

EVSC and ISA Motorcycle - MAG UK 2007

What's the difference between External Vehicle Speed Control (EVSC) and ISA (Intelligent Speed Adaption)?

The answer is nothing much.

In 2001 MAG launched its campaign against the threat of the mandatory fitting of speed control devices on all privately owned vehicles with the EVSC Petition and Mulhouse Declaration.

Since 2001 the EVSC "working title" for these systems and projects (sometimes referred to as Telematics) has been spun around to Intelligent Speed Adaption.

This should be seen as presenting a more acceptable face to drivers and riders regarding their concerns of taking away the control of a vehicle.

External is replaced by Intelligent – Control by Adaption.

However control remains as the main focus, especially as regards the freedom of riding a motorcycle, a rider exercising personal and independent control of a motorcycle, control our movements, control over our lives.

Between February 1997 and February 2000 a series of reports on a project on External Vehicle Speed Control undertaken by The Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds and The Motor Industry Research Association (MIRA) for the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions where published.

Rumours abounded of a motorcycle fitted with a system for several years eventually surfacing this year with a Suzuki 650S Bandit and an invite to take part in evaluation trials which included questions on thoughts about the system.

The major part of the project has focused on a fleet of 20 ISA-equipped cars being used for four, six-month trials in West Yorkshire and Leicestershire.

The system fitted to the bike basically slows the bike down through speed limits by acting on the throttle. Information for the bike to slow down through set speed limits, in this case at the MIRA test track is supplied to the bike by GPS information digitally mapped to the various speed limits on the track. These speed limits range from 30 – 40 – 50 – 60mph.

When the bike enters a lower speed limited zone (e.g. riding from a 40mph limit through to a 30mph limit without slowing down) then the ISA assisting system will warn the rider that the bike is travelling too fast, if the warnings are ignored then the throttle is gradually reduced until the speed of the bike is at or below the speed limit. The system does not interfere with the brakes or the gears of the bike, only the throttle, which in turn reduces power to the engine.

The system introduces itself gradually by audible warning through ear phones plugged into the system, warning lights which flash, mounted under the screen, vibrating pads in the seat, these are placed under the seat cover at the riders inner thighs – no smutty remarks please.

When this is "ignored" the throttle reacts by resisting the rider trying to accelerate and gradually decreases the speed. When the correct speed is reached the throttle returns to full control of the rider.

The audible warning also sounds when riding into and out of the set speed limits.

There is also a display unit mounted on the centre of the handle bars which advises the rider of the speed limit. The display can also show the rider what junctions are approaching.

I was able to ride the bike first during an initial test and at the recent official launch, unfortunately due to the recent terror alerts the Transport Minister wasn't able to attend.



The ride round the test track used various courses both clockwise and anti clockwise. The system was gradually switched on to the various warning systems with the final introduction of the throttle control all ridden within the set speed limits.

The last three laps gave me the opportunity to see how the system with the throttle control operating affected the stability of the bike in a corner.

It will come as no surprise that with either the throttle decelerating the bike or allowing the bike to accelerate with the bike in mid corner I found the stability of the bike was upset having to adjust my balance and reposition the bike on the track.

I also found that I accelerated up to the speed limit faster and let the system kick in, I was also watching the speedo continuously so that the warning system didn't start beeping flashing and vibrating, annoying after two days testing unliveable with on the road.

The bike was fitted with a temporary off switch for manoeuvres such as overtaking when you need to accelerate over the speed limit.



Overall in my opinion the ISA system is a dangerous safety device it overloads the rider with information and distracts the concentration needed for the task at hand.

This is the end of the project and a final report is to be submitted to the Department this should make interesting reading.

With the project over and achieving a result that technically ISA can be fitted and slow a bike down within a set speed limit and limit that speed within the confines of a test track situation.

So where now for MAG?

We know that this is not the only ISA equipped test motorcycle the Swedes have tested a bike and lead in ISA trials in Europe.

The issue is not about telematics or Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) which can provide night vision devices and audible warnings for car drivers who wander over the white line or clever signs on motorways that advice of speed limits to improve the flow of traffic.

It is about devices that remove control from the rider or driver to remote operation. The central and fundamental purpose of EVSC/ISA is control - control over individuals, control over vehicles, control over movements, control lives.

This project may never see the light of day, it may never be commercially viable, it may never be possible to introduce the system on new bikes without retrospectively fitting it to older bikes but we must be aware of future developments and state our opposition clearly.

Trevor Baird

From an article published for the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG UK)