

Department Of The Environment:

Consultation On Proposed changes to the

Learner and Restricted Driver Schemes

and on Graduated Driver Licensing

21st July 2011

Right To Ride Response

Right To Ride Response to: Department of the Environment

Proposed Changes to the Learner and Restricted Driver Schemes and on Graduated Driver Licensing.

21st July 2011

Right To Ride welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department's consultation on the, "Proposed Changes to the Learner and Restricted Driver Schemes and on Graduated Driver Licensing."

This response is the representative views of Right To Ride Ltd which is a Non Government Organisation (NGO) registered as a non profit company limited by guarantee (Registered Number N1073799).

Right To Ride's objectives are: To carry on activities, in particular (without limitation) to promote awareness and understanding of training, environmental road safety and security issues relating to the use of those vehicles classed in law as motorcycles, scooters, mopeds, motorcycle combinations and tricycles and to research and investigate solutions to these topics. To do all such other lawful things as may be incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objects.

About Our Response

Our response to the consultation comes from a motorcycling perspective. The previous Minister's (Edwin Poots) comments in the Executive summary of the consultation, "If we are to achieve this target, (to reduce by at least 55% the number of young people killed or seriously injured on our roads) it is clear that we must improve how we train and test drivers to ensure that they are competent and safe when they start to drive unaccompanied."

Edwin Poots further stated that, "The current training and testing regime is not fit for purpose. Currently we put too much emphasis on testing ability to control a vehicle and perform a range of basic manoeuvres. Not enough attention is paid to the motivations, attitudes and behaviours we know are linked to an increased risk of being involved in a collision."

Learner motorcyclists will face a change in the training and testing regime through the introduction of CBT (Compulsory Basic Training) in 2011 and in 2013 the 3rd European Driving Licence Directive which sees a progressive and direct access scheme to obtain a full licence. This scheme is a combination of engine cc, brake horse power and power to weight ratio which is linked to what age these motorcycles can be accessed at.

These testing regimes should be looked at as regarding Learner, Restricted Drivers and Graduated Driver Licensing but more importantly for motorcyclists, is that any changes should be made in relation to attitudes and behaviours

To this end we would welcome the introduction to require the use of driver records/student workbooks linked to the new Learning to Drive syllabus.

However taking this one step further, the NI government has recently introduced Compulsory Basic Training for motorcyclists therefore a similar model could be designed for novice car drivers. This would allow the novice driver to have professional instruction, a CBT test and then the opportunity to continue practicing under supervision until they are confident enough to pass their driving exam.

Equally, as with the CBT, the novice driver would keep a log book while being instructed by a professional instructor to ensure that he/she has fulfilled the requirements of the course prior to doing the test.

Any revision of the practical driving test, especially the use of workbooks, must include a “theoretical” introduction for learner drivers to be aware of and thus actively look out for other road users especially motorcyclists and other vulnerable road users such as cyclists.

Learner drivers should be instructed and taught how to interact not only with the road but with other road users, in our specific case motorcycles (Motorcycles – Scooters – Mopeds), which then asks the question of what is actually being taught to Learner drivers?

Trevor Baird

Dr Elaine Hardy

Right To Ride Ltd

www.righttoride.co.uk

trevor.baird@righttoride.co.uk

Documents

DOE - Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Learner and Restricted Driver Schemes and on Graduated Driver Licensing - <http://www.doeni.gov.uk/roadsafety/index/new-drivers.htm>

Consultation closed on 19th July 2011

Response form

The Department is seeking views on the following options. If you have other comments or ideas about any of these issues please include them in your response.

Measure 1: Raise the minimum licensing age

Option 1(a) Keep the minimum age for both a provisional and full car driving licence as 17 years

Option 1(b) Raise the minimum age for both a provisional and full car driving licence to 17 and a half years

Option 1(c) Raise the minimum age for both a provisional and full car driving licence to 18 years

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

Option 1(a) Keep the minimum age for both a provisional and full car driving licence as 17 years.

The present regime for novice car drivers focuses on instructing them to understand the mechanics of the vehicle, e.g. how to brake, how to use the gears, how to enter into traffic and so forth.

One of the main problems affecting the quality of initial driver training is the concentration on machine control skills to the detriment of hazard awareness and driver attitude and behaviour. The relationship between newly qualified driver overconfidence, failing to recognise hazards and take risks and pre licence training that has overly focussed on machine control skills.

This is not related to age, it simply highlights the shortcomings in the present structure of car driver training. Increasing the minimum age would simply move the problem on.

Indeed it would be preferable to introduce driver training courses including hazard awareness and risk behaviour at an earlier age in schools in order to prepare our young citizens to become worthy and prepared road users, whatever form of transport they intend to use.

Measure 2: Require learner drivers to take a minimum number of driving lessons and/or hours/miles of supervised practice

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Option 2(a) | As now, not require learner drivers to take any professional driving lessons with an approved driving instructor or to have any supervised driving practice |
| Option 2(b) | Require learner drivers to take a minimum number of hours of professional driving lessons with an approved driving instructor |
| Option 2(c) | Require learner drivers to have a minimum number or hours/miles of supervised driving practice |

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

If you think learner drivers should be required to take a minimum number or hours of professional driving lessons with an approved driving instructor, how many lessons/hours should that be and subject to what further requirements, if any?

If you think learner drivers should be required to have a minimum number or hours/miles of supervised driving practice, how many miles/hours should that be and subject to what further requirements, if any?

Option 2(b) 2(c); As mentioned previously, the importance of understanding the mechanical aspects of driving should be complemented with road hazard awareness and risk behaviour. Both aspects would require a minimum number of hours with a professional driving instructor.

However equally important for a novice driver is practice and experience and in this circumstance, spending time under supervision would enable the novice driver to gain much needed experience and confidence.

The NI government has recently introduced Compulsory Basic Training for motorcyclists, therefore a similar model could be designed for novice car drivers. This would allow the novice driver to have professional instruction, a CBT test and then the opportunity to continue practicing under supervision until they are confident enough to pass their driving exam.

Equally, as with the CBT, the novice driver would keep a log book while being instructed by a professional instructor to ensure that he/she has fulfilled the requirements of the course prior to doing the test.

Measure 3: Set a minimum mandatory learning period (starting potentially from age 16)

Option 3(a)	As now, have no mandatory minimum learning period
Option 3(b)	Set a mandatory minimum learning period of six months
Option 3(c)	Set a mandatory minimum learning period of 12 months

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

If you think there should be a mandatory minimum learning period, at what age should people be able to start to learn to drive?

Option 3 (a) See answer to measure one. One of the main problems affecting the quality of initial driver training is the concentration on machine control skills to the detriment of hazard awareness and driver attitude and behaviour. The relationship between newly qualified driver overconfidence, failing to recognise hazards and take risks and pre licence training that has overly focussed on machine control skills. This is not related to age, it simply highlights the shortcomings in the present structure of car driver training.

However, this question is vague. Does the question mean that all 16 year olds must learn to drive a car? If so, it would be unrealistic and extremely expensive and because not all 16 year olds would want (or have the means) to learn to drive and the Government would have to cover the cost of the "learning period".

Or does the question mean that there must be a mandatory learning period for all novice car drivers?

This mandatory learning period, would not take into consideration individual ability to learn more quickly, nor the fact that one novice driver may have more lessons or more practice than another.

A far better solution would be to have provisional licences post exam for a minimum period of two years.

Measure 4: Encourage/require skid training for learner or restricted drivers

Option 4(a)	As now, neither require, nor encourage, skid training for learner or restricted drivers
Option 4(b)	Encourage skid training for learner drivers
Option 4(c)	Encourage skid training for restricted drivers
Option 4(d)	Require learner drivers to undertake skid training
Option 4(e)	Require restricted drivers to undertake skid training

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

Option 4 (b) and (c) However, see response to measure one. One of the main problems affecting the quality of initial driver training is the concentration on machine control skills to the detriment of hazard awareness and driver attitude and behaviour.

The relationship between newly qualified driver overconfidence, failing to recognise hazards and take risks and pre licence training that has overly focussed on machine control skills.

Measure 5: Amend or remove speed limits for learner and restricted drivers

- Option 5(a) Retain the current 45mph limit for learner and restricted drivers**
- Option 5(b) Raise the 45mph limit to 50mph**
- Option 5(c) Raise the 45mph limit to 55mph**
- Option 5(d) Raise the 45mph limit to 60mph**
- Option 5(e) Allow learners and restricted drivers to drive at the current posted or national speed limits in the same way as all other drivers**

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

Option 5(e). The problem with separating the speed limits of novice drivers from other road users is that there is the potential for accidents in certain circumstances.

Speed per se is not the issue, any traffic officer and indeed reports from the Department for Transport (GB) indicate that most “speed” related accidents are due to inappropriate speed for the conditions – not “high” speed.

We would assume that any changes would also apply to motorcyclists, if not then our opinion would be that it should.

Measure 6: Allow learner drivers to drive on motorways

Option 6(a) As now, not allow learner drivers to drive on motorways

Option 6(b) Allow learners accompanied by professional instructors in dual-controlled cars ONLY to drive on motorways

Option 6(c) Allow any supervised learner to drive on a motorway

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

Option 6 (b) There are far fewer accidents on motorways compared to urban and rural roads, thus it is senseless to restrict learner drivers from learning how to drive on motorways.

If they are accompanied by professional instructors, then they have a far better opportunity of learning how to cope with motorway traffic and for example how to enter and exit motorways.

We would assume that any changes would also apply to motorcyclists if not then our opinion would be that it should. Bearing in mind that Learner motorcyclists once they have completed CBT can ride while unaccompanied.

Measure 7: Revise the practical driving test

Option 7(a)	(Assuming the 45mph speed restriction is either raised substantially or removed completely) review the practical car driving test and, in particular, coverage of test routes so that more of them include higher speed dual- and single- carriageways and busy town centres.
Option 7(b)	Encourage the use of driver records/student workbooks linked to the new <i>Learning to Drive</i> syllabus
Option 7(c)	Require the use of driver records/student workbooks linked to the new <i>Learning to Drive</i> syllabus

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

We also welcome your views on whether the marking system for the practical driving test should focus more on competence than on evidence of weakness.

Option 7(a) and (c) however taking into consideration comments in measure one. , as with the CBT, the novice driver should keep a log book while being instructed by a professional instructor to ensure that he/she has fulfilled the requirements of the course prior to doing the test.

Therefore our opinion would be Option 7(c) to require the use of driver records/student workbooks linked to the new Learning to Drive syllabus.

Collision facts with motorcyclists speak for themselves, as the top three causes for all KSI (Killed Seriously Injured) motorcycle collisions (irrespective of responsibility) - Motorcycle casualties in NI Statistical Analysis, Causes and Influencing Factors – published in December 2009.were*:

- Emerging from a minor road without care; excessive speed having regard to conditions; and turning right without care.
-
- More than two-thirds (65%) of collisions happened ‘at or within 20 meters of a junction’.
- Of those collisions occurring at T-junctions, more than 45% occurred at a T-junction with give way signs or markings, followed by 36% at ‘uncontrolled’ junctions, and almost 13% at junctions with a stop sign.
-
- Half of all motorcyclist casualties are caused by other drivers.

Therefore any revision of the practical driving test, especially the use of workbooks, must include a “theoretical” introduction for learner drivers to be aware of other road users especially motorcyclists and other vulnerable road users such as cyclists.

This would mean that instruction for learner drivers and how this is delivered would also have to include a syllabus of what is taught to learner drivers.

As mentioned in “Measure 2”, the NI government has recently introduced Compulsory Basic Training for motorcyclists therefore a similar model could be designed for novice car drivers. This would allow the novice driver to have professional instruction, a CBT test and then the opportunity to continue practicing under supervision until they are confident enough to pass their driving exam.

Equally, as with the CBT, the novice driver would keep a log book while being instructed by a professional instructor to ensure that he/she has fulfilled the requirements of the course prior to doing the test.

Details of the Ride It Right (motorcycle safety initiative) “See Us” campaign is available at http://www.rideitright.org/?page_id=116

Measure 8: Introduce night-time driving restrictions for restricted drivers

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Option 8(a) | As now, do not apply restrictions on night-time driving on any driver |
| Option 8(b) | Restrict all newly qualified drivers from driving between 9 pm and 5 am for the first six months post-test unless accompanied |
| Option 8(c) | Restrict all newly qualified drivers from driving between 9 pm and 5 am for the first 12 months post-test unless accompanied |
| Option 8(d) | Restrict all newly qualified drivers from driving between midnight and 5 am for the first six months post-test unless accompanied |
| Option 8(e) | Restrict all newly qualified drivers from driving between midnight and 5 am for the first 12 months post-test unless accompanied |

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

What exemptions, if any, do you think should be permitted if a night time driving restriction is introduced?

Option 8 (a), In cases where the novice driver has to go to work or travel long distances for family reason or to attend college etc, this restriction is unfair and impractical.

If a novice driver is breaking the law at any point of the day or night, this is an enforcement issue.

A more appropriate approach to reducing problems of young people driving inappropriately should be part of the school curriculum - to introduce driver training courses including hazard awareness and risk behaviour at an earlier age in schools in order to prepare our young citizens to become worthy and prepared road users, whatever form of transport they intend to use.

Measure 9: Introduce passenger restrictions for restricted drivers

Option 9(a)	As now, do not apply passenger restrictions on any driver
Option 9(b)	Restrict all newly-qualified drivers from carrying any 'under-age' passengers other than immediate family members for the first six months post-test unless accompanied
Option 9(c)	Restrict all newly-qualified drivers from carrying any 'under-age' passengers other than immediate family members for the first 12 months post-test unless accompanied

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

What exemptions, if any, do you think should be permitted if a passenger restriction is introduced?

Option 9(a)

The inference of this restriction is that all people become novice drivers at the age of 17, this is not true.

For example if a novice driver is a parent, they would not be able to carry their own children in their car for either six or twelve months.

As mentioned previously, if a novice driver is breaking the law, this is an enforcement issue.

A more appropriate approach to reducing problems of young people driving inappropriately should be part of the school curriculum - to introduce driver training courses including hazard awareness and risk behaviour at an earlier age in schools in order to prepare our young citizens to become worthy and prepared road users, whatever form of transport they intend to use.

Measure 10: Introduce restrictions on high-performance vehicles for restricted drivers

Option 10(a)	As now, do not place any restriction on learner or restricted drivers driving high performance cars
Option 10(b)	Introduce restrictions on learners and re restricted drivers driving high performance cars

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

If you favour restrictions, should they be about engine cc, brake horse power, power to weight ratio, modified vehicles or low Euro NCAP ratings?

If you favour restrictions, what exemptions (if any) do you think should apply?

Option 10 (b) There should be a system similar to the 3rd European Driving Licence Directive for motorcycles whereby there is a progressive and direct access scheme to obtain a full licence.

This scheme is a combination of engine cc, brake horse power and power to weight ratio which is linked to what age these motorcycles can be accessed at.

However whether this will have an effect on motorcycle safety remains to be seen it is something worth investigating for learner and restricted drivers.

Bearing in mind that restricted riders are restricted to the horse power of their motorcycle at present.

Measure 11: Introduce an offence-free period before restrictions are lifted

Option 11(a)	As now, do not have an offence-free period
Option 11(b)	Introduce a six-month offence-free period before restrictions can be lifted
Option 11(c)	Introduce a one year offence-free period before restrictions can be lifted

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

Option 11(c) As mentioned previously, there should be a provisional licence period of two years after the novice driver has passed their driving exam.

During that period, there should be restrictions for offences, depending on the severity and type of offence. Those driving under a restricted licence should be dealt separately and not by issuing a fixed penalty ticket.

However the outcome should aim to educate the novice driver (unless the offence is serious e.g. drink driving, dangerous driving etc). Including obligatory refresher courses and attendance at "bad driver rehabilitation classes"

Measure 12: Increase the duration of the restriction period

Option 12(a)	Retain the current one-year restricted driving period
Option 12(b)	Increase the duration of the restricted period to two years to match the probationary period
Option 12(c)	Remove the restricted period completely

Which of these options do you favour, and why?

Should all restrictions apply for the whole of the restricted driving period?

If not, how long should particular restrictions apply?

Option 12 (b) As mentioned previously, the novice driver should have a provisional licence for two years post driving exam and be subject to stricter measures in the case of offending. See measure 11.