



25<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**48<sup>th</sup> GAM AGM Chairman's report**

Hello, good evening everyone.

Welcome to the GAM 2023 AGM. This year has seen our activities settle down to a more normal regime with a slightly reduced (compared to pre-COVID), but steady stream of associates and continued support from our faithful committee and Observer volunteers. Our finances remain stable, enabling us to support our volunteers and members.

Whilst we continue to deliver the IAM RoadSmart advanced driving course with some success (see Secretary's report), the world of GAM is not without its challenges. I must bring some of these to your attention as it is very important to recognise that along with many voluntary organisations, our volunteer workforce is getting older and individual circumstances change, preventing them from continuing their support. This applies to both Committee and Observers. Likely new observers will mostly come from Associates who have passed the test. We have had some success recruiting, but sadly, like many other Groups, a majority of the new Members (those who pass the test) decide not to renew their IAM-RS and GAM membership at the first time of asking. Clearly ongoing membership isn't a priority for many.

You might be interested to note that IAM RoadSmart has changed the Observer qualification. There is now a single level of qualification equivalent to the national observer (NO) level that you will be familiar with, and the Local Observer (LO) will disappear.

On the subject of Observers, I would like to thank David Clifton, our Chief Observer, for his efforts during the year coordinating, encouraging, informing, and training our Observers. It is this dedicated team that our Associates interact with most and see as the essence of GAM. We work hard to keep abreast of our Observers needs in terms their qualification through IMI and their personal development. Some key actions this year have been sessions on vehicle technology, best coaching practices on "progress" and peer-to-peer Observer check-drives. Cars are becoming easier to drive, but technology is making vehicles in many ways more complex. Some of our Associates often see the technology as a magic 'black box', and whilst Advanced Drivers don't need to be technical gurus, they often need Observers to help with the safe and effective use of the tools at their finger-tips.

During the year we have continued working in the virtual world. The most positive aspect is improved attendance at Committee Meetings, probably due to avoiding travel time on dark nights. In October and November (2023) we have or will have held face-to-face lecture meetings. Some Groups deliver regular monthly meetings to Members and Associates on-line or hybrid. Apart from our sessions during COVID we haven't made these a regular feature....would members like regular events on-line?



Returning to the subject of GAM's volunteer support, I need to appeal once again for volunteers to come forward to reinforce and ensure succession in the committee and officer structure. Why not share the camaraderie and satisfaction of being part of our vibrant team. We are particularly looking for a general secretary in waiting. Paul Whitehead knows the role backwards and is looking for a sidekick to shadow and learn the ropes. We published four editions of our Newsletter in hard copy during the year, covering a broad range of Advanced Driving and motoring topics. We are looking for somebody to take over the Editor role, a chance to put their own stamp on this important GAM publication. We have well established standardised procedures and templates for drafting, printing, etc.

Neil Fuller has moved out of the area (sorry to see you go Neil, and thanks for all your efforts supporting our GAM ambitions), and we need somebody to take on the role of associate coordinator. This is a great opportunity to be the link with our associates and generally organise "Sunday Runday" from the GBC Depot to ensure they run smoothly for Associates and Observers. If you're interested, then give Paul Whitehead or me a call. On the subject of coaching, many of our Associates are looking for runs on different days of the week. Clive Heavens, one of our NOs, coordinates our so-called AORs (Appointed Observer Runs). We are really grateful to all those Observers who have supported this way of working.

I'm delighted to welcome Alex Masters to the GAM committee. Alex passed his test in a Tesla, one of several this year, and helped us with aspects of living with the special features of the marque. Anyway, his arm was twisted, and Alex will take on the administrator role for our Microsoft Office 365 account, a key operational platform for GAM. Clive Heavens will continue his role as Webmasher.

A couple of IAM-RS matters. A number of members have taken advantage of IAM RoadSmart skills days at Thruxton where they have the chance to drive their cars enthusiastically within the safe confines of a racing circuit. We attended the IAM-RS Regional Forum again this year where we learned about some of the corporate plans and charitable missions of the organisation. None have a major impact on GAM. It was a good opportunity to catch up with returning area service delivery manager, Stuart Haythorn, a good friend to GAM before his time away travelling.

Finally, I thank our Committee and Observers for their unstinting support of our mission and objectives and wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year.

Gordon Farquharson, GAM Chairman  
GAM AGM 26th October 2023