



# The **BEDFORD** Group of RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders Members Newsletter

Visit the **BEDFORD Group** online at [www.road-a-bedford.org.uk](http://www.road-a-bedford.org.uk) **March 2010**

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## March AGM Meeting

The meeting on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2010 will start with our AGM.  
**Don't Panic: the formalities will not go on for hours.**

Once we have carried out the formalities of our AGM, our guest speaker this month will be our President Dr Lisa Dorn who currently leads a team of Psychologists working with the private and public sector on research concerned with driver behaviour and training at Cranfield University.

Dr Dorn will talk to us about her work as Research Director for "a2om", the first driver education company to use the Goals For Driver Education (GDE) matrix in the education of learner drivers.

Thank you for your continued support at our well attended monthly meetings. We hope to see you at 8pm on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010 at the Training Centre of the Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service, Southfields Road, Kempston.

**The February Meeting:** This meeting gave us a very interesting insight into the work of both the Highways Agency and The East Anglian Air Ambulance.

Mark Doggett, a Highways Agency Traffic Officer started the evening off with a video and talk on the work of the Highways Agency Traffic Officer Service.

The Traffic Officer Service is part of The Highways Agency and was introduced in 2004 to take on around 75% of the duties

previously handled by the Motorway Police. Time consuming functions such as clearing accidents, escorting large loads, co-ordinating lane closures, helping stranded motorists and assisting the Emergency Services now form part of the work of the Highways Agency Traffic Officers. The Officers have the legal powers to direct, divert or stop traffic and they can also take control of the Variable Message Signs, which give advance warnings to motorists of potential hazards such as accidents and road debris.

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The Officers' primary function is to ease congestion and keep traffic flowing safely. This applies particularly where an accident has taken place, as accidents are known to be responsible for 25% of all motorway tailbacks. The Highways Agency has now rolled out the service across the whole of England, with around 1,200 on-the-road Officers taking charge of up to 1,500 incidents a day.

Where incidents occur, police colleagues still retain their role in investigating crime, but the Traffic Officers are there to help with coordinating the resources of the other emergency services, managing the traffic and re-opening routes as soon as it is safe to do so.

Mark's presentation was followed by Paul Airtton who gave us a talk and presentation on the **East Anglian Air Ambulance Service (EAAA)**. The Air Ambulance Service is a charity independent of Government and National Lottery Funding and was established in 2000 operating in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk functioning with one helicopter Anglia One. In 2007 the service was extended to operate a second helicopter, Anglia Two, which serves Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Anglia One now focuses on covering Norfolk and Suffolk. The EAAA works with a range of organisations in operating its service including the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust and other clinical charities.

The EAAA covers a vast area of around 5,000 square miles, much of it rural. The area covered is 11% of the total area of England and it contains some of England's most isolated terrain making it sometimes difficult for land ambulances to reach the scene of accidents and emergencies quickly. Anglia One and Anglia Two are subjected to different pressures: Norfolk and Suffolk are more rural and in the summer months with the influx of tourists the population increases by 2-3 million placing enormous pressure on our roads and infrastructure. However in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, there is generally more 'business' traffic. However, as with

everywhere else, East Anglia's roads are becoming increasingly congested, leading to ever more road traffic collisions - which already make up more than 50% of the incidents that the air ambulance attends.

The service has developed at a rapid rate, and along with that the medical skills of the crew have also increased as part of the ambulance team. This enables treatment to be given at the scene so patients benefit from on-scene stabilisation which saves more lives and spares thousands from serious long term injury. Once the patient has received the essential on-scene medical treatment, the crew on the land ambulances might then take over and manage the situation which frees up the helicopter and its clinicians so they can be deployed to accidents and emergencies where these skills are needed elsewhere.

### **The Safety Eye-opener.**

Research by Which? has revealed what many of us know already: The modern car may restrict your all round view of the road more than an older car.

The Which? study reveals that all round visibility in cars is worse than it was 15 years ago. Safety features such as strengthened roofs and door pillars, that get wider to increase both vehicle strength and house air bags are also restricting the driver's view. Drivers can however still do their bit to reduce the effects of these potential blind spots by shifting their seating position slightly whilst driving so that they always maintain the best view of the road and other road users around them. Simply moving slightly in your seat or moving your head to the left or right of your normal driving position can significantly improve your driving vision. RoSPA estimates that eliminating vehicle blind spots would prevent 25 fatal accidents annually.

Keith Hooson

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