

The logo for IAM RoadSmart, featuring the letters 'IAM' in a large, white, stylized font above the word 'RoadSmart' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, all set against a blue background.

iAM
RoadSmart

Official Provider

Wirral Institute of Advanced Motorists

An Official Group of IAM RoadSmart

driving

***Improving driving standards and making Wirral roads
safer since 1980***

forward

iAM **RoadSmart** **Spring 2026**



Chair's Welcome

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Wirral IAM newsletter.

We have begun 2026 on a very encouraging note, with several new and enthusiastic committee members - Derek Jeffries, Neil Hilton, John Birkenhead, Davinder Lotay, and Paul Edwards. This has injected new blood and bodes well for the longer-term succession planning for the group.

We have also attracted a number of potential new Observers, who are currently in training. Thanks, as usual, to the sterling work of our Observers, who tirelessly support the primary function of the group – preparing Associates for the advanced driving test.

Finally, thanks to you, our members. Without your subscriptions, we would be unable to function.

In this issue:

- Committee update and member noticeboard
- Associate success stories
- Skills focus
- Upcoming events
- Road safety updates
- Article and photo of the month

Drive safely,

Guy Lightfoot

Chair
Wirral IAM



Committee report & Member Noticeboard

- **AGM Date:** 26th May 2026, 8pm
- **AGM Location:** Wirral Rugby Club, Thornton Common Rd, Birkenhead, Wirral, CH63 0LT
- **AGM Google Location:** <https://maps.app.goo.gl/sva7ITJbv6bQQgeX9>
- **Subscription Reminder:** I will be sending membership renewal forms after the 1st April but for those who renew by standing order your membership will automatically renew.

I would like to extend a warm welcome and sincere thanks to the new Committee members who have joined us since our last AGM. In recent years, a decline in overall membership has placed increased demands on a small number of dedicated individuals. It is therefore very encouraging to welcome new talent, working alongside our long-serving members, to support the Committee's work.

Having served as Newsletter Editor for many years, I fully appreciate the time and effort required to produce each edition. I am delighted that Paul has kindly taken on this role, and I encourage you to share your feedback if you enjoy the Newsletter.

You may have noticed that the next AGM is scheduled for May (date to be confirmed), which follows relatively soon after the November meeting. This adjustment is necessary to align the AGM more closely with the end of the financial year on 31 March. The shift to a November AGM was originally introduced following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. We very much hope you will be able to join us.

Further details, including the Group's accounts, proxy forms, and supporting documents, will be circulated by email once the date and venue have been confirmed.

Finally, I would like to thank all members for their continued support. Your subscriptions play an important role in helping us work towards making Wirral's roads safer for everyone.

Tony Stopforth

Membership Secretary, National Observer, Masters Distinction

Our Latest Advanced Drivers

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new Associates this quarter:

- Mr Rob Mawdsley
- Mr Hayden Collins
- Mrs Lynn Smith
- Mr Nathan Curtis
- Mr William Norman
- Mr Marcin Kuna
- Miss Chloe Holt
- Mr Richard Roberts

We trust you will all enjoy and benefit from your Associate membership and we look forward to reporting your Advanced Driving test passes in the near future.

And we are absolutely delighted to congratulate:

| Name | Date | Category | Observer |
|---------------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| Nathan Thomas | Feb-2026 | Pass | Simon Richards |
| Ian Scott | Jan-2026 | F1rst | Malcolm Studholme |
| James Beattie | Jan-2026 | F1rst | Roger Roberts |
| Connie Dundas | Nov-2025 | F1rst | Guy Lightfoot |

Very well done on achieving the IAM Advanced Driving qualification 🚗 🙌 🏆

This now brings IAM Wirral membership numbers to

| Full | Associates | Group Friends | Hon Members | Total |
|------|------------|---------------|-------------|-------|
| 132 | 16 | 1 | 1 | 150 |

Liz Scarff
Associate Co-Ordinator



Skill Focus (Reminder) of the Month

The System of Car Control

This month we're focusing on:

IPSGA

- Information
- Position
- Speed
- **Gear**
- Acceleration

Advanced drivers must be able to:

- **Demonstrate an ability to select the correct gear on every occasion**
 - Gear changes need to be smooth and accurate at all times
- **Make all gear changes smoothly, matching engine revolutions where appropriate**
 - Employ a rev on the down change or sustained accelerator pressure to match engine revs to road speed, if necessary, to achieve a smooth gear change
 - Recognise when this isn't required, for example when selecting a rolling first gear or when road speed is very low
 - Understand when a planned overlap is appropriate
 - At slow speeds for simple junctions it will be safe to overlap brakes and gears. The gear change needs to be finished and the clutch engaged before steering
- **Position the steering for the required course when a gear change needs to be made in a hazard**
 - For example, select a gear with the steering set for the required course on a roundabout, the steering position should be held constant while gear is selected

Manual Vehicles

- **Select the correct gear straightaway**
 - Advanced drivers should know the approximate performance of their vehicle in each gear
 - Preferably they should be able to select any gear without engaging an intermediate gear (block changing) This is an option, rather than an ongoing requirement, in certain high compression modern vehicles the manufacturer may recommend an intermediate gear to prevent the vehicle stalling. Be guided by your vehicle handbook.

Automatic Vehicles

- Know how to use an automatic gearbox
 - Be aware how to correctly select gears using either paddles or gear selector
 - Be aware of additional functions and modes
 - Be able to describe circumstances in which a manual selection of a gear may assist
 - Be able to operate the gearbox correctly to maintain stop/start function (the vehicle handbook will detail whether neutral or park needs to be selected when stationary for any period of time)
 - Be aware of additional driver selectable modes that may affect the performance of the vehicle not necessarily only the gearbox

Practical tip: Always complete braking before gear selection to maintain stability and control.

A note to owners of fully electric vehicles (EVs): IPSGA applies, without modification, as for other car types.

With regenerative braking, “lifting” constitutes the speed phase of IPSGA and should ideally not overlap with the position or gear (essentially automatic in EVs) and acceleration phases of IPSGA. In practical terms, when entering a bend, get the speed right and get back onto the “gas” before entering the bend. Drive (don’t break or coast) round the bend, applying just enough power to maintain speed. This is identical to conventional automatics.

Owners of EVs might want to consider a free refresher with one of our Observers.



Upcoming Events & Training 2026

| Date | Event | Location |
|--|--|---|
| Saturday 4 th July | Neston Village Fair 2026 | Parkgate Pony Sanctuary Field |
| 1 st April – 30 th September | IAM Welsh Wonders | Start: Betws-y-Coed, North Wales |



North Wales driving experience puts road safety in the spotlight

- *Scenic treasure hunt road trip combines learning, fun, and a chance to win a £50 voucher*
- *Collecting points en route, participants will see some of the most spectacular scenery in Wales*

The Welsh Wonders IAM RoadSmart Experience is returning to one of North Wales's most scenic regions, combining road safety with a fun day out.

The seasonal adventure, which runs from April 1 to September 30, 2026, will challenge drivers to put their road safety knowledge to the test on a treasure hunt-style road trip and a chance to win a £50 voucher.

Beginning and finishing in Betws-y-Coed, teams will earn points by visiting designated locations and solving clues, all while taking in the stunning scenery of Snowdonia National Park and the coastal town of Llandudno. Brand new road safety general knowledge questions will make the 2026 experience even more challenging for participants.

Each team needs one driver with their own car, accompanied by at least one passenger who also acts as the chief navigator while those in the back seat can also get involved in the education and fun. You'll need a smartphone with the GooseChase app installed (available on Google Play or the App Store; join as a guest), and optionally, access to Google Maps or other navigation tools.

Tickets to take part in this exciting adventure are available [online](#) now, with the experience and leaderboard going live on 1st April.

Helen Doran, Head of Product Development at IAM RoadSmart, said: “As the UK’s leading road safety charity, we wanted to create an experience that blends challenge, learning, and fun. This initiative allows drivers to test their knowledge while exploring the stunning landscapes of North Wales—for a small fee. To make it even more exciting, the team with the highest score at the end of the season will win a £50 One4All voucher. We’re thrilled to offer this unique adventure through the Goosechase App, with routes carefully designed and tested by our experts.”

Instructions, rules and terms and conditions can be found when booking a place. Participants are required to conform to all road traffic laws and have all the correct licence and insurance documentation. This is not a race and is an experience for pleasure and educational purposes. Participants are strongly advised to check the route is fully open for the dates they wish to go and avoid clashes with other events and possible road closures.

We regret that owing to the interactive element, this is not currently open to motorcyclists and is for cars only where passengers can control the interactive element.

Masters scheme

How long is it since you passed the IAM Advanced test?

Are your skills still up to scratch? If you think so, would you like to take them to a higher level? The IAM RoadSmart Master's scheme is designed to take you there and help you to enhance and develop your ability even further.

The Master's test is based on IAM Advanced test principles, with reference to the police driver's manual “Roadcraft”, so safety and legality are foremost, implemented using IPSGA. It's difficult to define how the standard differs from the “standard” IAM Advanced test. Perhaps added “sparkle”, assurance and safe progress best describes it.

It is delivered in one-to one sessions with a local Master's Mentor on a variety of roads, with an emphasis on challenging country roads. The examiner is usually the IAM Area Service Delivery Manager (ADSM) with the test being on unfamiliar out-of-area roads, with commentary / spoken thoughts throughout. Many regard it as equivalent to the police advanced driver standard (minus the high-speed pursuit element). Requalification is every five years.

The programme is not cheap, currently at £325, but from personal experience I can guarantee you would find it hugely rewarding and would learn a great deal.

If you are interested and want to register, call IAM RoadSmart on 0300 303 1134. Just fancy a chat before you decide? Call me first on 07823 479214.

**Guy Lightfoot,
Wirral Group Chair,
Master Mentor**



Observers Spotlight

Observer Name: Tony Stopforth

IAM Member Since: 1995

Why I Volunteer: to give something back and I love to see the progress of associates from the first run out to test standard and to see how much they have gained from being on the course.

Favourite Driving Tip: Take your vision as far forward as possible so you can formulate a driving plan in plenty of time.

Our long-standing Observer David Holt has stepped down from Observing for the group. Wirral Advanced Motorists would like to express our deep gratitude for his long-term valuable commitment as an Observer for the Group and to IAM RoadSmart.



Associate Corner

Preparing for your advanced test?

Ten top tips to passing the IAM RoadSmart advanced test

01 Take the initiative This is your decision and your course. You will be the main beneficiary of this learning experience and we'd appreciate it if you keep us on our toes: Be prompt, chase us if we are not providing enough information and tell us if there is anything else we can do for you. We're here solely to help you achieve success.

02 Read the book 'The Advanced Course Logbook' contains all the information you will need to know in a simple, clear style with plenty of photos and diagrams. Invaluable reading!

03 Ask questions, get advice People learn in different ways so please ask as many questions as you need to. Speak to fellow associates, visit forums and request to see advanced skills demonstrated. Your group is here to help you pass the advanced test in whichever way suits you best.

04 Don't switch on and off Advanced road skills need to become embedded as your normal everyday behaviour. You cannot switch between advanced skills and your 'everyday driving or riding'.

05 Ask for help or support We provide our time to coach and help you to pass the advanced test. If we are not meeting your expectations or there is something we are not doing for you then please let us know. Speak to your group or call Customer Support on 0300 303 1134 customercare@iam.org.uk. We can only put things right if we know about them.

06 Practice You will only be able to change and develop your road skills by putting in considerable practice time. The benefit will be from the changes that your passengers or fellow riders notice and comment on – try it and see!

07 Engage with your local IAM RoadSmart group Your local IAM RoadSmart group receives great satisfaction every time one of their members passes the advanced test. As volunteers, they all give their time willingly so that you can pass the test – make sure you make good use of their skills and knowledge.

08 Set a 'test ready' target date Possibly our most important tip is to set a 'test ready' target date with your group as soon as possible for you to work towards. Your group will help plan your development to reach 'test ready' status.

09 Don't drift away It's only natural that the early enthusiasm and commitment wears off a little as 'real life' takes over. Please try to stay focused and make the effort to attend your observed sessions regularly. Our groups love nothing more than to nag lagging Associates!

10 Enjoy the experience We saved the best until last. You'll find that you will enjoy and have great fun developing advanced road skills with us. If you love the experience then please tell your family and friends about it – the majority of our new members come via word of mouth and we'd like that to continue.

Top Reminders:

1. Plan early and well
2. Maintain smoothness and stability
3. Demonstrate clear observation and hazard awareness

Don't forget – it is your responsibility to maintain contact with your Observer, who will assist with organising convenient runs to help with the development of your advanced driving skills



Wirral Roads News & Safety Update



[Local roadworks information](#)

WirralGlobe

[Live Traffic & Travel News](#)

Remember: *Advanced driving is not about making maximum progress, but the level of progress required for the particular journey safely in the given conditions*

Government sets out bold plan to cut road deaths by two thirds



The Government is embracing a Safe System approach while putting young drivers and motorcyclists in focus – and setting itself a formidable delivery challenge

The Department for Transport (DfT) has published its first full Road Safety Strategy in more than 10 years, setting out an ambitious plan to cut deaths and serious injuries on Britain's roads by nearly two-thirds over the next decade. The new Road Safety Strategy focuses on at-risk road users, including young and old drivers, as well as motorcyclists.

Launched in January, the strategy commits the Government to a 65% reduction in people being killed or seriously injured (KSI) by 2035, alongside a 70% reduction in child (under 16s) KSIs, using a 2022–24 baseline. Ministers say the targets reflect a decisive shift away from what they describe as a 'dangerous complacency' that has stalled progress on road safety.

You can read the full Department for Transport Road Safety Strategy [here](#)



Community & Outreach

Interested in a free taster session or mature driver review?

Visit: wirraladvancedmotorists.co.uk and use the Contact Us form or email: <mailto:info@wirraladvancedmotorists.co.uk>



Article of the Month



Drug-drive reoffending increases by 134% over last four years in England and Wales

- New figures obtained through a Freedom of Information request to the Ministry of Justice reveal a concerning rise in the rate of reoffending
- Nearly half of drug-drive offences are committed by a reoffender

- The UK's leading road safety charity IAM RoadSmart welcomes proposals in the road safety strategy to suspend the driving licences of those suspected of drug-driving
- But the charity says more needs to be done and calls for the introduction of a national drug-drive rehabilitation course

Instances of drug-drive reoffending have surged by more than 134 percent in the last four years revealing a system that is broken and in need of urgent reform, according to victims and road safety campaigners.

A Freedom of Information (FOI) request submitted to the Ministry of Justice by road safety charity IAM RoadSmart shows that drug-drive re-offending rates are surging: in 2024 there were 3,193 instances of drug-driving reoffending - more than 134 percent higher than the 1,363 recorded offences in 2020.

Nearly half of drug-drive offences (44%) are committed by a reoffender, according to Government data. One person committed the offence when they had 18 previous drink and drug-driving convictions.

When police suspect a person of drug-driving, they will conduct a roadside screening test such as a swab which can test on the spot for cannabis and cocaine.

They may also perform a Field Impairment Test (FIT) and ask the driver to perform physical tasks to assess coordination such as walking in a line or standing on one leg. A person will be arrested if they fail the roadside test, FIT, or if the officer still suspects driving is impaired by drugs. The offender will then be taken to a police station and asked to provide a sample of blood or urine for laboratory analysis.

One of the reasons that reoffending is rife could be because of delays of up to six months to process blood tests, which means people who have failed a roadside test are allowed to continue to drive.

Some of those drivers have gone on to kill while their results are pending. Jane Hickson was killed by Paul Wright who was on bail for drug-driving at that time, having been arrested six months earlier after testing positive at the roadside.

Tim Burgess was killed by Joshua Eldred who had also been bailed pending a blood test, meaning he was free to drive. Both tests would later prove to be positive.

The backlog has been acknowledged in the Government's new road safety strategy, which proposes giving police powers to suspend the driving licences of those suspected of committing a drug-driving offence.

Exploring alternative methods for drug-driving evidence collection and sampling is also on the table. Australia has been using immediate, roadside evidential saliva sampling for nearly two decades, combining this with laboratory testing for rapid case resolution.

Research conducted by IAM RoadSmart in August 2025, through a survey of 2,053 UK motorists, found that 82 percent support a proposal to give police powers to suspend driving licences immediately pending trial for those testing positive for drug-driving.

Separate figures show that drug-driving on the whole is increasing: 20,072 people in England and Wales were sentenced for drug-driving offences in 2024 – 143 percent higher than in 2017. A conviction for drug-driving carries a minimum one-year driving ban, an unlimited fine, and

up to six months in prison.

While the drink-drive rehabilitation scheme has been in place for 25 years, no such national scheme exists for drug-drive offenders although trials are being undertaken.

A drink-drive course is offered to drivers who have been disqualified for 12 months or more. It can reduce the length of the ban by as much as a quarter.

Studies show that offenders who did not attend a drink-drive rehabilitation course were up to two and a half times more likely to reoffend compared to those that did attend the rehabilitation course.

Case study

Charlie Ward's father was killed by Samuel Russell, 37, who was more than ten times over the drug-drive limit and nearly three times over the drink-drive limit after consuming cocaine and alcohol.

Steven Ward, 62, died from head injuries in 2024 after being struck by a car just yards from his home in Englefield Green, Surrey.

Russell was jailed for nine years and nine months in November after admitting causing death by dangerous driving.

Ms Ward, 31, from Leamington Spa, said: "My dad was walking on the pavement just yards from our family home when he was hit and killed by a drug and drink driver. My mum was at home, and she heard a bang but thought nothing of it until police knocked on the door. Not having dad around has devastated our family and left a huge hole in our lives. I feel so angry that someone's stupidity and personal choice led to this. I think that more needs to be done to stop drug and drink drivers from ruining people's lives."

IAM RoadSmart Policy, Public Affairs, and Communications Manager William Porter said:

"The system for dealing with drug-drivers hasn't kept pace with the huge increase in reoffending. The fact that those who have tested positive to a roadside test are allowed to get back into the driving seat pending a laboratory blood test shows that the system is broken. We welcome the proposed Government shakeup and would like to see an immediate suspension when a driver has provided a positive roadside saliva drug test.

"We also need to see the introduction of a drug-drive rehabilitation course with better screening for drug and mental health problems and with clear pathways to treatment. Drug-drivers often need support to break the pattern of reoffending by changing their mindset and habits, understanding how drugs impair driving, and the serious consequences for themselves and others."



Photo of the Month



I thought I would get the ball rolling on this - My old Subaru Impreza WRX STi version 5 😊

The most responsive car I've owned which also felt, perhaps strangely, the safest. I have some fond memories of driving this in the early 2000s and of some spirited driving listening to the unmistakable 'Subaru rumble' (produced by the use of unequal length headers (UELH), where exhaust pulses from the 2.0-liter EJ207 turbocharged boxer engine's cylinders arrive at the rear at different times).

The informal Japanese 'gentleman's agreement' in 1989, between the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association (JAMA) and its members, agreed to limit the listing of their production cars as 276 bhp with an aim to prevent 'horsepower wars' between different manufacturers, and also to begin to address rising traffic fatalities in Japan in the late 1980s. Often felt by owners to produce a lot more power than listed, they certainly required a lot of responsibility to drive appropriately on UK roads.

Bought in 2006 and sold in 2008 for around £5000, it is now very rare and all but pretty well confined to the history books. You may find one for £20k plus...

Please do send through your own photos of anything car and driving related, with a short paragraph, that I hope to be able to include in future Wirral IAM newsletters.

Thank you.

Paul Edwards

Newsletter Editor



Contact Us

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| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
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| Chair: | Guy Lightfoot |
| Vice-Chair: | Tony Stopforth |
| Secretary: | Neil Hilton |
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| Associate Coordinator: | Liz Scarff |
| Area Associate Organiser: | Guy Lightfoot |
| GDPR/Complaints | John Birkenhead |
| Social Media & Publicity | Davinder Lotay |
| Newsletter Editor: | Paul Edwards |
| Other Committee: | Derek Jeffries |

Wirral Advanced Motorists Group was formed in 1980 having previously been part of the Merseyside Group. A Registered Charity run entirely by unpaid volunteers, our main function is to improve driving standards and to advance the cause of Road Safety. Affiliated to the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM), also a Registered Charity we are completely self-funding.

Wirral Group works hard to inform local people of the advantages to be gained by becoming an Advanced Motorist. We arrange open days regularly throughout Wirral to promote Advanced Driving.

How can the Group help me?

We provide advice on improving your driving and preparation for the IAM Test. This guidance is given by Observers (an Advanced driver who has received training and has passed a nationally recognised (IMI) Observer assessment).

If you would require any further information, then please contact any member of the Committee or use the contact us via the website, link at the top of the page.

Wirral Group of Advanced Motorists - affiliated to IAM Roadsmart. Registered charity number 512232 (England)