

# Report of the Regional meeting of Groups in the northeast and Scotland held at the Cleveland Police Headquarters

Saturday 15 March 2008

- Note* Editorial comments are indicated by square brackets thus [ ]
- Present* Keith Bamford (GAP northeast and Chairman)  
Bob Smalley (Chief Examiner)  
Emma Middleton (RoADAR Development Officer)  
Simon Protano (RoSPA Head of Road and Fleet Solutions)  
Ayrshire: Bill Devlin, Dennis Clifford  
Cleveland: Mike Elder, Peter Webster, Nigel Dunnett  
East Kilbride: Brian Gray, Dave Arnott, Brian Smith  
East Renfrewshire: Ann MacEwan, Bill Winter  
East Riding: Steve Roper, Chris Hood  
Edinburgh & Lothian: Davie Whyte, Ian Burt, Ian Carter  
North East: Harry Moir, Richard Jones  
North Yorkshire: Mike Borrows, Peter Suggitt  
South Yorkshire: Zakria Din, Steve Wing  
West Yorkshire: Norman Stitt, Phil Steward
- Emergencies* Ian Lince (Cleveland Police) gave the emergency evacuation procedure and the location of toilets
- Apologies* None
- Welcome* KB welcomed everyone, particularly those who had not attended any of the previous regional meetings.
- Chairman's remarks* 'Welcome to our ninth regional meeting, especially to those who are new to the meeting. Don't hesitate to ask questions or speak to any of the delegates, we want you to feel welcome. Fortunately, we have not had the trauma on today's journey which caused such huge problems last year.
- The first of these meetings was in 1999 but we didn't hold a meeting in 2002 as I was convalescing. These meetings were introduced to replace annual conferences at HQ and it was I think the right decision because with a smaller number of participants the Groups involved have a better chance to make their views known. The down side is that the individuals in each region never meet their colleagues in other regions.
- May I ask that before coming to this meeting each year the Group delegates and their committees read again the reports of the previous meetings as these usually contain useful information which may not be repeated.
- I shall repeat my comments on the two C's. Commitment clearly is necessary because almost all the workers for the organisation are volunteers and without them the organisation would be a pale shadow of its usual self. The one which concerns me most is Communication. This I think is where the whole system can fall down. I have said many times and I make no apology for repeating it: if you have questions or problems, contact me first as the GAP member. Being involved in the region I am more likely to have local knowledge than HQ. If I don't know the answer to a query I can find out though most questions I can answer promptly. It is irksome to hear nothing from a Group from one meeting to the next a year later and then find that they have several areas of dissatisfaction which have been annoying them in previous months. If I hear nothing from a Group I feel entitled to assume that all is well with that Group.
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The second point of repetition is to remind you that all changes of Group chairmen and secretaries and their details of addresses, phone numbers and email addresses should be sent to me directly as well as to HQ. I keep this basic information up to date on behalf of RoADAR and the Chief Examiner and so need to know about changes. Much of this is kept confidential on behalf of the people concerned. An important additional point about confidentiality is that when people want to send a message to a number of other people they should not use CC on their computer but the BCC facility. Most people do not want their email addresses in a block in the public domain where they are too easily picked up by spammers.

I hope you will give a warm welcome again to Bob Smalley, who is known to most of you as the Chief Examiner, and also to Emma Middleton, the RoADAR Development Officer. I am also pleased to welcome Simon Protano, Head of Road and Fleet Solutions at HQ to his first Regional Meeting in the north.

We were very sorry to learn of Barrie Barnett's death last year. He had not been in the post of RSE very long but had gained the respect of all who knew him as a person of integrity with a friendly and helpful personality. He will be missed. His successor as RSE is Jim Muter, a well known figure in police and Group affairs in the north whom we had hoped to welcome here today.

Moving to general matters: the Group Guidelines are newly revised and rewritten and are almost ready to be posted on their website. They include current details of the new tutor qualification schemes for car and motorcycle tutors. These have been discussed and rewritten several times to make them clearer and easier to follow. I believe they are now as clear as we can make them. The fact that of recent months we have had very few queries suggests that they are now understood and accepted by the Groups. A simplified summary of the new insurance arrangements negotiated for the RoADAR with RoSPA's insurers is also in the Guidelines. You will all be aware of the newly raised problem of insurance for demonstration drives, having had the official letter from HQ on this. Personally, I think it an unnecessary waste of everyone's time. But as the question has been raised the insurance companies have to deal with it.

The website is now run from HQ. However, if you wish to continue to send any changes to me I am entirely happy to deal with them and I shall see that they are put in place. Bear in mind that Groups must submit all new websites and significant changes in websites to HQ for approval. The RoSPA web expert, Kevin Knowles, does a great job and is very helpful in making adjustments to the website.

Also we have had a plethora of new books over recent months and weeks: *Know Your Traffic Signs*, *The Highway Code*, *Roadcraft*. Let us know what you think of these – plenty of bedtime reading. Note that there is an alternative publication of *The Highway Code*. It is green and considerably cheaper than the TSO version – identical and produced under licence. I think it is photocopied. You may find it more economical if you buy it in large numbers for your Group. The *Roadcraft* VCR is now sold as a DVD. My own VCR on commentary driving is now available as a DVD. A new entrant is a DVD made by Chris Gilbert about commentary driving (*Ultimate Driving Craft*). This a professional looking production and may be useful to Groups, initial price £19.95.

Remember that no forms of the RoADAR logo are permitted other than those sent to Groups from HQ. Also the logo must be used only on official documents as it is legally the property of RoSPA.

You will know from the survey forms that HQ must have records of the main Group officials and of the Group Tutors. This important for insurance purposes.

Thanks to Emma's efforts in obtaining sponsorship we have new publicity leaflets and posters from RoSPA and visiting card size publicity cards which fit easily into a match pocket or purse. We also have the new Associate Membership scheme and new test application forms. I wonder how well received these have been. Please throw away or recycle all your old forms and please don't use them for test applications.

I have brought an updated list of websites and email addresses. Please take one. Newsletter editors can find much useful material in some of the websites.

Today we shall have our usual Discussion Groups. Let me again emphasise that the members of the Discussion Groups are entirely free to discuss any topic which they wish. The sheet of suggestions is simply that – suggestions.

I was re-reading the advanced driving manual written for the Lancashire Constabulary about 60 years ago – and again I was struck by the wisdom contained in that, much of which turned up years later in *Roadcraft* when that became available for the public. I'd like to share with you its comments on concentration, a subject with which it begins and ends:

Concentration is the most important point in driving and is the very essence of skill and safety. Without it there can be no ultimate skill, no courtesy to other travellers and no security for man or machine. Each corner is a problem, every gear change a test; crossroads and children are potential dangers, greasy surfaces are examinations in driving skill. None of these problems, tests or dangers can be solved, passed over or avoided without concentration.

Thank you for your attention. Have a good meeting.

*Headquarters update* This was given by Simon Protano and Emma Middleton. SP explained his role in RoSPA and ensured that every delegate had received a smart complimentary key ring with the logo inscribed. He paid tribute to Emma for her work during the two years she had been in post. He was conscious that in the past RoSPA had given little help to the Groups. His intention was to be very proactive and give support which had hitherto been missing. He asked delegates not to hesitate to approach him with any questions or requests or suggestions.

Emma then addressed the meeting. She referred to the new material which had been produced and invited everyone to take what they wished from the table. She then spoke at length about the new RoSPA Associate membership. It had been hoped that it would appeal to companies who wished to become involved. When they applied to HQ they were given a pack explaining what was available to them. If they wished, they could join a Group as a Group member and then undergo training for the test. Overall it is a method of getting RoADAR further into the public arena. SP added that this was intended to encourage those who had undergone fleet training to join Groups. There is no intention that companies should be approaching Groups. Peter Webster suggested a grey area where they expected to come free and get perhaps 20 hours training. EM said that they will pay for the Group membership and the test so everyone wins. The main winner is road safety. RoSPA encourages people to continue after their fleet training perhaps including families and friends too. Road safety is also enhanced as CoTR goes into their homes as well.

A further comment from the floor suggested dropping the circulation to put out CoTR less frequently, people would be less inclined to ignore it. SP said that cost was the main problem. He said that 200 fleet Associate members contributed the salary for a new staff member. Norman Stitt gave the example of a member of the public who, having joined as an Associate, did not expect to have to pay a Group subscription. SP quoted the IAM life package. He asked for a show of hands on the question. 'Do you want us to have one price?' and there was no response. A new member asked. what Groups charged: £10 – 20 average. SP said that the Groups had different costs. The question of a standard subscription needed much thought. Most people did not want this. A member from Hull said the IAM life pack had caused problems.

EM continued with her remarks describing new outdoor equipment. They had lost an outdoor display in the wind last year. She hoped new ones would be available before long. She was still struggling to get discounted insurance. She had arranged a discounted membership for a golf club. There was now a good collection of flyers, posters, keyrings, notepads, pens to fill a 'goodie bag'. This was well received by the delegates. EM felt that, 'We are getting there regarding outside events.'

SP announced that Emma would shortly be leaving RoADAR and asked for a round of applause for the work she had done during her time as Group Development Officer (applause).

*Discussion Groups* Sheets of possible discussion topics were given to everyone but KB again emphasised that groups were entirely free to discuss any subject which they wished. Each group was asked to appoint a person to take notes for the plenary session. There were four groups.

### Group 1

Groups gave various discounts and had varying subscription. Some had difficulty was retaining ADIs. Usually their method of teaching their pupils after their test would change and improve the quality of their teaching and of their pupils, so their membership was a good thing. The RoSPA grading was very successful and it was hoped would remain. They had discussed briefly an elitist award, but the group felt that new members would be put off by this. Danger may exist of an elitist grade thinking itself perfect. People who wanted to avoid the test should be accepted. Their driving was improved by even a short course. Insurance was discussed and RoSPA had tried to offer help. CG's DVD had been used by only one person. The idea of turning off sound and getting pupils to look ahead was mooted. It can be useful. New books: RC well received, HC more info in it and it was commended. Finally increased closeness to HQ and how it has affected Groups was mentioned. In the past emails, letters, phone calls were often not answered. The Future looks brighter.

### Group 2

Discussed costs and the organisation of Groups, especially for a new Group.

### Group 3

Centred on associate membership. The Group believed that the name was unfortunate, Affiliate would have been better to distinguish it. EM said the wording could be changed. The general feeling was that it would be better. Also it might be useful in other material. It should be mentioned on information about Groups. Suggested use 'subscription' not 'fee'. Current package for associates contains what? Could it not be given also to those who have passed the test – branding & marketing. Are these associate memberships available only from HQ or can they be purchased through Groups. EM said there is an option for Groups to sell it on for, say, £10. Reason was associate members felt left out and didn't see what they were getting apart from training. Also the group discussed people who did not want a test. Thought was expressed about standardising. At present what is on offer is very wide. Encourage ADIs to do the test and give something back to the Group. ADIs wished to use the RoSPA logo. They can say they took test, but doubt whether can use logo [there was some difference of interpretation here from the HQ officials] .

### Group 4

Chose not to use the given questions so instead set up a scheme of membership. Associates at present are a confused mess. So they suggested a national skills type package. Pay money, get that, no confusion, anywhere in the country. Plain & simple. It has the advantage that a pack can be defined and is same everywhere, can use national advertising. This makes it easier for Groups, then if it comes with national advertising, Groups know where they stand. Cost would be only a tank of fuel. Paying £10 not much. Paying £60-80, RoSPA could charge £50 and the Group gets £10. The income could go to a new employee's salary. SP said many Groups are charities in their own right as is RoADAR. It does not pay high salaries. As a prerequisite it would be necessary for the person appointed to manage manpower in the regions. So liaison between HQ and Groups' resources was important. They believed that this would be good for RoADAR and the Groups.

KB thanked all groups for their contributions

*The Chief Examiner* Bob said that he still continued to get some complaints about tests, both procedure and results. With a finely defined system like ours it is not surprising that we get complaints. With the appointment of a national Senior Motorcycle Examiner we are at an advanced stage of producing a new manual for MC examiners, diploma retests and advanced tutor tests. He said there had been misunderstandings both by Groups and examiners. He believed that publication of the relevant information on the website should reduce problems.

He compared people taking the car test with those taking the motorcycle test. He said that while the latter seemed prepared to travel large distances for a test, the former expected to have their test in their home locality. This shows up variations in procedure.

We are going to do the same for cars, intending to revise the manual and bring the comments into line with new RC. KB has updated advanced theory tests and diplomas in line with new and HC & RC. It will be necessary for members to acquaint themselves with the new editions when preparing for retests.

Also we are trying to encourage more examiners' meetings. Examiners are still volunteers. There may be differences between local interpretations by examiners where the local PDC is in conflict with RoSPA. These differences can be solved by dialogue. We encourage examiners to have communication & dialogue with Groups even if they are not members. This can be done without compromising impartiality.

He was sorry that Jim Muter hasn't come to the meeting. But he believed that Jim will be a good replacement for Barrie.

Finally Bob asked for information and feedback if there are delays in tests or other problems.

#### *Other matters*

The floor was open for general questions from the delegates. The logo question came up again. SP emphasised again that use of the logo was jealously guarded by RoSPA.

The danger of commercial issues getting involved in Groups. Someone asked why cannot RoADAR put personal enquirers directly in touch with their local Group. RoADAR wants people to join Groups so give them information about Groups. They are not encouraging people to take Associate membership and join the local Group. That is not what it's about. It was just aimed at people interested in road safety and then getting them into the organisations. The person shortly to be appointed will be pointing them to local Groups which may get more members. It was reiterated that someone who has paid an amount of money to the national organisation should not have to pay another.

SP said that he benefited from listening but he was getting mixed messages. He said that last year RoSPA's turnover was £8M but the surplus was £200k, and it is forecast that at the end of the current financial year the surplus would be only £60k. But RoSPA tries to plough back into RoADAR a substantial amount.

There was a comment about Examiners and their connection with tutoring. An examiner may offer to tutor. BS said no difficulty. He must not be involved in testing but quoted the chairman of a Group who is an examiner, but doesn't involve himself in the test though he has pupils. If they have gift of being a trainer and are willing, they should go ahead.

Finally KB asked for views from the region on Peter Webster's suggestion of a national package. One or two thought it good. EM had some enquirers who wanted a package. The question of how to price it was discussed. The feeling was in the long run it would save money. Look at costs and what competitors are charging (£90 IAM). Concern will be handing control of local Groups to the national organisation. Pros and cons were discussed. Bob spoke about the IAM who lost members as a result of this policy.. RoADA gained several Groups who left IAM. Another difference is that we get many members from the IAM who have had much training and they would not buy a package from us. We should lose those who want to do what we do. Having a package as an option, with someone in charge of it might work. That person should learn availability of Groups. But to copy the IAM without breadth of cover would be mistake. Discussion followed about different options and SP agreed to look into the various things discussed.

KB pointed out that every Group in the region is represented today. He asked, 'Has any Group got problems or grumbles? If so he would like to know about them?' There arose a question of the chance of standardised training. BS said we collate best practice and Groups need to look at other Groups' methods. There are no plans to produce a scheme. We did not want to interfere with what is going on already. Much discussion took place when the new schemes were being set out, but the results of Groups are shown by the examiners' results. Most Groups put forward candidates in expectation of a minimum grade of silver. Groups just do not produce duff candidates. The RSEs look at the awards examiners are making as useful guides to grades. It is difficult to come up

with a scheme that is suitable for all groups but all are reaching a minimum standard which is high enough to get silver on initial test.

KB explained in answer to another question how approved tutors are trained and checked; this was endorsed by Harry Moir as being very similar to North East Group methods.

A question was asked about training days. Training days of the earlier kind were now stopped and had been replaced by the advanced tutor system. We now certificate tutors. They qualify in a much better way than the ad hoc previous methods. Your RSE will give a talk to your tutors. Bob will do same. It is a good system.

Davie Whyte raised a question about rebates on test fees. KB said it depends how it's run. Ask the candidate to send the form to the training officer who writes a Group cheque for £3 less than that received by the Group. KB said that it does happen and works well. He also said it depends on another criterion: 'Do you want the candidate to benefit or the Group?'

SP asked about the test fee. Is the amount acceptable? Answering a query about different costs for cars and bikes, SP said that examiners are paid more for bike tests because they use their own machines.

The next question was about the possibility of completing the test application but not renewing the RoSPA subscription for two years, then paying for a new test. This was deemed a bad idea because if the person does not maintain national membership they don't get all the benefits such as insurance.

*Close*

KB commented that at last we had a satisfied GAP region and closed the meeting at 14.20 h with thanks personally and on behalf of all the delegates to Mike Elder for making the arrangements for the meeting and arranging for our excellent lunch. His work in this respect was greatly appreciated (applause).

KB hoped that everyone had found something of interest in the day, thanked them for attending and wished the delegates a safe journey home.

**Keith Bamford**  
**GAP northeast**