

PE1600/A

Petitioner Email of 16 June 2016

Chris,

Thanks for the update on my petition.

If possible I would wish the committee to read the attached statement.

National Speed Awareness Course

In 2015, according to Government statistics 1,207,570 drivers opted to complete a Speed Awareness Course (NSAC), as an alternative to receiving fixed penalty points and a fine.

The National Speed Awareness Course (NSAC) scheme is designed to allow the Police to divert low-end speeding motorists to a re-education course. The course content is designed to change the driver's behaviour with the aim of preventing the driver from reoffending.

To qualify for a National Speed Awareness Course the driver's speeding needs to be within certain limits for example in a 30mph zone, your speed needs to be between 35mph and 42mph. On motorways, the figure needs to be between 79mph and 86mph. Furthermore, you will not be offered a Speed Awareness Course if you have taken one in the three years prior to your most recent speeding offence.

The National Speed Awareness Course is a half-day theory based workshop designed to help you recognise speed limits, address the reasons for speeding and give you information to help you reduce the likelihood of speeding in the future. Completing the workshop means that you will not have to pay the Fixed Penalty Notice and you will not get penalty points on your licence.

Deputy Chief Constable Suzette Davenport, told the BBC that going on a course is "not a punishment". "We would argue that this is about improving road safety and therefore reducing risk, so it is a real concern to us".

"I've had many letters come to me that say 'this was a really good course, I will do things differently' - if people are doing that then that is reducing the risk.

An independent survey, commissioned by Acpo, of more than 2,000 people who had taken a speed awareness course, found that 99% of drivers claimed to have changed their behaviour as a result of attending.

These courses improve driving standards, and mean we could have a constructive solution to minor motoring offences. The Scottish Government has said it will look into this, but nothing has happened, and now it's time.

In England more than one million drivers attend these courses every year and we it is hugely beneficial to sit drivers down and challenge their behaviour in this way. Because it is up to the Procurator Fiscal rather than the police officer by the side of the road to decide whether to prosecute or ticket someone, there are some legal issues that would require to be sorted before these courses could be offered as an alternative to a ticket but those issues can be resolved.

Speed Awareness courses - an Alternative to Prosecution

A recent study from the University of Reading, ⁵² 'Speed Awareness: The effect of education versus punishment on driver attitudes' concluded that those who had gone through the Thames Valley course had been, in the most part, positively influenced. There was clear evidence that attendance was significantly associated with more positive attitudes to existing speed control. Those who attended mainly:

- Gave approval for significantly higher camera numbers than all groups of drivers who had been punished with a fixed penalty.
- Considered a speed limit breach of 35 mph in a 30 mph limit significantly more unacceptable than those groups receiving punishment.
- Were more in favour of stricter speed control in the future.

All of these differences were sustained across a period of six months. The report also considered that these newly formed beliefs would help improve public acceptability of future speed enforcement.

In my case I would have happily attended the course however to go to Carlisle from Invergordon would require at least one night's accommodation plus the cost of travel, 275 miles one way. So a round trip of 550 miles plus one night's accommodation and dinner, roughly £150. Economics make the decision as the fine was £100.

The Scottish Government have been reviewing this since at least 2009. Just how long does it take to come to a decision.

Kind regards

John Chapman