

News Release

Date: 08 October 2014

Proposals aimed at improving safety of new drivers

The Department of Infrastructure is inviting public feedback on proposals aimed at improving the safety of new drivers.

Statistics show that a disproportionate number of inexperienced motorists are killed or seriously injured on roads throughout the British Isles.

The Isle of Man has witnessed a number of tragedies involving young drivers and passengers this year and the Department is hoping to stimulate discussion about how to reduce the risks.

Proposals highlighted in a public consultation launched today (Wednesday 8 October) include raising the driving test age to 17 years, extending the use of 'R' plates and introducing electronic devices to alert the police to speeding or dangerous driving.

Infrastructure Minister Phil Gawne MHK said: 'The safety of people on our roads is of paramount importance. The Department works closely with the Isle of Man Constabulary to create a safer environment and the number of fatal collisions has fallen significantly over the past 10 years. We have improved road designs at accident black spots and continue to promote legislation to safeguard all road users as part of our commitment towards protecting vulnerable members of the community.'

He added: 'Despite these improvements, there are still significant concerns about the safety of young and novice drivers. The Department has been investigating how other countries around the world are tackling these issues. We want to strike the right balance between making things safer without unduly restricting young people's social freedoms and economic opportunities.'

The Department, which is responsible for the licensing of all drivers, is encouraging people to respond to its consultation and survey, and also to submit their own ideas and suggestions.

At present, people can apply for a provisional driving licence at the age of 16 years and sit a test as soon as the licence has been issued. Once a full test has been passed, new car drivers must display an 'R' plate on their vehicles for one year and adhere to a maximum speed of 50mph.

The proposals open to comment in the public consultation include –

- **Allow 16-year-olds to hold a provisional licence, but do not permit them to take a driving test until they are 17**

This would encourage learning over a longer period, as more mature candidates tend to demonstrate better skills and judgement.

- **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**

This would retain and extend the current 'R' plate restrictions, but provide an incentive for novice drivers to take further training.

- **Limit 'R' plate drivers to carrying one passenger for the first six months after passing their test, or to have no passengers between 8pm and 6am (unless at least one passenger is 25 or over)**

This is aimed at reducing peer pressure – a known contributory factor in serious collisions and incidents of dangerous driving.

- **All 'R' plate drivers to be issued with an electronic device that would alert the police if the driver is speeding**

Subject to suitable technology being available, this would monitor drivers and notify the Isle of Man Constabulary if a driver exceeds the speed limit or is driving in a dangerous manner.

- **Drivers to be banned and ordered to retake their test if they accumulate a specific number of penalty points for driving offences within the 'R' plate period**

An 'R' plate driver who reaches a certain threshold for penalty points (to be decided, possibly three or six points) would be disqualified for a minimum of six months and have to pass the theory and practical tests again before they could drive unaccompanied.

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

The current methods of learning to drive and 'R' plate restrictions have served the Isle of Man for many years. However, the Department feels more should be done to teach the relevant skills and provide incentives for new drivers to take responsibility for their actions.

John Houghton MHK, Member of the DoI with responsibility for Highway Services, said: 'Driving is important to young people as it provides independence and mobility. It also comes with great responsibility. Current figures show that new drivers aged between 16 and 24 are more likely to be involved in a serious or fatal accident than any other age group. We want to make our roads safer and this consultation is intended to encourage debate and new ideas. The Department's proposals could be introduced relatively quickly if there is support from the public and Tynwald, so we want to hear people's views.'

The consultation is available at

<https://www.gov.im/transport/ConsultationDetail.gov?id=466> and the survey can be completed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NewDriverPaper>

Alternatively, people can email comments to Chris.Hannon@gov.im or write to Chris Hannon, Department of Infrastructure, Sea Terminal, Douglas, IM1 2RF.

The closing date for submissions is 30 November 2014.

Ends

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