



## Sussex Advanced Motorists – Newsletter Summer 2020

### A word from the (temporary) Editor

Hi All

Hopefully you are well and have escaped the menaces of the virus and will continue to do so.

Looking at the calendar, our next Members Meeting should be on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. Unless circumstances change dramatically for the better I cannot see how it would be safe to meet as a largish group on that date, even though it might be legal with face coverings. Regretfully I think we will have to cancel yet another meeting. But should a miracle happen I would message everybody.

We have also not forgotten the AGM, which will happen as soon as it is safe to meet in groups again; we will let you know.

Things are changing rapidly. As I write this we are still under partial lockdown though motorbikes have started tutored rides and before long driving instruction (including advanced driving) in a car can start again. On a motor bike it is easy to maintain social distancing but not much chance of that in a car, even sitting in the back seat puts you very close to the driver. I look at it this way: advanced driving is supposed to save lives on our roads; keeping to social distancing might well save lives too by preventing people from being infected by a virus that could prove fatal. To me that makes the choice easy.

This matter will be discussed at a committee meeting next week and a risk assessment undertaken; I will keep you informed.

Until we can meet once more without social distancing,

Keep safe, keep well

Margret  
Group Secretary

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## **From our Chairman (written before the latest advice re driving instructions)**

Dear All

I hope you are all well and finding lots to do in this unusual time. Currently Observed Drives are not yet starting again. As soon as we get notice to resume it will be good to get back to normal?

The AGM was suspended and the current committee have stayed on - once we have the AGM maybe new members will stand. Our bi-monthly meetings were also on hold and again when they resume we shall find some speakers?

Personally, I have been occupied walking. Gardening has been my other occupation. It has been fortuitous that the weather has been good. Perhaps this has helped take the edge of the lockdown?

I was lucky to sell my Mother's house in April - she passed away in March last year. Once we get a clearer picture of what we can do, then we can arrange meetings and the AGM.

Until then, all the best to you all. Keep cheerful and well.

Anthony

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## **From the Group Secretary**

Hello Everybody,

You might be surprised to find that this newsletter is edited by me, the Group Secretary. The sad truth is that we are still without an editor for our newsletter and I have decided to step in for this one occasion.

Unfortunately even now our movements are still restricted and we are encouraged not to drive very far. And this follows several weeks of lockdown with only essential trips in the car allowed. I am wondering – have we all got out of the habit and finesse of advanced driving? I certainly feel I can do with some practice and will take myself out for a few practice drives just to be sure I am still up to standard. And if you feel the same and would like some help to polish up your skills (especially if your re-test is imminent) – let Duncan, our Training Officer know and he will arrange a session with one of our trained tutors for you (once we can safely resume tutored drives). In addition, below I give details of a webinar run by IAM Roadsmart on 7 July 19.00 to 20.00 entitled “driving post lockdown”, I certainly will join even if just to jog my memory.

Lastly, can I repeat my plea from the previous newsletter: we need volunteers to help run the Group in various capacities, please consider if you could spare a little time. It sounds corny, but it would be for the common good.

At present we need a treasurer and a newsletter editor. None of these roles will take up too much of your time (we only have 6 committee meetings per year) and if you need help to get familiar with the role - we are a very friendly committee and always willing to help each other.

In addition, our website looks rather tired and it would be good to have a fresh and current site. What we need is a web designer; we can write all the necessary text but we need someone to put it all into a suitable order and put it on the web for us. Our current website is hosted on Wix, anything like that would be useful.

Margret

## **Taking the RoSPA Advanced Driving Course and Test – by Josh Hill**

It takes somewhere between 15 and 30 milliseconds for an airbag to deploy in a motor vehicle. When you get into an accident your body produces adrenaline. Lots of adrenaline. Whilst my car was spinning, I could see the airbag begin to deploy, it felt like an eternity. This is the accident that wrote off my first car and made me decide to take the advanced driving test.

My best friend described my driving before I took the advanced test as “You drive as if you want to die.” That has all changed. In summary the biggest things that I was taught by taking the advanced driving course included patience, an understanding of how to drive my car maximising my safety and above all that I can still have fun driving my car, without driving in a way that could injure me or other people.

In my first advanced driving lesson my tutor looked at the way in which I drove and showed me her driving her car around the exact same course. It was immediately obvious that she was driving more smoothly and that she was able to react to the changing road conditions much more easily than I could, whilst driving at the same speed I was.

Over the course of the next few months I met with my tutor and we discussed the finer points of advanced driving, always driving different routes where I would have to react to different circumstances and situations. The biggest area of struggle for me was definitely braking for turns and roundabouts as I had been taught the same thing that all new drivers are taught by their instructors – go around the corner with your foot on the brake! My tutor helped me overcome my issues and explained to me why different ideas worked: such as the limit point, ABS on your car and why we position the way we do when we go around corners – before it was explained to me why we take the line of best visibility I was an avid user of the racing line!

As a person I dislike taking tests, but the ROSPA experience was completely different. I was thoroughly prepared by my tutor and I was just going to turn up and do the best I could. I didn't really mind what grade I achieved as I knew I was a much better, smoother, safer driver, so after a lovely drive – where I still made some mistakes and learned something – I was pleasantly surprised to be awarded with a Gold – the highest level of achievement in the advanced test at only 23!

The whole experience was thoroughly enjoyable, my tutor was easy to get on with and helped me; as a result of getting involved with ROSPA, I am now myself a tutor which pairs quite nicely with my professional life as I have just graduated from Chichester University on a Primary Teaching Degree.

Thank you ROSPA I am now completely sure that I would not end up in the same situation that caused my original accident. My patience in the same situation as well as the way I would have reacted would be completely different. After all what is more important getting home 5 minutes quicker or being alive?

Josh Hill  
Tutor

## From Graham Feest Consultancy Newsletter

### Finding a Car Parking Space

Drivers spend an average of 44 hours a year searching for a parking space a study has found. Wasted time, fuel, overpaying for parking and fines cost the typical motorists £733 a year according to research carried out by traffic information Inrix.

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### Driving Post Lockdown

If you want to make sure that your standard of driving has not deteriorated during lockdown, think about watching some of the videos on YouTube; my favourite ones are by Chris Gilbert and Reg Local but there are many more, some good and some not so good. You might also like to watch this Webinar (it is organised by the IAM but advanced driving is the same everywhere, just ignore any advertising):

#### Webinar

Microsoft Teams

**Tuesday, 07 July 2020, 19:00 - 20:00**

In our Driving Post Lockdown webinar, we'll be discussing getting back in your car as lockdown restrictions ease, refreshing/introducing your knowledge of advanced driving techniques and discussing the changes on the roads as we head out more frequently when lockdown restrictions ease. We'll also update you on our latest activities since lockdown started.

The webinar will be hosted on Microsoft Teams, [click here to join](#) on the night. We suggest you do this a little before 7pm to give yourself time to set everything up. You do not need to have a Microsoft Teams account to take part. You can click on this link at any time between now and the webinar to test it and get yourself set up.

If you are using a PC or laptop, the link will work in any internet browser; you can either choose to view within the browser or download the Teams App. Join as a guest by typing your name in, once you have clicked the link. Ensure your camera and microphone are enabled, however, please keep these turned off on the app when you join.

If you are using a phone or tablet, download the Microsoft Teams App in your app store. Join as a guest by typing your name into the app after you have clicked the link. Ensure your camera and microphone are enabled, however, please keep these turned off on the app when you join.

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## **Advice for Driving Instructors (Tutors) in the Covid-19 age.**

As the government will soon allow driving lessons to resume, here is some advice which I have copied from the Graham Feest Consultancy Newsletter. (I have abbreviated the article slightly) It is meant for driving instructors but applies equally to advance driving tutoring and those learning about advanced driving.

If you make the choice to return to work then make sure that you follow these guidelines:

### **Recommencing Work:**

When and if you make the choice to return to work it will be an individual decision ....., but we advise that you make sure that you follow these guidelines:

### **Before collecting the client:**

- Consider whether you or they have had any symptoms of the virus within the last 7 days or have been in contact with someone who has within the last 14 days.
- Before you leave to collect the client for a lesson call or text them and check if they have had any symptoms of the virus within the last 7 days.
- (ask) If they know anyone or have been in contact with anyone that is showing symptoms or has been doing so within the last 14 days.
- Remind them to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds, in line with Government guidance, immediately before leaving the house for their lesson. If they want to wear disposable gloves, to put them on just before getting into the car.
- Make sure you ask the client to wear clothing that is suitable and covers as much of them as possible, including arms and legs.
- Once you arrive to collect them you should again assess whether they are well enough to start the lesson. Do not let them get into the car straight away but have a conversation with them at least 2 metres away and see if you notice any symptoms. Arrange to meet by the vehicle not at their front door.
- **You need to be 100% happy with their state and if you are not don't start the lesson and explain you need to cancel until they have recovered fully.** Ideally do this before every lesson you have, even if you only saw the pupil the day before.
- Make sure then that they have washed their hands or have hand sanitizer ready for them, making sure they sanitize their hands before getting into the car.
- Explain that you have also just cleaned your hands with hand sanitizer, or soap and water where possible, and that both of you should avoid touching your face and hands.
- Explain you will not shake their hand or share visual aids, pens etc. with them and will be minimising contact with them for safety.....
- Explain that the windows will be down as much as possible during the lesson to allow for ventilation, and tell them to wrap up warm as it might be cooler in the car.
- Avoid using the air conditioning if possible; however if it is used don't set it to recirculate.....

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):**

- It is essential you have hand sanitiser and clean your hands as frequently as you can .....

### **You may also want to consider the following:**

- Disposable gloves could be worn by yourself and the client but you will still need to wash your hands ....., You will need to change them after each lesson.
- Face masks: You could also use face masks or coverings. .... Have a supply of both gloves and masks to offer your client before they enter the vehicle .....

### **During the lesson consider the following:**

- Visual aids and any training resources should be held up and not passed between the two of you to hold and touch.....
- Try to avoid directly facing each other when discussing scenarios, it is safer to face forwards in the vehicle because we cannot maintain being 2 metres apart.....

## EMERGENCY VEHICLES

Under the above heading on page 6 of the March 2020 issue I indicated that a new Blue Light Aware video (<https://www.bluelightaware.org.uk>) was due to be launched at the end of March. Unfortunately owing to the Coronavirus lockdown this has been delayed until September. I suggest that all members please check the website for themselves in September to see the new video.

On another subject I think these safety messages are old but still very valid.

1. The careless driver isn't driving his car he's aiming it.
2. It isn't the car that kills, it's the driver.
3. No matter how new, the safest device in your car is you.
4. Reckless driving doesn't determine who's right, only who's left.

Malcolm Taylor, Committee Member

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## Some government advice during the Covid-19 crisis (copied from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

### Licence Renewal

Not all drivers have access to a computer and therefore they might not be able to renew their driving licence online. Due to the pandemic processing of paper applications is slower than normal. In this case the DVLA will accept a paper application, and if all conditions are fulfilled you will be able to continue driving whilst your application is processed.

The conditions:

- You have applied for a driving licence.
- Your doctor must have declared you fit to drive.
- You only drive vehicles that your old licence permits you to drive.
- You meet all conditions that were specified on your previous licence,
- You are not currently disqualified

### Renewing your Licence at 70.

RoSPA have been made aware of a number of websites offering licence renewal at 70 for a fee, usually in exchange for an 'application checking service'. Generally this fee is non-refundable. The facts: you can renew your driving licence online with DVLA for free if you are 70 or over (or will be 70 in the next 90 days).

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## DVLA Eyesight Awareness Campaign

The DVLA awareness campaign reminds people to check they can read a car number plate from 20 metres (about 5 car length or 8 parking bays) away (wearing glasses if necessary). Anyone concerned about his or her eyesight should visit the optician or optometrist for an eye test.

### A true story in relation to the need to have good eyesight for driving

On traffic duty a police officer observed a car swerving all over the road. He stopped the car, asking the driver to get out and take an eye test. The man duly obeyed and took a roadside eye test: at 20 metres – he is unable to read the number plate, same at 15m, 10m, and 5m. Finally at 2 metres he can oblige. And he explains: he knows that his eyesight is very bad and he only drives with his wife sitting next to him. She does not have a driving licence herself but tells him what to do and when, how far hazards are, etc. And he drives according to her advice.

Needless to say he lost his licence.

*Are there more people on the road driving with such poor eyesight?*

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## From the GEM blog

ROAD SAFETY and breakdown organisation GEM Motoring Assist is warning drivers that it's not just speeding, seatbelts and mobile phone use that can bring them to the attention of the police. There are a host of other infringements, some better known than others, which can result in drivers picking up fines they may not have been expecting.

GEM has identified five situations – generally less obvious – where getting it wrong generally leads to a penalty of some sort:

### **Driving too close past a cyclist:**

The recommended distance for passing a cyclist is 1.5 metres. If you are seen overtaking too close to a cyclist, you face prosecution, with a £100 fixed penalty ticket and three points on your licence.

### **Parking by a pedestrian crossing**

No one is allowed to park on the zig-zag lines found at pedestrian crossings (unless it's an emergency situation or the reason you stopped was beyond your control). If you do, you risk a £100 fine and three penalty points on your licence.

### **Attaching a non-compliant number plate**

Number-plates should show your vehicle registration number correctly, according to the DVLA. They must be made from a reflective material, and be black on white for the front and black on yellow for the rear. Strict rules apply concerning fonts, styles and letter sizes. Non-compliance in the first instance will lead to a £100 non-endorsable ticket. DVLA has the power to cancel your right to use a cherished plate, so if you have paid a king's ransom for it, then it makes sense to ensure you display it correctly.

### **Driving with a defective tyre**

Make regular checks of your tyre pressures and tread depths. The minimum legal tread depth is 1.6mm across the all-round central three-quarters of the tyre. If one of your tyres is below this, you face a £100 fine with three points on your licence. If more than one tyre is faulty, you will face a court hearing where you can receive a fine of up to £2,500 and three points *per tyre*. The 20p test is a simple way to check tyre tread. Pop a 20p coin into a tread groove. If you can see the outer band of the coin, then you must replace the tyre. An underinflated tyre can also lead to points and a fine.

### **Satnavs, dashcams and other items that may obstruct your view**

Windscreen obstruction is measured by zones. Zone A refers to the area directly in front of you when you're driving, and this area must not contain any obstruction measuring over 10mm in diameter. Zone B refers to the rest of the windscreen, where stickers and other obstructions) must not measure more than 40mm.

The Highway Code states "windscreens and windows MUST be kept clean and free from obstructions to vision". So if you use a satnav, then it makes sense to buy a holder you can insert into an air vent, rather than risk mounting it on the windscreen. We recommend that you should mount a dashcam between the rear-view mirror and windscreen, as this ensures it is entirely out of your view when driving, and will not mean you risk a penalty.

If you do not have a 'full view' of the road and traffic ahead, you can be fined £200 with six points on your licence.

### **And some Good News from GEM**

I have just learnt that GEM Motoring Assist offers RoSPA Sussex Drivers' members a 25% discount on their breakdown service.

Good news indeed in these hard times.

Information from Neil Worth, CEO, Gem Motoring Assist

## **THE BRAKE THAT NEVER WAS**

by Douglas Wragg, Accident Investigator

When looking back through the files, certain cases merit another reading, not least this one, as it was the first case I ever undertook.

The story starts in 1977, when I was approached by a “Man from the Ministry” who asked me to look into an incident which had happened a few weeks earlier. He could not, by virtue of his position, take any action in this case. This situation involved a lady, whom we shall call Mrs. Caldwell. She had been driving a new Datsun, which she had owned for only a matter of weeks, from Beachy Head to Eastbourne on a hot and sunny day in the middle of summer.

As she began the descent, she put her foot on the brake pedal which went straight to the floor. She pumped the pedal, but to no avail. The car continued to pick up speed. Vainly she tried to engage second gear, but by this time she was travelling too fast to make the gear change. Eventually, and in desperation, she pulled on the handbrake – just at the point where the new loose chippings had been laid on the road that morning.

The rear wheels locked, and the car spun round several times before coming to rest by the side of the road.

The result of this “manoeuvre” was that by now three cars had been written off.

The Police were summoned to the scene of the incident. Mrs Caldwell told the officer “I put my foot on the brake pedal and it went straight to the floor.” The Police officer put his foot on the brake pedal and found a firm and hard pedal, indicating that the brakes were fully functional.

Mrs. Caldwell was adamant in her assertion about the lack of brakes. The Police officer told her that he believed what she said was true, but that the final decision did not rest with him.

Eventually Mrs. Caldwell was charged with dangerous driving. This she strenuously denied. She freely admitted to writing off three cars, but not driving dangerously.

The scenario of this incident sounds like it could have been written by the script writers of a television “soap”.

Where to begin in this investigation? As always, due to the elapsed time, there was little point in visiting the scene of the incident except to gain a pictorial view of the area. Therefore, the first port of call was with the vehicle itself.

This took some time, as the car had been removed to a breakers yard. Eventually it was tracked down and an appointment made to inspect the vehicle.

This was not entirely straightforward procedure, as it was “neatly stacked” under two other vehicles, and working on it was slightly hazardous.

However, despite all of this, the brake master cylinder was removed and sealed, a sample of the brake fluid was taken for analysis and the front and rear brakes were examined.

Of particular interest was the fact that there was a considerable amount of brake dust on the front disc brakes and pads, but the rear brakes and drums were completely dust free. “Curiouser and curiouser” said Alice.

The sample of brake fluid was sent to a well-known oil company who measured the water contamination and boiling point of the fluid.

It is worth recalling that in 1977 considerable interest was being shown in this country on the effect of water contamination of brake fluid and its relationship to the boiling point. When the fluid boils it produces a condition known as “vapour lock”. When this occurs, the fluid becomes steam and it readily compressible. In liquid form, brake fluid is almost incompressible. The expansion rate from liquid to vapour is in the region of 1700:1

A great deal of pioneering work had been done in the U.S.A. by Markey, who as far back as the 1930s had maintained that vapour lock could, and did occur. He was not immediately believed,



and his findings went largely unnoticed for many years. Ironically, perhaps, that when interest was shown in this country, the industry standard equipment was known as the Markey Tester. It was an adaptation of a laboratory apparatus for determining the boiling point of liquids.

In its original condition, brake fluid (depending upon its specification) will boil at about 250°C. 1% of water contamination will lower the boiling point to 175°C, and thereafter, progressive contamination lowers the boiling but by a lesser amount. (The graph is a curve rather than a straight line.) The recommended maximum of water contamination for brake fluid at that time was 1%.

The results of the tests on the brake fluid showed a boiling or vapour lock point of 120°C indicating significant contamination. The fluid was also heavily discoloured due to heat, and contained a large amount of rubber particles.

A question sometimes asked is where does the water found in brake fluid come from? The answer is that brake fluid is hygroscopic – it has an affinity for water – and will absorb moisture readily.

This can be via the dust seals on the brake wheel cylinders and callipers, via the atmospheric vent hole in the in the brake fluid reservoir filler cap, and interestingly, through the flexible brake hoses.

In order to obtain a valid assessment of the condition of the brake fluid in a vehicle, a sample is taken (in this country) from the left-hand front brake assembly. Left-hand, because it is the dirtiest side of the vehicle and nearest to the kerb, and front brake, because more work is done by the front brakes in relation to the rear brakes.

Having established the condition of the brake fluid, attention turned to the brake master cylinder. This was of the tandem type, whereby there are two actuating pistons; the front one controlling the rear brakes, and the rear piston controlling the front brakes. For ease of recognition and clarity, these are most usually referred to as the primary and secondary circuits.

In theory, if one of the circuits fails, the other one will provide braking, albeit at reduced efficiency. This did not appear to have happened in this case, and the foremost question was “why”?

Upon dismantling the master cylinder it was discovered that the piston seal for the rear brakes was deformed and part of the lip seal could not touch the cylinder bore. From the condition of the seal it was apparent that the deformation had occurred during the manufacturing process, and that the seal had never worked at all.

Therefore, all braking had been carried out on the front brakes. This would have given the impression to the driver of a powerful braking system, as the nose of the vehicle would have dipped on firm application of the brakes.

This also explained why brake dust was found on the front brakes and why the rear brakes were dust free.

A picture emerged of a braking system in which only the front brakes functioned, and brake fluid which was contaminated.

Given the prevailing conditions; a hot day, a steep downhill descent and only one braking circuit functioning, it was easy to see that in all probability this vehicle had suffered vapour lock immediately prior to the incident.

It would also explain the fact that when the Police officer put his foot on the brake pedal he found a firm resistance. In the intervening time between the incident and his arrival, the brake fluid would have cooled sufficiently for it to return from vapour to liquid.

One thing I could never understand was why almost nobody believed Mrs. Caldwell's version of the events. She was an intelligent, professional and highly articulate lady – not the sort of person to invent an excuse in order to avoid responsibility.

At the court hearing, the Police offered no evidence, and so the case was dismissed by the Bench.

Mrs. Caldwell left court without a stain on her character, smiling sweetly and saying "I told you so."

Everyone was happy, justice has been done and my first case had been successful. In accordance with the solicitor's instructions I returned the parts from the car to the breakers yard and consigned the file to the archives.

Imagine, then, my surprise when six months later I received a letter from the solicitors informing me that Mrs. Caldwell had decided to sue Datsun for selling her a defective car. All the material evidence had now disappeared, and this promised to be a fiercely-contested case – based almost entirely on the technical evidence.

Months later, after counsel's briefing and endless correspondence the case was heard in front of learned judge, whose grasp of things mechanical was not overly great. I had obtained an identical brake master cylinder, which had been dismantled and laid out on a sheet so that the components could be seen by learned judge as they were referred to in evidence. At one point it was necessary for me to leave the witness box and stand next to him to point out the various parts of the braking system as they were being discussed. He was having considerable difficulty with the concept that the front piston controlled the rear brakes whilst the rear piston controlled the front.

In all innocence – remember that this was my first case – I said to the judge "would it help if we referred to these as the primary and secondary pistons and circuits?" "**No it would not**" was the quite emphatic reply.

In all, my evidence lasted for 7 hours - 6½ of those under cross-examination! That really has to be an understatement, as for those last 6 ½ hours I was having the stuffing knocked out of me by the counsel for the defence.

I felt quite dispirited when listening to the summing up by the defence, who, with dramatic oratory declaimed "...and I find it incredible that the expert witness states that..." "...Mr. Wragg's assertion stretches credulity to the breaking point..." So it went on, and I sat there feeling quite miserable, and with an overwhelming feeling that I had let people down.

When the counsel for the plaintiff rose to give his summing up, the judge smiled at him and said "I will not trouble you further, as I have already decided this case, and I find for the plaintiff." Whereupon, he rose, bowed and left the Court. It took me a few moments to grasp what had actually happened – we had won!

The verdict was in favour of Mrs. Caldwell, which was very satisfactory for everyone except Datsun – no smiles from that side of the court.

After the departure of the judge, the two counsels approached each, drew calculators from somewhere inside their gowns and started a little haggling. "...So that is three cars at £10,000 a piece, over 2 ½ years at 8% per annum..." and so on

I never thought that I would ever have occasion to act for Mrs. Caldwell again, but I was wrong. About five years later she telephoned to ask for urgent help. But that is another story for a later time.

Douglas Wragg

Douglas is an honorary life member of Sussex Advanced Drivers, being involved since the inaugural meeting. He is an independent consulting engineer and here he recounts his very first investigation case. Par 2 will appear in our next newsletter

## This is your committee

(Please don't hesitate to contact any of us if you have a query).

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### Group Secretary's notes:

#### All meetings are held at:

St John Ambulance, 16 Crowhurst Road, Hollingbury, Brighton, BN1 8AP

Start time: 7.30 for 8pm

To ensure you are kept informed of news and extra activities arranged for the Group, please could all members and associate members let us know of any changes to their contact details so that we can update the Group's database.

Margret Preece (Group Secretary - margretp@clara.co.uk) or

Gwyn Davies (Membership Secretary - membershipsecretary@mail.com)

### Events

Sadly no events are planned at present. Our program of talks will resume once the present crisis is under control and we can meet again in groups without worrying of catching the corona virus. We had to cancel speakers like Neil Worth of GEM, Colin O'Neill, the examiner etc.

### Sussex RoSPA

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