

# NELE AGM 2026

## Chair's Report on calendar year 2025

During the past year, NELE continued to further the objectives of the Group, which are to promote improvement in the standards of driving and the advancement of road safety for the overall benefit of the public. Activities are primarily focussed on the Group's area of operation, which approximately covers the North-East sector within the M25 plus a few anomalies around the edge, such as Epping Forest.

### Membership

Membership figures are naturally dynamic, varying from day to day. Nevertheless, they provide a useful snapshot of NELE's circumstances.

### Members

Year	Full	Associate	Total
2023	227	43	270
2024	217	60	277
<b>2025</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>293</b>

### Joiners and Leavers

2025	Full	Associate	Total
<b>Joiners</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Leavers</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>54</b>

2024	Full	Associate	Total
Joiners	1	36	37
Leavers	18	12	30

The difference between totals and changes can be ascribed to differences in the way that figures were captured. The significant point is that there were more new Associates joining than full members leaving.

To simplify the Group administration, a decision had been taken during 2023 to bring subscription renewals to a common 1<sup>st</sup> January date wherever possible. As part of this initiative, the committee reviewed subscription renewals going back over several years and identified quite a few instances where payments to the Group, Head Office (or both!) were long overdue. Action has now been taken from the New Year 2025 renewal process onwards to terminate membership for those who ignore three reminders sent within four months of subscription expiry. This elimination of long-overdue payments accounts for many of the Full member "leavers" in the chart for 2025. We anticipate that the number of leavers each year will decline now that the backlog has been cleared. See below for comments on the number of Associates who left during the year.

Longer-standing members are reminded that NELE's Observers offer refresher sessions for those who wish to update their skills to match today's road conditions or, indeed, to adapt to changes in vehicle technology since they took their original Advanced Test – just contact any committee member.

### Test Results

Since the last AGM, 19 Associates took their Advanced test, with the following outcomes:

Result	2025	2024 (for comparison)	2023 (for comparison)
First:	3	8	8
Pass:	18	9	8
Fail:	2	4	2

Two this year's passes were under 26, and therefore eligible for NELE's "Young Driver Discount" scheme which refunds 50% of their Advanced Driving Course to encourage take-up by younger drivers.

The 2025 test total is 20 rather than 22 because two Associates who were initially unsuccessful persevered to re-sit their Tests and are included in the passes. Well done to all who passed for their perseverance!

NELE's internal quality control arrangements ensure that once their own Observer thinks that Associates are near to Test standard, they are encouraged to take a final check-run with another National Observer. Having that second viewpoint is similar to being with an unknown Examiner and thus reduces the potential stress when eventually taking the Test. It also provides an element of quality control to make sure that nothing slips through the net (no single Observer's routes can cover all potential road situations).

There is always a lag between Associates joining and actually taking the test. Many of those who took the Test in 2025 would have joined in 2024. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the number of Test applications is significantly less than those who sign up for the Advanced Driving Course. Common reasons for Associate drop-out are:

- Changes in personal circumstances (moving away; family events; pressure of work; health issues)
- Vehicle problems, both mechanical and financial. These include the cost of repairs and delays in spares availability and the affordability of insurance for newer drivers.
- Scheduling pressures (travelling to and from meeting-points with Observers and practising between Observed Runs took up too much time). This is a common issue in London, especially with the need to travel beyond 20mph zones before reaching roads suitable for developing many driving skills. This can add 45 minutes in each direction to an Observed Drive.
- Similarly, realising that reaching the Advanced Driving standard requires commitment to attend regular Observed Runs and to practise in between.
- Too long a delay before being allocated an Observer. Because our small team of Observers are at full capacity, it can be several months before a new Associate can be allocated an Observer. Understandably, some Associates withdraw from the programme when allocation cannot be achieved in as short a timescale as they would wish. We are working to increase the number of Observers to reduce the delay and hope that Associates on the waiting list will bear with us whilst this we get there..
- Increasingly, a significant number of Associates just want to become competent drivers, confident in dealing with everyday driving, rather than reaching full Advanced status. Once they have achieved their goal, they withdraw from Observed Runs, content with the progress that NELE has helped them achieve. Although they don't figure in NELE's Test figures, such drivers can be considered a success in terms of improving their road safety. We understand that IAM RoadSmart may be considering ways of providing such drivers with the equivalent of a "Competent and Confident" certificate that recognizes their achievement without conferring "Advanced Driver" status; there is much to commend such an approach.

## Observer Corps and Associate Allocations

All Observers who had previously qualified as Local Observers under internal Group assessment arrangements achieved National Observer status by IAM RoadSmart's March 2025 deadline.

During the year, two Observers retired from Observing – we thank them for their many years of past service. NELE currently has a total of 15 Observers, comprised of 10 National Observers and 5 Trainees. However, not all can be expected to be available at any one time. Two National Observers are "offline", as are two Trainee Observers. That leaves a total of just eight National and three Trainee Observers currently active.

Training for all new Observers now leads directly to the NO assessment. We were pleased to welcome four new Trainee Observers (TOs) into the scheme during 2025. However, life events caused two TOs to withdraw temporarily; we hope to welcome them back soon, and that the other two TOs will progress to taking their NO assessment in 2026. A further two members have indicated that they would be interested in becoming Observers. If successful, the result of these additions will add 50% to NELE's Observer resources.

Between them, our Observers are currently supporting 57 allocated Associates with a further 12 awaiting allocation. That doesn't mean that each of the eight National Observers has six or seven active Associates; some can only cope with one or two at a time; others have more time to offer. We are grateful to all of them, however many Associates they can accommodate.

Once allocated, Associates' continuing availability cannot be guaranteed. At any one time, about a dozen Associates are marked as temporarily inactive for reasons of work, health, family events or vehicle availability. This results in additional "catch-up" work for their Observer when and if the Associate is able to rejoin the training programme.

There's more to being an Observer than just being a good driver, or even an Advanced driver with good coaching skills. NELE Observers and the allocation team display an extraordinary level of patience and understanding in their efforts to support as many Associates as possible. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

To join the Observing team, just contact [chief.observer@neleiam.co.uk](mailto:chief.observer@neleiam.co.uk). You'll find that it's an excellent way to maintain and improve your own driving standards and become a vital part of NELE's road-safety work.

## Social Meetings

We continue to hold social meetings every month (except August and December) with a steadily increasing number of members attending, whether in person or over Zoom.

Each meeting is an excellent example of teamwork, with contributions from:

- **Paul Heasmer**, creating a varied programme of interesting talks and activities and then booking the speakers.
- **Mike Noel**, booking rooms at the hall for the year, managing "front of house" activities each month.
- **Graham Fennell**, providing prizes for the raffle which helps defray the cost of hiring the room.
- **Lyn and Charlie McGlinchey** preparing and serving the excellent cakes, coffee and tea.
- **Pete Minvalla**, supported by **Aadhar Gupta** co-ordinating the technology to enable meetings to be Zoomed and recorded, then subsequently viewable at [www.neleiam.co.uk](http://www.neleiam.co.uk).

Paul Heasmer also co-ordinated a NELE Christmas Meal at The Bull in Theydon Bois, attended by 20 members. Once again, the excellent standard of the food was matched only by the quality of the conversation!

At a time when many IAM RoadSmart Groups near us have reduced or even stopped social meetings, we can be grateful that NELE still offers the opportunity to meet regularly with like-minded people and share one another's company, even if sometimes only over Zoom.

To further our social activities, we would like to revive a programme of external visits to places of local interest, such as the London Transport Museum Depot at Acton, Crossness Pumping Station, Whitewebbs Museum of Transport in Enfield, Diggerland, and Copped Hall, to mention just a few. However, to do so we really need someone to take on the task of co-ordination – existing committee members give so much of their time that it would be unfair to expect them to take on even more (especially because most also have work and charitable commitments beyond NELE). This would be an ideal role for someone else from within the Group to pick up. Any volunteers?

## Newsletters,

NELE's newsletter, *Roadworthy*, was published twice during the year and continues to provide an interesting and informative mixture of Group news and related articles. In the absence of a volunteer from within NELE's membership, *Roadworthy* is currently guest-edited by Pettigrew Jones, a friend from another Group. Once compiled, *Roadworthy* is transmitted over the internet to the printers, who return completed copies to NELE. A small team from the committee (Colin Savidge, Graham Fennell and Mike Noel) put them into envelopes, affix labels and stamps, then despatch them. Thus, the editor is relieved of this routine element of newsletter production.

Pettigrew would be more than happy to hand over editorship to someone from within NELE. If necessary, he can explain how best to use layout tools to enable articles to flow between columns and pages, and to incorporate images into a good-looking publication. Our target is still to achieve handover by next year's AGM, so a word-loving volunteer is urgently sought – just contact any committee member!

## Website and Media

Pete Minvalla continues to look after the IT infrastructure upon which NELE depends for much of our work. This includes the hosting of our website and official NELE mailboxes, conversion and editing of Zoom recordings of meetings for the website and the provision of all-round technical support to those of us less gifted in the computer wizarding arts. He also looks after our Facebook page.

## Group Administration

An integrated database, an asset shared between those committee members with Membership, Finance and Observing oversight, helps us maintain a rounded overview of Group information.

In accordance with GDPR guidelines, personal information is neither disclosed to third parties nor retained once it is no longer required (e.g. after a member leaves the Group). Members will recently have received an annual reminder of their subscription status, together with a copy of their personal information held by the system. It would be a great help to the smooth running of the Group if members would please notify the Membership Secretary of any changes to the contact information set out in those letters.

## 2026 and Beyond

In the coming year, the committee intend to:

- Increase the size of the Observer Corps by attracting and training new Trainee Observers to the National Observer standard.
- Reduce new Associates' waiting times for the allocation of an Observer, as the result of the planned increase in the number of Observers.
- Continue our programme of monthly social meetings
- Investigate opportunities for external activities such as visits to places of interest
- Encourage more members to take a practical role in supporting NELE, such as by joining the committee or taking over editorship of *Roadworthy*.
- Improve continuity and succession planning for committee posts.
- Encourage a greater support for Gift Aid by full members, since this gives NELE a 25% boost to their subscription from HMRC at no cost to the member. The recent personalized subs renewal letters encouraged Gift-Aid where appropriate.

## Food for thought

In NELE's catchment area, roughly a quarter of Greater London, there are about 2¾ million people of driving age. If only half of them are active drivers, that still gives about 1½ million licence-holders. Only 293 of them are currently NELE members. We have a long way to go! It would be a significant step if we could engage with local councils to attract more members from their areas.

However, I look with envy on other IAM RoadSmart groups in more rural parts, who are centred on a single town or city, with a single Local Authority to deal with. Many are able to forge partnerships with those Local Authorities. Within our "patch", we have 9 London Boroughs plus the City of London, Thurrock, Epping Forest, the London Mayor's Office and TfL. It's almost impossible to keep up with the road developments in all those areas, let alone finding a Road Safety Officer (if one exists). Anything that members can do to help us make those links would be a useful service to the Group.

## Membership

Finally, a couple of word of thanks to Group members. By continuing to support NELE and IAM RoadSmart with your subscriptions, you enable us to continue our active contribution to Road Safety in our area. We hope that it also helps you maintain your own driving standards with the same objective.