



Motorcycle Friendly Crash Barriers & Wire Rope Barriers

MAG has been leading this campaign for the fitting of motorcycle-friendly crash barriers and the removal of wire rope barriers from the UK roads over the past year or so.

The issue has been pushed through FEMA (Federation of European Motorcyclists Associations) mainly by MAG, MAG Netherlands and NMCU Norway the effort culminating in the production of the FEMA 2005 document, "The Road to Success" *.

MAG Netherlands have been very successful with their continued drive for the fitting of motorcycle-friendly crash barriers and the removal of wire rope barriers fitted in the Netherlands with the last wire rope barrier in the Netherlands being dismantled last month!

In Norway NMCU report that the Norwegian Minister of Transport has announced a ban on further use of cable barriers. Unfortunately she could not promise the immediate removal of existing cable barriers, but still...it is a glorious victory!

The Norwegian Public Roads Administration has argued that cable barriers cost a lot less than other barrier designs. While it is true that cable barriers are cheaper to purchase, maintenance costs have proven to be astronomical, and thus the total cost ends up comparable to other designs.

FEMA organised an event in the European Parliament in April 2006 supported by Mrs Wortmann – Kool MEP from the Netherlands and both she and Mr. Queiro MEP from Portugal tabled a series of questions to the European Commission urging them to promote best practice for road construction for motorcycles, the regular updating of CEN standards, to present an infrastructure package that takes into account the need of all road users including motorcyclists, to consider that a *ban on cable barriers* would contribute to road safety and to give a mandate to the CEN (European Committee for Standardisation) to establish a new European standard for crash barriers that respects motorcycle users.

This will provide a sound basis against which to determine the nature of motorcycle-friendly crash barrier systems in the UK, giving road authorities a standard that they can work to without separate testing and the related costs that are a barrier (pun intended) to their installation.

The Commission has since replied through Jacques Barrot Vice-President of the European Commission.

He gave a vague reply with no commitment on banning cable barriers and concentrated in his reply on "work in progress" at the necessary European level.

In the UK the Highways Agency has previously stated that any central reservation vehicle restraint systems (which would include Armco and wire rope systems) fitted on UK roads, that they maintain, will, when in need of replacement, be replaced with concrete barrier systems.

Shortly after the EP presentation, FEMA was invited to give a presentation on crash barriers and motorcyclists in a meeting organised by The European Union Road Federation (ERF) with the co-operation of the CEN European Committee for Standardisation on passive safety and road safety barriers.

FEMA's Filippo Marino who gave the FEMA presentation, reports that the most important item to note was that the issue will be raised to a higher profile within the European Commission and the respective United Nations working group.

The importance of taking into account the safety needs of motorcyclists and their vehicles in all road infrastructure was further underlined by a presentation of the ACEM handbook 'Guidelines for Powered Two-Wheelers - Safer Road Design in Europe' www.acembike.org which reflected and contained information from the UK's IHIE Guidelines to road engineers published in 2005.

Last year in the UK MAG produced a supporting document to 'The Road To Success' with an action pack to lobby the UK's Transport Minister, MPs and MEPs, these are still available on the MAG UK website www.mag-uk.org in the 'Riders Writes' section under 'Crash Barriers'.

We asked then that the decisions by road authorities to install vehicle restraint systems should take into consideration the safety of motorcyclists.

The issue has been raised in the Scottish Parliament by Phil Gallie MSP he asked the question to the Scottish Executive on what research has been carried out into motorcyclists' safety regarding the provision of wire rope central reservation divisions on Scottish roads.

The Scottish Executive replied that it has not commissioned any research into motor cyclist safety regarding the provision of wire rope central reservation divisions on Scottish roads. However, Transport Scotland has briefed a consultant to undertake a research study looking directly at these issues.

As you can see crash barriers are still high on the agenda.

Unfortunately MAG is being quoted out of context by councils and manufacturers that we support the fitting of wire rope barriers using the text from a fourteen year old letter from MAG.

The latest misuse of this letter comes from Ireland where the National Roads Authority is looking to install a new national route between Limerick and Waterford. A Swedish 2+1 system is being used with a wire rope safety barrier separating the carriageway.

MAG UK considers that wire rope barrier systems are the most aggressive vehicle restraint system used on the roads.

This letter was posted on a wire rope manufacturer's website and they were asked to take this down from the internet which they did and since then MAG has issued a new statement:

"The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG UK) supports our colleagues in riders' organisations who are engaged with their road authorities in removing wire rope barriers from the road infrastructure.

Due to the open nature of the design which exposes the upright steel posts and wire cables, MAG UK considers that wire rope barrier systems are the most aggressive vehicle restraint system used on the roads.

MAG UK does not endorse any vehicle restraint system or the manufacturer of any of these systems.

It is the position of MAG UK that the main cause of injury to riders is the exposed upright posts of all vehicle restraint systems.

MAG UK's aim is to improve the safety of vehicle restraint systems thus reducing the potential for injury and death of motorcyclists when impacting these systems.

Therefore MAG UK is currently campaigning for steel beam barriers to be fitted with a 'motorcycle-friendly' secondary rail and to have wire rope barriers removed from the road infrastructure in the UK."

Although the Highways Agency has fitted a version of the motorcycle friendly crash barrier and have committed to replacing 'metal' type barriers on central reservations with concrete types we still need a **commitment from the UK Government** that:

1. A review of the placement of crash barriers needs to be undertaken with those identified as dangerous for motorcycles to be fitted with a motorcycle-friendly guardrail.
2. That there will be no more wire rope type barrier systems fitted in the UK.
3. That these high maintenance and expensive

systems will be systematically identified and replaced expediently.

Write to the Transport Minister and your MP regarding this

Minister of State for Transport, Dr Stephen Ladyman at:

Department for Transport
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DR

You can find your MP www.upmystreet.com/commons/ or use the campaign website at www.mag-uk.org

Suggested Letter

Remember standard letters can get ignored. For maximum impact every letter needs to be personal.

The sample letter below should be used as a guide when drafting your letters.

Please forward any responses to Trevor Baird at MAG UK, PO BOX 750, Rugby, CV21 3ZR or email publicaffairs@mag-uk.org

I am writing to you as a motorcyclist regarding wire rope barriers and the fitting of motorcycle friendly crash barriers (Vehicle Restraint Systems) on the UK roads.

Riders Groups across Europe have been involved with various European bodies in finding a resolution concerning vehicle restraint systems and the danger that riders face when impacting these systems.

The Highways Agency reported that they intend to raise the issue of motorcycle and Vehicle Restraint Systems safety at the EN1317 CEN Standards Committee and have fitted motorcycle friendly crash barrier systems in two locations in the UK.

However I believe that the UK Government should make an immediate public commitment that:

There will be no more wire rope type barrier systems fitted in the UK. These are the most aggressive vehicle restraint system used on the roads.

A review of the placement of crash barriers needs to be undertaken with those identified as dangerous for motorcycles to be fitted with a motorcycle-friendly guardrail.

Decisions by road authorities to install Vehicle Restraint Systems should take into consideration the safety of motorcyclists so that they are not a greater danger than the obstacle they are intended to protect.

That these high maintenance and expensive systems will be systematically identified and replaced expediently.

Could you please take the time to respond and advise me where you stand on the issue.

You can review a riders report on this issue "Road to Success" at www.fema.ridersrights.org