

# Police to carry out regular checks on country roads



Police Scotland and the Scottish Safety Camera Units will be carrying out regular patrols and checks on country roads around Scotland in support of Road Safety Scotland's Country Roads campaign.

As summer turns to autumn, many factors affect our roads. Falling leaves, shortening days, fading light, changeable weather and agricultural vehicles all add to the dangers on our roads.

East area Safety Camera Unit and Road Policing Officers have linked in with very successful Clackmannanshire motorcycle racing brother and sister duo "Team Tasker". Andrew and Sammi are keen to encourage motorcyclists and drivers to consider their speed as well as their riding and driving manner as we go into autumn.

In addition to normal marked and unmarked police patrols, the recently launched Safety Camera motorcycle will also be out on patrol. The motorcycle will supplement and enhance the existing fleet of camera vans. Its compact nature will allow it to attend at locations on existing identified roads which were previously unavailable to the current fleet of large vans.

Patrols will focus on country roads outwith built up areas where there is a much higher probability that if you are involved in a collision, the likelihood of serious injury is greatly increased. Currently around 55% of road deaths happen on country roads. Excessive speed is not always evident but certainly inappropriate speed for the conditions is a factor in most of these collisions. There is also often a

disproportionate number of motorcycle casualties. Supporting data shows that while motorcycles account for only 1% of all traffic on the road, they account for 13% of fatalities.

As the biking season draws to a close, it is hoped that the camera unit and police motorcycles particularly will resonate positively with the biking community, highlight that they are travelling on some of our most dangerous roads and influence their speed compliance and riding behaviour accordingly.

Additionally with the support of Team Tasker it is hoped to raise overall awareness of the results of excessive and inappropriate speed, dangerous driving/riding and encourage drivers and riders to 'keep it for the track' if they want to explore the full capabilities of their vehicle regardless of how many wheels it has.

Enjoy our stunning Scottish roads and autumn scenery; we are there as a very visible deterrent to remind and encourage all drivers and riders to stay safe and make responsible use of the roads.

East Safety Camera Unit manager Andy Jones said: "The camera motorcycle is our newest technology and along with our vans will be routinely deployed on routes with a high incidence of casualty collisions. Often these are trunk roads but in Scotland these roads are often very rural country roads, particularly as you move away from the densely populated central belt.

"The motorcycle, like our vans, is there to encourage safe driving and compliance with speed limits.

"While our country roads account for over half of all annual road deaths, we often find that collisions on these routes involve a higher than normal proportion of motorcyclists and we hope that including the motorcycle as a tactical option will further resonate with motorcycling groups and remind them that they are riding on potentially dangerous roads.

"I would also like to thanks Sammi and Andrew Tasker for highlighting and emphasising the dangers associated with speed and of inappropriate driving and riding on public roads. Hopefully they will have encouraged anyone who wants to enjoy the thrills of driving or riding in a competitive manner to take it to the track. It has to be better to spend a few pounds to enjoy the capabilities of your car or bike in a controlled environment than risk your life on the road."

Police Scotland's Trunk Roads Inspector Roddy MacMillan said: "We routinely carry out high visibility patrols on all our major and rural roads and from late spring to autumn we carry out enhanced patrols on the routes where motorcycling casualties are disproportionately high.

"Our local communities regularly highlight speeding as a concern and our analysis consistently shows that this is a significant factor in the level of injury sustained should you be unfortunate enough to be involved in a collision. Most drivers and riders respect the laws of the road, but there are a minority who choose to put their own lives and the lives of others in jeopardy every time they venture out. Quite simply we won't tolerate this type of behaviour.

"As we head towards autumn, hopefully our presence over the coming weeks will resonate with riders and drivers alike and have them adjust their riding or driving accordingly. Road Safety and Road Crime are priorities for Police Scotland and these commitments complement our strategic intention "to influence road user behaviour and make Scotland's roads safer".

"I would like to thank Team Tasker for lending their support to this initiative. Their dedication to their sport and informed perspective shows that competitive motorcycling has a very specific time and place and shouldn't be replicated on public roads."

Andrew Tasker said: "I have been riding motorcycles and racing since I was six years of age and in my career have witnessed firsthand the dangers of motorcycling, even in a relatively controlled environment.

"Track racing is undoubtedly dangerous – and that's when everyone is travelling in the same direction. On the road, events can develop very quickly and it's often the actions of others that can lead to dangerous situations developing in an instant.

"Having recently sustained a racing injury, I relied heavily on help being immediately available. I could not imagine what it would have been like if that had happened on a remote country road where there is the possibility of a lengthy wait before that initial medical response arrived.

"It has to be better to drive or ride according to the conditions and not put yourself or others at risk. If you want to drive or ride competitively find your local race circuit and sign up to keep it on the track."

Sammi Tasker said: "Like Andrew, I also don't ride a motorcycle on the road. All my skills have been developed on a track from a very young age and the opportunity to do this is available to everyone.

"Local racetracks, including Knockhill Race Circuit, have track days. As well as general access to the controlled track environment, tuition is available. I tutor groups of novice racers from age 12 and up and would encourage any rider to contact their local circuit for more information.

"I regularly see racing incidents, but the track design and the various safety features around it mean that serious injury is often avoided. This is unlikely to be the case on the road with trees, signs, kerbs and other vehicles waiting to get you around every bend.

“I would always say keep it on the track. Public roads are not the place to ride or drive irresponsibly and hopefully by highlighting this we can raise awareness of the dangers.”

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