

We need to start to thinking about older drivers



BY GERRY FALOONA
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DRIVERS over the age of 70, including those who suffer from poor health could be allowed to retain their driving licences if they stick to roads in their local area, suggests the DVLA.

More new proposals being investigated could see older motorists having a tracker installed on their vehicle as part of a 'graduated driving licence' scheme. The discussions come as data shows an increase in the

number of drivers over the age of 70 on the road doubling over the last 25 years with worrying statistics showing that the number of deaths on the road involving the over-70s is rising.

The new graduated driving licences could see elderly drivers, who suffer health problems, restricted to an area of just twenty or thirty miles from their home and could have a night-time driving ban enforced. At present, a driving licence expires when a motorist reaches the age of 70 and those who wish to stay on the road must contact the DVLA to do so. There are currently more than five and a half million drivers aged 70 and over holding a full UK driver's licence.

No matter what age, drivers must make the DVLA aware of any health condition that could affect their safety behind the wheel, and after 70 a review of each driver's condition is carried out every three years. Despite this, a pilot scheme run in England, allowing elderly drivers involved in motoring accidents to take a fitness-to-

drive test rather than facing prosecution, has found that 30 per cent of those involved had undeclared existing health conditions.

Edmund King, president of the AA, believes that greater expectations should be placed on medical professionals to flag motorists who are not fit to drive. He said that it is the job of doctors to save lives and asks what better way to save lives than to prevent someone known to be capable of causing death by driving from driving. Tough words indeed from the AA, but I wonder if they have considered the existing workloads of GPs and the bureaucracy that would be involved. Stop passing the buck, Mr King, it's time for all of us to take responsibility for road safety.

In 2019, a report found that the vision quality among as many as a third of all drivers falls below the legal standard to drive and it is estimated that more than 2,000 accidents could be avoided each year if regular eyesight checks were mandatory. None of us are getting any younger and, speaking for myself I



would be devastated if I were told I could no longer drive. But for anyone over 70, perhaps a fitness to drive medical assessment from a

GP would make sense. A good starting point in fitness to drive is for every driver to have an eye test at least every two years.

Let's do all we can to protect ourselves, our families, our passengers, and other road users. Safe driving.



Great news for Irish rally pair

AT last, some good news for Irish competitors in the World Rally Championship (WRC).

Irish duo Craig Breen and Paul Nagle (above) have been confirmed by Hyundai Motorsport's world rally team on Rally Croatia, taking place from April 22 to 25. It will be the Irish pair's first asphalt WRC round together, although Craig and Paul should feel right at home having both learned their skills on Ireland's classic tarmac stages.

Co-driver Paul had one of his earliest experiences in a

competitive car partnering Andersonstown man Kieran O'Neill to second overall in the Killarney Historic Rally in 1998. Further good news was the confirmation that Carnmoney co-driver Chris Patterson will return to the WRC partnering Ford M-Sport's Gus Greensmith in April's Rally Croatia. Chris will bring years of top-flight experience to the team as Greensmith continues his rookie year in a World Rally car. Chris last competed in World Rally in Spain in 2018 when he partnered Khalid Al-Qassimi in a Citroen C3 WRC

and has partnered both Kris Meeke and Petter Solberg in the past.

And finally, Belfast pair William Creighton and co-driver Liam Regan are set to debut in the Junior World Rally Championship campaign, also in Rally Croatia. Despite a positive result in the Czech Republic a few weeks ago, where they finished second fastest Rally4 crew, they are bracing themselves for the much quicker pace of World Rally Championship Competition.

Keep them between the hedges, boys.

A feast of classic cars

DUE to an unprecedented demand for entries for the 2021 Déjà Vu West charity classic rally, run September 17 and 18, organisers have closed applications and are now taking only expressions of interest for a reserve list.

More than one hundred and thirty classic rally car owners, including several local drivers, have registered for what promises to be a magnificent run through some of the most famous rally stages in Mayo and Connemara, where, subject to Covid regulations, spectators can expect to see a magnificent exhibition of classic cars including 911s, Cooper Ss, Escorts, Subarus, Celicas, Mantas, Kadettes, Sunbeam Lotus, Tigers and Avengers, Astras, Chevettes, and many more.

The event commences on Saturday morning with a grand cavalcade start at Westport Mall, entrants will then wend their way in convoy through the town before heading off on a 130-mile round trip taking in Roundhouse in County Galway.

In addition to the cars, the event has attracted some legendary motoring personalities such as Paddy Hopkirk, Jimmy McRae, Rosemary Smith and Austin McHale, who as well as driving in the event will (again subject to restrictions)



be available to meet Irish motorsport fans new and old.

Déjà Vu Ireland West will herald the grand re-awakening of historic motorsport in Ireland, a time

to celebrate and rekindle some old friendships, meeting people we haven't seen for a while. And a time to see and remember old cars and competitions.