EMBARGOED NEWS RELEASE: STRICTLY NOT FOR BROADCAST OR PUBLICATION BEFORE 09:30 (BST) MONDAY 6 JULY

**MORE THAN A THIRD OF PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND DON’T LEAVE 1.5 METRES AND 8 IN 10 BECOME FRUSTRATED WHEN OVERTAKING SOMEONE CYCLING**

*---Two thirds (64%) of people in Scotland don’t know you can get three points on your licence for close-passing---*

*---Findings revealed on the day the nation’s cycling organisation* ***launches its annual TV/radio ad campaign*** *to encourage drivers to give space to people on bikes. This year’s campaign more important than ever due to* ***77% increase in cycling during lockdown****---*

*---Press pics and people who have been close-passed available in* **Aberdeen, Aviemore, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth**)---

More than a third (34 per cent) of people living in Scotland don’t always leave 1.5 metres and eight in ten (80 per cent) find it “frustrating” when overtaking someone cycling.

While two thirds (64 per cent) of people don’t know they could get three points on their licence for driving too close to someone cycling on Scotland’s roads (a nine per cent improvement since last year).

These are the findings of two new polls of 501**1** and 1,002**2** Scotland-based adults commissioned by the nation’s cycling organisation – Cycling Scotland – to mark the launch of its annual nationwide advertising campaign today (Monday 6 July).

Cycling Scotland’s road safety campaign is supported by Police Scotland. It is a careless driving offence for motorists to close-pass (overtake with less than a car’s width) someone cycling and puts lives at risk. People can get a fixed penalty of three points on their driving licence and be fined £100 – or receive a criminal conviction for more serious offences.

Close passes are an everyday experience for people cycling across the UK, according to the [Near Miss Project](http://rachelaldred.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Nearmissreport-final-web.pdf), with data suggesting every year people who regularly cycle will “experience an event that is so frightening that it alone makes them consider giving up cycling.” In addition, latest road safety statistics**3** show that every week in Scotland at least three people cycling suffer serious, life-changing injuries, usually from a collision with a vehicle.

Some locations in Scotland have seen a 77 per cent increase in cycling**4** during lockdown and according to **Cycling Scotland Chief Executive Keith Irving** this year’s campaign is more important than ever.

**He** **said:** “With a big increase in the number of people cycling during lockdown, it’s even more important that our roads are safe. Cycling reduces our carbon footprint, improves our air quality and is fantastic for the nation’s health, and for those reasons we have to make sure this renewed enthusiasm for cycling continues and expands.

“People driving need to be aware of vulnerable road users around them and give at least a car’s width (1.5 metres) and even more when passing at higher speeds. Often that means waiting at a safe distance until there is space to pass. Many people don’t realise that driving too close to someone is damaging even when no contact is made and can put people off cycling. Concern about road safety is also the main reason people don’t get back on their bike.

“As we move out of lockdown, we’re seeing an increase in road traffic and more tragedies on our roads as a result. Each week in Scotland on average, three people cycling suffer a life-changing injury in a crash and in most cases, it’s the person driving, not the person cycling, at fault.

“Dedicated cycling lanes, separated from road traffic, are the top priority for making our roads safer for cycling while education and enforcement wherever necessary is needed to improve road safety for everyone. Cycling Scotland believes that Operation Close Pass, improving infrastructure and, as soon as it can be implemented, third party reporting of dangerous driving behaviour are all necessary to keep us all safe.”

**Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity Michael Matheson said:** “We know that perceptions around road safety remain a barrier to people getting on their bikes. Across Scotland, we’re building protected infrastructure to remove cyclists from traffic and will continue to do so by supporting local authorities. At the same time, road safety campaigns, such as this campaign from Cycling Scotland, remain vitally important to spark conversations, encourage new thinking and change behaviours.

“As part of the Scottish Government’s response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we’re asking people to walk, wheel and cycle where possible to help manage demand on public transport. Rates of cycling have increased across the country and it’s important that we keep up this positive shift in behaviour and that it is supported by all road users.

“Through continued education, enforcement and protected infrastructure we can all continue to support cycling as a mode of transport which protects our environment, our health and our wellbeing. The message from Cycling Scotland, Police Scotland and the Scottish Government is clear – give people cycling space when overtaking. Failure to do so is a driving offence and puts lives at risk.”

Cycling Scotland’s campaign – which runs on television, radio, social media and the backs of buses from today until Monday 3 August – is funded by Transport Scotland and backed by Police Scotland. Over the summer months Police Scotland will be conducting Operation Close Pass in locations across Scotland to promote the safe use of shared road space.

Operation Close Pass sees a police officer in plain clothes cycling with a camera on their handlebars and the back of their bike. When they are passed too closely by a car, the police cyclist radioes details to colleagues further up the road who pull over the motorist and direct them to a spot to talk to them about their driving.

The chat takes place by the roadside on a giant mat showing the correct minimum passing distance, usually defined as 1.5 metres. If someone is unreceptive to education then they will be cautioned for careless or dangerous driving and receive a court summons.

**Police Scotland Head of Road Policing, Chief Superintendent Louise Blakelock, said:** "As we work towards the Scottish Government's casualty reduction targets, road safety for all road users remains a priority for Police Scotland, and we are fully supporting Cycling Scotland with their campaign.

"Since the coronavirus lockdown, we have seen an increase in the number of people using our roads for cycling. Now more than ever, we urge motorists to give cyclists, and other vulnerable road users, especially children, plenty of space. There is room for everyone and we encourage all road users to show consideration and respect for the safety of each other. We all have a duty to make our roads a safer place."

**Aberdeen-based Andrew Stewart is a 47-year-old programme manager. He said:** “It feels intimidating when vehicles overtake too closely. There are potholes to dodge and sometimes a wind to contend with, so it’s good to have space. I think if everyone was more considerate of each other it would be fantastic. I’m sure that if more drivers understood how frightening it can be to close-pass someone cycling there would be change.”

**Sally Devlin (25) works in a family shop in Aviemore. She said:** “Close passes do make me feel vulnerable on the road. I feel like some people forget that there is a person on the bike when they pull a dangerous manoeuvre. Surely it’s better to be two minutes slower on your journey than end up knocking someone off their bike.”

More information about Cycling Scotland’s cycling road safety campaign can be found [here.](https://www.cycling.scot/what-we-do/campaigns/give-cycle-space)

**ENDS**

EMBARGOED NEWS RELEASE: STRICTLY NOT FOR BROADCAST OR PUBLICATION BEFORE 09:30 (BST) MONDAY 6 JULY

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

* High-res jpeg Press images of the campaign launch available via email from [dave@zudepr.co.uk](mailto:dave@zudepr.co.uk).
* Image caption: Police Scotland Head of Road Policing, Chief Superintendent Louise Blakelock, and Cycling Scotland Chief Executive Keith Irving at the campaign launch.
* Link to the [advertising campaign video available here.](https://youtu.be/6-ZXsj1V7Rw)
* Link to [Operation Close Pass film available here.](https://youtu.be/C7ma6psvZm8)
* Interviews with Cycling Scotland Chief Executive Keith Irving are available.
* Interviews/pics of people who cycle and have been close-passed in **Aberdeen, Aviemore, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth** are **available now.** Call David Sawyer to arrange.

**For further media information please contact:**

David Sawyer, director, Zude PR

0141 569 0342 / 07770 886923

[dave@zudepr.co.uk](mailto:dave@zudepr.co.uk)

**1**Five-hundred-and-one people living in Scotland were asked questions between 14 and 22 June 2020 by research company Progressive. The research was conducted online rather than face-to-face because of lockdown restrictions.

**2**The YouGov survey asked the question *“Before taking this survey, were you aware that in Scotland you may get three points on your driving licence if you don’t give cyclists at least a car’s width when overtaking them*?”

The answer, that two thirds (64 per cent) of people living in Scotland don’t know they could get three points on their licence for driving too close to someone cycling, is a nine per cent improvement on the identical poll last year which put the figure at 73 per cent, before Cycling Scotland launched its annual cycling road safety campaign in 2019.

The total sample size in YouGov’s survey was 1,002 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 4 and 6 February 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Scottish adults (aged 18+).

**3**Source: [Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2018](https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/46069/reported-road-casualties-scotland-2018.pdf).

**4**Cycling Scotland has a network of automatic cycle counters across the country. The information is collected as part of the National Monitoring Framework, managed by Cycling Scotland and funded by Transport Scotland, to monitor cycling rates. The nation’s cycling organisation compared the average number of people cycling per day in May 2020 to the same period in 2019. Across all counters from which data was available, the number of people cycling increased by **77 per cent.**

**About Cycling Scotland**

Cycling Scotland is the nation’s cycling organisation. Working in partnership with other organisations, with funding from Transport Scotland, we help create an environment for everyone in Scotland to cycle easily and safely. Our vision is of a sustainable, inclusive and healthy Scotland where anyone, anywhere can enjoy all the benefits of cycling. For more information please visit [www.cycling.scot](http://www.cycling.scot)

Cycling Scotland is a Scottish Charity, SC029760, regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

**About Police Scotland**

Police Scotland was formally established on 1 April 2013 and is responsible for policing across the length and breadth of Scotland, some 28,168 square miles. Police Scotland is the second largest force in the UK after the Metropolitan Police.