

The Road Observer



The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



August 2026





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The Newsletter of the North Down Advanced Motorists Group (Group 8199)
Helping to Improve the Standard of Driving on the Roads in Northern Ireland and the
advancement of road safety

August 2026

<https://ndam.org.uk/>

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<https://www.facebook.com/NorthDownGroupIAM>

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Test passes

Congratulations this month to car Member

Ian Wilkinson

who achieved a F1RST pass

and also to

Des Garland

Good luck and safe driving or riding to any Associates approaching their test.

New Members

This month we welcome new car members Catherine Moore, Joshua Davison and Catherine Patterson and also bike member Victor Boyd. We hope you not only gain from being a member of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

Cover picture

The cover picture in the June/summer issue was the road leading to Fanad lighthouse in Donegal. Congratulations to David McFall, James O'Brien and Ralph Magee.

Do you know where this month's picture was taken? There is a prize to aim for as well as the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, getting a mention in the next Road Observer. The prize is a year's Group membership to the Member who gets the greatest number of correct answers in the year to October 2026. Submit your answers to: leslie.ashe.LA@googlemail.com

Dates for your diary

In addition to the regular STAC nights for car Associates and the regular bike runs (notified by email to bike members and also on Facebook) we have a varied programme for the Group Nights

1 September	STAC 1 - Human factors and IPSGA
8 September	Group night - Roads Policing
22 September	STAC 2 - Core driving skills
29 September	STAC 3 - Bends
6 October	STAC 4 - Junctions and roundabouts
13 October	Group Night - AGM
27 October	STAC 5 - Overtaking
3 November	STAC 6 - Motorways and dual carriageways
10 November	Group Night - TBA
24 November	STAC 7 - Manoeuvring
1 December	Additional driving practice
8 December	Group Night - Christmas dinner

All meetings will take place in the Boathouse at Groomsport Harbour car park unless otherwise stated or notified by email.

STAC - Short Term Associate Course. Car Associate Members should ensure that you are familiar with the relevant section of the "Associate Handbook" before each STAC night so that you can get the most benefit from the theory session as well as your observed drive. **And remember to bring your logbook with you.**

August Bike Run

Ten NDAM riders met in Ards for the August bike run to Antrim Castle Gardens, with Ivan leading the group and Neil Anthony taking on the all-important tail-end/sweeper role. The route was planned to suit all abilities, avoiding motorways and dual carriageways, which meant the day was less about getting there quickly and more about enjoying proper road riding, group discipline, and the sort of route that keeps everyone switched on.

The weather started off dull and relatively calm, which was no bad thing, as it avoided the nuisance of low sun and stayed dry throughout, becoming much more pleasant as the run progressed. In Northern Ireland, we will absolutely take "dull but dry" and call it a win, especially when nobody has to wrestle waterproofs on at the roadside while pretending they're still enjoying themselves.

It was particularly good to see a couple of associates out with the group, including Carla, who is new to NDAM and finally made it along for a run, and Edward, alongside our regular National Observers and several members working towards their National Observer qualification. That mix of experience is one of the real strengths of NDAM rides, because newer members get the benefit of riding within a well-organised group, while those developing their observer skills have the chance to keep sharpening their own standards in real riding conditions.

The run took the group out past Comber and Moneyreagh, across to Saintfield Road and Shaw's Bridge, before continuing over to Dundrod. This section provided a proper test of group riding, with a number of junctions, traffic-light-controlled sections and varied roundabouts arriving in quick

succession, giving everyone plenty to think about while still maintaining position and keeping the group together. Well done to all involved, because smooth group riding doesn't happen by magic; it takes concentration, awareness, patience, and occasionally the ability to resist the urge to mutter rude things into your helmet.

Arriving at Antrim Castle Gardens, which was a first visit for the group in a number of years, the parking proved more than adequate, and the café offerings were very welcome. A coffee and bite to eat gave everyone a relaxed break of around 45 minutes, with the usual mix of chat, bike talk and the quiet satisfaction that comes from arriving somewhere dry, organised and still speaking to each other.

After the stop, a few members had to head home for their own commitments, while a smaller group of five returned via Dundrod and the UGP circuit, which was new for at least one rider and added a brilliant extra element to the day. There is always something special about riding roads with that kind of history, even when tackled at a sensible NDAM pace rather than with delusions of grandeur and a commentator shouting your name.

Thanks to everyone who attended, to Ivan for leading, to Neil for sweeping, and to all who helped keep the group moving safely and smoothly throughout the day. These rides are a valuable part of what NDAM offers, helping motorcyclists stay on the road, maintain their confidence, develop their road-riding skills, and keep safety standards at a high level while still enjoying the simple pleasure of a good run out with good company.

We hope to see everyone out again for our next run.



Region 7 BBQ

Saturday 22nd August was the IAM RoadSmart Region 7 (Northern Ireland) BBQ at the Ulster Aviation Society just outside Lisburn. The weather gods smiled on us and provided a pleasantly warm, dry day so that the BBQ and socialising could be enjoyed outside. Over 200 adults and children attended from all our Groups.

Burgers, hot dogs, a blues band playing at the entrance to one of the hangars, guided tours of the exhibits as well as the facility to walk about the hangars to look at the many aircraft on display (from behind the barriers of course). There were also flight



simulators which were a great attraction for all ages as well as many other displays providing extensive information about a whole range of different aspects of aviation in Northern Ireland, including NI's role in World War 2.

It's a fantastic facility. The North Down Group has visited a couple of times for a guided tour on our Group Nights over the last few years and if you weren't able to attend these or the BBQ we can thoroughly recommend a visit and get a guided tour. Even if you have been before is still worth a visit as there are new aircraft on display and other displays are being updated all the time. Details of the Society can be found by clicking on this link: [Ulster Aviation Society](#)

It was a very successful day and perhaps something to be repeated? Following are some pictures from the day.



Mini roundabout encounter

I witnessed a stalemate at the mini roundabout at the junction of the Rathmore Road and the Crawfordsburn Road in Bangor. (I was a pedestrian and therefore had no part in this other than as a witness).

As I approached the roundabout I noticed that there was a car stopped at each of the give ways on the Rathmore Road (1) and the Crawfordsburn Road (2). A third car (3) was approaching from Bangor but had not yet reached the roundabout. The car on the Rathmore Road (1) had plenty of time to go before car 3 arrived at the give way line but didn't go with the result that eventually there were three cars stopped at the roundabout.

I didn't see any communication between any of the drivers eg a wave or a flash of the lights (neither of which an advanced driver should use to indicate that you are giving way).

The car coming from the Crawfordsburn (2) direction decided to break the stalemate and turned right into the Rathmore Road and didn't put any wheels on the spot in the mini-roundabout - instead he went entirely on the wrong side as indicated in the diagram (poorly drawn) below. If the car waiting on the Rathmore Road (1) had decided to go about the same time they would have been in conflict over the same bit of tarmac. I walked on with a shake of my head!



Mini roundabouts

Remember to give way to traffic from the right, also give priority to traffic closely approaching the roundabout (IAM RoadSmart Associate Logbook). All vehicles must pass round the central marking except large vehicles which are physically incapable of doing so (Rule 188 of the Highway Code)

General

Don't wave anyone out or flash your lights to indicate you are giving way. Make the decision that you are giving way obvious eg by leaving sufficient space for another driver to move.