

Nearly 70 people received the police 'chat on the mat'



Nearly 70 people in Edinburgh have received the chat on the mat as part of Operation Close Pass.

Operation Close Pass sees drivers who pass an unmarked police cyclist too closely pulled over and given advice using a specially designed mat which shows how much space a person on a bicycle needs when overtaking them.

The operation began on Monday 17th April and was officially launched this week (Monday 24th April). Sixty-eight motorists have been spoken to after passing the plain clothed officer on a bike too closely, and PC Dominic Doyle who is running the operation said the message has been well received.

“We have carried out the operation in different parts of the city and whilst we have stopped roughly the same number of drivers in each location, the advice was definitely taken on board by those people and we have noticed the public reacting the same way. This week I’ve seen drivers giving cyclists far more room when overtaking and colleagues are reporting the same.

“We’ve also had a lot of positive feedback with different areas of Edinburgh being suggested where we could take the mat next. We will certainly consider these, as we want to address both areas of concern and places where we have in the past seen cyclists injured in collisions.

“We have used different cyclists wearing different clothes and on different bikes, so drivers can’t be complacent. The message is simple – you should give cyclists as much room as you would a car when passing, for the safety of everyone.”

A number of other road traffic matters and offences were also dealt with by officers on Operation Close Pass, including issuing fixed penalty notices for speeding, no MOT, no driving licence, no insurance and careless driving. One driver with a dangerous load was stopped and an ASBO was issued for anti-social vehicle use.

Transport Minister Humza Yousaf said: "This Government is investing over £1 billion per year in public and sustainable transport to encourage people onto public and active travel modes. It is our long term aspiration to increase the uptake of walking and cycling for shorter everyday journeys.

"I welcome this important road policing project and fully support all road safety interventions that make choosing active travel a realistic and safe choice. All road users need to be aware of the things they can do to make everyone safe as part of our daily journeys. A mid-term review of Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020 identified cyclists and pedestrians as one of three key priorities for further action, setting a specific outcome which seeks to reduce the number of cyclist casualties. The Close Pass project is one of a range of measures that will assist towards achieving that outcome."

The pilot will continue in Edinburgh until the end of May.