

Police operation to highlight the space cyclists need to use roads safely



Plain clothed police are taking to Edinburgh's streets to highlight the space cyclists need for everyone to use our roads safely.

Operation Close Pass will see 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.

PC Dominic Doyle from the Divisional Road Policing Unit is leading the initiative locally and said that the close passing of cyclists is a concern, with the sense of close passing vehicles often cited as a significant disincentive to cycle.

"A lot of drivers see a person on a bicycle riding on the road on in a cycle lane and don't consider that passing them closely puts all road users in danger. It could constitute careless or even dangerous driving and you would fail your driving test for that.

"Those drivers that we stop during this operation will be shown how closely they passed the unmarked officer by standing on our specially designed mat. You should allow at least as much room as you would when overtaking a car when passing a person on a bicycle, giving consideration to the maximum speed limit and time and distance available to you."

The initiative is being piloted in Edinburgh, having been originally developed by West Midlands Police, with the intention of rolling it out across Scotland. Three-hundred-

and-ninety-eight cyclists have been injured in collisions in the capital over the past two years, 62 seriously, and one has died.

The operation is running alongside Cycling Scotland's Give Everyone Cycle Space campaign. Keith Irving, Cycling Scotland chief executive, said:

"Operation Close Pass is a welcome new initiative by Police Scotland to improve road safety. Education and enforcement are essential to making safer roads for everyone, whether we are cycling, driving or walking. This initiative is one of the many we need to take to tackle the increase in serious injuries amongst people cycling. We aim to see the scheme rolled out nationwide so everyone will benefit, complementing the Give Everyone Cycle Space road safety awareness campaign which reminds people to drive and overtake safely around people riding bikes."

Chief Superintendent Andy Edmonston, head of road policing for Police Scotland, has welcomed Operation Close Pass.

"We are constantly working to make Scotland's roads safer for everyone, and I am very pleased to see this innovative approach being piloted in Edinburgh where a large number of people cycle to commute and for pleasure.

"I would encourage all road users to take responsibility for their own safety whilst respecting that of others, and any road traffic offences that are seen by officers during the operation will be dealt with appropriately. I would urge cyclists to make themselves as visible as possible to other road users through positioning and clear signals, reflectors and lights after dark and light-coloured clothing, and to ride safely according to the law."