



**THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
DECEMBER 2018**

**President
Vacant**

**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 2019, and to present the reports and accounts for the year ended 31st December 2018.

I am delighted to report that 2018 has been the most successful recruitment year since 2015 and we have achieved an exceptional retention rate of 78%.

I would like to record my personal thanks, together with the Executive Council to CEO Paula Williams, our treasurer Sue Poulton and all the GEM staff who have worked extremely hard to maintain and develop our 'club' in what continues to be a very competitive market place.

Award winning breakdown cover

A significant part of our success was the outstanding achievement of becoming a **Which? 'Recommended Provider'** in May 2018, their highest ranking. We came first in their survey of breakdown recovery providers beating a number of well-known providers including the AA, RAC and Green Flag.

We also retained our top position in the Auto Express Driver Power Survey, once again, becoming their 'Gold Winner'. We have now achieved this wonderful accolade seven times in the last ten years. (we were runners up in the other three years).

In addition, we maintained the 5 Star Rating by 'defaqto', the independent researcher of financial products showing that we continue to provide policies with the highest quality offerings in the market.

These prestigious awards are evidence that not only are our members delighted with the overall service we provide, but that independent assessors have confirmed we conduct our business in a first-class manner.

Membership

Just over 9,800 memberships were taken up during the year resulting in 15,587 new individuals. As mentioned earlier the best recruitment figures in the last three years.

GEM continues to maintain its high visibility on the internet with over 85% of new members joining online. Membership documents are all available by logging in to the secure members area on the GEM website, our commitment to helping reduce unnecessary paper waste.

We have not yet found a replacement for motor legal expense insurance and are awaiting further information on the proposed reforms to crack down on whiplash claims which have now been delayed until at least April 2020. These could lead to an increase in premiums which may be prohibitive in GEM being able to provide this benefit free of charge to members.

GDPR

The General Data Protection Regulation came into force on 25th May 2018. GEM reviewed its policies, updated those where necessary and we are confident that all data is processed lawfully, transparently and for a specific purpose.

Road Safety

We continued to promote road safety for all road users and particularly welcomed the Government's introduction of a new two-year road safety action plan linked to its Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. This strategy looks at everything from the design of infrastructure for cycling and walking through to changes in the Highway Code aimed at protecting the most vulnerable road users. Whilst the Government has not re-introduced road safety targets, something we strongly disagree with, the action plan does highlight their commitment to reducing the number of people killed or injured on our roads.

Unfortunately, the figures for reported road casualties in 2017 showed no reduction in the number of people killed when compared with 2016. Sadly, there were 1,793 fatalities which equates to an average of five people dying on our roads every day. Year on year reductions in the total number of road casualties also appears to have stalled.

We raised the issue of the Government not setting targets at the National Road Safety Conference in November and the panel of road safety experts and academics all agreed that revised targets would help focus activity across the country. We also raised our concern about the ongoing reduction in Roads Policing across the country, asking whether the cuts in this area should be stopped. There was complete agreement from the panel, which included the Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex.

The state of driver's eyesight has long been a concern for our organisation and throughout the year we worked with Essilor UK to promote the Driving Blind campaign. The campaign aims to educate the public about the need for regular eye tests from a health and road safety perspective. Our President, Viscount Simon, graciously hosted a meeting of road safety professionals including representatives from RoSPA, Road Safety GB and the London Road Safety Council to discuss these issues with a view to increasing public awareness and, in the longer term, introducing mandatory eye tests for all drivers. This work remains ongoing.

For the third successive year we were pleased to support Project EDWARD (European Day Without a Road Death) which took place in September. We were especially pleased to join the team from TISPOL when they received the very prestigious Prince Michael International Road Safety Award for Project EDWARD. We look forward to continuing our support for this initiative in the years to come.

GEM, as a member of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS), was delighted that the Government has asked PACTS to run a competition to encourage the development of mobile evidential breath testing instruments. The introduction of these devices will enable evidential breath samples to be taken at the roadside and therefore remove the need to convey a drink drive suspect to a police station, saving time, money and delay. This is something that has long been championed by Viscount Simon and we look forward to reporting on the results of the competition.

Throughout the year we have revised and refreshed our road safety leaflets and resources, introducing for the first time a leaflet specifically relating to driver's eyesight. All of our resources are provided free of charge and are available to order through our website.

The trustees of the Road Safety Charity have agreed to make a donation towards a fully revised Blue Light Aware resource. This project is being developed and planned to launch in late 2019.

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 used towards road safety projects. If you would like to donate then please fill in the form that appears in every edition of Good Motoring.

Keeping in Touch with Members

Our quarterly magazine 'Good Motoring' continues to play an important role in communicating with our members. We appreciate all the letters and emails to our editor James Luckhurst giving us valuable feedback. The new compostable wrapper has been well received and sees GEM taking its responsibilities seriously in reducing plastic waste. I would like to take this opportunity to thank James for his tireless efforts in creating a magazine with interesting and informative features, articles, car reviews and competitions. The competitions in particular generate a large response.

GEM continues to have a presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with these platforms primarily being used to promote road safety messages to members and non-members alike.

As part of GDPR compliance we emailed members to confirm their preferences for receiving the quarterly e-newsletter and ad-hoc marketing emails. We were delighted with the response. Our open and click through rates rank above the bench marks set for our industry showing that the content is well received.

Finances

Our annual accounts, available today, show a small deficit. This can be mainly attributed to the decrease in the fair value of investments against previous year's market value, understandable in a year still affected by the uncertainty of Brexit.

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.

Executive Council

I am extremely grateful to my colleagues on the Executive Council who give up an enormous amount of personal time to help ensure our club is successful. Their help and guidance is greatly appreciated.

And Finally

On a sad note, I have to report that Viscount Simon has taken the decision to step down as our President, a role that he has held so admirably since May 2004. We will always be indebted to Viscount Simon for his tireless efforts in raising the profile of GEM amongst road safety policymakers and making sure our voice was heard. His outstanding contribution to GEM over these past 18 years, having first joined us as a trustee of the GEM Road Safety Charity cannot be praised enough. On behalf of myself, the Executive Council, all the staff at GEM and the GEM members I would like to pass on our sincere thanks and wish Viscount Simon all the best for the future.

Maureen Emms
Chairman, GEM Motoring Assist