



# THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

for the Financial Year 2020/2021

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## President

- Vacant

## Vice Presidents

- 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
- Mr B Johnson
- Mr D Swain
- Mr L Puffett
- Mr A Stevens
- Mr G Stevens
- Mrs L Ward

## Independent Charity Trustee

- Mrs Emma Tugwell-Smith

## Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this, the Annual General Meeting of 2021, and to present the reports and accounts for the financial year ended 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021. I am delighted that we can meet in person this year in the sincere hope that the worst of the global pandemic is now behind us. As I did in last year's report, I would again like to pay tribute to the whole team at GEM for adapting to the situation caused by Covid-19, working from home at short notice, but still providing excellent service to our members.

I must pay tribute to HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh who passed away earlier this year. Prince Philip had been a member of GEM for over 60 years, serving as President between 1959 and 1965. He took particular interest in the association and we know from correspondence that he continued to enjoy Good Motoring, often commenting on items that he took a particular interest in. I am pleased to say that GEM has made a donation to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Living Legacy Fund in his memory.

It is with very great sadness that I have to report the death of our immediate past President Viscount Jan Simon. Jan was appointed figure head of the organisation in 2004 and immediately set about making an outstanding contribution to our road safety work. Despite his busy schedule as Deputy Speaker in the House of Lords, Jan always found time to consult and advise on safety issues and was a regular attender at Council of Management meetings. On such occasions he would also spend time chatting to all the GEM staff to ensure all was well. It was this 'down to earth', honest, approach to all that he did that made him such a popular figure with all the people and organisations he dealt with.

Jan was co-chairman of PACTS (Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety) and both initiated and supported many items of legislation relating to safety on our roads. He was also a great supporter of roads policing, accompanying Metropolitan Police Traffic officers on active duty. Both the Met and the Police Federation recognised his outstanding support for their work with special awards. His honorary Police Warrant card was one of his proudest possessions.

Jan's dedication to road safety will be greatly missed and for our organisation he will be a very hard act to follow. We have sent our condolences to his daughter, Fiona.

## Award winning breakdown cover

In 2020 we were again recognised as one of the top breakdown recovery providers in the country, coming third in the Auto Express Driver Power Survey. This is the twelfth year we have been in the top three (having come first nine times).

Again this year we have maintained our 5 Star Defaqto Rating. This independent research of financial products demonstrates 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

In what has been a very challenging and uncertain period due to Covid-19 and the restrictions introduced as a result, we recruited just over 6,571 new members in 2020/21. We also maintained a retention rate of 77% which is testament to how our members view our club.

Our new website and customer management system are due to go live imminently. These integrated systems will greatly enhance our internet presence whilst also improving the experience of our existing members who will be able to make changes to their policies online.

We have also launched a new smartphone app that allows members to report a breakdown directly, removing the need to telephone the control centre. This service is much quicker than the more traditional telephone call and is already being used by members from across the country.

## Road Safety

Road safety remains at the heart of everything we do and we continue to promote it for all road users. 2020 saw a dramatic reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads when compared to the previous year. Unfortunately, these reductions are a result of the lockdowns imposed in response to the pandemic and are not a sustained reduction. 1,472 people died on the roads of Great Britain with a further 22,014 people seriously injured.

I am pleased to say that our revised Blue Light Aware resource that aims to help educate drivers on how to help emergency vehicles, was awarded Highly Commended status at the 2021 Intelligent Instructor Awards. We were also

nominated or a Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation Road Safety Award. This is a great achievement and my thanks go to the whole team behind the revised resource. You can find the resource, including all of the excellent videos on the Blue Light Aware website: [www.bluelightaware.org.uk](http://www.bluelightaware.org.uk).

We welcomed Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services report entitled Roads Policing: Not Optional. This followed the inspection of a number of police forces across England and Wales where their approach to roads policing was examined. Spending on roads policing has been cut by 34% resulting in fewer officers on the road. The report contains thirteen recommendations for improvement for both policing forces and Government. Hopefully the recommendations will be acted upon and we will see more dedicated roads policing officers back on our roads in the coming years.

Following the theme of moving things online, GEM produced several road safety video podcasts during 2020, including a seminar looking at distracted driving. As part of our contribution to Project EDWARD (Every Day Without a Road Death), we hosted a further webinar for older drivers, presented by long time GEM member Valerie Singleton OBE.

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.

## Road Safety Charity

In 2020 the trustees of the GEM Road Safety Charity were pleased to be able to provide grant funding for a number of projects, including a cycle training scheme and behavioural science project. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, a number the projects funded were unable to proceed and have therefore been rolled forward to 2021.

The Trustees are keen to do more for the cause of road safety and are extremely grateful for the generous donations 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

Good Motoring, our quarterly magazine that has been published continuously since 1935, remains a vital link in communicating with our members. We appreciate all the letters and emails to our editor James Luckhurst giving us valuable feedback. Members will have noticed that we have recently moved away from the compostable wrapper and have, instead, replaced it with a paper version. This is supplied by our printer and is FSC certified, the same as the magazine itself. We made the decision to move to a paper wrapper following feedback from members about the difficulty in recycling it with different parts of the country doing something slightly different. The move to paper will eliminate any confusion as it is widely recycled.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank James Luckhurst, our Editor, for his tireless efforts in creating a magazine with interesting and informative features, articles, car reviews and competitions. I also want to express my thanks to David Motton, our Road Test Editor and all of the other regular contributors to the magazine for helping to make it such a success.

Our new social media strategy, adopted at the end of this reporting period, is designed to increase our presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These platforms are being used to raise awareness of GEM and the benefits of membership as well 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 all of the challenges and uncertainty that the pandemic and everything associated with it has caused, I am happy to report that our annual accounts, available today, 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.

## And Finally

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 our new Independent Charity Trustee, Mrs Emma Tugwell-Smith, to the Executive Council and look forward to working together for many years to come.

I also want to pay tribute to everyone who has helped to make GEM a success during these very difficult times. From the team in the GEM office, to the call takers at the Control Centre to the recovery operators that stayed on the road through the turmoil of the past year. On behalf of the Executive Council and all GEM members you have our thanks.

Maureen Emms

Chairman, GEM Motoring Assist



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