

# RIGHT TO RIDE

**Having given MAG, a right of reply to the original "Big Debate" editorial, it's only fair that we afford Right to Ride the opportunity to respond to comments in that response, to clarify their position.**

**Don't worry, I'm not going to reprint the original every time, because now that the debate is rolling, it hopefully will gain its own momentum, and more importantly get people talking about the issues that this raises.**



The comments accredited to MAG UK President Ian Mutch and Campaign Manager, Paddy Tyson regarding Right To Ride, in response to the article "The Big Debate" in American-V, were a surprise because it is not true that we have tried to undermine MAG UK. Not only do their actions break an agreement we had with the MAG Chairman to refrain from criticizing each other publicly, but because they have chosen not to honour this agreement, we have reflected on where we go from here and what is in the best interests of Right To Ride and of our 1000+ supporters.

For the record, we set up Right To Ride in order to report what is happening in Europe and here locally in Northern Ireland, to use our knowledge and experience as lobbyists for the benefit of motorcycling. Our opinions may differ from others including Ian and Paddy, but we have the right to express them, hopefully to get people thinking and to stimulate debate. If anybody looks at our websites, there is nothing in our articles that aims to undermine any organisation. However, we recognise there will always be unintended consequences.

With regards to the proposal for European-wide introduction of road worthiness testing for motorcycles and scooters, we don't understand what Ian and Paddy are insinuating.

We reported on the Commission's proposal on RWT and stated that there will be no change to the frequency of MoT for motorcyclists in this country, and from what we have read the focus of this proposal is on cars. Although we believe that the present MoT is valid and worthwhile in Northern Ireland (and to a large degree in the rest of the UK), we wrote that we support the right to protest of riders from other EU countries in Brussels in September. We will continue to report the progress of this proposal, as with our report "Testing Times" on 20th August, 2012 on our website ([www.righttoride.eu](http://www.righttoride.eu)). While we appreciate that headlines warning of a Super MoT and/or the end of motorcycling as we know it are appealing, as we saw with the 'anti-tampering' proposal – which took three years of discussions – it's a proposal!

With regards to their comment "Ironically however, the Am V article then says the ABS case has been lost, with only an addendum added so that manufacturers can fit a switch. This is quite incorrect. An addendum is exactly what we are calling for and will continue to call for, even though RTR believe this foolish". This switch wasn't under discussion until the Federation of European Motorcyclists' Associations' (FEMA) General Secretary raised it at a meeting with the Commission. Whatever views the Commission held about a switch, it was not their decision to make because this technical aspect falls under UNECE regulation 78. ACEM (The Motorcycle Industry in Europe) pointed out that the ABS switch is permitted by EU legislation, and in the absence of text in the proposal explicitly prohibiting a switch, it wasn't an issue. It is our understanding that the 'compromise' call for a switch by FEMA (and MAG) signalled to the IMCO (Internal Market and Consumer Protection) Committee and the Commission that riders' organisations in Europe were prepared to accept mandatory ABS: in other words FEMA (and MAG) screwed up, because they didn't understand the technical details. Our position was then and is now, that ABS should remain a voluntary option, which we wrote about in an article entitled "What the Hell!" back in October 2010.

A further comment in the response from Ian and his colleague appears to refer to Right To Ride's article of 17th July 2012 entitled "Washington Post" about an MP (Steve Baker). The Washington Post article states "Proposed new pan-European rules would forbid motorcycle owners from doctoring bikes themselves, outraging tens of thousands of British bikers and becoming the latest symbol here of continental authority run amok". According to "The Washington Post", "Baker is also the wrong biker to mess with."

We wrote "As Chairman of the Associate Parliamentary Motorcycle Group he (Baker) has been briefed on the regulation and is therefore fully aware that there is nothing within the proposal that would forbid motorcycle owners from 'doctoring' their bikes." We concluded that the

article had been written on the premise of a lie. The link to MAG UK is made by Steve Baker, which we reported on.

We have also reported on the EU Type Approval proposal including positions from rider organisations and the motorcycle press. While Ian was riding around Brussels on November 22nd 2011 as part of the Motorcycle News demo, we were in a meeting, also in Brussels, discussing issues with the Commission representative responsible for the proposal, who clarified that there was no intention of banning 'positive modifications'. From our perspective, here lies the confusion: anti-tampering = illegal modifications NOT legal/positive modifications.

On June 22nd 2012, one of our sources in the IMCO Committee informed us that "The Parliament has agreed to Council's position on not mandating ABS on scooters (50 to 125cc), it has also agreed with the Council on limiting the anti-tampering provisions to lesser powered motorcycles only and making them manufacturer obligations only, so categories L3eA2 (Medium performance motorcycle) and L3eA3 (High performance motorcycle) are entirely excluded from the anti-tampering measures. The Parliament has also agreed to not having detailed EU rules on Individual Approval in this Regulation, with this left to national rules".

On July 17th 2012, we published "EU Regulations – Almost There" in which we confirmed the above statement. One of our sources in the IMCO Committee had sent us this information and we were also informed that the DfT was fully aware of this development in the negotiations, which appears to contradict the comment "... in no small part because of the almost weekly contact MAG has with the DfT ...". If it is true that 'MAG' is in 'almost' weekly contact with the DfT, then 'MAG' would have had to know about this latest development, which as mentioned above, excludes categories L3e A2/A3 from the 'anti-tampering' measures, which we understood was central to MAG UK's campaign.

Finally, our thanks to Ian and Paddy for giving us the opportunity to present this clarification of our position.

**Trevor Baird & Elaine Hardy: Right To Ride.**

## UPDATE • UPDATE • UPDATE

I left a couple of questions hanging at the end of my response to MAG's reply last issue and was pleased to get an immediate response to one of them from Nich Brown, MAG's General Secretary.

With regard to the accusation of lobbyists' emails "threatening his life" made by Liberal Democrat MEP for East Midlands, Bill Newton Dunn, Nich had a meeting with him and was reassured to hear that such things were not unusual; and in qualifying that with Bill Newton Dunn I received the following response on the 14th August 2012:

*"Yes, I had a coffee with Nick Brown and he seemed very pleasant.*

*There have been no other threats since then, merely abuse.*

*In public life you have to learn to take abuse – it is part and parcel of democracy, and so could even be called healthy. But if there were to be a more specific threat in future, then the police would certainly be informed."*

I am pleased to be able to set the record straight and to report that MAG did take the accusation seriously, but I failed to get the point across to Nich that it was in MAG's interests to issue a clarification to that effect – although he did acknowledge a need to improve communications. I have since found an undated release believed to be from July 2012, from Paddy Tyson, MAG Campaign Manager, stating:

*"... (Bill Newton Dunn) has written of MAG members issuing death threats, yet when we offered to help him press charges, he said 'don't worry, I'm used to it' and failed to provide specifics.*

*MAG will not condone threatening behaviour and it won't help any lobby case ..."*

I firmly believe that this stuff needs to be put in the public domain because the internet has a long memory, and if such statements go unchallenged, it's difficult to later say they were unfounded. /Andy