

August 2005

Welcome to the latest edition of *Update*. My apologies for the delay in its issue. This paper includes updates on the telephone and Internet booking service and the reminder service for MOTs. There is also information and guidance on using driving test routes for practice and the use of the Mini convertible for driving tests. I hope that you find the contents of this edition of *Update* both interesting and informative.

USE OF DRIVING TESTS ROUTES FOR PRACTICE IN COOKSTOWN

We have received a complaint from residents in Fortview Terrace about ADI's using this area to teach manoeuvres such as reverse parking. According to the residents, the volume of school cars at various times is causing difficulty for elderly and disabled residents to obtain a parking space close to their dwelling and allegedly a number of vehicles belonging to residents have been damaged.

Again, in this situation we would ask you to respond positively to the concerns raised by the residents.

USE OF DRIVING TEST ROUTES FOR PRACTICE IN BALLYMENA

We have received a complaint from residents in Moat Road about ADI's using this area to teach manoeuvres such as the turn in the road and reverse parking. According to the residents, the area is inundated with school cars at various times of the day both during the week and at weekends. This is causing difficulty for residents to obtain a parking space and allegedly a number of vehicles belonging to residents have been damaged.

One of the residents is ill at the present time and the situation is causing them additional stress and worry. The Agency designs its' test routes to minimise inconvenience to residents as far as possible and the situation we have described is one of the reasons why we expect ADI's to stay off the approved test routes until the latter stages of training. It is fair to say that we all have a responsibility to try and resolve such problems and we would ask you to respond positively to the concerns raised by the residents.

GENERAL STATEMENT ON THE USE OF TEST ROUTES FOR PRACTICE

In addition to an increasing number of complaints from residents, we have received a number of complaints from examiners in several centres about this same problem. Examiners are finding locations for test manoeuvres blocked by school cars practising and on some occasions examiners have had to move on, only to find their alternative location also blocked. I am sure you appreciate this does not assist the smooth running of a test as examiners work to a tight deadline. I am certain you also appreciate that some pupils' may be put off by this, so we ask you to consider "what if it was your pupil being affected".

Examiners have also stated that some ADI's have followed them around a test route, possibly learning the route. This could have the effect of shielding the test candidate from the normal interaction with other road users, thereby adversely affecting the quality of test being delivered. We request those involved to desist from this practice.

As stated, increasingly, residents are making complaints to us about school cars "swamping" particular areas, if the situation continues, the outlook is uncertain for all of us. Indeed some test routes may become untenable, and there are a finite number of routes available. You should be aware that some residents have suggested that they may take legal action on the grounds of nuisance being caused. We aim to work in partnership with you regarding the use of test routes and our advice is still the same, please stay off the test routes until the latter stages of training.

USE OF MINI CONVERTIBLE FOR DRIVING TESTS

From recent publicity you may be aware of concerns about the suitability of vehicles with restricted all-round vision for use on practical driving tests. In particular, the Mini convertible.

DVTA's policy is not to conduct driving tests in vehicles where the examiner's view is severely restricted. Whilst these vehicles may be perfectly safe from a driver's point of view, the fact is that examiners do not have an acceptable degree of all-round vision. As a result, it is not possible for them to assess adequately a candidate's response to other road users, which may not be visible to them. Motorcyclists, cyclists or pedestrians in particular could be completely hidden from the view of an examiner in the front seat. The Mini convertible falls into this category. In addition, the restricted view to the rear in this vehicle renders the emergency stop exercise difficult if not potentially dangerous to carry out.

There is nothing new in this approach. DVTA has always maintained that the existence of blind spots, which seriously affect an examiner's all-round vision, would render a vehicle unsuitable for test. Although some tests have been conducted in these cars, the numbers were small and concerns about examiners' safety have come to the fore. DVTA had to decide whether or not the vehicle was acceptable, and this decision has now been taken.

Decisions such as these are not taken lightly, but DVTA has a duty of care to its examiners. On failed tests, examiners' sometimes have to take action to avoid a collision. That action might not be taken if an examiner was unaware of traffic close

by, with a resulting risk to the safety of the examiner, the candidate and other road users. Therefore, unfortunately, the mini convertible is not considered suitable for use on driving tests in N.I.

TELEPHONE BOOKING SERVICE

The telephone booking service continues to operate on the extended hours (see below). Initially demand was low, but recently it has increased and there is now a steady demand during the evening and on Saturday mornings.

Telephone Booking	08452472472
Hours of Service	8.00am – 7.00pm (Mon-Fri) 9.00am – 1.00pm (Sat)

REMINDER SERVICE FOR MOTs

On 9 March we launched a reminder service for MOTs. Customers will now receive a letter notifying them that their current certificate is about to expire. The letter will issue 5 weeks before the due date, but only if an application has not already been made.

We are also working on reminders for vehicles requiring their MOT test for the first time. We hope to introduce this service over the next few weeks.

INTERNET BOOKING

We are currently working on an internet booking service for practical driving tests and MOTs. We have no firm date for this yet.

Finally, comments on any of the contents of this *Update* are very welcome.



R J CROSBY
Registrar

