

# UPDATE

## A.D.I. NEWSLETTER



February 2005

### **Note from the Registrar**

This is the first ADI *Update* of 2005 and I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a very happy New Year. I am sure, like us you will have your reasons for being glad to see the end of 2004. I refer of course, to the effects of the continuous and lengthy strike action taken by members of NIPSA in its campaign for better pay, and to long waiting times and other issues which have resulted from it. This *Update* goes into further detail about these issues. By now hopefully things are getting back to some form of normality, for those of you whose business was affected by the strike action. The Agency is also trying to recover the situation and has put in place measures to bring lengthy waiting times down. We have also included some information on the measures being taken to address the backlogs.

Also included in this *Update* is the decision taken in respect of the proposal to include HPT and MCQ into the supervision arrangements for ADIs. We know that this decision has been long awaited and you can read about it below.

You will also by now be aware of the new NICS smoking policy, which applies to all DVTA buildings and premises as well as all other Government buildings from 1 January 2005. Hopefully, this has not resulted in too much hardship for you or your pupils. Again, further information is available below.

Throughout the course of 2004, during tests, seminars and meetings, DVTA staff met with quite a number of instructors. The ADI customer group is small enough that it is possible for good communication to be maintained. We hope to build on this during 2005.

### **Proposals for HPT and MCQ to be included in ADI Supervision Arrangements**

As you know, DVTA issued a consultation letter on the above proposals on 27 January 2004. This followed DSA's decision to proceed with a requirement for ADIs who had qualified before the Hazard Perception Test was introduced to do the test along with the MCQ element. During the course of last year DSA modified the proposals and in the summer obtained agreement with representatives of the ADI industry in GB that existing instructors would have to undergo the HPT element *only* of the PDI theory test on a mandatory basis beginning on 1 January 2005.

As a rule the Agency would aim to replicate provisions in GB, where appropriate, in order to maintain the mutual recognition between the two ADI schemes, and obviously DSA would hope that NI would follow the GB position. However, there was overwhelming opposition to the proposals in the consultation process and many ADIs expressed fears for the loss of their livelihood. By and large there was however, support for ADIs being given the opportunity to do the test in order to be familiar with what is required of learners. The Agency felt it would be prudent to defer a decision on this issue

and useful to monitor how the new arrangements work in GB. **In the meantime, the Agency will proceed with arrangements to enable ADIs to take HPT tests at their own instigation for familiarisation and personal development purposes, at a fee designed to recover the costs involved.** We would encourage all ADIs to take this option once it becomes available. Your record can be noted to indicate that you have passed the test if you wish to advise us that you have.

The Agency has put this issue on review for one year, at which time we will again consider the matter and possibly re-consult. Further details about how you can take this test, will be sent once we have sorted out the logistics.

We would again like to thank everyone who responded to the consultation paper and who attended seminars for taking the time to do so, and trust that you will regard this update as a reply to your individual responses. If anyone requires a specific response, please contact Deirdre Walsh on 028 9068 1831.

## **MERIT**

A workshop on the **Minimum European Requirements for Driving Instructor Training (MERIT)** was held in Brussels on 21 January 2005. The purpose of the workshop was to advise participants of the work done to date by the project team and to give an opportunity to comment on the papers presented which had been posted on the MERIT website since early December. MERIT is the first EU funded project to focus on the skills and competencies of the intermediary for road safety issues for learner drivers, namely the driving instructor.

There were over 70 delegates at the workshop from the instructor industry and ministries from all over Europe including a representative from the NIADIA. A very useful discussion took place about the working papers which set out a science-based approach to driving instructor training based on the GADGET matrix (or the GDE Framework), and teaching skills and methods to be used to deliver the right kind of training to instructors. A working paper will now be produced on minimum requirements for driving instructors, which will be the basis for a EU Directive, and this will be discussed at a further workshop in Brussels on 21 March 2005.

Information about MERIT can be obtained from [www.gutefahrt.at/merit](http://www.gutefahrt.at/merit) and feedback on papers can be sent to the project team, by emailing [eumeritproject@hotmail.com](mailto:eumeritproject@hotmail.com).

## **Email/Internet**

Throughout the period of industrial action, DVTA was able to provide instructors who had given us their email address, with up-to-date information about the strike action, test cancellations, etc. We have had very positive feedback from those instructors who received this information indicating that it was useful and helped them to plan/re-schedule as necessary. We would encourage all instructors who have email to let us know their address, or to advise us when it is updated, so that communication can be made more timely and easier. Of course we intend to keep *all* instructors informed of developments through the *Update*, and those who are not on-line will not miss out on any information on key issues. Please advise us of your email address should you wish by emailing [deirdre.walsh@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:deirdre.walsh@doeni.gov.uk).

We would also encourage more of you to allow us to post your details on the Internet (your name/driving school name and phone number). In 2004, 81% of all hits on the ADI section of our website were for the list of ADIs. This compares with just 15% on 2003. The ADI list is also contained under information on driving tests.

## **Driver Test Waiting Times**

At present all resources are being allocated to meet the present demand, with a view to reducing waiting time for driving tests. A review of staffing levels is underway and shortcomings will be addressed once this has been completed. We know that the high waiting times for driver tests is unacceptable and all efforts are being taken to reduce this.

Certificates of Temporary Exemption have been issued to many thousands of vehicles and will continue to be issued until such times as there is a clear indication that waiting times are firmly under control.

### **Industrial Action - Expired Theory Test Certificates**

You will know that the industrial action from May to August 2004 adversely affected our ability to offer some customers a suitable date for a practical driving test before the expiry of their theory test certificate.

Having analysed all the issues, we concluded that we could not allow candidates to take practical driving tests with expired theory test certificates. This reflected legal advice, the fact that a similar position had already been adopted in Great Britain, and road safety considerations. As a result, some candidates have had to retake the theory test before applying again for a practical test.

In recognition of the inconvenience and distress this has undoubtedly caused, we have made arrangements to make a goodwill payment, to any candidate who applied for a practical driving test appointment more than one month before the expiry of their theory test certificate; and who, as a direct result of industrial action, could not get an appointment within the required period.

The Agency has used records of bookings, cancellations and complaints to identify customers who qualify for goodwill payments, and in many cases customers have already received payments promptly without any action on their part.

Please bring this to the attention of anyone you know to have been affected in this way, who has not already been in contact with the Agency. Queries should be directed to DVTA, Customer Services, Freepost, BEL 4363, Belfast, BT12 6QL or by telephone to 0845 601 4094.

### **Electronically operated parking brakes**

A number of car manufacturers are fitting electronically operated parking brakes to their vehicles. This innovative design alleviates the necessity for the coordination of gas, clutch and parking brake control. However, as this is an important and necessary requirement for a driver to demonstrate on test it has been decided that vehicles fitted with this type of parking brake would not be suitable for a driving test. However, if the systems can be manually overridden and subsequently operate as a conventional ratchet type parking brake, the vehicle would be suitable.

Instructors should be aware that tests will not proceed if the vehicle is fitted with an electronically operated parking brake which cannot be operated conventionally.

### **Peugeot 206 Recall**

Peugeot has announced a safety-related recall of all 206 models (except the SW model) built before February 2002 because they have identified a fault that in very rare circumstances could affect the braking system.

DSA carried out a risk assessment and decided not to conduct tests in the cars affected until they have been checked and, if necessary, repaired under the recall arrangements.

DVTA's approach, until now, was to wait and establish the extent and uptake of the recall. However, after discussion with the manufacturers it appears that there are still some vehicles in Northern Ireland which have not been checked. It is therefore our intention to put procedures in place similar to DSA.

From this date any customer with a Peugeot 206 affected that has a 2002 or earlier registration must produce documentary evidence from Peugeot that the car has been examined (and repaired where necessary) before being allowed to use it for a driving test.

We are sorry for any inconvenience that this may cause.

### **Display of Registration Marks on Vehicles**

During a recent driving test the vehicle being used was stopped by a PSNI traffic branch officer and the driver questioned regarding the display of number plates that did not comply with, "The Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001". This caused embarrassment and put the candidate in a position that was not conducive to the relaxed atmosphere that the examiner attempts to create when conducting a test.

The Agency is confident that the majority of vehicles used for driving test purposes display number plates which are legally compliant and those that are not may be due to an ignorance of the law. To ensure that everyone is fully aware of the legal requirement we will send an explanatory leaflet with the next *Update*.

We would ask that all ADIs check and make sure their registration plates comply to ensure that candidates are not put under additional pressure during their test.

### **Telephone Booking Service**

As a result of the recent industrial action the telephone booking service has been extended on a pilot basis. Since last August the service has been available for an extra hour in the evening and on Saturday mornings (see below). If there is sufficient demand for the extra hours, then the hours of service may be extended permanently.

Telephone Booking	0845 247 247 2
Hours of Service	8.00am – 7.00pm (Mon-Fri) 9.00am – 1.00pm (Sat)

### **Reminder Service for MOTs**

Over the next few weeks we hope to introduce a reminder service for MOTs. Customers will receive a letter advising them that their current certificate is about to expire. The letter will be issued five weeks before the due date, but only if an application has not already been made. We are also working on internet booking for practical driving tests and MOTs. We have no firm date for this yet.

### **Use of DVTA Premises for Parking Bay practice**

A driving instructor who was using one of DVTA's premises for practice was locked into a centre after closing time. The Centre Manager had to leave his home to return to the centre to allow the instructor and pupil to leave. This typifies the difficulties presented to centre managers by instructors using Agency premises for the purpose of training their candidates. Centre Managers should not have to search the premises for people who have no legitimate reason to be there.

The Agency is arranging to have signs put up at centres indicating that "these premises MUST NOT be used for driving test training". Any instructor who is found to be using premises for anything other than presenting candidates for test, or making enquiries or collecting forms, will be regarded as a trespasser and if necessary appropriate action will be taken.

This is a harder line than the Agency would wish to take with a key customer group, and it is taken with some reluctance, but repeated entreaties to have this practice stopped have not worked. The centre manager must consider issues of health and safety, he must ensure that centres have sufficient space to be used for testing purposes, and there is an issue of liability in the event of an accident. These considerations must be given priority over permitting centres to be used for training purposes by instructors.

I hope that you can appreciate the Agency's position and that you will observe with diligence this latest request not to use centres for training purposes.

### **Headlamp Aim Test**

A new headlamp aim test is being introduced into the annual roadworthiness tests from 31 March 2005. The new test will apply to all vehicles and will ensure compliance with national legislation and will bring NI into line with GB standards. The new test will ensure that headlights are aligned correctly, not only for the benefit of the driver but also to prevent dazzling of other road users.

This is not a completely new test. The test is currently being carried out on an advisory basis. From 31 March 2005 the test will become a pass/fail item. A leaflet about the test is attached and includes details of how to get more information if you need it.

### **NIADIA AGM**

NIADIA have asked us to bring their forthcoming AGM to your attention. The Association is holding its annual conference and AGM on Monday, 28 February 2005. As usual, it will be held in the Park Plaza hotel previously known as The Fitzwilliam Hotel, Aldergrove Airport. Enrolment will be from 5.30 pm onwards. The programme will commence at 6.00 pm with a demonstration on how to deal with car accident casualties by a Paramedic. The AGM will begin at 7.00 pm with the conference kicking off at 7.30 pm. All ADI's are welcome and invited to raise any issues prevalent to them. All memberships will be due for renewal.

Guest speakers include:

- Mr. B. O'Neill from 'Cruisers' which is a scheme introduced in the north of the country aimed at 'boy/girl racers'.
- Ms. Karen Laudon from Robinsons Contracts.
- Mr. E. Barnaville from DIA.

Members of DVTA staff will also be in attendance.

### **Mutual Recognition of Driving Disqualifications and Endorsable Offences**

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland (DVLNI) has asked us to inform you of changes introduced from 11 October, to driver licensing. These changes will enable driving disqualifications imposed in Great Britain (GB) to have effect in Northern Ireland (NI) and to apply the fixed penalty procedure to offences committed by GB licence holders in NI.

This means that a Northern Ireland driver who is disqualified from driving in Northern Ireland will now also be disqualified from driving in Great Britain.

NI drivers committing a road traffic offence in GB can now use the fixed penalty system in GB rather than face court prosecution and additional costs, not to mention the added inconvenience experienced at present.

A NI driver may have his NI licence revoked in GB on medical grounds or during a new drivers probationary period if six or more penalty points incurred. It will no longer be legal for a driver to hold both a NI and a GB licence. He can only have one licence. A leaflet concerning this issue is attached for your information.

Corresponding changes came into effect in Great Britain at the same time as Northern Ireland, ensuring a more consistent licensing system within the United Kingdom.

### **Show Me/Tell Me Questions**

The ‘show me’ ‘tell me’ questions have been in place for sometime now and from our perspective they are working well. However, we would like to know how you think they are working. To this end we would welcome any comments that you may have in relation to ‘show me’ ‘tell me’. Comments to Driving Standards about the questions should be sent to [marina.mcgurran@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:marina.mcgurran@doeni.gov.uk) or Driving Standards Section, DVTA, Balmoral Road, Belfast.

### **Gortrush Park, Omagh**

The Agency has recently received a complaint on behalf of concerned residents about the amount of driver training taking place in Gortrush Park, Omagh. Residents have said that they are unable to park their vehicles due to the congestion caused by learner drivers. We know the problems ADIs face in finding suitable sites to train candidates. We also recognise the problems of residents if their area is over used by people learning to drive. The Gortrush Park area is on a test route and is used to carry out an ‘angle start’ or ‘reverse park’ exercise on the driving test. There is limited scope in the Omagh area for conducting these manoeuvres on the test, but we would hope that there is greater scope for finding alternative locations for training of these manoeuvres. We would appreciate if ADIs would try to avoid over use of this particular area. Your cooperation in this matter would be very much appreciated

### **Mill Bank Road, Omagh**

The reverse park exercise that was carried out at Mill Bank in Omagh, has been removed from driving test routes in response to a series of complaints received from residents.

### **Certificates of Temporary Exemption**

With effect from 6 October 2004, CTEs have only been issued when the Agency cannot offer a customer a test within 21 days of the request for a vehicle test appointment. Where it has been necessary to issue a CTE the Agency will only issue a further CTE in exceptional circumstances, for example, a customer will not automatically receive a second CTE when they cancel and rebook a vehicle test appointment. Customers are, however, able to request a duplicate CTE.

Further information is available on DVTA’s Internet site. On the main page select “Certificates of Temporary Exemption” - follow the link.

## **New NICS Smoking Policy**

The Health & Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 requires an employer to ensure *“the provision and maintenance of a working environment for his employees that is, so far as far as is reasonably practicable, safe, without risks to health, and adequate as regards facilities and arrangements for their welfare at work”*.

In view of the health and safety obligations imposed on employers to provide a safe working environment without risks to the health of staff, it has now been decided to impose a total ban on smoking across the entire NICS.

From 1 January 2005 there has been a total ban on smoking in all NI Departments and NIO premises (excluding Prisons).

This means that:

- Smoking is not permitted in the entrance / exit areas to and from all DVTA buildings, including all fire and emergency exits.
- Smoking is not permitted in vehicles parked within government premises
- A member of the public or a visitor who refuses to observe the ban will be asked by the Premises Officer to leave the premises.

### ***People Covered by the Ban***

The ban on smoking applies to anyone working or visiting DVTA premises including staff, ADIs, consultants, contractors, vehicle and driver test customers, visitors and members of the public.

Can you please ensure that you and your candidates observe the new rules? It is entirely a matter of personal choice whether smokers continue with the habit or not but if you feel inclined to give up, the following support measures might be of use to you:

- Stop Smoking groups/classes such as those organised through the Ulster Cancer Foundation and the NI Civil Service Sports Association’s Health Works programme;
- GPs, through whom Nicotine Replacement Therapy might be prescribed where appropriate, or Smoking Cessation classes/clinics via Area Health Board Coordinators;
- The DHSSPS – funded Free Telephone Helpline Service on 0800858585
- Pharmacies, and
- The Health Promotion Agency Website  
[www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk/Work/Tobacco/Menu.htm](http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk/Work/Tobacco/Menu.htm)

### **Balmoral Show**

This year’s Balmoral Show will be held on 11 - 13 May 2005 (inclusive). The Agency will have a stand at the show, again this year, promoting various aspects of road safety. ADIs should also be aware of the heavy traffic and potential for congestion in the vicinity of the Belfast (Balmoral) test centre during this period.

### **Public Holidays 2005**

Please note that Agency premises will be closed on the following dates over the next few months:

Thursday, 17 March 2005

Monday, 28 March 2005

Tuesday, 29 March 2005

**Finally**

My thanks to all contributors to this edition of Update. Feedback on the relevance or usefulness (or otherwise) of any of the material is very welcome.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R J Crosby', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**R J CROSBY**

Registrar

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