THE CHAIRMAN’S REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
DECEMBER 2016

President
The Rt. Hon Viscount Simon

Chairman
Miss M E Emms

Chief Executive
Mrs P Williams

Treasurer
Mrs S Poulton

Executive Council
Mrs V Brindley
Mrs L Ward
Mr M Cooke
Mr N Worth
Mr D Swain
Mr D Williams MBE

Independent Charity Trustee
Mr C Clarke
Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this, the Annual General Meeting of 2017, and to present the reports and accounts for the year ended 31st December 2016.

I am delighted to report that from a trading point of view 2016 has been successful for GEM and once again the small number of dedicated staff have worked extremely hard to maintain and develop our ‘club’ in what continues to be a very competitive market place.

I would like to record my personal thanks, together with those of the Executive Council, to new CEO Paula Williams and all the GEM team for their efficiency and dedication in continuing to promote and develop an organisation in which I and all members can be immensely proud.

Recommended by Others

The 2016 Auto Express Driver Power survey resulted in us being beaten to top spot by a very small margin of only 0.16%. We were delighted, however, to have come first in two of the categories, ‘Overall Experience’ and ‘Value For Money’, which is an outstanding achievement.

In addition, during 2016 we maintained a 5 Star Rating by ‘defaqto’ which together with the Auto Express award clearly shows that, not only are our members delighted with the overall service we provide, but that independent assessors have confirmed we offer a first class product.

It goes without saying that we will continue to place the needs of our members as a first priority in the months and years ahead.

Membership

I stated in my introduction that 2016 had been a successful year. Our recruitment of new members has again been a major part of this success and despite very modest marketing funds we managed to welcome 15,089 new individuals from 9,191 memberships during 2016. These encouraging figures are very similar to 2015 results and we hope that this trend will continue in 2017 and beyond.

Competition in the field of breakdown recovery continues, and therefore, in order to maintain a strong position in the market place we are forced to offer introductory discounts in order to attract new business. It is good to report that this has not affected our retention rate of existing member’s which remains at a consistent level, again proving that once motorists experience our services they tend to stay. We can boast over 5,500 members who have supported us for more than 25 years, a truly remarkable record of loyalty.

We are very grateful to the large number of GEM members who take time to recommend our services to friends and family. This word of mouth recommendation is vital to our success and I hope such activity can be doubled in the year ahead.
I am delighted to report that our new Road Safety Officer Neil Worth has settled in to his new task well, and has helped GEM to continue to work tirelessly in the promotion of road safety to our members and the wider community across the country. In 2015, the last year for which figures are available, a tragic 1,730 people died on our roads and a further 22,144 people were seriously injured. Although this is a reduction on the figures for 2014, it still equates to an average of five people dying and sixty people being seriously injured every day.

Throughout the year we responded to a number of Government consultations relating to road safety. The most notable of these was the proposals to change the driving test to reflect real world driving conditions that motorists face. We also responded positively to the proposal to allow learner drivers to have lessons on motorways, provided that they are being appropriately trained by an approved driving instructor. We felt that with the introduction of Smart Motorways across England and the general lack of understanding about motorway rules that standards can be improved if people are properly taught how to use motorways safely and effectively.

On the 21st September we saw the first ever Project EDWARD (European Day Without a Road Death) organised by TISPOL the European Traffic Police Network and supported through a financial donation by the GEM Road Safety Charity. The aim of the day was simple - to have a single day across the continent free from road fatalities. To achieve such a target across thirty countries was always going to be difficult but in terms of raising awareness of road safety matters it has been deemed to be a runaway success. The event had a unique social media reach of over 19 million views on the day. The GEM Road Safety Charity contributed funds that allowed for the creation of ten short videos which were translated into twelve languages.

GEM has always advocated compulsory eyesight testing for drivers at regular intervals and as a result we worked with Vision Express to raise the profile of the issue during Road Safety week in November. This saw our President, Viscount Simon, raise questions in the House of Lords relating to compulsory eye-sight testing for all drivers and we also wrote directly to the Secretary of State highlighting the need to introduce regular eye tests as part of the licencing regime. We are planning to continue our work with Vision Express over the coming months to develop a wider campaign with the support of PACTS.

The GEM Road Safety Charity was able to make financial donations to the following schemes in 2016:

- Wessex Driveability’s production of a short video on the role of a mobility assessment centre for older drivers.
- Tispol’s Project EDWARD

We are keen to do more for the cause of road safety and are extremely grateful for the generous donations that we receive from members. Such donations are given in full, directly to the trustees, to be spent on road safety projects. If you feel you can assist by making even a small donation please visit our ‘My Donate’ page at www.mydonate.bt.com/charities/gemroadsafetycharity or by filling in the form that appears in every edition of Good Motoring.
Keeping in Touch with Members

Our much respected members’ magazine Good Motoring continues to provide high quality, interesting and topical articles. Editor James Luckhurst deserves much credit for this, with his unending enthusiasm for securing special features, member offers and arranging member events.

We know from feedback that our quarterly e-newsletters are well received and we do appreciate those members taking the time to complete the e-mailed surveys. 1,100 members responded to the latest survey on a selection of motoring issues, the results of which featured in the recent edition of Good Motoring.

Social media still plays a major part of communication to both young and old and we regularly use Facebook, Twitter and Blogs to pass on information from GEM to members, interested groups and individuals.

Finances

Our annual accounts, available today, show a small surplus and a stable financial situation for the organisation. I pay tribute to our Treasurer, Sue Poulton, for her expertise in guiding our financial matters in an exemplary way.

Copies of the accounts, apart from being available at this meeting, can be obtained, free of charge, by sending a stamped addressed A4 envelope marked ‘Accounts’ to our offices in Forest Row.

And Finally

I must again thank all my colleagues on the Executive Council for providing such excellent support to me, and the organisation as a whole, during the past year. I would also like to place on record sincere thanks to Mr Don Mowl who retired from the Council after providing an outstanding contribution to GEM for over 18 years.

Our President, Viscount Simon, despite a busy year in the House of Lords, continues to provide invaluable help and support to GEM in so many ways.

I would also like to acknowledge the passing of our Honorary Vice President Sir Anthony Grant last October. He gave outstanding support to GEM over very many years and will be sadly missed.

As one of the few remaining independent motoring organisations in the UK, GEM continues to provide an outstanding and award winning level of service to its members while also making a significant contribution to safety on our roads.

I hope you will join me in wishing GEM Motoring Assist many more successful years.

Maureen Emms
Chairman, GEM Motoring Assist