Website-  www.northantsroadar.org.uk

https://www.facebook.com/groups/NorthantsDrivers/

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We love to hear when you pass your tests. Please note that RoSPA head office do not notify local groups of their member’s successes. Please ensure that you take refresher drives before your 3 year retests, (contact your tutor), and let us know when you’ve passed.
Your success is our success.

New RoADAR Benefits - a message from the RoSPA Advanced Driving and Riding Team

We are delighted to announce that RoADAR Benefits is now ready and you can join today. The RoADAR Benefits Platform is managed by Boundless, who have been running one of the UK’s largest membership schemes for more than 90 years.

Signing-up to RoADAR Benefits is free and part of your RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders Membership.

On the new RoADAR Benefits website, which is only available to RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders members; you’ll find a huge selection of member-only benefits tailored to RoADAR members. From exclusive discounts on car and bike insurance with LV= insurance, to money off car warranty and tyres, as well as everyday savings on holidays, days-out, travel (including ferries) and unique motor-specific events and activities – there really is something for everyone.

To set up your account, just fill in the online form and start taking advantage of your new benefits today.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your dedication to improving road safety and driving and riding standards. We hope that you like and enjoy the benefits that are now provided and we look forward to continuing to work with you over the coming years.
https://www.roadarbenefits.co.uk/

Driverless vehicles by 2021? Only three years away? Should this worry you?  
Confused.com

Every motorist will be wondering what it will be like sharing our roads with driverless cars. Word has come from the very top that driverless cars will be on our roads in three years time. Is it a reality or a pipe-dream? [Ed]

Last year, Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond said he aimed to have fully driverless cars on Britain’s roads by 2021.
Meanwhile, industry has been busy at work, with technology companies and carmakers alike vying to be the first to get self-driving cars on the road.

There are some obvious incentives in this drive towards autonomy, not least safety.

Human error has been cited as a causal factor in 90-95% of road traffic accidents, according to a House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee report [2017]. Eliminating this from the driving process has the potential to save countless lives.
Recent media coverage, such as the case involving a self-driving Uber that killed a pedestrian in Arizona, has highlighted just how difficult this is likely to be. In light of such uncertainties, the government target of 2021 seems particularly ambitious.

And even if this is achieved, will autonomous vehicles really benefit society in the ways we’re hoping for?

Making a mark

Stu McInroy is chief executive of the Road Safety Markings Association. He argues that there are still many issues to be resolved before self-driving cars rule the road.

“This is not going to happen quickly,” McInroy says. “My concern is that government probably hasn’t as yet fully understood and embraced the challenges of how we get there by way of the supporting infrastructure that would be required.” One of the key pieces of infrastructure is road markings.

At present, most autonomous vehicles navigate using technology called optical sensing, which is currently used in safety systems such as lane assist. Optical sensing relies on a camera which monitors the likes of road markings to help the car to navigate safely. This reliance on optical sensing, and therefore on the quality and visibility of road markings, presents some significant problems, says McInroy. “The road markings in the UK tend to be refreshed on a six- to eight-year basis, and given the financial strictures that have been placed upon local authorities and the like across the country, that period is being extended. “Of course, the result is that if lines aren't replenished, refurbished or replaced, they lose reflectivity.” McInroy says in the worst cases these road markings “get worn away to such an extent that they can't even be seen by a human eye, never mind the optical sensors of a vehicle”.

5 futuristic car technologies we should be using by 2020

Matthew Avery, head of research at car safety group Thatcham Research, agrees the transition towards autonomy is likely to be problematic.

If we could make all autonomous vehicles fully autonomous overnight then there wouldn't be the difficulty,” he says. “The transition phase is the dangerous bit.”

In 2014, the US-based Society of Automotive Engineers identified six levels of automation.

Cars with Level 4 technology and upwards are generally regarded as fully autonomous, or self-driving.
But car manufacturers are already bringing out cars with Level 3 technology that, in certain conditions, can control many aspects of driving, such as braking, accelerating and even steering.

**Image: SAE six levels of autonomy**

According to Avery, this new technology is confusing many car-buyers into thinking their vehicles can fully drive themselves when they can’t.

“We’re starting to see real-life examples of the hazardous situations that occur when motorists expect the car to drive and function on its own.

“Specifically, where the technology is taking ownership of more and more of the driving task, but the motorist may not be sufficiently aware that they’re still required to take back control in problematic circumstances.

“Names like ‘Autopilot’ or ‘ProPilot’ are deeply unhelpful,” Avery says, “as they infer the car can do a lot more than it can.” He argues that “absolute clarity” is needed to help drivers understand when and how these technologies are designed to work, and that they should always remain engaged in the driving task.

“Fully automated vehicles that can own the driving task from A to B, with no need for driver involvement whatsoever, won’t be available for many years to come,” says Avery. “Until then, drivers remain criminally liable for the safe use of their cars and as such, the capability of current road vehicle technologies must not be oversold.”

**The rise of electric cars**

**Caught in a jam**

Even if such issues are addressed, as in time they may be, there is still the problem that the first fully autonomous cars will have to mix with vehicles controlled by human drivers.

Avery says, “Driving is really complicated. Drivers are constantly negotiating and taking chances.”

He gives the example that when making decisions on the road, such as, “can I pull out in front of this vehicle?” we look into the eyes of the other driver to see if he will let us go. “That process you do as a human, AI can’t do yet. And, although it will get there, the first self-driving cars are likely to be really cautious.” Avery therefore wonders whether travelling in a self-driving vehicle would be frustrating rather than relaxing.

“For example, [an autonomous vehicle] might leave a large gap between it and the car in front, but another car being driven manually may seek to fill that gap. “And so the car will readjust and move further backwards to keep the gap, giving the passenger the feeling he or she is going backwards or not making progress,” he says.
problems we have and in the best possible science-fiction scenario, automation can’t fix most of them,” he says.

“It can’t fix social isolation – if anything it makes it worse. It can’t fix people getting insufficient exercise – if anything it makes it worse; it can’t fix road wear; it doesn’t fix out-of-town retail harming city centres; it doesn’t fix suburban sprawl; and it doesn’t fix or reduce employee unproductively and absenteeism because of a lack of activity. If anything it makes all of these things worse. “And so I think we need to be incredibly careful for a couple of reasons: one, it might just make everything worse. “But second, there is a real danger, and I’m seeing this occur more and more, that all of today’s problems are being batted 30 years down the road. “We’re failing to address urgent, pressing problems because of this vague promise of a messiah that’s going to come along in the future and fix everything,” he adds.

Could our cities adapt to become carless in the next twenty years?

One of the main issues, according to Dr Walker, is the car manufacturers themselves. “At the moment, the car manufacturers’ business model is to sell you one car per person and so we have multiple-car households, with vehicles that are sat about doing nothing most of the time.” Instead, he says: “Probably the only system that really makes any sense is to have a small number of self-driving cars that are shared. But that requires car manufacturers to completely change their business models. And it’s unlikely they’ll do that spontaneously.” Although some manufacturers have talked about shared mobility, Dr Walker cites Ford as an example. He says: “It’s such a mind shift of 100 years of simply selling everybody a car that I’ll believe it when I see it”.

The road ahead

As for our original question, is it all worth it? Are we on the road towards a self-driving dream or nightmare? It really depends on what we’d like autonomous cars to achieve.

Fully autonomous vehicles, once they eventually arrive, are likely to lead to a significant reduction in fatalities. So in that respect, the drive towards autonomy is definitely worth it. And in the long term, traffic congestion should become significantly less too. However, both these outcomes could arguably be achieved by simply having fewer cars on our roads, perhaps through a combination of both shared mobility and encouraging people to take fewer journeys by car. Therefore, before we’re sold the self-driving dream, we should think carefully about what we’d like this technology to do for us.

This article is a shorter version of the report, “Autonomous cars: A driverless dream or nightmare in waiting?”. We love to hear from our membership and so please consider sending in your views, concerns and whether you would consider owning or using a driverless vehicle. Will we, for example, call one up from our smart phones when we need to go somewhere – (if the self-driving car revolution happens that is)? [Ed]
Chris’s Contributions

A survey conducted by the UK’s largest independent road safety charity, IAM RoadSmart, found that many drivers have a real lack of awareness of the rules of the road, putting themselves and others in danger.

More than 50% admitted their road knowledge was so poor, they didn’t recognise the roundabout sign.

More than two-thirds of drivers admitted they had no understanding of the two second rule.

Over 1,000 motorists participated in the survey for IAM RoadSmart to test their knowledge of the Highway Code.

Some 68% of drivers were unaware of the two-second following distance in dry weather, with 53% confusing this for two car lengths. This results in a gap of less than a third of a second when travelling at 60mph, for an average-sized family car.

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart director of policy and research, said: “This is truly shocking. The outcome of the survey brings to light some frightening statistics which demonstrates the need to constantly re-fresh on-road knowledge.”

The survey also found that only 43% correctly recognised the Highway Code ‘dual carriageway ends’ sign, with respondents aged between 17 and 39 being the largest group to answer this incorrectly.

When asked what to do when arriving to a scene of a serious crash, almost half (48%) were unaware that the first thing you need to do is to warn others of the danger by turning on hazard lights.

Of those who participated, over half were not able to identify that a circle shaped sign demonstrates traffic signs that give orders – a crucial piece of information when on the road. Drivers aged 70 onwards statistically scored below average on this question.

Worryingly, two-thirds of those surveyed admitted they were unable to recognise the colour of the reflective studs between a motorway and its slip road, with only one in five (20%) of those aged 17 to 39 answering correctly that they are green.

[Additional note: 12.5% of males in this country are red/green colour blind – Ed].

Neil said: “With many young drivers showing high levels of traffic sign ignorance these results reinforce IAM RoadSmart’s view that road safety education should be taught as part of the National Curriculum in schools to prepare teenagers for their future driving career.

“Many drivers don’t look at the Highway Code regularly after they’ve passed their test, but no-one’s memory is perfect and it’s crucial to read and understand the most recent version of the Highway Code for the safety of all road users.”

An interesting extract from www.amusingplanet.com, about roundabouts

Kevin Beresford is the President of The United Kingdom Roundabout Appreciation Society, an odd group of people who meet in and around Redditch, a town in north-east Worcestershire, to discuss everything about roundabouts – their architecture, design, style, location as well as their safety features.

Roundabouts are not only an essential traffic management system but they also provide space for gardening, sponsorship and sculpture. These roundabouts range from a simple expanse of grass to magnificent landscaped beauties. Some feature works of art or are wildlife havens, others are sources of local history. There are 10,000 roundabouts in the UK. Redditch alone has over forty.
Time to debate the clock change and save lives, says RoSPA

The time has come to debate whether the UK should put an end to the current daylight savings system and do what's best for the country, according to national accident prevention charity RoSPA.

As the House of Lords prepares to discuss the European Commission's proposal to end seasonal clock changes – essentially meaning the UK could be on British Summer Time year-round – RoSPA is calling on the UK Government to seriously consider whether the current clock change system is still beneficial, or even necessary.

Each year, when the clocks go back in the autumn, there is a marked spike in the number of vulnerable road users killed and seriously injured. In 2017, pedestrian deaths rose from 37 in September to 46 in October, 63 in November and 50 in December. The casualty rate for all road users increased from 520 per billion vehicle miles in October, to 580 per billion vehicle miles in November.

Until recently, RoSPA has been seeking a trial of Single/Double Summer Time (SDST) (www.rospa.com/campaigns-fundraising/current/lighter-evenings/) which would see the clock change retained but put the country an extra hour ahead, creating extra daylight in the evenings when the number of casualties is highest.

Errol Taylor, RoSPA's chief executive, is urging the Government to take this fresh opportunity to debate the wider merits and implications of ending the current daylight savings system.

He said: “A move to British Summer Time (GMT+1) all year round, which is one of the options to be considered, could save many lives by providing an extra hour of daylight throughout the autumn and winter. This new European Commission proposal has once again brought to the fore the debate around daylight savings, and it will always reoccur until something is done about this serious issue – we know that the darker evenings which suddenly occur in the autumn kill people – so let’s take this chance to do something about this once and for all. It would be a quick and easy win for the Government, and if just one life is saved, it would be worth it.

“The clock change system was created more than 100 years ago when the country was a very different place; there are now more people on the road, there is far more electric lighting and technologies have advanced more than anyone back then could have predicted.

“While there is plenty of evidence about the benefits of a change to SDST there is very little in the way of real opposition, so let’s consider a change that would bring the greater benefit to the greater number of people.”
An interesting fact: The first British circular junction was built in Letchworth Garden City in 1909.

There are a number of roundabouts in Northamptonshire that make even the most advanced driver nervous, what would you like to see happen to make negotiating those roundabouts safer. Please email me your thoughts. [Ed]

Congratulations to those passing their tests.

The Funny Bit

Driver: I came across a group of workers in the centre of town last week. They had dug up the road.

Passenger: What were they doing that for?

Driver: Would you believe it, they said they were building a roundabout. A roundabout? I've never heard such nonsense.

Passenger: How extraordinary! What did you say say to them.

Driver: I told them firmly, I would report them to the town council. A junction of four roads is not the place for a fair ground ride!

Passenger: What ever next? Clowns directing traffic? Chimps tea-party on the village green?