



Response from
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Motor Schools Association of Great Britain (MSA) is pleased to respond to the Home Office Consultation paper “Road Traffic Penalties”
- 1.2 The MSA is the national trade association for driving instructors and schools founded in 1935. Members of the association are in the main Driving Standards Agency Approved Driving Instructors (ADI). Following our merger with the Institute of Large Goods Vehicle Driving Instructors (ILGVDI), in 2000, we also represent their interests together with those of a small number of bus/coach instructors and motorcycle instructors.

2 GENERAL COMMENTS

- 2.1 The MSA welcomes the London Mayor’s Draft Transport Strategy and fully supports the concept of a safe, clean integrated transport system for the nations capital city.

New Road Traffic Penalties

The Home Office in conjunction with the DETR have released a consultation paper entitled “Road Traffic Penalties”. It contains a number of interesting proposals some 22 in all. Copies of the consultation paper are available from the Home Office or can be found on the Home Office web site www.homeoffice.gov.uk.

The proposal that has received most media coverage is the one that looks at the revaluation of penalty points. It suggests that the basic tariff for a low-level fixed penalty would be 5 points instead of the present 3. Totting up would arise at 20 points, in place of 12 (and revocation of licence for new drivers would be at 10 points instead of 6).

Of particular interest to ADIs is the proposal that concerns the retraining of certain offenders. The paper states. It is our intention that those receiving an endorsement or penalty points which take their points total up to or beyond 10 points – half way to totting up – should ideally be offered automatically the opportunity to attend, at their own expense, a driver retraining and improvement programme. This practice would inevitably entail gradual implementation. Successful completion of the course would earn remission of 5 points.

Those disqualified for a period of over 56 days up to and including 12 months should be automatically offered the opportunity to attend, at their own expenses, a driver retraining and improvement programme. Successful completion of the programme would earn remission of 20% of the period of disqualification. The opportunity of a driver retraining and improvement programme should however be available no more frequently than once in 2 years. Those whose further offences suggested that they had not benefited by a recent course should not be eligible to reduce the sentence by attending another one.

Another proposal of particular interest concerns situations where offenders are convicted of driving otherwise than in accordance with a licence, or causing or permitting a person to drive otherwise than in accordance with a licence. In May 1999, the MSA put this proposal before the Commons Transport Committee they did not take it on board so we are pleased to see that the Home Office are proceeding along the lines we suggested. We said in our submission:

When prosecuted for driving without a licence the offender is likely to receive a fine of less than £100. Many young people perceive that the risk of detection is low and choose to take the risk on the basis that even if they are caught the fine is cheaper than driving lessons. In some cases, the vehicles they drive belong to their parents!

- *We ask the select committee to consider that the police should be empowered to impound a vehicle if an unlicensed driver is driving it and that the courts should be empowered to confiscate the vehicle permanently.*

The Home Office proposes that In addition to existing penalties, “decoupled” community penalties could be introduced in any case where disqualification is available (ie where the driver could not have held a licence for the class of vehicle driven, for example because he was under the minimum driving age for all vehicles): and permanent or temporary forfeiture of the vehicle involved in the offence. This would mean, for example, that a parent or friend foolish enough to allow an unlicensed person to use his vehicle would risk loss of the vehicle, temporarily or even permanently.

If you would like to have, your views included in the MSA response to this consultation exercise please write or Email MSA Head Office to reach us by 8 March.

2.2 PUBLICATION OF MSA COMMENTS

- 2.2.1 We are content for our response to the draft strategy to be divulged or published.

2.3 CONCLUSION

- 2.3.1 The MSA find The London Mayor’s Draft Transport Strategy interesting and thought provoking but urge the Mayor to add driver trainers to the list of those exempt from congestion charging.