

PE1600/C

RAC Email of 13 July 2016

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for contacting RAC regarding the use of speed awareness courses in response to a public petition.

Can I begin by explaining that with more than eight million members, the RAC is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. As such, we are committed to making driving easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for all road users.

We welcome the Scottish Parliament's Public Petition Committee's review into whether the use of national speed awareness courses should be considered further. Statistics show that around 1.2 million drivers opted to take driver awareness courses in 2015 instead of receiving penalty points and a fine. In 2010, the figures were just under 450,000. This marked rise shows clearly it is an increasingly popular alternative for drivers who have been caught driving over the speed limit. As you can imagine, comparing these figures alongside data of drivers caught speeding over the same period may not give an accurate picture of the success of these courses, due to possible increased use of speed cameras and reductions in the numbers of road traffic police officers.

In relation to the effectiveness of these courses, there is currently on-going research by the Department of Transport through a survey of motorists who have attended such courses. The research is currently being undertaken and it would therefore be inappropriate to pre-judge what it may show. I understand there will be further meetings to progress this research later in the summer. In 2013, Aston University conducted their own research into the effectiveness of such awareness courses. Within this research they found that the courses can have a positive long term impact on driving behaviour. Further information can be found here <http://www.aston.ac.uk/news/releases/2013/january/speed-awareness-courses/>.

Although the evidence is limited, the RAC believes that the offer of educational courses, as opposed to punishment, may act as a catalyst for improved driver behaviour and could have some positive impacts upon road safety overall. The purpose of these courses is to make motorists aware of the consequences that speeding can have and to encourage them to adjust their driving style appropriately. If a proportion of those attending become safer drivers as a result, this is clearly preferable to punishment through fines and points because behavioural change has a far more enduring benefits. We would certainly therefore not oppose a roll-out of these courses across Scotland, giving Scottish

drivers the same opportunities as those across the United Kingdom in understanding the consequences of dangerous driving.

Please not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information, and please also take this email as our response to your request.

With best wishes,

Nick Lyes
RAC