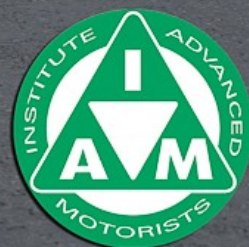


The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



April 2025





The Road Observer

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

April 2025

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Test passes

Congratulations this month to

Mark Patterson

and

William McAteer

on passing their National Observer (car) assessments.

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

Cover picture

Last month's cover picture was an obscure one and for once I thought I might not get any correct answers. However I hadn't reckoned on the eagle-eyed and good memories of some members. Congratulations to Stewart Campbell, Norman Shearer, Davie Hall and William McAteer. It was taken in the village of Glynn just south of Larne on the A2. What makes it distinctive is the footpath on the left is below the level of the road and is protected by a barrier.

Do you know where the months cover picture was taken? It might be easier than last month. There is now 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 2025. 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. All meetings will take place in the Boathouse at Groomsport Harbour car park unless otherwise stated.

29 April	STAC 6 - Overtaking
6 May	STAC 7 - Motorways and dual carriageways
13 May	Group Night - Return visit by K9 Rescue (practical demonstration)
27 May	STAC 8 - Manoeuvring
3 June	Additional driving practice
10 June	Group night - Drive/ride to The Rhinka for ice-cream.

STAC - Short Term Associate Course. 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.

April Group Night

On our Group night on the second Tuesday in April we had a presentation by Mr Ross Cameron a past member of the bike section and now the Community Resuscitation Officer, a new post for the region. The presentation started with a question "Does anyone know what percentage of people survive an Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest?"

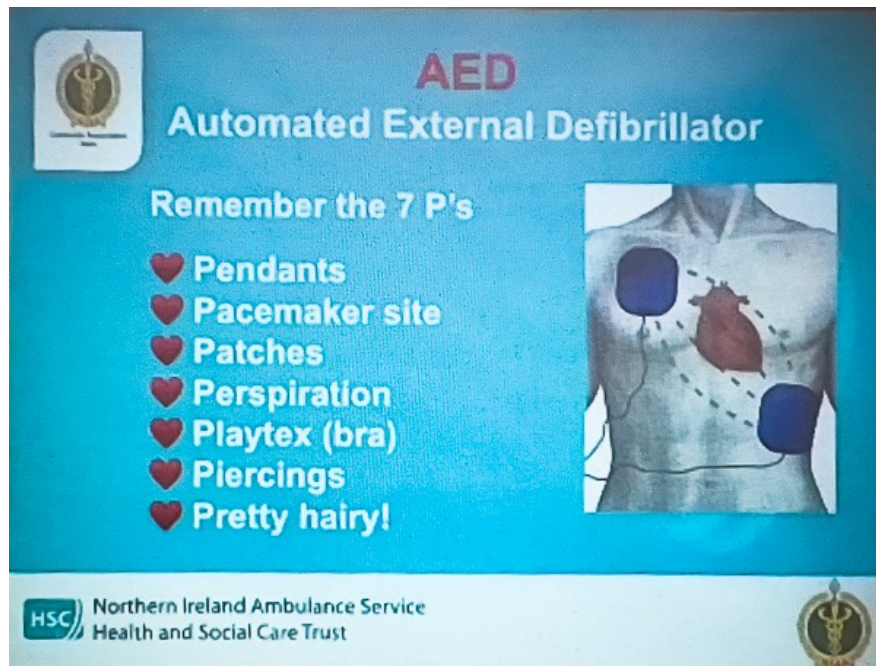
The answer was less than 1 in 10 approximately 8%.

Ross explained that other countries generally have similar figures, though some, a few, have figures that are significantly higher, even though they have fewer ambulances to despatch to the patients. What they do have, is a community spirit that encourages keeping an eye on each other and being aware of individuals requiring medical help. It was determined that there was a time critical component to patient care in the case of cardiac arrest. The time taken to implement the correct care and attention had a bearing on the successful outcomes. Being able to administer CPR as soon as possible was critical to these successful outcomes. Not everyone has the ability to correctly make use of this procedure but the use of an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) unit makes it perfectly simple to correctly help someone in cardiac distress.

Ross explained there was a number of these spread across the country, numbered in the thousands but only a small percentage were owned by the Health Service, invariably in Health Service properties. It was his aim to have one of these units within a mile of any point in the Province. He was able to demonstrate the use of a typical AED and explain how it made all the decisions as to when to shock and how much power to use, in some cases if not all, the machine will talk to the



user telling them what to do. There were a number of things to be aware of when using an AED., Jewellery, piercings, Playtex bras, pacemakers, patches, perspiration and excessive hair.



When coming across a cardiac arrest there are a series of things to do (DRS ABCD)

Danger – electric cables, traffic any thing putting the patient or help in danger

Response – checking for response from the patient, tapping the collar bones firmly is a good tip.

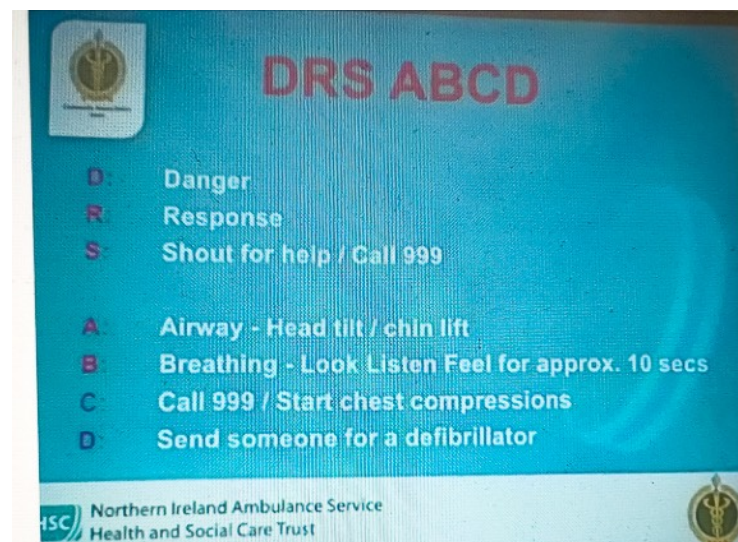
Shout for help

Airway – Tilt the head, lift the chin

Breathing – look, listen and feel for approximately 10 seconds

Call 999 – start chest compressions

Defibrillator – Send someone for a **D**efibrillator



Continue CPR until

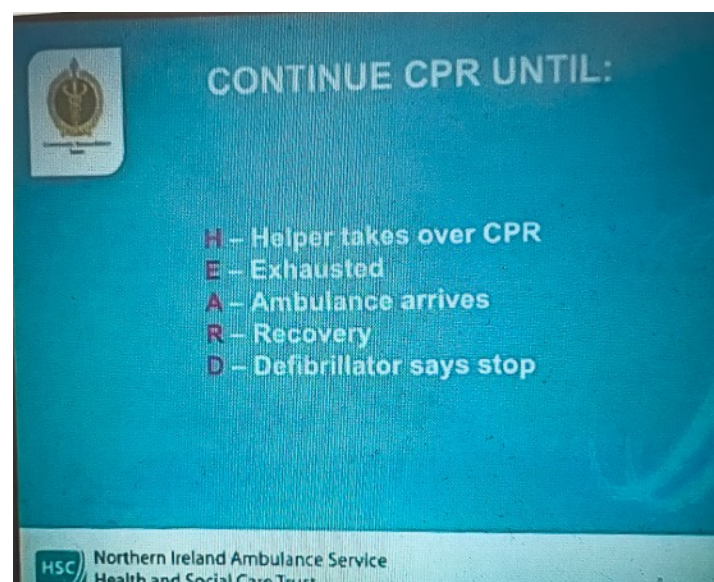
Help arrives to take over

Exhausted

Ambulance arrives

Recovery

Defibrillator says stop



Many thanks to Ross for his talk and to Ivan Greenfield for his report.

Westlink

I was confused recently when driving westbound on the Westlink. The reason was that one of the overhead gantries was showing the national speed limit sign. My understanding was that the whole of the Westlink was subject to a maximum limit of 50 but could be reduced to 40 or 30 depending on traffic conditions.

Westbound

I decided to look into this in a bit more detail and a further drive westbound showed the following (all photographs taken by my passenger):

- The start of the Westlink has a 50mph sign:

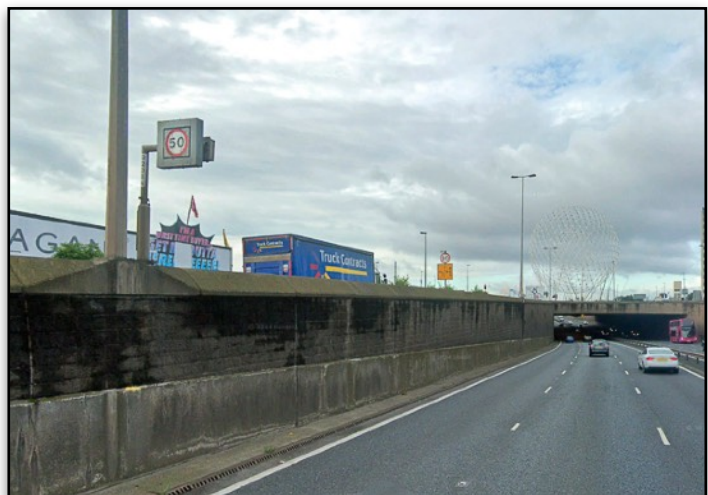


- The Clifton Street bridge has a variable speed limit sign:



- There are 4 overhead gantries capable of showing variable speed limits before the Falls Road bridge (the “Balls on the Falls”) (not pictured)

- There is a 50 limit sign immediately before the Falls Road Bridge (just on the left hand side) which is louvered and can be changed:



- At the start of the M1 there is a gantry which shows the National speed limit. This sign is also louvered and can be changed:



- Further 3 gantries before the Stockman's Lane off-slip all capable of showing variable speed limits. (Not pictured).

- Immediately after the Black's Road off-slip there is a Variable speed limit ends sign:



On the Thursday before Easter I was driving the same stretch and to my surprise the second gantry on the Westlink (after the Divis Street Bridge) was again displaying the national speed limit sign. Unfortunately the photographer (my other half) wasn't ready!

It would appear that between York Street and the gantry on the country side of the "Balls on the Falls" the speed limit is 50 unless another speed limit is posted (lower or higher). Between that gantry and Blacks Road it is 70 unless a lower speed limit is posted.

Citybound

City-bound just before the Blacks Road on-slip there is a sign which states "Variable speed limit ahead":



The gantry before the Balls on the Falls usually has a 50 speed limit unless there is congestion ahead in which case it is lower:



I have only ever seen 50 or lower on the Westlink gantries and the ones following:



The variable speed limit extends as far as the Clifton Street bridge but I didn't see any signs indicating what the speed limit is between the bridge and York Street:



This is simply a report of what I have seen. Let me know if you have ever seen the national speed limit displayed on the Westlink westbound or anything other than 50 or lower city bound.

This reinforces the need for good observation and not assuming what you think the speed limit is.

Speed detection

Approximately 700 detections for speeding were made during a day-long road safety operation carried out across Northern Ireland on Wednesday 16 April.

The detections were made during Operation Lifesaver, which is the Service's new approach to speeding, by officers and Road Safety Camera Vans. Spanning all 11 policing districts, officers conducted almost 260 speeding operations across Northern Ireland. Around 800 motoring offences were detected, of which approximately 700 were specifically for speeding.

Commenting on the figures, Chief Superintendent Sam Donaldson from the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Operational Support Department said: "These figures show very clearly that there are drivers who are continuing to speed regardless of the potential consequences. Not only is that really disappointing, but it's also very worrying because it shows that far too many drivers are putting their lives and other roads users lives at risk.



"Last year, in 2024, we made around 100,000 speeding detections across Northern Ireland. That is a shocking number of people, who for whatever reason they think is justified, found themselves with a fine and penalty points, or even under arrest and in court.

"Even more shockingly, a number of drivers have been caught speeding on multiple occasions. Clearly these drivers are not getting the message."

Chief Superintendent Donaldson had this message for drivers ahead of the Easter holiday period.

"One of the greatest contributions each road user can make is to reduce their speed. Speeding is a dangerous crime and poses a serious threat to other road users and we, as a Police Service, have a duty to detect those who break the law and deal with any offences.

"If we all stop speeding, road safety improves, lives can be saved and fewer people have to contend with life-changing injuries."

April bike run

After weeks of gorgeous weather, brilliant for getting out on the bike on bone-dry roads, Saturday arrived alongside rain, quite a bit as it turned out. Typical, but five of us still made the trip into deepest County Down, travelling from Comber through Saintfield and Ballynahinch, and on to Dromara, Rathfriland and finally down from the hills into Warrenpoint.

We're all used to the gentle, rolling drumlins around Strangford Lough, but around Dromara, the hills get much steeper and the roads more challenging. Given the inclement weather, the riding challenges kept us all focused. There's no doubt that our fry in Diamonds, Warrenpoint, was well-earned!

Our thanks go to Brian for organising and leading this month's run. Not only did he plan a great route and destination, but he also included Rathfriland, home of Patrick Bronte (father to the famous writing sisters) and Katesbridge, location of Northern Ireland's most well-known thermometer, and one of the coldest places in the UK during icy winter spells. Every day's a school day! Next time, Brian, we'll do it in the sunshine and stop at Graham's in Rathfriland for their ice-cream - it's special!

A well deserved feed! Many thanks to Ralph Magee for the report.



And finally....

Have you ever looked closely at a road works warning sign. In the UK it clearly shows that the worker is wearing welly boots. Some suggest he is trying to open an umbrella rather than using a shovel!



In the Republic there are two types of signs both of which clearly show a shovel. However, in one the worker appears to be wearing shoes, but they could be wellies, whereas in the other he has no feet!



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