

Motorcycle Action Group

**The Department of Transport's Consultation
on
The Draft Local Transport Bill**



**Response from the
Motorcycle Action Group (MAG-UK)**

September 2007

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Introduction

The Motorcycle Action Group, (MAG UK), represents the interests of motorcyclists from all walks of life and social strata in the United Kingdom.

MAG has been party to the formulation of the Government's Motorcycling Strategy and has recently given evidence to the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee on the implementation of the strategy.

MAG is represented on the Parliamentary Advisory Group on Transport Safety, (PACTS), and is actively engaged in consultation at all levels from local to national government.

MAG fully supports the Government's commitment to mainstream motorcycling into transport planning and policy which is the central tenet of the Government's Motorcycling Strategy.

MAG is committed to working with government to achieve this objective by capitalising on the benefits offered by motorcycling through reducing traffic congestion and pollution whilst at the same time increasing social mobility and employment opportunities.

MAG recognises the problems faced by society caused by the exponential growth of road traffic against a finite network of road and transport infrastructure.

Put simply, the demand for road space and travel is outstripping the supply of road space.

This is compounded by issues around climate change, pollution and the threat to an expanding economy stifled by traffic congestion.

David Short B.Sc, MIRM
Campaigns Manager
Motorcycle Action Group (MAG UK)

Road Charging – Congestion

In relation to those specific issues raised in the consultation document pertaining to motorcycling, MAG believes that the overarching issue is to ensure that where road charging is applied, then it should be that the least polluting and most road space efficient modes are exempt from charges. Conversely those modes which are the most polluting and which take up the most road space should be charged at a higher rate.

A sliding scale of charges would reflect the levels of pollution and road space consumed.

It has been proven through the London congestion charge scheme, that exempting motorcycles from charges increases social mobility, reduces traffic congestion and pollution levels.

It is interesting to note that whilst motorcycle use has increased there has also been a marked reduction in the motorcycle casualty rate.

Casualty Rates

Concern over motorcycle casualty rates is often used as a means of justifying charging motorcycles on the grounds that it is a mode of transport which should be discouraged.

This stance often ignores the facts that motorcycle casualty rates are reducing, they were 5% lower in 2005 than 2004 and overall 26% lower than the 1994/98 baseline, (source – Road Casualties in Great Britain Report 2005).

Motorcycles

Motorcycle design has always been at the cutting edge of developing technology. The use of developing technology ensures that motorcycles, including scooters and mopeds are well engineered with better brakes, greater stability, more responsive steering, more effective controls and improved ergonomics to reduce fatigue and improve reliability.

The appeal of motorcycling as a safe and viable alternative to the car is enhanced by these advances in motorcycle safety.

Better training programmes as well as post test training and assessment schemes are giving riders the necessary skills for relevant machine control skills; a knowledge and understanding of traffic rules and regulations; the importance of attitude and behaviour and hazard recognition; avoidance or management to have a positive impact on casualty rates.

Improved exhaust designs ensure emissions conform to the most stringent Euro 3 standards. In a recent ADEME study¹ which compared EURO4 cars with EURO3 motorcycles. Not only do motorcycles use less fuel and therefore emit less CO₂ emissions than small urban cars, but EURO3 motorcycles also emit less greenhouse gases than the best 4-wheel vehicle currently available on the market. Motorcycles are one of the least polluting transport modes.

Average motorcycles consume between 55% and 81% less fuel than cars on the same journey and require fewer resources to manufacture (1/7th)² -

Consultation

As a general observation of the issues in Chapters 4 to 6 of the consultation, it is imperative that local and unitary authorities who are considering implementing road charging schemes should consult meaningfully with user groups such as motorcyclists to ensure the provisions of the Government's Motorcycling Strategy are considered.

Many of the provisions in the strategy such as recommending dedicated and secure parking and the use of bus lanes by motorcyclists, are all sound measures which would actually contribute to the aims and objectives of road charging e.g., reduced congestion, reduced pollution and greater social and economic mobility.

MAG fully support the principles of autonomy, devolved responsibility and self determination as proposed in the draft Bill, however, it is also essential that sufficient governance safeguards are in place to ensure consistency of application across the UK.

It is also essential that 'good practice' is identified and taken on board by other local and unitary authorities implementing road charging schemes.

The London congestion charge scheme should be the benchmark for others to follow.

Conclusion

MAG recognises the Government's commitment to address road congestion and traffic pollution.

MAG would urge the government to recognise motorcycling as an answer to the problem and build on the excellent on going work through the Government's Motorcycling Strategy which 'mainstreams' motorcycling as a legitimate and viable transport mode.

MAG is committed to working with Government, local and unitary authorities to help reduce traffic congestion.

The key is consultation and measured consideration, encouraging those modes which support the objectives of the Local Transport Bill.

Motorcycling offers a sustainable answer to the problem.

David Short B.Sc, MIRM
Campaigns Manager
Motorcycle Action Group
PO Box 750
Rugby CV21 3ZR

Contacts

Mobile – 077389 48080
Office - 01347 822214
Email: campaigns-manager@mag-uk.org

¹ Study of real-world emissions of Euro3 PTW Comparison with Euro4 cars" – May 2007 - ADEME

² European Commission Motor Vehicles Emissions Group.

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<http://www.ihie.org.uk/index3.asp?cat=6&d=2&pageid=937298>

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