

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



Summer 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

Summer 2026

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Group Contact: Tel No 07760 578444

Email: secretaryndam@gmail.com

New Member

This month we welcome new bike member Gary Irvine. 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.

Test Passes

Congratulations this month to

Peter Hamill

who was successful in his National Observer Assessment

Cover picture

I thought that this one would have more correct answers as anyone travelling to the International Airport from Belfast direction would have passed it. It was the traffic lights in Templepatrick with a distinctive gateway on the left of the picture. Congratulations to David Hall, David McFall, James O'Brien, Mark Patterson and Ralph Magee.

Do you know where this month's picture was taken? Again this is a location that many Members will have passed on multiple occasions. 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. Click on this link to 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.

11 August	STAC enrolment for new Members and demonstration drives
1 September	STAC 1- Human factors and IPSGA
8 September	Group Night - Road Policing
22 September	STAC 2 - Core driving skills
29 September	STAC 3 - Bends
6 October	STAC 4 - Junctions and roundabouts
13 October	Group Night - Annual General Meeting
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.**

June Group Night

This was to be an ice-cream run to Mauds in Carrickfergus scheduled for Tuesday 9 June. However external circumstances meant that we had to cancel at the last minute. We rearranged it for 22 June



in place of an evening of additional driving practice. The evening turned out sunny and dry but with a cooling wind. A total of 15 members took part (5 on bikes and the rest in cars). Two car Associates had observed drives from Groomsport (my Associate and I went the long way through Ballynure and Glenoe because it was too good a driving night to miss out on some relatively quick and twisty roads). We all took the opportunity of a fine evening to socialise outside while having our ice cream.

Bike runs

Early June

The story of the bike runs at the beginning of June could probably be summed up in one line: Weather forecasts: who needs them?

It was a busy weekend for North Down members, with some taking part in the IAM regional bike and car run to Ballycastle on Saturday 6 June, followed by NDAM's own first-Sunday short ride out to Clough the next day. Despite poor forecasts for both days, the conditions were unexpectedly good, proving once again that motorcycling in this wee country requires optimism, flexibility, and possibly selective hearing when the weather app starts giving out opinions.



Before leaving on the Ballycastle run

Ahead of Sunday's scheduled first-Sunday ride, Ralph had volunteered to lead the group, and, with the forecast looking less than encouraging, he quite reasonably suggested that the original plan to head towards Slemish might be swapped for a shorter coffee run to Newcastle or Clough, particularly as the last attempt in that direction had ended with the weather closing in so dramatically that Don failed to see Slemish at all, despite riding close enough to it that it was practically waving at him.

By Sunday morning the plan was still to meet at 9.30am, with Ralph taking the refreshingly practical approach of "We'll see how we feel," which is probably as close as any of us should ever get to trusting a forecast in Northern Ireland. With French's or Newcastle on the cards and the important matter of a breakfast buttly influencing strategic decision-making, the group set off and were rewarded with a thoroughly enjoyable run to Clough.

The weather, having threatened all week to be difficult, decided instead to behave itself beautifully, and Sunday's ride was blessed with dry roads and no rain whatsoever. This did, of course, lead to

the inevitable post-run conclusion that the best approach may be to look out the window, shrug, take your chances anyway, and accept that the forecast is sometimes less of a science and more of a dramatic suggestion.

Sunday's stop at French's in Clough was, as always, a highlight, with great food, great craic and great company making the run especially enjoyable.

We are incredibly fortunate in Northern Ireland to have such cracking scenery and roads within easy reach. The Antrim Coast Road remains a true gem and an absolute must for at least one bike run every year, while closer to home in County Down we have beautiful rolling countryside, fantastic roads and, very importantly, plenty of excellent food stops, because the scenery is lovely but a good brunch has its own special magic.

A big thank you to Ralph for leading Sunday's ride and to everyone who came along over the weekend and helped make both runs such a success.

Saturday 20 June

Eight NDAM bikers met in Newtownards for the group's latest bike run, with Brian organising and leading the day's route, Neil taking on sweeper duties, and Brian apparently organising the weather as well, because the sunshine was far too good to be accidental.

The outward route took the group from Newtownards towards Windy Gap, Slievenaboley Road, Ballyward and Castlewellan, serving up a brilliant mix of open roads, sweeping views and the kind of scenery that makes you remember why bike runs are so good for the soul.

Lunch was at Cunningham Bistro in Kilkeel, which proved to be an excellent stop and gave everyone the chance to refuel properly, because while the bikes may run on petrol, the riders are powered by good food, decent coffee and the firm belief that a proper lunch stop is absolutely not optional. Brian has always said that group riding with NDAM is simply more enjoyable, and this run proved the point perfectly, with good company, a well-planned route, smooth group riding and everyone able to relax into the day rather than just chasing miles for the sake of it.



The return route took a different line back via Newcastle, Minerstown and Downpatrick before heading to Portaferry Ferry Terminal to catch the ferry, which added a lovely change of pace to the

day and gave the run that little extra “we’re on an adventure” feeling without anyone needing to produce a passport or pretend they packed sensibly.

From there, the ride back to Newtownards via Kircubbin offered a beautiful stretch along Strangford Lough, with superb views, dry roads and the kind of late-run scenery that makes everyone quietly forgive any earlier faffing about with gloves, helmets and “are we ready yet?” moments.

A huge thank you to Brian for organising and leading the run and for somehow sorting the fabulous weather too; to Neil for sweeping; and to everyone who came along and made it such a brilliant day out.

Safe riding, everyone — and if Brian is now taking weather requests, we would like sunshine for the next one as well, please.

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Safe riding, everyone—and remember, when in doubt, look out the window. The weather forecast has clearly been freelancing as fiction.

New Speed Cameras Introduced in Northern Ireland

New speed cameras are being introduced across Northern Ireland as part of efforts to tackle speeding and improve road safety. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), working with the Northern Ireland Road Safety Partnership, has begun a three-month pilot of new TruCAM II handheld laser speed cameras. The devices represent a significant development in speed enforcement because they can detect speeding vehicles from much greater distances and record video evidence of an offence.



The new TruCAM II cameras are capable of detecting vehicles from up to one kilometre away. Unlike traditional roadside enforcement, where police officers may stop a speeding driver immediately, the new equipment can record the vehicle and the alleged offence without requiring officers to pursue or pull over the motorist. In some cases, drivers may therefore only become aware that they have been

caught when they receive official correspondence afterwards. In addition, they can operate during hours of darkness.

The technology combines laser-based speed detection with high-definition video recording. This allows police to gather evidence while operating from a safe position at the roadside. The cameras are also portable, meaning they are not restricted to fixed locations. The PSNI has stressed that speed enforcement equipment can be deployed on roads throughout Northern Ireland, making it more difficult for drivers to rely on knowing the locations of permanent cameras.

One of the main aims of the new cameras is to improve enforcement on rural roads. These routes can present particular challenges because of bends, hills and limited opportunities for police officers to stop vehicles safely. The longer detection range of the TruCAM II devices could allow officers to monitor speeding more effectively in these areas. This is especially important because excessive speed can increase both the likelihood of a collision and the severity of the injuries caused.

The introduction of the new technology comes against a background of high levels of speed enforcement in Northern Ireland. In 2024, the Northern Ireland Road Safety Partnership recorded 84,004 detections for speeding or running a red light, the highest annual total since the scheme began. This represented a 16 per cent increase compared with 2023. More than half of the drivers detected for speeding completed a speed awareness course.



Northern Ireland already uses several different forms of camera enforcement. These include mobile safety camera vehicles, fixed speed cameras, red-light cameras and average-speed enforcement systems. According to the PSNI, there are 90 permanently signed locations where 12 safety camera vehicles operate, although the vehicles can also be deployed elsewhere. There are also three fixed speed cameras, six fixed red-light cameras and three average-speed enforcement cameras.

The new handheld cameras are likely to attract debate among motorists. Some drivers may see longer-range detection as overly strict or worry that they could be caught before noticing a police presence. However, the purpose of speed enforcement is to encourage drivers to obey the legal limit at all times rather than only slowing down when they see a camera or police vehicle.

Ultimately, the introduction of the TruCAM II cameras marks a further move towards technology-based road policing in Northern Ireland. Their effectiveness will become clearer during and after the three-month pilot. If they help deter speeding and reduce dangerous driving, they could become an important part of future road-safety enforcement. For motorists, the message is straightforward:

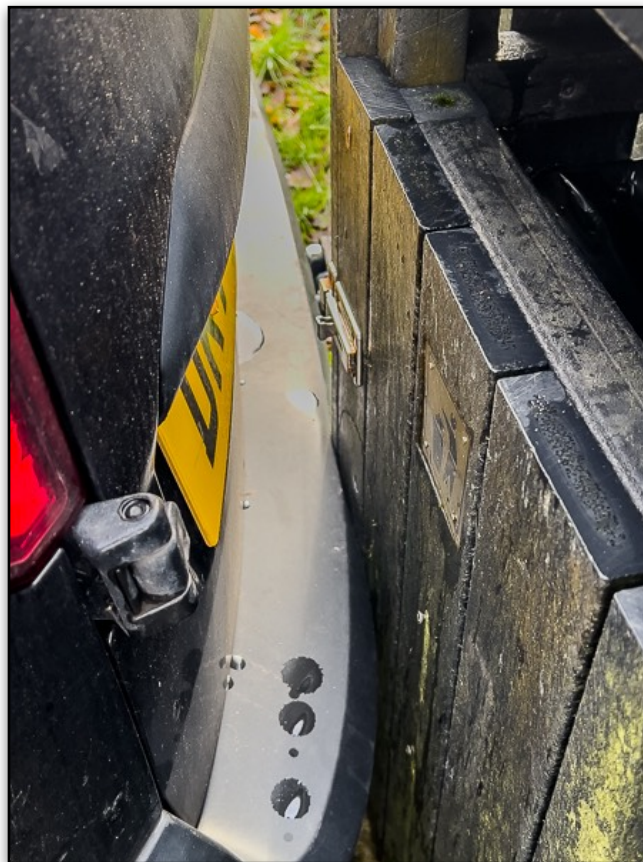
speed limits apply regardless of whether a camera is visible, and new technology means speeding offences can now be detected from much farther away.

Spotted locally:

Honda with wonky rear suspension.



Tight parking: right up against a rubbish bin to the extent that the plastic bumper is deformed.



The views expressed in the “Road Observer” are not necessarily those of the Editor, the North Down Advanced Motorists Group or IAM RoadSmart