



ROADWORTHY

JOURNAL OF THE
NORTH-EAST LONDON AND ESSEX GROUP
OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

Safer Essex Roads Partnership



**Tuesday, 8th September,
7.30 p.m.**
at Theydon Bois Village Hall
Guests welcome!

Autumn 2026

IAM RoadSmart Group Affiliation Number 7043
Registered Charity Number 1056280

ROADWORTHY

Autumn 2026

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Another Date for your diary?

On **Saturday 16th October 2027**, NELE will be **70 years old**.

Would you like to mark this momentous occasion by doing *something*? If so, we need suggestions from you, our members, as to how *you* would like to celebrate it:

- During the day?
- In the evening ?
- A Dinner with/without after-dinner speakers ?
- An outing somewhere?
- A repeat of the North Weald "Large Vehicles" driving day that we held in 2017?

It is quite possible that we could hire Theydon Bois Hall, kitchen & bar for the evening, but we have to be quick because it might get 'snapped up' shortly.

Group Nights

Group Nights take place at 7.30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month (*excluding August and December*) at Theydon Bois Village Hall, Coppice Row, CM16 7ER (right). The hall has a spacious car park with a no-step entrance to the building and is within walking distance of Theydon Bois Tube station; it also is outside the expanded ULEZ zone!



Whilst we try to find presenters who are able to attend in person, this is not always possible: some very interesting presenters now use Zoom, which widens our choice of topics. However, whatever format, a friendly welcome is guaranteed with like-minded people and with tea, coffee and biscuits provided.

We look forward to welcoming you.

We also “Zoom” meetings whenever possible so that those who cannot attend can join us via a mobile, laptop, iPad or tablet. If you use this method, you can opt to watch and listen without having to appear on camera yourself. The link, meeting ID and passcode remain the same each month as follows:-

Zoom Meeting ID: 840 2554 8565 Passcode: 909354

Videos of some previous Group presentations can be found on our website www.neleiam.co.uk under the ‘Events’ tab and by clicking “videos” on the right of the page. They are well worth a look!

Dates for your Diary - all Tuesdays at 7.30 p.m
(Except the Christmas meal, which is a Friday!)

8th September	Safer Essex Road Partnership Reduction of death and serious injury on Essex roads towards zero
13th October	Paul Romaine, JP: The Life of a Magistrate
10th November	Rhett Brown — 1970’s Police Cars
Friday 11th December	NELE’s Christmas Meal

Deadline for the next edition of RoadWorthy: 31st November 2026
E-mail: editor@neleiam.co.uk

Coming Soon to NELE

Monthly meetings at Theydon Bois Village Hall; all start at 7.30 pm

Tuesday 8th September

Essex Safer Road Partnership

The Safer Essex Roads Partnership has brought together organisations across Greater Essex, to provide a road safety service. Representatives will be coming to our September meeting to tell us something of their work and their successes in helping Essex move close to Vision Zero

Tuesday 13th October

The life of a Magistrate

Paul Romaine, JP

A Justice of the Peace (JP) is a local judicial officer or volunteer who handles minor legal cases, witnesses signatures, and certifies official documents. They often serve as lay magistrates. They hear less serious criminal cases (like traffic offences or minor summary crimes), make decisions on bail, issue warrants, and conduct minor trials. They do not always need a formal law degree, as they are trained and supported by professional legal advisers. This will be a rare opportunity for NELE members to hear first-hand about the work of JPs without the strain of making an official appearance before them.

Tuesday 10th November

1970s Police Cars

with Rhett Brown

Rover “Jam sandwiches”, Austin 1300 Pandas, Ford Consuls and Granadas. What else comes to mind when you think of Police cars from the 70’s?. How good were they for their tasks? Rhett Brown will enlighten and entertain us at our November meeting. If you’re old enough, indulge your nostalgia. If not, find out what had your parents reacting nervously when the blue lights came on. None of your wailing sirens. These were proper “Nee-nah” cars. Apart from Pandas, of course—no blues and twos for them!

Friday 11th December

Christmas Meal

We have again chosen the The Bull, Theydon Bois for our Christmas meal, based on positive experiences in previous years. The food and service are good, the price is reasonable and it’s within walking distance of Theydon Bois Station for those that wish to have a drink with their meal.

In response to feedback, we’ve changed the day from a Tuesday to a Friday; 11th December, reducing the potential worry of being ready for work the following morning!

Menu and prices will be available soon—watch out for an email announcement with menu choices and [booking details](#).

Chairman's Chat

NELE's main objectives are to provide an environment within which drivers can constantly improve their skills; whether directly as a member of the Group or indirectly by education and influence on those around us. In many ways, our mission is akin to that of the BBC ("To inform, educate and entertain") in the arena of Road Safety.

Our undertakings therefore go beyond organising Observed Runs to prepare people for the Advanced Test and beyond. The monthly meetings provide ongoing information on driving topics, in part to keep members up-to-date with motoring developments but also to provide some occasional light relief. They also provide human contact—something that was seriously affected by the drop in community activities during the Covid pandemic, which coincided with the growth of online meeting tools such as Zoom, Teams and others that have fallen by the wayside!

The reports in this month's *Roadworthy* reflect the wide variety of activities that our Committee has facilitated this year; quite an achievement for such a small team, particularly bearing in mind that many of them are also Observers. As mentioned by Pettigrew in "From the Editor" elsewhere [*It's down below!-Ed.*], it would help if members who are planning to attend meetings could provide photos or a write-up of the event (we are often lent copies of presenters' slides, which helps with the latter!) Contact details as per Pettigrew's article.

I'm pleased to welcome on board a number of Trainee Observers (TOs) who, once qualified, will almost double the number of active Observers supporting NELE Associates. As part of a TO's training, we may ask Associates, in advance of their appointment, if they would kindly allow a Trainee Observer to widen their experience by joining from the back seat. As the TO progresses, we may ask if they can observe whilst being supervised from the back seat by their mentor. If you can help, thanks in advance. If you'd prefer not, feel free to say so!

See some of you at the forthcoming meetings? Revive the art and joy of human interaction?

From The Editor

I was pleased to receive reports from several contributors to this edition of *Roadworthy*, particularly the thought-pieces by Tony Cater.

One area that would make editions be better would be a wider range of writers' styles. As you know, I'm an absentee editor, carrying out my editorial duties from afar. I'm therefore very grateful to committee members who provide much of the material each edition. However, they already do so much for the Group, it would be a great help if we could find some support amongst the members for some of their tasks. For instance, other members could summarise the presentations given at our social meetings, or take photos of the proceedings—I suspect that there must be some keen photographers in the ranks.

If you'd like to volunteer, just let me know at editor@neleiam.co.uk, or discuss with Paul Gillett, chair@neleiam.co.uk or at a meeting.

Changes afoot

Microsoft have announced that the application that I use for preparing *Roadcraft*, Microsoft Publisher, is being "retired" in October 2026. That means support for problems and tools such as the online help facility will no longer be available. I am going to have to transition to using other tools like Word, PowerPoint or open-source equivalents. This may provide a useful breakpoint for me finally to vacate the editorial chair in favour of someone with more up-to-date knowledge of magazine publication tools or software—or maybe just more extensive knowledge of what can be done with Word. If that sounds like you, please contact me or the Chair (details as above) so we can organise a smooth handover.

Pettigrew

Recent NELE meetings

Becoming an Observer

10th March: David Rosewell / Graham Fennell

The presentation for our March meeting saw not one but two presenters : David Rosewell and Graham Fennell in conversation about their paths to becoming Observers.

Not so much a chat show as a souvenir of “Alas Smith and Jones”, this was a light-hearted but informative session, reminiscing about the family and other influences that shaped their early driving experiences.

They also compared and contrasted their journeys through “the system” to become Advanced Drivers and subsequently to prepare for the National Observer assessment.

Becoming fully-qualified Observers had provided them with greater insight into other people’s driving skillsets as they constantly had to develop and expand their range of coaching skills to match the needs of the Associates allocated to them.



This was a useful and informative presentation especially for several members of the audience who themselves had been considering volunteering as a NELE Observer. As a consequence, we have several new additions to the Observer team, currently undergoing training to join David and Graham as qualified National Observers.

Thanks, chaps!

14th April: Carl Sturman

Our IAM RoadSmart Area Service Delivery Manager

“The keynote speaker after NELE’s AGM (see pages 14-16 for the minutes) was Carl Sturman, who is our Area Service Delivery Manager (ASDM). His territory is called East Central England & Anglia and covers an area from The Wash to Oxfordshire, then down to the Thames Estuary.

As a member of the Field Operations Team, he is responsible for standards of Examiners, Observers and Masters Mentors of all Groups within that area.

Carl’s 30-year Police career, much of it in Road Policing, has been augmented by voluntary work within IAM RoadSmart as a Group member, National Observer and Examiner, so he has wide grass-roots experience.

That background gave him a good understanding of why so many of us give up our time and expertise to support IAM RoadSmart in delivering its charitable Road Safety objectives.

He showed IAM RS’s strategy diagram, which sets the scene for its how the organisation is guided in its thinking and actions, whether in the Charity sector (Groups, the Test and related activities), its commercial arm (generating income from services to industry) or delivering National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS) course for drink/drive or speed awareness.

IAM RoadSmart



IAM RS was on board with DfT's January 2026 Road Safety Strategy, focussing on "The Fatal Five" of road user behaviour:

- Speed
- Failure to wear seat-belts
- Driving under the influence of Drink and Drugs
- Careless Driving
- Mobile Phone use.

We should expect to see an ongoing series of proposals from Head Office in support of these initiatives.

Carl also explained some of the challenges facing IAM RoadSmart, not the least being that recently, expenditure has not been matched by income, so action was needed to stem the losses. One initiative in the near future would be the relocation of Head Office to less expensive premises, still in Welwyn Garden City (to avoid redundancy costs for locally-recruited staff).

Changes in the driving environment, such as fewer new drivers and the increasing spread of 20mph inner-city zones meant that the prospective population for new Advanced drivers was diminishing, and therefore the potential for new members. Consideration is also being given to additional categories of IAM RS membership, short of covering all Advanced skill, but more active than most drivers in improving their driving standard for everyday journeys. They might perhaps qualify as "Competent and Confident" drivers, or just take modules covering specific skills, like motorways or urban driving. These people would not be called Advanced drivers, so the touchstone standard would not be devalued. However, since IAM RS is largely sustained by membership subscriptions, these additional members would unlock additional sources of income to keep the charity afloat.

The shortfall in finances was also one of the reasons why (at present), it was impractical to reduce subs for Observers. Consideration was being given to other tangible ways of recognising the contribution that they make.

Carl rounded off his talk with thanks to NELE, and especially to the Observers for the ongoing support for IAM RoadSmart. Their time is greatly appreciated and is clearly visible from the stream of high-quality Associates that NELE continues to deliver for test."

12th May: Chris Conlan Pearly King of Bromley

From time to time, our monthly talks stray from motoring subjects to topics of local interest in North East London. This month was one of those exceptions. When our planned speaker was unable to attend at short notice, we were pleased to be able to ring the changes with a talk about a group of people originally born within the sound of Bow Bells—the Pearlies. The talk was given by Chris Conlan, the current Pearly King of Bromley.

Pearlies have their origins in London's street traders (costermongers) of the late 19th century, who sold fruit, vegetables and fish from carts. This was long before the establishment of National Insurance or the National Health Service, so when one of their number fell upon hard times, other costers would club together to provide mutual support—akin to the later Trade Unions. They also raised funds for other charities. Each Borough's trades elected their own Coster Kings and/or Queens, leading the fight for their members' rights against The Authorities and local bureaucracy.

From the early 19th century meanwhile, the wealthy West End society would parade their finery and pearls through the fashionable London parks. In parody of that fashion, the costers would flash up their everyday working clothes by decorating the seams with mother-of-pearl buttons.

The first to have made a complete Pearly suit is reputed to be an orphaned road sweeper and rat catcher named Henry Croft. He sewed thousands of pearl buttons onto a discarded dress suit to gain attention and to raise money for Victorian charities and orphanages.

The idea spread amongst the Coster Kings and Queens and leading to dynasties of Pearly families—the offspring of Pearly Kings and Queens becoming Pearly Princes and Princesses, eventually inheriting their Pearly parents' titles, although sometimes, a title could pass to a cousin or other relative (just like real royalty!). They all wear suits decorated with lines, patterns and symbols made of pearl buttons.



At its height in the middle of the 20th century, there were around 300—400 Pearlies. Today, there are still around 30 Pearly families, supported by several active groups.

In addition to their charitable activities, they keep alive the traditions of the Costermongers, including the ability to speak fluent Cockney—originally, a means of passing messages that could not be understood by officials and the Police. Not that some of their activities were nefarious... We learnt some useful phrases!

Chris explained how he became Pearly King of Bromley, through contacts in other Boroughs. Like most Pearlies, much of his time is given up to activities such as civic events, mayoral functions, parades and the traditional Harvest Festival held at St Martins-In-The-Fields church in Trafalgar Square.

His talk was illustrated by not only his Pearly suit but also a collection of Pearly memorabilia and awards made to him for his charitable works.

A most entertaining and enlightening evening—not only giving us a Bucher’s (hook—look) at his Whistle (and flute—suit), but opening our minces (pies—eyes) to their social activities down the Rub-a dub (pub)!



9th June: Chris Rodwell

Large Vehicles

Over many years in the transport industry, Observer Chris Rodwell has developed a wide range of skills and much knowledge. In June, we were fortunate to have him passing on some of his vast knowledge about Large Goods Vehicles (LGVs). This is a précis of some of the (many) points that he made.

What are LGV's? They're what older NELE members may still think of as HGVs (Heavy Goods Vehicles). The name was changed by DfT in 1992 to bring it into line with EU licences for vehicles that weigh over 3.5 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight. At the same time (and for the same reasons), the old HGV Class 1 and 2 categories were changed to become LGV C+E and LGV C. However, as Chris pointed out, whatever you call it:

- You *do* know that it is **Large!**
- You *don't* know whether it's empty or loaded
- A loaded vehicle will drive differently than an empty one
- Fully-loaded, they could weigh up to 44 Tonnes, take twice as long to stop as a car from the same speed and have many more blind spots.
- It will do a lot of damage if it hits you, empty or loaded!

Drivers of “traditional” HGVs would probably be taken aback by the cabs of modern LGVs. No more manual gearboxes with up to 32 gears! Modern vehicles are all automatic, albeit with some over-ride facilities. However, for reasons of economy and to limit emissions, many companies mandate that the use of Automatic wherever possible—“black boxes” and in-cab cameras monitor compliance with the policy.

Age Limits and Training

Minimum age limits apply for becoming an LGV driver: 18 for C (rigid bodied); 21 for a CE (Articulated or with trailer over 750 Kg.) Before undergoing LGV training, a driver must have held a full Category B car driving licence for at least one year. Special exemptions exist for young individuals enrolled in LGV apprenticeships or special training schemes. There is no maximum age, but rigorous health (including eyesight) checks ensure that older drivers are fit enough to continue.

Acquiring an LGV licence requires a large measure of commitment. Once the initial medical and eye tests are passed (both of which must be paid for), trainees must prepare for (and pass!) a DVLA LGV Theory Test, then undertake practical LGV Learner Driving training before passing an LGV Driving Test. The training doesn't end there, though, as a professional driver must undertake 35 hours of periodic training every 5 years to keep their Driver Certificate of

Professional Competence (CPC) current. This ensures that they are up-to-date with regulations such as legislation on LGV drivers' hours, speed limits, weight and size regulations.

Driving near large vehicles

Stay Visible:

- Avoid driving in lorries' blind spots for long periods.
- If you can't see the vehicle's external mirrors, the driver can't see you either.

Pass with Care:

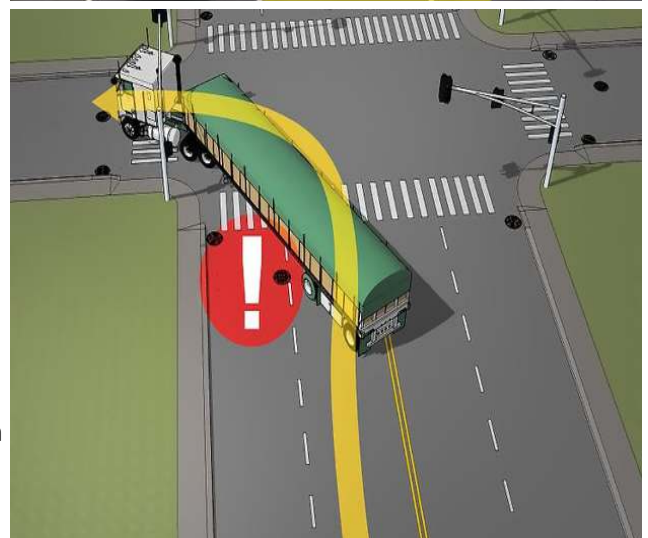
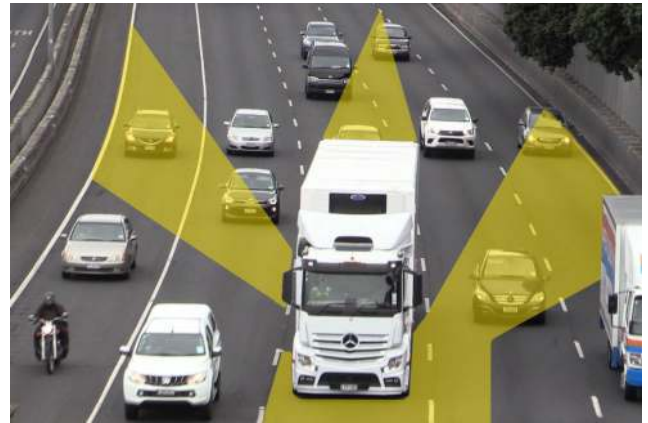
- Ensure you have enough room to complete your overtaking manoeuvre before committing yourself.

Give More Space:

- Be aware that blind spots will move—as a lorry turns, different areas become invisible to the driver
- Wait until a lorry has completed its turn before passing, as they may need more than their own lane to turn.
- Can I stop in the distance I can see to be clear on my side of the road?
- (Highway Code Rule 164: Do not cut in too quickly)
- Only a fool breaks the 2 second rule (even more when the weather's poor)

Understanding Stopping Distances:

- LGVs require significantly longer stopping distances than smaller vehicles.
- Allow extra space in front of you when driving near an LGV.



Speed Limits and Lane Limitations

Large vehicles (which includes buses, vehicles with trailers and some apparently-small trucks) are subject to lower speed limits than cars. They are also not permitted to use the outside lane on motorways with three or more lanes. We need to make allowances for these limitations and not impede their progress (e.g. "Middle-Lane Owners Club driving at 45 mph).

[Unfortunately, the complexity of the official speed limit table, coupled with space and legibility limitations preclude the inclusion of that table in this edition of Roadworthy—readers should look at the online version at <https://www.gov.uk/speed-limits>. Other countries seem to manage with much less complex rules—maybe the UK could review whether we could follow suit! –Ed]

Observation Links that warn of the need for added caution

- Watch out for LGVs with foreign number plates—they often have bigger blind spots that can hide cars alongside them.
- Be aware that newer LGVs are fitted with a range of external cameras instead of mirrors. We can no longer look in the mirrors to see where the driver is looking! There is also an unforeseen drawback for long-sighted LGV drivers, who can have problems re-focussing from distant views to a camera image displayed close to their eyes.

Chris delivered a fascinating insight into the life of LGV drivers, giving us all food for thought when driving near these leviathans. Thanks very much, Chris!

**14th July: Graham Fennell
Summer Quiz—see pages 18—21**

Skills Day Event (Sun May 31st)

by Mike Noel

On Sunday May 31st, NELE hosted a **Driver and Rider Skills Day Event** at Theydon Bois Village Hall. It was a free event for the local public as well as Members, Associates, family and friends of NELE. Activities on the day (it lasted from 10am - 4pm) included:

- A series of presentations in the small hall, covering a range of driving techniques
- On-road demonstration drives by our Observers using the Observers' own cars, be it petrol, diesel or EV; auto or manual
- Feedback on participants' driving/riding skills (Taster/refreshers drives using their own car)
- Demonstrations of practical roadside skills in the car-park (knowing what's under the bonnet, changing a wheel)

The aim was a 'drop-in' day to raise awareness of driving skills and to promote the work of NELE and our two-wheeled colleagues from East London Advanced Motorcyclists (ELAM).

After a few months' preparation, organisation and advertising, the sun shone brightly as we all arrived early to make our last minute preparations to welcome members of the public, which started off as a trickle.



Unfortunately, the trickle did not turn into a flood (for whatever reason: be it the end of the half-term holidays or not enough wider publicity).

I am pleased to say, however, that those who did attend enjoyed themselves and gave valuable feedback regarding the event organisation and the experience gained from both demonstration and taster drives. The morning presentations were moderately attended:

"Plan ahead - get time to react",

"Bends and cornering",

"Overtaking – safely passing other road users"



Whereas the afternoon session,

"Motorways – making the most of our safest roads", involving audience participation (note the masking-tape lane markings and "volunteers" acting as vehicles), was very well attended.



Overall, there were 13 Demonstration and 7 Assessment drives. ELAM also took out a couple of riders for assessment/refresher rides.



A steady stream of participants investigated how to carry out safety checks on an assortment of cars in the car-park, together with practical exercises such as changing wheels.

Thanks must go to the Committee for the work involved in the organisation; to the 13 Observers who gave of their time for demonstration and assessment drives; to Members and Associates of NELE who helped on the day and to members of the public who turned up! Mention must also go to Lyn and Charlie McGlinchey for catering to the volunteers' inner needs. Lastly, we're grateful to the Theydon Bois Village Hall Association for the use of the facilities ~ not least, the car park!

We will be organising another similar event in the future, implementing lessons learnt from this one.

A video showing many of the day's activities can be found at neleiam.co.uk/skillsday2026 or on [You Tube](#)

Time for a New Deal between Society and the Motorist?

By Tony Cater

Many choices in life have unintended consequences. Nowhere is this more apparent than in society's relationship with the motor car. Nowadays, virtually everyone who wishes to have a car already has one, and our society is built around the use of cars.

But in more recent times, the agenda around the use of cars has been seized by zealots who will brook no challenge to their world view that car = bad and cycling, walking and public transport = good. Maybe part of this has been brought upon ourselves by society's perception of the motorist's effect on life, and if we want a more balanced outcome, we need to show by our behaviour that there can be a middle way.

The root causes of the problems lie in society's choices over planning policy, and the way our working lives have changed as the economy has evolved. These factors have been in play in the decades since World War 2. Until our towns started to be "planned", they had evolved according to the needs of the people that lived and worked in them. Workshops, shops and schools were intermingled with houses, while bigger factories on the edge of towns would provide work for a majority of the townsfolk.

On the one hand, planners decided that towns should be zoned, with all the houses in residential areas; the commerce and small industry accommodated on trading estates, and out of town supermarkets and retail parks were the way forward for retail. On top of that, as the economy evolved, it became more common that businesses needed specialised skills and had to draw their staff from far and wide to get the people they needed. Husbands and wives might often have very different skills and work far from each other. I recently retired from the software industry, and the companies I worked for found that they needed to fish in regional and sometimes international pools of talent to find the people they needed.

Given that we have organised our society like this over many decades, how can we be surprised that car use has exploded and as a result we have problems with traffic, parking and all sorts of driver behaviour. The reaction from government and local authorities has been to impose ever more stringent limitations on car use instead of encouraging better behaviour.

But motorists are not some alien horde of invaders, here to lay waste to our towns and cities. Traffic is the aggregate of you, me and the people who need to service our needs going about our legitimate business in a free country. It is time for a new deal between society and the motorist. Society needs to cut us some slack, while we need to show that we can earn the trust of society.

Two of the biggest issues society has with motorists are speeding and parking. A selfish minority persist in driving at unsafe speeds in residential areas and failing to use sufficient observation skills to avoid threatening harm to other road users. No wonder speed bumps, cameras and 20 mph limits are being imposed on motorists and the measures have significant support from residents. If only drivers would start behaving in a more considerate manner, there'd be no need for any of these.

There's never going to be enough parking to go round, but selfish parking results in widespread support for heavy-handed enforcement. Many drivers seem to have the mind set that they must park as close to their chosen destination as possible, regardless of the nuisance their parked vehicle might impose on other road users. You may have to drive a little farther from your destination, but sooner or later you can find somewhere to park where you won't be blocking access to premises, obstructing a narrow road or parking half on a footpath. "I pay my taxes, so I can park where I please" is not an endearing attitude.

Parents on school runs exhibit some of the most outrageous examples of selfish parking behaviour. It does make one wonder what sort of example they think they are setting for their children.

Courtesy on the roads seems to be in very short supply these days. How often have you been in a stream of traffic and noticed some poor pedestrian waiting forlornly at the kerb, hoping for an opportunity to safely cross the road? Traffic just ploughs on oblivious. In such a situation, I'm often in a quandary: do I stop to allow the pedestrian to cross, or would I just be inviting them to step into greater danger in the middle of the road, because the opposing line of drivers lacks the anticipation and imagination to cooperate and make a safe space for them to cross?

I think that a big contributor to a lack of courtesy on the roads is that there are no officially recognised signals for giving way to others, let alone one for apologising if you've unwittingly inconvenienced other road users. Unofficially, a flash of the headlights is recognised by most road users to signify that you are giving way to another road user. But the Highway Code simply says that such a signal is only used to warn others of your presence. I don't believe that IAM RoadSmart has a position on this issue, other than following the Highway Code rule. Perhaps it's time for the organisation to think some more about the matter.

The question of saying sorry is more problematic. What would be a suitable signal? Maybe holding hands up in surrender (if it's safe to do so)? But if such a signal were to be encouraged, it might defuse many situations that could otherwise lead to road rage. Maybe members can offer suggestions?

Perhaps we can reset the situation and campaign for a fairer deal for the motorist. Motorists have to start by demonstrating that they can be trusted to behave responsibly and to be worthy of the trust society placed in them when it awarded them their driving licences. Driving requires all of your attention, and you should drive using speed appropriate for the road conditions and with anticipation and courtesy.

If society starts to see that the carrot is more effective than the stick in encouraging desired behaviour on the roads, we might have a chance of achieving a more balanced approach from those making the rules.

I am probably pushing on an open door advocating these changes to IAM members as whole, who are probably already practising considerate and courteous behaviour on the roads. But how might we encourage a wider acceptance of the need for a change in attitudes and behaviour? Leading by example would be a good start.

But IAM RoadSmart has a voice with other motoring organisations, (AA, RAC, etc), with the government, and with the media. Perhaps the executive might consider launching a campaign to publicise the need for change and more importantly, to stress the benefits society might expect from such changes. This probably needs to be bottom up. Politicians have already moved on from choosing anything else over motoring. Unless they see that society and voters are ready for change, nothing will happen.

Friends in the media are probably the key to this. If they can be persuaded to back the idea, it has a chance of succeeding. Isn't it worth a try?

Going for a Drive

We recently had an extended family get-together which (inevitably) resulted in some reminiscing. Looking back to the 20th Century, there was nostalgia for the time when a car wasn't just a part of the everyday routine. Back then, people would actually go out somewhere, or even nowhere in particular, "for a drive" - a treat in itself. Admittedly, the road network then was not so well developed, so people hadn't become accustomed to using motorways—long, boring slabs of concrete or tarmac— to get relatively quickly to a chosen destination many miles away.

There were no such things as GPS Navigators back in time. Drivers would purchase a Road Atlas for the UK or maybe an Ordnance Survey map for the county and use that to work out a route. To cope with occasional changes to the road layout, they might even buy updated maps once every five years or so.

Those maps could be used to devise an itinerary for the day, taking in what appeared from the map to be some interesting scenery or going to a place of interest that hadn't before been visited, or maybe *had* been visited before and was considered worth going to again. Sometimes there wouldn't even be that level of organisation—we'd just set out for the day in an arbitrary direction and, when the fancy took us, strike out down side-roads at random to see where they led. Such days out typically took us down smaller roads with pleasant views on either side, through charming villages, stopping at country pubs or tea-rooms for refreshments and village shops for local crafts and foods.

One of the advantages of becoming an Observer is that we get to introduce Associates to some of the many rural routes that still exist, just like 40 years ago. The roads themselves thread through ever-changing scenery and an astounding variety of buildings: roadside farms, barn conversions and historic town centres (city centres with concrete office blocks are reserved for "Town" sessions). Many Associates are astounded at how easy it is to get "into the scenery" that surrounds London.

When out for the day, village inns are less frequent nowadays, but the quality of pub grub has improved out of all recognition. Moreover, garden centres seem to have blossomed (sorry!) everywhere, nearly all of them with a decent tearoom attached.

In the 21st century, it's no longer necessary to break out the UK Road Atlas. GPS Navigators and phone apps such as Google Maps or Waze have options to avoid Motorways and Dual Carriageways. They then entice you down unknown roads and tracks that once more give you the joy of "going for a drive". In doing so, you'll not only surprise yourself at what Essex and Hertfordshire have to offer, you'll also tone up your IPSGA and forward planning skills. Finally, two relevant quotes:

- The best drivers never stop learning.
- A poor life this if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare.

NORTH EAST LONDON & ESSEX GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

Registered Charity Number: 1056280

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held at **Theydon Bois Village Hall (TBVH), Coppice Row CM16 7ER** in the The Small Hall
(the AGM also had members attending via ZOOM)

Tuesday 14th April 2026 at 7.30pm

Minutes

The Chair, **Paul Gillett (PG)** opened the **AGM** welcoming everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies for absence** – Ron Metha, Dan Cranefield, Michael Smith
2. **Minutes of previous AGM** on *Tuesday 8th April 2025*

The Minutes were accepted as a true record.

Proposed by: Colin Savidge; **Seconded by** Ken Wheeler

Carried unanimously.

3. Matters arising from the 2025 AGM Minutes

- There were no matters arising from the Minutes

4. Chairman's report

Copies were handed out at the meeting and was/is also available on the Group's website **[Please see the report for more details]**.

The Chair gave a spirited account of the year (2025) with some of the stats & particular aspects reprinted below:

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
2025	222	71	293

Joiners and Leavers

2025	Full	Associate	Total	2024	Full	Associate	Total
Joiners	7	49	56	Joiners	1	36	37
Leavers	30	24	54	Leavers	18	12	30

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

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, becoming Observers 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.

There were no questions. The Chair thanked the Observers, the Committee and the members

Resolution 1: To accept the Chairman's report

Proposed by: David Rosewell; Seconded by Charlie M^cGlinchey

Carried unanimously

5. Treasurer's report and adoption of accounts.

The Treasurer's Report for year ending 31/12/2025 was circulated at the meeting, and can be seen on the NELE website.

Graham Fennell thanked Mike Coggins (present) for his auditing of the accounts and advised that in compiling his report the overwhelming factors were openness, honesty and transparency. Comprehensive notes accompanied each entry. Amongst other items mentioned Graham cited:

- Two donations: one of £100 from R. Day and one of £73.04 from the Charity Aid Foundation.
- Our net balance of Income/Expenditure was **£1523.00** as compared with **-£41.00** in 2024.
- Thanked the Committee members for their support, particularly Colin Savidge for his documenting of membership and chasing up of fees owed.

Resolution 2: To accept the Treasurer's report and adopt the accounts.

Proposed by: John Bentley; Seconded by: Ken Wheeler

Carried unanimously

6. **Resolution 3:** That any monies unclaimed by Group members for over one year by the end of the AGM should be treated as a donation to Group charitable funds.

- It was explained that NELE includes this every AGM to avoid "ghost" entries in the accounts where members, for example, have moved without notifying a new address or cancelled their membership but not a standing order. It was often impossible to trace such people as banks would not provide NELE with contact details for GDPR reasons. Similarly, occasionally members have paid twice and not taken up an offer for reimbursement from the Treasurer.
- In the year 2024/25 **Resolution 3** related to 30 payments:
 - 22** (£220) bank transfers from former members for whom we have no contact details and whom we cannot identify through the banking system
 - 8** (£80) from current members who paid twice for subs and declined repayment of the excess, thus effectively making donations to the Group.

Proposed by: David Rosewell; Seconded by: Pete Minvalla

Carried unanimously

7. Election of officers (*Officers must retire annually & may offer themselves for re-election*)

Standing for re-election:

- **Chairman:** Paul Gillett
- **Secretary:** Mike Noel
- **Treasurer:** Graham Fennell

Proposed (*en bloc*) by: **Pete Minvalla**; Seconded by: **Ken Wheeler**;

Carried unanimously

8. Election of committee members

Every year, one-third of Committee members must retire by rotation and may offer themselves for re-election.

- **Committee Members retiring by Rotation and not standing for re-election:**

None

- **Committee Members retiring by Rotation & standing for re-election:**

Pete Minvalla

- **Committee Members not retiring and number of years remaining before retiring by rotation:**

Colin Savidge (1), Chris Rodwell (2), Paul Heasmer (2)

- **Steve Bennigsen** volunteered to join the Committee

Proposed (*en bloc*): by **John Harrison**; Seconded by: **Graham Fennell**;

Carried unanimously

9. Any Other Business

Two announcements were made:

- (a) A Driving & Riding Skills day would take place on Sunday May 31st 2026 at Theydon Bois Village Hall
- (b) The 2026 Christmas Dinner at the Bull would be on Friday December 11th 2026

The AGM finished at 20.23 hrs

There followed the presentation of awards and annual trophies by the Chair:

Annual Trophies (for activities in 2025)

- The **Observer of the Year Award/Trophy** went to **Chris Rodwell**
- The **Walsh Trophy** (given to the member who has made a significant contribution to the group over the year) went to **Pete Minvalla** for his continual technical support in the recording, Zooming and maintenance of our social media platforms.
- The **Associate of the Year** was announced as Dafin Aziz who, unfortunately, was unable to attend. A separate presentation would be made to him.



Why Are Most Cars Now 50 Shades Of Grey?

By Tony Cater

Surely most people have noticed how little variety there is in the range of colours among new cars on the road. I don't think it's because those are the only colours customers want for their cars. I'm sure it's due to the way cars are sold these days. The majority of new cars are either sold into fleets or to private owners on contract plans built around a 36 or 48 month replacement cycle. Fleet owners are not very concerned about colour, more with residual values so they stick to the most popular colours. Similarly, dealer groups mostly buy for stock and will opt for safe choices rather than bright colours. Private owners find that unless they settle for what the dealer has in stock, they are faced with a lengthy wait for a factory order. That doesn't work if your contract is at an end.

There is one exceptional case, though. When launching a new model, or a high performance version of a current model, manufacturers will sometimes ensure that the initial batch of vehicles delivered to dealers are painted in a bright colour that makes them stand out from the crowd. It ensures the cars are noticed and reinforces their promotional campaigns. But of course, this practice feeds into the same "Hobson's Choice" for car buyers. If you're anxious to have the latest model, or the high performance version, you'll have to settle for a colour that stands out in a crowd.

In practice, there is a small group of purchasers in the HQ's of dealer groups and fleet operators who are the real influencers on the availability of colours. Their remit drives them to play safe, so the endless variations of black, grey, white, blue, and metallic variants of the same, are what we get. Customers may well be crying out for more choice, but no-one in the industry is listening nor cares.

Things are different with specialist marques which are built (and painted) to customer order. Think of brands like Rolls Royce, Bentley, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Morgan etc. If you see one of those on the road, it is much more likely to be a distinctive colour as the owner has chosen for himself.

Can we draw any conclusions from these observations? First of all, if you're planning to buy a car, you should probably be prepared to compromise on specification and especially colour. Otherwise you will find that unless you can settle for a vehicle available from stock, not only will you be in for a long wait for a factory order, but you probably won't be able to negotiate as good a deal on the purchase either.

How about on the road? If you encounter a car in an unusual colour, it probably means it was a special order so you might expect the driver to be more careful about his driving. Maybe because he had to wait so long to get his car and he wouldn't want to risk an accident with it. This generality may well not apply if the car in question was a high performance model. In that case you might anticipate flamboyant behaviour – racing away from traffic stops, risky overtaking manoeuvres, tailgating, etc.

These observations only really apply to cars new enough to be with their first owners. Once vehicles get into the second hand market, buyers are usually looking for the best car they can get for their money, and colour is rarely the first consideration in those circumstances.

Nice observation piece, Tony! On the continent, there appears to be a greater variety of colours amongst the vehicle population. Perhaps the influence of corporate buyers and the vehicle tax situation are different there! - Ed.

July 2026 monthly meeting

Summer Quiz with Graham Fennel as Quizmaster

Five tables-worth of members were in attendance (Zoom impractical for a quiz!) to test their knowledge and skill with conundrums. There were nominal prizes and the honour of winning, but to be honest, most were there for the company and a bit of a challenge. Thanks to Graham for his hard work and preparation. Questions on these two pages; answers overleaf. No peeking until you have to!

QUIZ QUESTIONS

ROUND 1 - GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who appears on the reverse of a current UK £10 note?
2. On a standard Sudoku puzzle, to what do all the numbers add up to when correctly completed?
3. St George is the Patron Saint of England but did he ever visit England?
4. If you were born on 14th July, what is your star sign?
5. What flavour of Walkers Crisps sells the most?
6. How many lines are there in a sonnet?
7. Who is the long time presenter of the UK version of Dragons Den?
8. In what year was the Battle of Waterloo?
9. Who was the author of "A Brief History of Time"?
10. What is Lewis Hamilton's F1 racing number?

ROUND 2 - AMERICA / CANADA / MEXICO

1. There are 50 States in the USA but how many Provinces and Territories are there in Canada?
2. Which country is the largest, America, Canada or Mexico?
3. How many international borders does Mexico have
4. How far is Hawaii from mainland USA
5. When was the Aztec civilisation prominent in Mexico?
Either between:
 - a) 1,200 BC – 400 BC
 - b) 100 BC – 900 AD
 - c) 1,300 AD – 1,500 AD
6. Where does Route 66 start and finish in the USA?
7. Who is the current Prime Minister of Canada?
8. What is the currency in Mexico?
9. Of the five Great Lakes, which ones straddle the US/Canada border?
10. What is the national animal of Canada?



ROUND 3 – CAR ANAGRAMS

(Questions 1 – 10 are Make and Model.
e.g. – Q's 1 – 10: Ford Fiesta.

Questions 11 – 20 are just Make)
e.g. - Q's 11 – 20: Volvo)

1	MAIN SIN CARS	11	TRANSIT MOAN
2	MODERN FOOD	12	TECH LOVER
3	AN UNTIDY CACHE	13	BAIT TUG
4	LAX VALOUR CASH	14	BROILING HAM
5	LARGE NEAT MENU	15	AMORAL FOE
6	KNAVE FOLLOWS GG	16	SORRY CELLO
7	SEX OR ACTION	17	SLATE
8	ROACH AND COD	18	AIM TASER
9	I PUT ON FAT	19	ACID CALL
10	TOO LOYAL ACTOR	20	MR CLEAN

ROUND 4 – LONDON

1. What is currently the tallest building in London?
2. Where is the Merchant Navy Memorial in London?
3. When was the building of St Paul's Cathedral completed?
4. What are the 3 sites of the V & A in London?
5. Which 3 markets are managed by the City of London Corporation?
6. What was opened in 1909 at 400 Oxford Street?
7. How many Towers are there at the Tower of London?
8. At the 2021 Census, how many people were recorded as living in the "City of London"?
9. What is generally known as "Number 1, London"?
10. When was the last London Bridge sold to the USA?

ROUND 5 – SCIENCE AND NATURE

1. How many bones are there in the average Adult Human Body?
2. Which elements make up the word CHALK?
3. How is the strength of an earthquake generally measured?
4. When was the telephone invented by Alexander Graham Bell?
5. What is the fastest member of the animal kingdom in the World?
6. What is the generally accepted as being the largest tree in the World?
7. What was the first satellite to be launched into space?
8. How much of the Earth's surface is covered in water?
9. When were the first Nobel Prizes awarded?
10. Of the eight Main Human Blood Groups, which one is the rarest?



See questions 1 and 4

NELE - SUMMER 2026 QUIZ ANSWERS

ROUND 1 - GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Jane Austen
2. 405 (45*9)
3. No
4. Cancer
5. Cheese and Onion
6. 14
7. Evan Davis
8. 1815 (18th June)
9. Stephen Hawking
10. 44

ROUND 2 - AMERICA / CANADA / MEXICO

1. 10 Provinces and 3 Territories
2. Canada (9,984,670 km² (Note - USA 9,833,517 km² and Mexico 1,927,550 km²
3. 3 – USA, Guatemala, Belize
4. 2,400 miles (3,900 km)
5. 1,300 AD – 1,500 AD
6. Starts in Downtown Chicago, Illinois. Ends in Santa Monica Pier California
7. Mark Carney
8. Mexican Peso
9. Superior, Huron, Erie & Ontario. (Only Lake Michigan is solely in the USA)
10. The Beaver (Strangely it is actually the North American Beaver)

ROUND 3 – CAR ANAGRAMS

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------|----|--------------|
| 1 | NISSAN MICRA | 11 | ASTON MARTIN |
| 2 | FORD MONDEO | 12 | CHEVROLET |
| 3 | HYUNDAI ACCENT | 13 | BUGATTI |
| 4 | VAUXHALL CORSA | 14 | LAMBORGHINI |
| 5 | RENAULT MEGANE | 15 | ALFA ROMEO |
| 6 | VOLKSWAGEN GOLF | 16 | ROLLS ROYCE |
| 7 | CITREON SAXO | 17 | TESLA |
| 8 | HONDA ACCORD | 18 | MASERATI |
| 9 | FIAT PUNTO | 19 | CADILLAC |
| 10 | TOYOTA COROLLA | 20 | MCLAREN |

ROUND 4 – LONDON

1. The Shard. – At 309.6 metres / 1016 feet
2. Tower Hill
3. 1710. Construction started in 1675 and took 35 years to complete. However, it was only officially declared completed by Parliament on 25th December 1711, a year after it had actually been finished.
No change since then in how long it takes the Government to deal with matters....
4. South Kensington, (the main building), Young V & A in Bethnal Green and the V & A East Museum & Storehouse at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford.
5. Billingsgate Market, Smithfield Market and New Spitalfields Market
6. Selfridges. Opened by Harry Gordon Selfridge
7. 22 (but accept either 21 or 23 as well, as there is some doubt)
8. 8,583.
9. Apsley House
10. April 1968, for \$2,460,000.

ROUND 5 – SCIENCE AND NATURE

1. 206
2. Carbon, Hydrogen, Aluminium and Potassium (C, H, Al, K)
3. On the Richter Scale
4. It was Patented on 7th March 1876 and the first call was on 10th March 1876
5. The Peregrine Falcon, with a diving speed of over 300 kph (190 mph).
6. A Giant Sequoia called The General Sherman Tree, in the Giant Forest of Sequoia National Park, in California. It has a volume of over 52,500 cubic feet
7. Sputnik 1 – launched on 4th October 1957
8. About 71%. This includes oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, glaciers and even soil moisture.
9. 1901 (10th December 1901 – 5 years after the death of Alfred Nobel as stipulated in his will)
10. AB Negative – About 1% of the population.



Winners!

New Associates

A very warm welcome to the following NELE Associates.
We look forward to welcoming you to our Group Nights (see page 3):

NAME	FROM
Nusaybah Ahmed	Plaistow
Ed Chaplin	Chigwell
Martin Eatough	Crouch End
Iban Hossain	Limehouse
Jeremy Jacobs	North Finchley
Tom Jones.....	Clissold
Jen HOUNG Lie.....	Canary Wharf
Saroj Loo.....	Enfield
Evie Loveday	Enfield
Srikanth Mattewada	Lower Clapton
Edward Melhuish.....	Finchley
Imola Nemes	Islington
Dorothy Price.....	Friern Barnet
Bruno Henrique Rodrigues Casarim	Barking
Momoko Tani.....	Limehouse
Riley Torris	Hornchurch
Richard Tromans.....	Highgate
Simon Watts.....	Enfield
Craig Zeital.....	Walthamstow

It is a busy time for NELE with so many new Associates. Our small team of enthusiastic Observers is currently somewhat overwhelmed. This means that unfortunately, there's a delay in allocating Associates for their Observed Drives
Please bear with us as we deal with the backlog.

Recent Passes

Since the last edition of *Roadworthy*, twelve Associates have passed their Advanced Tests and are now full members of IAM RoadSmart.

Name	Observer	Examiner
Parvez Ahmed	Stephen Bennigsen	Colin Underwood
Shahzain Badruddin (First) ...	Paul Heasmer	Mark Anderson
Phillip Burgess (First)	Iain Wyness.....	Colin Underwood
Yuri Chesses	David Rosewell	Paul Mostyn
Ben Efere*	Paul Gillett.....	Paul Mostyn
Celia Greenwood	Graham Fennell	Paul Mostyn
Ralph Hall	Iain Wyness.....	Colin Underwood
Frank Longsworth.....	Iain Wyness.....	Mark Anderson
Sonia Paiva	Paul Heasmer	Mark Anderson
Gorana Renovica	Pete Minvalla	Colin Underwood
Sara Sharif* (First)	Paul Heasmer	Colin Underwood
Michael Smith (Masters).....	Paul Heasmer	Colin Underwood

Congratulations to all of them, and thanks to their Observers!

*Ben Efere and Sara Sharif benefitted from NELE's Young Driver scheme for those passing the Advanced Test whilst 26 or younger. They received a 50% refund of the cost of their Advanced Driving Course. If you know a young driver who is 26 or younger, let them know of this offer — we want to attract younger drivers, who are at greater risk of traffic collisions.

NELE currently has 10 National Observers and six Trainee Observers. We urgently need to have more! If you are an Advanced Driver, you can take your journey up a gear by becoming an Observer. You'll go through a training programme which develops your coaching skills and includes a final assessment with an independent IAM Assessor. Upon completion of the course, you'll be awarded your National Observer certificate which is a qualification recognised by the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI).

You will be fully supported by NELE as you work towards achieving the qualification.
Contact [Paul Gillett](#), Chief Observer for more details.

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Views expressed in this newsletter are those of individual contributors and not necessarily those of NELE IAM or IAM RoadSmart unless so stated.

Comments, ideas, suggestions and perhaps some motoring humour are always most welcome!

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