



iAM
RoadSmart

FORWARD

Issue 25

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The Newsletter for
Somerset & Wiltshire
Advanced Motorists

Your Committee and other Group Contacts

President: Dave Edwards

Vice Presidents: Judith Pepler; David Gallagher

Chair	Lindsay Flower	☎ 07968 126162 (<i>mobile</i>) chair@swam-iam.org
Deputy Chair	Ron Lomas	☎ 07587 362206 (<i>mobile</i>) deputychair@swam-iam.org
Group Secretary	Rosemary Tandy	☎ 01985 846643 (<i>home</i>) secretary@swam-iam.org
Group Treasurer	Mike Twitchett	☎ 07984 559832 (<i>mobile</i>) accounts@swam-iam.org.uk
Chief Observer	David Major	☎ 01985 217050(<i>home</i>) ☎ 07743 246746 (<i>mobile</i>) chiefobserver@swam-iam.org.uk
Associates Co-ordinator	David Major	☎ 01985 217050(<i>home</i>) ☎ 07743 246746 (<i>mobile</i>) associatescoordinator@swam-iam.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Peter Huntington	☎ 07703 000263 (<i>mobile</i>) membership@swam-iam.org.uk
Minutes Secretary	Vacancy	minutes@swam-iam.org
Newsletter Editor	Clare Hogg	☎ 01749 343059 (<i>home</i>) newsletter@swam-iam.org.uk
Public Relations Officer	Robin Clark	☎ 07974 764094 (<i>mobile</i>) pr@swam-iam.org.uk
Website	Neil Bannister	support@swam-iam.org
Young Driver Representative	David Gallagher	youngdriver@swam-iam.org.uk
SWAM Enquiries	Telephone email	☎ 07968 126162 (<i>mobile</i>) chair@swam-iam.org
Social Media	X: @SomersetWiltsAM	Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/SomersetWiltsAM

FORWARD

Newsletter of Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists

www.swam-iam.org.uk

Registered Charity No 1050592

May — July 2026

Issue 25

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Summer Events

We have four special events organised for this summer:

In June we will be attending two outdoor events promoting advanced driving at the Chippenham Cherished Vehicle Show, and the Bath Festival of Motoring, and in July we will be having another Treasure Hunt, with an outing planned for September.

Chippenham Cherished Vehicle and Family Fun Day: Sunday, 7 June. See page 14 for details of this interesting and fun event.

Bath Festival of Motoring: Saturday and Sunday, 27 & 28 June. See page 14 for details. We need volunteers for both these events.

Treasure Hunt: Wednesday, 8 July, starting at 18.30.

See page 15 for full details of this event which will start from Beckington Memorial Hall*. Please join us for this exciting event.

Wiltshire Air Ambulance Visit: Tuesday, 1 September at 15.00.

See page 15 for details. This will be a very interesting outing so please come along.

**The address of Beckington Memorial Hall is Bath Road, Beckington, Frome, BA11 6SH (just off the A36).*

Welcome to this issue of *Forward*. There is a full report of the AGM held in April, which we urge you to read as it tells you how the group is progressing with the Objectives which were detailed at last year's AGM. We have made good progress and have achieved a lot in the last year.

We also have a full programme of events lined up for the summer, details of which are on pages 14 to 16. To summarise, we start with an Observer Training meeting (21 May), which is important to maintain the high standards our Observers achieve, followed by a 3-in-a-car meeting (27 May) which allows members to gain from the experience of the Observers to maintain their own driving standards. Do, please, come along to that.

In June we are attending two outdoor events, the Chippenham Cherished Vehicle and Family Fun Day (7 June) which was a great success last year, and the Bath Festival of Motoring (27 & 28 June) which was a regular event in our calendar until last year when it didn't take place. We are looking forward to both these events, and we need volunteers to help us spread the word about advanced driving by helping at the gazebo. Please contact Dave Edwards at president@swam-iam.org if you can help at either or both of these events.

In July we have our second Treasure Hunt (8 July) following on from the success of last year's Hunt. Light refreshments (sandwiches etc.) will be provided, and we can promise you a fun evening.

On 1 September we are having an outing to the Wiltshire Air Ambulance headquarters and airbase, which will be an interesting afternoon. There is a cost involved in this, but at a discounted rate, so please see page 15 for more details.

Clare Hogg, Sue Phillips

The next edition of *Forward* will be published in August 2026. Please submit motoring-related articles and/or digital photographs to the Editors (*who reserve the right to edit them*) by Friday 3 July at the latest. Names of authors and their home addresses should be disclosed to the Editors who will withhold them from publication on request.

Somerset and Wiltshire Advanced Motorists

Minutes of 5th Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 1 April 2026 at 19.30

1. Introduction by Vicky Lovell and Apologies for Absence:

Present

Lindsay Flower; Chair

Ron Lomas; Deputy Chair

Mike Twitchett; Treasurer

Rosemary Tandy; Secretary

Clare Hogg; Newsletter Editor

Robin Clark; Public Relations Officer

Peter Huntington; Membership Secretary

Dave Edwards; President

Vicky Lovell; Guest speaker from Carma Drivers

Plus 23 Members and guests

Apologies for Absence

David Major, Michael Muncer, Michael Meredith, John Marsden, Caroline Marsden, Nigel Carter, Anthony Chambers, Sandy England, Valerie Bearne, Simon Cowley.

2. Minutes of AGM 2024

The Minutes were signed off.

Matters Arising: There were none.

3. Report from the Chair, Lindsay Flower

It may be because we haven't had an event yet this year, but it feels

like we have been quite quiet – and yet, there has been a lot going on behind the scenes. We have had some changes. We are lucky enough to have a new President after the sad death of Helen Schofield. Dave Edwards allowed me to persuade him to step into this role and he has been very proactive, especially as a sounding board for me and as someone who is better informed at IT than the rest of us. Thank you, Dave.

Clare Hogg who has been our Treasurer is handing over to Mike Twitchett, and I would like to take this opportunity of saying a huge thankyou to Clare for her help over the years and another huge thankyou to Mike for once again allowing me to persuade him to step into the Treasurer's role. Clare will stay with us as Newsletter Editor for the time being and whether or not we continue to have a newsletter will depend on someone coming forward. Other groups have taken the view that all our news can just as well go onto the website, and this may well be a view we will have to take if no one is forthcoming for this role.

The third person who allowed me to persuade him to join us is Ron Lomas who joins us as Deputy Chair with a view to succeeding me next year. I've been in this job for at least five years and I'm aware that new blood is needed.

Another big thankyou goes to Neil Bannister and his wife Sara who together have undertaken several successful Facebook campaigns on our behalf resulting in our last campaign of 400 'hits'. This is fantastic and in part responsible for our increasing number of Associates. I also want to thank Simon Cowley for setting up Discord as a chat room. We plan to eventually open it up to all members but at present it is limited to Observers.

As a training facility, we are very successful and have trained 26 new advanced drivers since I spoke to you last year. The Taster sessions are also very popular and our conversions from Taster session to buying the advanced course is somewhere in the region of 75 – 80%. The driver refresher courses have had a reasonable take up with four

people completing them and we have trained three new Masters over the year. All Local Observers have now converted to National Observers and while a few people dropped out, two new Observers were trained bringing our total number of Observers to 26. In conjunction with Swindon IAM, we hold yearly Observer training evenings where we have a chance to discuss any training issues we've encountered along with giving information which may be useful in training Associates. We are proud of our Observers and just under half of all Associates achieve a F1RST, so we are clearly doing a lot of things right!

The Observers' dedication and professionalism underpins everything we do. Their efforts are clearly reflected in our results – we are clearly doing a lot of things right, and this year's achievements highlight the strength and commitment of everyone involved.

While many groups elect to be solely a training facility and offer no additional events, it is the view of the committee that extra events are helpful not only in increasing knowledge but in bringing people together in a more social capacity where ideas and views can be exchanged. However, the attendance for these remains poor and, in future, it would be hard to justify spending money on providing these if the uptake isn't better. Ron Lomas has taken on the responsibility for arranging three talks in the coming year and he has some great ideas so please look out for them being advertised – and do your very best to get here for them! If you have any ideas for a talk – please let Ron know.

We provide 3-in-a-car sessions in the summer. This gives advanced drivers an opportunity to drive with an Observer, maybe not the one who trained them, who will give feedback. A third person observes the Observer and feeds back to them. This is generally very helpful and decreases advanced skill erosion which we know occurs completely in four years after passing the advanced test. This means that unless you actively do something to keep your skills set up, you will revert to exactly where you were in four years, i.e. before you took the advanced test. I believe that this is one of the reasons that insurance companies no longer really offer reduced insurance to advanced drivers. I believe

there is a general move towards retest: this year, the UK government has replaced self-declaration eye status for obligatory eye test documentation for drivers over 70, upon licence renewal. Masters, Fellows and Observers are already retested and it may only be a matter of time before advanced drivers will need to be retested. Indeed this would certainly help with cheaper insurance for those keeping up their driving skills and it makes sense to me.

Last year we attended two car shows and increased our public interface. We also gave a number of talks to the MG club, the Link volunteer drivers and a U3A group. It would be lovely to have a few more people on our stand at car shows. This year the Bath Festival of Motoring is back on and we are looking for volunteers – this club needs YOU! We will also attend the Chippenham Cherished Cars event in June. For Observers – very often the people you speak to at these shows will request you for a Taster – and then as an Observer if it has all gone well. This explains the slightly disproportionate number of Associates trained by individual Observers. If an Associate requests a female Observer – then I get them on account of being the only female Observer to date.

I want to extend a huge thankyou to the Committee who meet monthly and make absolutely certain that we still have a club. Having a few more members has been great and a few more volunteers would not go amiss.

Lastly thank you to all members for continuing to support us with your membership fee. This is our main income stream and we really can't do without it.

That's me finished for another year! – thank you.

[4. Report from the Secretary, Rosemary Tandy](#)

I will keep this short and sweet.

We have had a very successful year with so many passing their Advanced Test. Lindsay and Robin have updated our Constitution, which is a legal requirement and sets out the aims and rules needed to

run a charitable organisation. As the document runs to 29 pages, and as we are trying to be paper free, you will find it on our website.

Having read it, if you have any questions, please feel free to email any of the committee.

[5. Report from the Treasurer, Clare Hogg](#)

The accounts have been sent to all members on email, and there are a few copies available here for those who wish to see them in print.

In 2025 we have spent more than we have received in income and there are four main reasons for this.

First, much of the expenditure on Events and Promotions was for equipment which will not be necessary in future years.

Secondly, we have been promoting the group on Facebook, which entailed set-up expenses, but it seemed to have a good effect in attracting people wanting Taster Drives so it is regarded as a worthwhile expense.

Thirdly, Observer Training expenses were unusually high because of the cost of training up Local Observers to National Observers, and because IAM HQ now requires groups to bear the cost of providing material to Observers which has involved a large initial cost.

And fourthly, the website and IT expenses are high because in the past IAM HQ provided free website hosting and support but has now ceased that and we have to pay for our own. We are now paying for IT support because we have not had any offers of help from members and this will be ongoing unless the situation changes.

I am resigning as Treasurer at this AGM and I wish to thank Mike Twitchett for taking over from me and for all the work he has done during this year to help me as my Deputy. I also wish to thank Ken Fryer once again for auditing the accounts and for his support. If you have any questions, please ask them now.

SOMERSET & WILTSHIRE ADVANCED MOTORISTS

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1050592

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2025

Statement As 31/12/2025	31/12/2025	31/12/2024
	£	£
INCOME		
Full Membership Fees	1,883.00	1,853.50
Gift aid	402.54	337.33
Associate Membership Fees	1,042.00	1,048.50
Sundry Income	24.00	0.00
Door takings	0.00	0.00
Donations	0.00	110.00
Events & Promotions (Flag Refund)	200.00	0.00
Interest Received	88.39	72.29
Total	<u>3,639.93</u>	<u>3,421.62</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Newsletter expenses	403.32	331.10
Stationery	51.82	38.50
Events & Promotions	667.31	234.13
Facebook	437.83	0.00
Room Hire & Speaker Expenses	498.48	540.48
Refreshments (including for Treasure Hunt)	133.73	15.23
Group Insurance	208.78	203.65
Observer Training	936.35	653.56
Conferences	29.00	0.00
Quiz prizes	0.00	0.00
Website & IT	697.60	130.45
Shirts	135.00	108.00
ICO (payment for GDPR)	47.00	35.00
AGM expenses	87.77	0.00
Sundries	111.27	134.05
Total	<u>4,445.26</u>	<u>2,424.15</u>
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	<u>-805.33</u>	<u>997.47</u>
General Reserves (Unrestricted)		
Brought Forward	10,131.14	9,133.67
Carried Forward	<u>9,325.81</u>	<u>10,131.14</u>

SOMERSET & WILTSHIRE ADVANCED MOTORISTS

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1050592

BALANCE SHEET

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2025

Statement As 31/12/2025	31/12/2025	31/12/2024
	£	£
CURRENT ASSETS		
Bank Account - savings	8,856.21	8,767.82
Bank Account - current	469.60	1,363.32
Cash	0.00	0.00
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	9,325.81	10,131.14
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accruals	0.00	0.00
Creditors	0.00	0.00
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	0.00	0.00
NET WORKING CAPITAL	<hr/>	<hr/>
	9,325.81	10,131.14
UNRESTRICTED GENERAL RESERVE	9,325.81	10,131.14
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	9,325.81	10,131.14
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	0.00	0.00

The accounts were approved by the committee on 14th January 2026

Lindsay Flower
Chair

Clare Hogg
Treasurer

The accounts were independently examined on 2nd February 2026

Ken Fryer

8 Coronation Road
Bath, BA1 3BH

Report on Objectives from the PR Officer, Robin Clark

Robin explained that all the Objectives from the last AGM had been achieved with the exception of two which are listed below. The action being taken is highlighted in red. The minutes of the last AGM were published in *Forward 21*, available on the website.

<u>SWAM Objective ID</u>	<u>IAM RS Strategic Aim Cross Reference</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Actions and Updates</u>
Obj.2/25	Growing Our Brand	Engage with Media, whether TV, Radio or online (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok). Develop website presence.	Undertake x1 TV or Radio media interview per annum to attract 50 Taster sessions	Considering the Social Media success SWAM has had, this will be put on hold until further notice. On Hold.
Obj.4/25	Increasing our Skills	Upload a selection of IAM RS video tips & guidance onto website and make available via Social Media, then measure in 6 months how many people have viewed.	Target remains fluid as this is new ground for the group. Tentatively looking for 1000 hits in 6 months, with a 10% follow up for enquiries to purchase course or request Taster Session.	A fresh initiative is being developed to create a collection of short videos, produced in-house by SWAM. Review objective and approach for 2026/7.

To Elect Nominees to Form SWAM Committee 2026/2027

The following Nominees were duly elected for 2026/2027:

Chair	Lindsay Flower
Deputy Chair	Ron Lomas
Secretary	Rosemary Tandy
Treasurer	Mike Twitchett
Chief Observer/Associates Co-ordinator	David Major
Membership Secretary	Peter Huntington
Newsletter Editor	Clare Hogg
Public Relations Officer	Robin Clark

Any Other Business (AOB)

Neil Bannister gave an update on the Facebook campaign.

Ron Lomas has made initial contact with Wiltshire Council and Partnership enquiring how SWAM can support and align with the Wiltshire Vision Zero initiative.

He has also made a number of enquiries about future talks and he pointed members towards YouTube so they could watch the IAM Webinar 'Young and Old Behind the Wheel'.

There followed a talk by Vicky Lovell of Carma Drivers

Vicky started by saying she concentrates on the emotional aspects of driving citing that some people get in their cars already angry and this anger will be aimed at another driver if anything happens.

Vicky said she has been involved in driver training for some 40 years, working with new drivers, experienced drivers needing extra training and with convicted drivers undergoing retraining. She has come to the conclusion that teaching people how to drive can be a complete waste of time unless she can change their hearts and minds and their behaviour.

Vicky explained that she and her business partner had formed Carma Drivers to try to make people the best version of themselves.

Vicky explained that she didn't want just to talk to us but wanted an interactive evening. She asked us to get into small groups to suggest what excuses drivers give when they make mistakes.

Suggestions ranged from total denial to saying that the cyclist/horse/tractor/learner/pedestrian shouldn't have been on the road, that the signals were faulty or that the satnav was wrong. Vicky explained that all the suggestions were looking to blame someone else rather than the driver taking responsibility or acknowledging that the driver had made a wrong decision.

Vicky cited a variety of examples to demonstrate how a wrong decision or a bad attitude could not only affect someone else's life but also badly affect the life of the driver.

She said that we all need to open our minds to stop us getting into trouble. We must all think about how we behave, consider who is best placed to take care of us when we drive and we must stay calm. Driving is about having a cool head.

Following the talk, Lindsay made a presentation to Vicky, and Robin presented a bouquet to Clare as a thankyou for her time as Treasurer.

2026 Events Programme

Thursday, 21 May at 18.00: Observer Training meeting at Beckington Memorial Hall* for all Observers.

Wednesday, 27 May at 19.00: 3-in-a-car meeting. 3-in-a-car meeting at Beckington Memorial Hall*. This is an opportunity to practise any aspect of advanced driving which interests you on a drive with one of our National Observers, and to benefit from their experience and advice. You can either drive or be a passenger, so please come along to make the most of this opportunity. Associates are especially welcome.

Sunday, 7 June: Chippenham Lions Cherished Vehicle and Family Fun Day at Langley Burrell, SN15 4LW. In addition to the vehicles there are lots of fun activities for families. We attended this show last year and it proved to be a worthwhile event for us. We need volunteers to help on the gazebo, so please come along and join us. If you can help, contact Dave Edwards at president@swam-iam.org.

Saturday and Sunday, 27 & 28 June: Bath Festival of Motoring at the Walcot Rugby Club (directly opposite the Lansdown Park & Ride terminus at the top of Bath's Lansdown Hill). Last year this event was not held so we are pleased to be able to attend this year. This always proves to be an interesting event and again we are asking for volunteers to help on the gazebo. Please contact Dave Edwards at president@swam-iam.org.

Wednesday, 8 July at 18.30: Treasure Hunt at Beckington Memorial Hall*. This was a great success last year so Lindsay and Robin are organising another one for us this year. See page 15 for further details.

Tuesday, 1 September at 15.00: Visit to Wiltshire Air Ambulance headquarters and airbase at Semington near Melksham. This is sure to be a very interesting visit. Details are on pages 15-16.

We also hope to arrange another 3-in-a-car meeting this year, and there may be events with a speaker at Beckington. See the next issue of *Forward* for more information.

**The address of Beckington Memorial Hall is Bath Road, Beckington, Frome, BA11 6SH (just off the A36).*

Treasure Hunt—8 July

Good advanced driving is about improving OBSERVATION alongside ensuring EARLY ANTICIPATION of hazards, to help PLAN how they can be best and safely negotiated, taking account of all road users and, of course, road conditions.

This Treasure Hunt aims to embrace all of the above qualities over a drive of approximately 1-1 ½ hours along the roads of Somerset and Wiltshire. Each team must consist of two people, one driving, plus one keeping a tab on the notes and questions/challenges that need to be worked out.

WE MUST STRESS THAT THIS EVENT IS **NOT**, REPEAT **NOT**, A RACE.

The 'Hunt' should take about an hour to an hour and a half, but no prizes will be given for arriving back early!

We do hope that you will join us for this event, and to try and ensure that a convoy isn't created, we will be staggering each team's start time by a minute or two.

It would help us in organising this event if you could let the SWAM Secretary know if you intend taking part in this event, so that we can plan for the number of Treasure Hunt Notes to be produced. Also with regard to numbers for catering etc. Contact: secretary@swam-iam.org.uk

It will begin and end at Beckington Memorial Hall, where competitors should aim to arrive at 18:30. Refreshments will be available, both before as well as after the 'Hunt'. The event should be finished by 21.00 at the latest.

We look forward to seeing you on the day.

Visit to Wiltshire Air Ambulance—1 September

We have a private behind the scenes tour in the Wiltshire Air Ambulance headquarters / airbase at Semington near Melksham starting at 15.00 on Tuesday 1st September. This tour is limited to 30 places at a reduced price of £20 (reduced from the usual tour price of £25).

This is a walking tour of up to 2 hours which will visit the Operations room, helicopter hangar and simulation suite. It will be an operational day when the helicopter will be flying, so the helicopter may not be there at the time. The simulation suite covers medical training.

We will take deposits of £10pp to guarantee places on a first come first served basis. If there are fewer than 30 members who wish to visit then we will accept friends and family, to a maximum of 30 people. The balance of £10 will be payable on the day.

If you would like to attend then please email me, president@swam-iam.org, and I will advise deposit details. Thanks to my Associate (and volunteer presenter at the Air Ambulance), Chris McCormack, for enabling this visit.

Welcome and Congratulations

We Welcome New Associates

Emma Brigstocke	[Observer: Dave Edwards]
Rosemary Cooke	[Observer: Ray Robbetts]
Janna Keating	[Observer: Mark Ellis]
Chris McCormack	[Observer: Dave Edwards]
Tom O'Hare	[Observer: Barry Seed]
Joshua Patrick	[Observer: Mark Ellis]
Cathy Warner	[Observer: Nick Elton]

We Congratulate

IAMRS Test Pass

Mary Ann Barber observed by Jeff Vincent

Driver Distraction—Ron Lomas, Deputy Chair

Driver Distraction — has there been a new temptation created?

As SWAM responsible advanced drivers we are fully acquainted with the crucial importance for full concentration when behind the wheel of our vehicles. To observe, anticipate and plan (OAP), throughout the progress of a journey, we know drivers need all their senses and wits about them at all times.

We are aware there are many inherent temptations in our cars that can easily cause distraction from OAP. In vehicles of old, for example, the in-car radio, the cassette player, the CD player could all easily tempt us into distraction. In modern vehicles, the in-car technology, with the abundance of switches and toggles, let alone the centre screen full of information, are all easy distractions if we allow them to be. This, of course, is without mentioning our distracting passengers and the biggest distractor of all, the mobile phone. As disciplined advanced drivers, we by and large resist and ignore these distractions whilst driving and time their use appropriately. Sadly that is not the case for all who drive on our roads!

According to survey, 14.8 million UK drivers report engaging in other tasks while driving. Research suggests distracted driving accounted for around 3,564 collisions in 2023, including 95 fatalities. However, because police can only record contributory factors they can reasonably identify, many distraction related roles in crashes will not be proven and won't appear in official statistics and therefore numbers can be easily assumed to be higher than these given.

So, I ask, why is there a relatively new temptation being put in front of drivers that unquestionably will cause distraction?

None of us could have failed to notice the influx of drive-thru food and drink outlets at services on our motorways and major routes around the country. By their very name these are designed for the convenience of the driver who doesn't want to stop and get out of his/her vehicle. Many drivers, I'm sure, use these sensibly but it would be naive to think all drivers are buying their drinks and fast food to consume at the end of their journey or at a convenient and safe stop. So, conversely, by the very concept of a drive-thru being for drivers who don't want to stop and

get out of their vehicles, I would suggest it has to be strongly assumed drivers are eating and drinking their purchases behind the wheel whilst on the move.

I ask again, why is there a further distraction being allowed, by these outlets, and added, as a consequence, to the already long list of temptations that can distract a driver?

Let's think about it. A driver has just purchased their drink at a drive-thru. They place the cup in the well-designed centre console of the vehicle and proceed back onto the motorway. The driver happily driving down the busy motorway, at 70mph, decides it is about time they took a sip of the drink. How many seconds do we think it will take that driver, whilst doing 70mph remember, to reach down to the centre console for the drink, lift it to their mouth, take a sip while tilting their head back, maybe take a second sip, and then replace the cup back into the cup holder?

Conservatively, and for the sake of argument, I'm going to say 10 seconds. Realistically it probably would be more, especially if the driver is eating a snack as well, but let's stick with 10 seconds. Whatever time it is the driver **will**, without any shadow of doubt, be distracted from fully concentrating on their driving.

Let us now continue that scenario and work out how far that vehicle would have travelled in that 10 seconds. We know a vehicle at 70mph travels at a distance of 103 feet per second. Assuming that 10 seconds which we considered as the time to enact the drinking process described above, the vehicle, with the distracted driver, would have travelled at least 1030 feet (314m or approx 78 car lengths). I would add that without full concentration the probability would be the vehicle speed would have crept up, but for argument's sake let's stick to the assumption of 70mph. So, 1030 feet (78 car lengths) with only one hand on the wheel. 1030 feet (78 car lengths) without concentrating on what is happening in front of the vehicle. 1030 feet (78 car lengths) without noticing what is happening behind or on each side of the vehicle. Worrying isn't it?

So is it wise for this temptation, to purchase food and drink 'on the go', to be put in front of a driver?

In 2012 Starbucks was the first chain to trial drive-thru outlets on a few major A roads and Welcome Break sites. This soon expanded to outlets more widely across service areas around the country. The first such type of outlet, alongside a motorway, didn't take long to follow when a Costa Coffee was opened at Rownhams East Services on the M27, on the outskirts of Southampton, in the summer of 2016. A shift from simply serving coffee and light snacks followed when MacDonaldis, offering their full fast food menu, opened their first drive-thru on the A1(M) at Durham Services in 2019. So now, not only a drink and a lite snack, but full fast food meals readily available for the 70mph drive!

Now, in 2026, I think you will agree, it would be hard to find a motorway services that doesn't have a drive-thru drinks or fast food facility. In fact, this year new brands apparently will be entering the format. High Street chains, like Pret a Manger, are evaluating motorway drive-thru locations. All these companies cite a rising demand for 'on the go' refreshment. Services operators see drive-thrus as a way to attract customers who might otherwise avoid stopping and promote the 'on the go' option. Drive-thru facilities are not only here to stay but many more will be opening.

At this present time it is not a specific criminal offence to eat or drink (non-alcoholic beverages) while driving. There is no rule that says simply having a soft drink at the wheel is illegal. However, as we know, the Highway Code and road safety laws require drivers to keep full control of their vehicle and pay proper attention to the road. Rule 148 – Safe Driving requires full concentration and drivers must avoid distractions, with one of the examples of distraction given specifically as eating and drinking when driving. As said eating or drinking behind the wheel is not illegal but if eating or drinking (including non-alcoholic drinks) distracts, causes loss of control of the vehicle or attention falls below that expected of a competent driver, the police can charge the driver with careless or inconsiderate driving, officially known as driving without due care and attention.

I personally haven't used one of these outlets so I don't know whether they already have a warning, but maybe every purchase at a drive-thru should come with a hazard warning, eg 'eating and drinking while driving

can be distracting and deem you driving without due care and attention'.

Currently official UK crash statistics don't break out eating or drinking at the wheel as a separate category. However, numerous surveys and safety studies, readily available in the public domain, provide insight into the risk. Such surveys have found that around 71-78% of drivers questioned admitted eating or drinking in the car while driving. (It is important to note these figures are for non-alcohol drinking and eating). Further, research has shown that drivers who eat or drink while driving are about 3.6 to 4 times more likely to be involved in a collision than those who don't. Around 10% of drivers surveyed admitted a near miss, e.g. having to brake or swerve, because of eating distractions, worryingly, as we've discussed above, technically breaking the law.

I don't want to appear a killjoy to those who enjoy their food and drink on the go, but surely this readily available, rapidly rising temptation must be increasing the risk of accidents, injury or death and encouraging drivers to flout the rules of the road? It appears, on the face of it to me, this concept of 'on the go' purchases of food and drink, alongside our motorways and major roads, has been allowed to develop without first due consideration to how drivers would use them and then of any consequential risk to road and driver safety.

Maybe safety was considered, and deemed low risk, and I'm only being a doom merchant, but I wonder how many 'driver eating and drinking' related collisions and accidents would have to happen before two and two are put together? Watch this space, I guess!

PLEASE NOTE

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