

News story: Driving examiner strike: December 2017

Some driving examiners who are members of the Public and Commercial Service (PCS) union are planning to take strike action on Monday 4 December and Tuesday 5 December 2017.

You can either:

- change your test appointment to a later date
- turn up for your test as planned, but your examiner might be unavailable

Not all driving examiners are union members, and even if they are, they might choose not to go on strike.

If your driving test is cancelled

You won't have to contact the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) to rebook your appointment if you can't take your test because of strike action.

DVSA will contact you with a new test appointment within 5 to 10 working days.

Out of pocket expenses

You can claim out of pocket expenses if your test is cancelled, but you must have turned up for your test to be able to do this. If you don't turn up, you'll have to rebook your own test and won't be able to claim expenses.

Theory tests

Theory tests aren't affected by the strike action and will be taking place as planned.

What the strike is about

The strike action is about a new standard employment contract that DVSA staff signed up to in 2014. In return for changes to their terms and conditions, they received a buy-out and a 3-year pay deal.

This contract was negotiated with the unions and agreed by staff in a ballot. Since then, PCS has opposed some aspects of the contract

PCS is now trying to link the dispute with health and safety risks of changes to the driving test. The new driving test has been designed to make sure drivers are better prepared for a lifetime of safe driving.

The changes have been developed and trialled extensively with input from DVSA staff, learner drivers, their instructors and other road safety

professionals.

DVSA carried out [risk assessments](#) and commissioned the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) to carry out an independent assessment. These show that the new test manoeuvres were low risk.

Helping you through a lifetime of safe driving

Gareth Llewellyn, DVSA Chief Executive, said:

The fact PCS is trying to undermine the launch of the new test by calling for strike action shows a shameful disregard for both road safety and learner drivers who have worked so hard to be ready to take their test.

The new driving test has been designed to make sure new drivers have the skills they need to help them through a lifetime of safe driving. It is one step in helping reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on Britain's roads.

During the last 3 years the changes – which are welcomed by most examiners, road safety experts, disability groups and instructors – have been developed and trialled extensively with a wide range of our staff, learners and other organisations. Over 4,000 candidates were involved in the trial.

I met with PCS on 2 November 2017 and they turned down my offer of mediation, although our offer still stands. This means that we cannot move forward together to resolve this dispute, for the sake of our staff and customers.

[Press release: Landscape protection confirmed for Cornwall's rare species](#)

Rare species like the marsh fritillary butterfly and willow tit bird have been given a conservation boost today, with Natural England officially recognising the Mid Cornwall Moors as one of the country's most important wildlife sites.

Following a four-month public consultation, Natural England has confirmed the designation of the Mid Cornwall Moors as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), giving the area legal protection for its important wildlife and habitats.

This brings certainty and purpose to conservation work in Mid Cornwall, where

the rich mix of heathland, woodland, and wildflower meadows provides a vital sanctuary for wildlife.

Wesley Smyth, manager of Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly team in Natural England, said:

This rich and diverse landscape of Mid Cornwall is home to an array of rare plants and insects, alongside one of the highest densities of willow tit breeding pairs in England.

That's why we've designated this area as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, recognising its vital contribution to our natural heritage and helping its precious wildlife thrive for generations to come.

Natural England is working with landowners and local organisations, such as the Cornwall Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation, to create the perfect conditions for the rare marsh fritillary butterfly. With further help from the Eden Project and Highways England, swathes of devil's-bit scabious – the main food plant for the marsh fritillary caterpillars – have been grown and planted alongside the A30 road corridor.

Philip Hambly, Chairman of Cornwall Butterfly Conservation (CBC), said:

CBC have been working with Natural England in order to help protect the rare Marsh Fritillary butterfly in Mid Cornwall, and this confirmation of SSSI protection will help future conservation efforts. If we want to protect our rare species such as this, we must manage their habitats carefully and make sure that we are doing so on a landscape scale.

As part of the area's newly-designated status, another project seeks to protect the habitat of the willow tit, which has virtually disappeared from large parts of the UK and whose national population has declined by an estimated 81% since the mid-1990s.

The Mid Cornwall Moors SSSI merges six former SSSIs that previously dotted the landscape around the A30 and east of Indian Queens. The new designation has extended those boundaries and protects around 50% more countryside, connecting important habitats and helping wildlife to withstand pressures from climate change.

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Press release: 'Distressed' clothing brand sends hard hitting message to young riders

Motorcyclists are more vulnerable than other roads users but without the protection a vehicle can offer, what they wear can make all the difference when they come off their bike.

A new campaign by Highways England, the Government company responsible for the country's motorways and main 'A' roads, is using fashion to raise awareness of safety for young riders on two wheels.

The initiative centres on the concept of a clothing range where each garment has a unique price tag – the difference being instead of monetary value the cost lists a range of injuries or hospital treatments that a young rider could face as a result of an accident.

Stuart Lovatt, Strategic Road User Safety Lead at Highways England said:

The mental and physical cost of not wearing the right motorcycle gear can be far greater than the financial cost. Most young riders will come off their bikes at some point – whether you have popped round the corner for a pint of milk or you are riding further afield to see friends or get to college, you need to be prepared.

Our campaign is designed to encourage discussion around wearing protective clothing and parents can play their part too. As a parent of teenagers myself, I know how much they want to follow fashion but the unexpected can happen close to home and wearing protective gear as well as having the right skills to ride defensively could make all the difference.

The consequences of coming off two wheels at any speed can be more severe than you would think – making sure they are wearing rip-

proof clothing as well as the essentials like a helmet, sturdy gloves and footwear can help protect your loved one.

Research carried out to understand the reasons behind the increased number collisions involving young riders shows that:

- Young riders represent just 15% of motorcyclists in Great Britain but represent more than 38% of rider casualties – so a young rider is over 2.5 times more times likely to be injured than someone more experienced
- the majority of riders of small bikes are aged 17-23 and are predominantly male
- most collisions involving motorcycles under 300cc are close to home
- six out of nine of the top hotspots for incidents resulting in death or serious injury involving young riders are in the South East region – with five being on the south coast

The Highways England campaign features a video of people's reactions to its new 'Distressed' clothing range.

Shoreditch provided the perfect backdrop for the launch of the range at a pop up shop with a twist – hidden cameras followed shoppers browsing the rails and captured their surprise on discovering the true cost of the garments.

The video was premiered at Chichester College.

[Distressed video.](#)

Andrew Green, Executive Principal at Chichester College, said:

We want to ensure our students travel to and from college as safely as possible, and encouraging our young riders to wear the right gear is really important.

The campaign is extremely thought-provoking, with some sobering messages about life-changing injuries which could so easily have been avoided.

We hope it is successful in inspiring riders to think twice before getting on a motorcycle without protective clothing.

Alongside the video, social media is being used to promote the campaign with the hashtag #distressedpopup. This will feature on Highways England's new Instagram account (@HighwaysEngland), Twitter (@HighwaysEngland) and the official Facebook page.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: Applications open for employment tribunal fee refunds as scheme rolls out](#)

All those eligible for employment tribunal fee refunds can apply from today, following a successful opening phase of the scheme.

The refund scheme comes after Ministers committed to reimbursing those who had paid employment tribunal fees following a Supreme Court judgment. The court recognised the important role fees can play, but ruled that the government had not struck the right balance in this case.

The opening stage of the phased implementation scheme was launched in October, with around 1,000 people given the chance to complete applications. This first phase has now been successfully completed, and anyone who thinks they [may be eligible for a refund can now apply](#) on GOV.UK.

During the creation of the scheme the government has been working with trade unions who have supported large multiple claims potentially involving hundreds of claimants, and ahead of the full launch people were invited to pre-register their interest in applying.

We will continue to work with the unions to ensure those who are eligible are able to claim a refund.