



THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Financial year 2019/2020

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President

- Vacant

Vice Presidents

- Rt Hon. The Viscount Simon
- Mr M Cooke
- Mrs P Williams

Chairman

- Miss M E Emms

Chief Executive

- Mr N D Worth MCIHT

Executive Council

- Mrs L Baker
- Mrs V Brindley
- Mrs L Ward
- Mr D Swain
- Mr L Puffett
- Mr A Stevens
- Mr G Stevens

Independent Charity Trustee

- Vacant

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this, the Annual General Meeting of 2020, and to present the reports and accounts for the financial year ended 30th April 2020. Due to circumstances beyond our control, we are holding this meeting online for the first (and hopefully last) time in our 88-year history. In 2019 the decision was taken to amend our financial year and as a result this meeting will cover the 18-month period from 1 January 2019 to 30 April 2020.

It is fair to say that nobody could have foreseen that this year would have turned out the way it has with the emergence of Covid-19 and the worldwide pandemic it has caused. The way in which we live and work has been changed significantly and I would like to pay tribute to the team at GEM for adapting to the ever changing situation, whilst still providing our members with the best possible service.

I would also like to pay tribute to Mrs Paula Williams who retired as Chief Executive earlier this year after over 40 years with GEM. I am delighted to say that Paula has accepted the position of Vice President of the organisation. I would also like to pay tribute to our long-standing Treasurer Mrs Sue Poulton who has also recently retired. Both Sue and Paula have worked tirelessly to make GEM the organisation that it is today and, on behalf of the Executive Council, I wish them both a long and happy retirement. Stepping into the role of Chief Executive is our Road Safety Officer, Neil Worth. I know that colleagues will join me in offering congratulations to Neil on his appointment and we look forward to many years working together.

Award winning breakdown cover

2019 saw us retain our top position in the Auto Express Driver Power Survey, once again, becoming their 'Gold Winner'. We have won this award nine times in eleven years, (we were runners up in the other three years).

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

Despite the challenges at the beginning of 2020, just under 9,250 memberships were taken up during the year. We also maintained a retention rate of 77% which is testament to how our members view our club.

We are currently developing a new website that will enhance our already high visibility on the internet. The new site will include a revised members' area that will allow members to log in, access their documents and potentially make changes to their policies. Coupled with the new website is a new customer management system to replace our current system. It is anticipated that both of these projects will be completed in early 2021.

Road Safety

Road safety remains at the heart of everything we do and we continue to promote it for all road users. Unfortunately, the reported road casualty figures for 2019 showed no real reduction in the number of people killed when compared to previous years. In 2019 1,752 people died on roads in Great Britain with a further 25,945 people were seriously injured. It is a real concern that there has been no significant reduction in the number of people dying as a result of collisions since 2010.

Following extensive consultation, we undertook to revise Blue Light Aware, our resource that aims to help educate drivers on how to help emergency vehicles. Working with Highways England we have produced a brand-new resource that includes a full five-minute instructional video as well as ten short 30 second videos. Using live footage as well as animation to reinforce learning, the resource looks at the most common issues faced by emergency drivers and now includes specific sections on smart motorways. All of the content is hosted on a specific website: www.bluelightaware.org.uk and are available in English and Welsh.

We welcomed the publication of the Government's Road Safety Statement 2019: A Lifetime of Road Safety that made various commitments relating to safer roads. We were pleased to see that roadside evidential breath testing was included within the statement, something that our former President Viscount Simon introduced into law in 2005. We were also encouraged to learn that the Government would be examining Graduated Driver Licensing, using its introduction into Northern Ireland as a pilot for the rest of the country. Evidence from around the world suggests that the introduction of GDL will significantly reduce the number of young people killed or seriously injured on the roads. We look forward to the outcome of this study. The Statement also included a commitment to look at the issue of driver's eyesight, with the potential to require the over 70s to provide evidence of a test at the point of licence renewal. We look forward to the outcome of the government's enquiries in this area.

The issue of smart motorways and the removal of hard shoulders in favour of emergency areas continued to concern members. We therefore welcomed the decision by the Secretary of State to halt the roll out of all new smart motorways until a full safety review had been conducted. During the course of this review, we were consulted by Highways England for our view and were pleased to be able to feedback our concerns. Although the stocktake made clear that smart motorways in England are here to stay, it did set in train a number of improvements that will help to make the network safer. We will not hesitate to hold the government to account if they do not meet their commitments.

We were pleased to be part of a Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) project group looking at the relationship between roads policing and road safety. Made possible thanks to a grant from the GEM Road Safety Charity, the project undertook to establish a link between the reduction in dedicated roads policing officers since 2010 and the stagnation in casualty reduction over the same period. This project culminated in a report that made a number of recommendations that have subsequently provided to the Department for Transport and National Police Chiefs Council.

For the fourth 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 see the Editor of Good Motoring, Mr James Luckhurst receive a prestigious President's Award from TISPOL for all of his hard work and dedication to the initiative.

Through our membership of bodies such as PACTS and Road Safety GB we continue to work with others to help reduce the risks people face on the roads. We were pleased to be invited to become a strategic partner of the Driving for Better Business programme and welcome the opportunity to work with that organisation to further our shared aims of reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads.

Road Safety Charity

In 2019 the trustees of the GEM Road Safety Charity were pleased to be able to provide grant funding for a number of projects, including the revision of Blue Light Aware and the PACTS Roads Policing Project already detailed. In addition, they provided funding to The Honest Truth, a programme delivered to young drivers by driving instructors. With the grant they have produced a number of revised resources designed to change behaviour of young drivers.

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. You can also donate to the charity each time you shop online using Amazon Smile or Easy Fundraising.

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. In addition to the compostable wrapper introduced in 2018, we have moved to a new printer and the magazine is now produced using FSC certified paper using 100% renewable energy. We believe that this demonstrates our commitment to reduce our impact on the environment.

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.

Our quarterly e-newsletters, containing a mix of road safety and motoring advice, are well received by members.

Finances

Despite the uncertain times I am happy to report that our annual accounts show a small profit for the year. You will agree that this is good news for the association.

Copies of the accounts can be obtained, free of charge, by sending a stamped addressed A4 envelope marked 'Accounts' to our offices in Forest Row.

Executive Council

Once again, this year 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. I would like to welcome the new members of the Executive Council and look forward to a long and happy working relationship with them.

And Finally

On a sad note, I have to report that earlier this year Mr Colin Clarke took the decision to step down as the Independent Charity Trustee of the GEM Road Safety Charity. I want to express my sincere thanks to Colin for all of his hard work and invaluable advice to the Charity. He will be missed and we wish him well for the future.

It is also with regret that have to announce the retirement today of a long-standing friend and colleague, Mr David Swain. David joined the Executive Council in 2005 and his contribution to both GEM and the GEM Road Safety Charity over the past 15 years has been immeasurable. We will sorely miss his sage advice and on behalf of myself, the Executive Council, all the staff and members of GEM I would like to pass on our sincere thanks and him all the best for the future.

Maureen Emms

Chairman, GEM Motoring Assist



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