduce a curfew for R Plate drivers between the hours of mid-night and 5.00 am.*

### ***Proposal 4***

***All R Plate drivers will be issued with an electronic device that would alert the police if the driver is speeding.***

51% of respondents supported the proposal. Electronic devices are available to track vehicles and are used by many organisations to understand where their vehicles are and what they are doing. However, this type of technology is not currently used to police new drivers. It should be noted that the introduction of such a system would require considerable investment in infrastructure and also produce significant additional work for the Constabulary.

This is an evolving area of technology where there are currently no common industry standards. Use of the technology is being progressed by the insurance industry as a way for new drivers to reduce their insurance premiums.

It would raise some ethical considerations if the use of this technology became mandatory for drivers. The Working Group felt that it was appropriate to monitor its evolution at this time rather than enforce its introduction. It was also noted that the technology currently monitors the vehicle not the driver.

#### *Next Step*

*The proposal will not be progressed but the use of such technology would be kept under review with a view to possible future introduction.*

### ***Proposal 5***

***R Plate drivers to lose the right to drive and have to retake the driving test if they attract three or six penalty points for driving offences within the R Plate period.***

86% of respondents supported the proposal.

The police suggested that other than being a deterrent, this does not proactively address the issues of driving standards; however, in order to address repeat offenders, the removal of their driving licence would be considered a suitable deterrent.

*Next Step*

*The Department will draft legislative amendments for Tynwald to consider R Plate drivers losing the right to drive for a period if they attract six penalty points for driving offences within the R Plate period.*

**Proposal 6**

***If the Department were to introduce the proposal in question 5, should it be at three points or six points?***

59% of respondents indicated that six points was an appropriate level. The Working Group was also supportive of the proposal.

*Next Step*

*The Department will draft legislative amendments for Tynwald to consider R Plate drivers losing the right to drive for a period if they attract six penalty points for driving offences within the R Plate period.*

**Proposal 7**

***Do nothing and retain the current instruction and testing system.***

79% of respondents replied NO to the proposal above. This indicates that there is significant public support for some form of action to address this problem

**Proposal 8**

***Do you think the current way of teaching people to drive is suitable or should the Department investigate other methods such as graduated driving licensing systems?***

61% of respondents support the statement. Unfortunately the wording of the question was poor so a text box was added for comments.

There was a relatively even balance between comments that suggested the current methods of teaching and testing were acceptable and those that suggested they are not. Some of the comments made are noted below.

- Include continuous training within the learner and R plate periods for specific skills such as driving at night, skid control, motorway or high speed driving and general skills.
- Graduated driver licensing systems have been introduced round the world with much success, why not here?
- Make it compulsory to learn with a qualified Driving Instructor and for a minimum number of lessons.
- Introduce an extra test before ending R Plates.
- Test drivers in different conditions such as at night, in fog, on icy roads, etc.
- Allow drivers to learn earlier but no driving test until age 18 years.
- Limit the power of the engine.
- More/better enforcement.
- Learning and testing is not the issue, attitude of some drivers is the issue.

- Tackle the attitude of some drivers.
- Do not penalise everyone because of a few bad apples.

The Department acknowledges that there is some truth that “a few bad apples” have caused tragic accidents. The current requirement on the Isle of Man is for a new driver to be supervised until they have reached a good, but basic, standard of ability and, after passing their test, to be restricted in their driving for one year whilst they are building their competence.

*Next Step*

*The Department will continue to investigate how post-test driver competence can be developed and assessed in future.*

**Proposal 9**

***Should the current driving test be made more difficult to pass?***

76% of respondents replied NO to the question above. The Working Group noted that the Manx test was more stringent than the UK test.

The Isle of Man Constabulary raised concerns regarding the standard of driving and how those standards are affected by various factors. For example restricting the engine size or power of a vehicle does not address general driving standards. They also commented on the current methods of teaching and testing drivers, suggesting that in their opinion these only appear to teach people how to pass the test and not how to drive safely.

The Isle of Man Constabulary also suggested that, rather than leave additional training as an option, it should be incorporated as an obligatory part of learning to drive and as part of the driving test, with the aim of improving general road craft. The Isle of Man Constabulary would be in favour of a graduated driver licence system, as this would appear to improve the driving skills of everyone who learns to drive and subsequently pass their test.

*Next Step*

*The Department will continue to investigate how post-test driver competence can be developed and assessed in future.*

**Summary**

The Isle of Man has similar issues to other developed nations in relation to new drivers. Graduated Driving Licence systems have improved road safety where they have been introduced. The Isle of Man has a form of Graduated Driving Licence with particular respect to the 1 year R plate system.

The Department will draft legislative amendments for Tynwald consideration that:

- increase the R plate period from 1 to 2 years;
- limit R Plate drivers to carry only one passenger;
- introduce a curfew for R plate drivers between the hours of mid-night and 5.00 am; and
- remove the right of R Plate drivers to drive after they attract six penalty points for driving offences within the R plate period.

The Department will continue to investigate methods to improve and assess the competence of new drivers and identify how these can be linked to the restricted driving period.



## **Part 4 – Conclusion**

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The problems that the Isle of Man faces are not unique in relation to new drivers. The Department has identified good practice from around the world and will introduce legislation to try and reduce the frequency of tragic accidents involving new drivers. It will also investigate how the competence of our new drivers can be developed more quickly and consider linking an assessment of competence to the restricted driving period.

The Department would like to thank all those who responded to the consultation exercise, either in writing or by completing the on-line survey, and for the comments made. They have been an invaluable part of the process.

## **List of Respondents**

Mrs L Henderson	Mr A Colgan
Mr S Fox	Mr I Harrison
Mr T Wild, MLC	Ms S Allanson
Ms S Corlett	Mr S Harding
Mr A Henderson	Mr Oyler-Torin
Mr H Connell	Ms J Dellar
Mr R Tasker	Ms J Maddrell
Ms A Qualtrough	Mr K Valerga
Mr S Peters	Mr G Petts
Miss T Brown	Mr I Saberton
Ms S Bell	Ms L McPherson
Mr A Mazzotta	Mr C Roughley
Mr H Gawne	Richard (no surname provided)
Sgt M McKillop	Mr T Illingworth
Mr D Ashley	Ms H Musson
Mr C Borrowman	Mr J Roberts
Ms K Carswell	Mr A Beale
Ms A Dawson	Mr R Hara
Mr M Pattison	Mrs A Fraser
Mr K Kerruish	Mr G Staples
Ms H Rourke	Island Road Transport Association
Mr I Lowey	Attorney General's Office
Mr D Asbridge	Mr J E Lyall
Ramsey Town Commissioners	Jurby Parish Commissioners
Marown Parish Commissioners	Ballaugh Parish Commissioners
Patrick Parish Commissioners	Andreas Parish Commissioners
Isle of Man Constabulary	