

Motorcycle Safety

In Northern Ireland



The Rider's Perspective 2009

Right To Ride

Motorcycle Safety in Northern Ireland – The Rider’s Perspective aims to provide legislators, decision makers and motorcyclists with a document that collates the expertise of motorcyclists, based on years of experience, consultation and lobbying.

It also aims to be a starting point for discussion and debate to develop a strategy for motorcycle safety in Northern Ireland by encompassing all stakeholders including the motorcycle community, individual riders, clubs, groups and associations.

The issues within this document are linked to the priorities for motorcycle safety identified during the International Transport Forum/OECD workshop on Motorcycling, held in Lillehammer, Norway in June 2008. The twentieth priority summarized the importance of collaboration amongst all stakeholders: ‘working together to achieve common objectives’.

Road safety has become a priority within the UK and targets set by the European Union drive policy for national governments and local authorities. While the objective to reduce road casualties is honourable and important and there are many within the motorcycling community who strive to find solutions to reduce casualties, the whole business of safety has become an industry which has taken on a life of its own. The measures and solutions that are put on the table are not necessarily the right ones because of the vested interests of the various stakeholders.

The most important piece of safety equipment on a motorcycle is the grey matter between the rider’s ears.

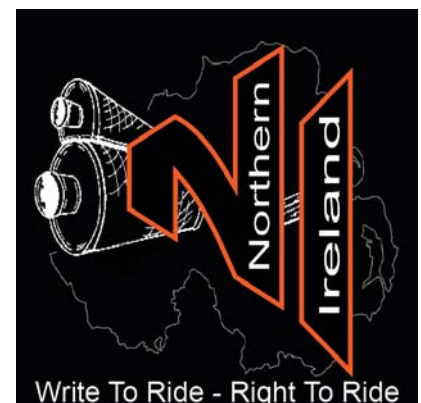
For example research institutes receive millions of Euros from EU funding, with some projects that aim to find solutions, such as warning devices and other ‘life-saving’ gadgets, mainly set by political pressure and commercial targets.

Basic training for motorcyclists focuses on the machine, not on the rider, but, human behaviour is recognised as the greatest cause of road casualties. The motorcycle industry maintains that the market drives production and continues to advertise power, speed and a racetrack image of motorcycling.

Yet motorcycling is complex, there are many aspects of this mode of transport that are not understood, not only by decision makers and legislators, but even within the motorcycle community. There is a constant debate on issues such as survival skills and protective clothing, age of access and risk, but in Northern Ireland, basic training, could best be described as a pick and mix sweet jar.

The debate about motorcycling as a mode of personal transport needs to be based on evidence and facts for the benefit of the people of Northern Ireland.

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Executive Summary

➤ The number of motorcycles¹ on Northern Ireland roads has increased from 9,000 to over 31,000 in the last twelve years. Motorcycling offers an inexpensive, environmentally friendly and an effective means of transport.

➤ The Department for Transport (GB) and the Scottish Executive have recently compiled motorcycle strategies to find the most appropriate solutions to improve motorcycle safety. These examples show that the best way forward is to involve all stakeholders from End-users to National Transport authorities and local road safety experts. ***Now is the time for a motorcycle strategy in Northern Ireland.***



➤ No road safety initiative can ever make motorcycling risk-free, which is true for any activity. However, educating riders² - either novice or returning to motorcycling, how to tackle these risks and how to adapt and live comfortably in our modern society would unquestionably have an important impact in reducing injuries and accidents. No person should start riding a motorcycle without having undertaken basic training which must consider avoidance and evasion strategies and attitude.

➤ Fair and accessible insurance especially for younger riders would help to ensure that they are able to afford newer and better quality motorcycles. The present insurance regime stifles choice and access to motorcycling due to the unique method of classifying risk that is used by insurers in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

➤ Studies indicate that the vast majority of collisions between cars and motorcycles are caused by car drivers. Therefore in order to reduce fatalities and injuries resulting from collisions between cars and motorcycles it is important to develop campaigns to promote driver awareness and rider collision avoidance strategies.

➤ While personal protective equipment and clothing can be useful in crashes to prevent more severe injuries, this must always be balanced against the cost of buying a quality helmet, jacket, trousers, gloves etc which can be considerable and frequently driven by commercial advertising rather than reliability.

➤ The design of motorcycles has made them increasingly more specialised and increasingly safer. However, certain motorcycles are manufactured with race tracks in mind which can create problems both in terms of injuries and attitude as highlighted by accident causation studies in Sweden, the U.S. and the U.K.

➤ The Third EU Driving Licence Directive offers no improvements for motorcycle safety: the increase of the age of access to the different motorcycle licence categories will restrict motorcycling. This highlights the car industry's lobbying power in Europe. Within this Directive there is no mention of training and/or testing for car drivers or stepped access for young car drivers.



¹ The term 'motorcycle/s' includes scooters and mopeds also known as Powered Two Wheelers (PTWs)

² The term 'rider' is used to describe a motorcyclist, in the same way the term 'motorist' is used to describe a car driver.

- Conspicuity, or the ability of car drivers to see motorcyclists, is a key issue for motorcycle safety. One of the proposed solutions is dedicated running lights for all vehicles. This solution presumes that road casualties will diminish as a result, but statistical evidence proves this to be untrue.
- Traffic management applications of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) should be developed to include motorcycles. However, the Northern Ireland Assembly should exempt motorcycles from any planned road pricing scheme as part of the solution to traffic problems that may exist throughout Northern Ireland.
- Road authorities should ensure that traffic regulations include the needs of motorcyclists (continued access to bus lanes, filtering, advanced stop lines, etc.) as part of a strategic approach to resolve the problem of urban mobility.
- Some public road authorities have done little to improve road design with regards to motorcycle safety. The Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers (IHIE) in the U.K. has, in consultation with motorcyclists, produced road infrastructure guidelines for motorcycle safety, for personnel working on road construction and maintenance.

This document can be downloaded here:

http://www.writetoride.co.uk/Motorcycle_Safety_in_Northern_Ireland_2009.pdf 2.9mb