

Chairman's 2007 Annual Report

Dear Members,

I am sorry that I am not able to be with you tonight but I have had to attend to a business event on Teesside connected to my employment. I hope you will accept my apologies for what is an unusual event over the 4 years during which I have been your Chairman. I have asked our Deputy Chairman, Graeme McColm, to make a proxy report on my behalf, as follows.

The last year has been an outstanding year for the Dumfries & Galloway Group of Advanced Motorists and Motorcyclists in many regards, some of which I will touch on in this report. Not only did we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the IAM in grand style but this year has seen the Group reach 30 years of existence. In May 2006 we began our celebrations by inviting the regions MP's and MSP's as well as other dignitaries to the launch of our young people initiative. This initiative has continued to grow to the point where we have funding from public and private bodies to enable us to double the number of young people we can coach on the IAM's Skill for Life programme, in relation to last year, and all free of charge.

Our numbers have increased to the point where we have overtaken both Glasgow North and South to become the most successful Group in Scotland in attracting Associates and getting them through the IAM Advanced Test. This has only been achieved through much hard work by our Observers and I wish to publicly acknowledge their contribution to our success here. Of course if we are to continue to grow in size we need to constantly identify and train new Observers and to this end I am pleased to say that this is happening on both the car and motorcycle sides. In order to support our additional Observers we have also significantly increased the number of Senior Observers within the Group.

We have gained much good publicity throughout the past year and our news activity has now spread as far as the Wigtownshire and the Stranraer Free Press, for which we are grateful. We commissioned our own radio advert, to which the IAM contributed £300, and which was played for several weeks on South WestSound radio. Coupled with this, one of our sponsors, St Michael Street Garage, has been generous in including our name with their commercial radio advert. More latterly we have featured on Border TV and BBC Scotland radio news programmes. To compliment these other forms of advertising we also have a listing in Yellow Pages. It is hardly surprising therefore that it is with increasing regularity we now receive enquiries from interested parties.

Another form of publicity we have sought to upgrade is our web site. We became aware that the number of hits was beginning to fall, so, coupled with a desire to add more interesting features, such as video, we have undertaken the task of enhancing our public face on the internet, where we are now found at www.iamdumfries.org.uk. For those of you who have looked at this new site I feel sure you will agree that this is a significant step forward, and one to feel proud of. The new web site has also allowed us to progress our policy of transparency to the point where we openly publish the minutes of our committee meetings, our Rules, Finances and minutes of our AGM. Our thanks go to Jamie Carruthers, one of our new young Associates who also runs Dumfries Cruise, for hosting our new web site free of charge.

We have recognised that we need to gain feedback from our Members to better understand their needs and aspirations and to this end we have undertaken a questionnaire of the membership to better understand these requirements so that wherever possible we can build them into our Annual Plan. You can find a copy of our Annual Plan, which forms part of our Group Strategy, on our web site. One of the early consequences of this survey is that we have encouraged our Regional Organiser, Steve Shepley, to petition the IAM to reduce the Skill for Life fee for inexperienced motorcyclists. The committee have also agreed to reduce the fee by a further £10, while our finances allow, for inexperienced motorists and motorcyclists. By doing this we hope to make the Skill for Life programme more available to those members of the public who are most vulnerable.

Our Magazine continues to attract sponsors, especially due to the quality of the publication, and we have reached the point now where it is self financing while at the same time retaining the quality of educational and informative copy it has always had. Because of our sponsorship and increase in circulation we have

also been able to extend the print run to the point where we can negotiate preferential rates for printing. By making our Magazine freely available throughout Dumfries & Galloway, in doctors and dentists surgeries, we hope to reach as wide an audience as possible so that we can both get our message about road safety across to members of the public as well as make them aware of our existence.

This past year has seen the introduction of a further educational DVD entitled, "What's it like to be an IAM Associate?" This is an excellent introduction for people who are interested in the IAM but who have not yet enrolled on the Skill for Life programme. It is also helpful in giving new Associates an introduction of what to expect once they commence with Observed Drives. We have made this DVD freely available in the StMichael Street garage as part of our marketing strategy. We will roll this out to other locations in due course as we obtain feedback on its effectiveness. The Kingdom of Fife Group has seen this DVD and were so impressed they commissioned us to produce a similar DVD for them, but badged up with their name and contact details. This has provided a useful income for the Dumfries Group.

This year has also seen the introduction of a new logo, to be worn on a T-shirt, aimed initially at young people who pass the IAM Advanced Test. The logo was designed as a means of signifying their success to their peer group so as to act as a discussion topic and thereby to attract further young people to our numbers. Once again, other Groups have seen this and have requested our permission so that they can copy our idea.

These are just some of our achievements over the past year and I hope they provide a useful summary of our activities, all of which are aimed at promoting road safety through coaching Associates to Test standard and demonstrating this by increasing our membership. Our efforts in this regard, and especially those aimed at young people, has recently been recognised by the IAM with the award of the Outstanding Group Achievement prize of a silver salver together with a cheque for £150.

In conclusion I would like to say how proud I am as your Chairman to report all of these positive messages. We have achieved a lot, both over the past year and in the longer term, over the past 3 years when we only had around 50 Members. The Group is in good health, both financially and spiritually, and we have a forward looking programme which will see us continue to grow in size if we continue to focus on these core activities.

As I said earlier, this success would not have been possible without the assistance of our Observer corps. In addition however, this success would not have been possible without the strong support of the committee members. I would like to thank them on your behalf for the support they have given in the various activities we have been engaged with. I would like to especially thank the officers without whose continuous efforts we would not be in the shape we are now. Our News Letter Editor and web site designer, Graham Watson, who constantly works hard behind the scenes on our behalf, deserves special mention. If I have missed anyone it is not intentional, so please forgive me.

Alan Jones
10 May 2007