

THE MOLE

NEW BIKE RUMOURS BY OUR MAN IN THE KNOW



Tamburini's latest project

CAGIVA is set to reveal a new Massimo Tamburini-designed machine later this year with its own mid-capacity V-twin. The bike is said to be revolutionary, with a superbike-style riding position and styling similar to the MV Brutale. Intriguingly, I've heard the bike has an adjuster in the middle of its steel trellis frame to alter the entire chassis geometry!

And there's a Husky too

TAMBURINI'S latest project is also set to be sold under the Husqvarna banner, but fitted with a new single-cylinder engine of around 650cc. I've heard that during tests of a prototype, fitted with Husky's 450cc single, the bike lapped a circuit a second faster than

the same firm's full-on superbike with the same motor.

Modified Speedmaster

I'VE been told Triumph is doing a lot of testing on its Bonnie-based Speedmaster at the moment. The firm can only be doing that if it's planning to update the bike, although machines spotted outside the factory appear virtually identical to the stock machine. My guess is that they're working on updates to meet the new Euro III emissions laws.

Most powerful Gixer ever

IT probably won't come as a huge surprise, but the word is Suzuki is planning to make its next-generation GSX-R1000 - due out later this year - the most powerful bike it's ever offered. That means it will outgun the 175bhp Hayabusa. There's no hint on the styling just yet, but I'm pretty sure it's going to be virtually a carbon-copy of the latest GSX-R600.



Weird new Pan European

ANYONE remember the Honda X-Wing concept bike (above) from 1999? Well I've heard the next-generation Pan European, expected later this year, could look remarkably similar to that design. Key features included side-panels that extend a long way forward either side of the headlight, which could be kept for the Pan, although I expect the X-Wing's V6 engine will be replaced with a V4.

INVESTIGATION

Cameras' trigger points lowered

Now they'll get you if you're only slightly over limit

BY STEVE FARRELL

SPEED camera authorities have sneakily lowered the speed at which cameras are triggered following Government instructions.

Last year MCN revealed that most speed cameras weren't triggered until around 40mph in a 30 zone or 90mph in a 70. But now safety camera partnerships, made up of police and local authorities, have lowered the threshold at many sites to 35mph in a 30 zone or 79mph in a 70 - and the Department for Transport has admitted to MCN that it told them to do it.

Last week Ian Bell, safety camera partnership co-ordinator for the Association of Chief Police Officers, told MCN: "Speed thresholds have been reduced. That's a definite."

The new lower speed camera thresholds are the same as those set out in ACPO guidelines for the police - that of 10% over the limit plus 2mph.

A spokesman for the DfT last week admitted the department "suggested that Safety Camera Partnerships move towards ACPO thresholds".

He said that guidance issued to the partnerships stated: "The aim of the programme is the reduction of casualties at sites where speed is a contributing factor. Therefore partnerships must plan to move towards enforcing speed limits in line with ACPO thresholds."

Minutes of a board meeting of the Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership, obtained by MCN, said: "The DfT were also looking for a written strategy toward achieving ACPO thresholds."

The instructions were issued in 2003, but the effect on actual thresholds has unfolded gradually since then, according to Bell.

He said: "Over the last few years there has been a general reduction."

The DfT spokesman said the guidance to reduce thresholds had been "superseded" by new guidelines which have "served to strengthen the position of the local partnerships to deal with local road safety issues".

But he acknowledged that the previous guidance to reduce thresholds will have prompted partnerships to commit to doing so. "I guess so," he confirmed.

The London Safety Camera Partnership's Operational Case for 2005-2006, in which it applied to the Government to remain in the national safety camera programme for another year, stated the

partnership was "committed to moving towards operating all cameras at ACPO guidelines".

Similar applications from other partnerships suggest they have also acted on the DfT's guidance.

Kent and Medway's application for 2005-2006 said: "The partnership also remains committed to reducing thresholds towards ACPO guideline levels."

We phoned 12 partnerships to ask if they'd reduced thresholds but all except two declined to comment for "operational reasons".

Derbyshire spokeswoman Rebecca Hampson said: "I can confirm that Derbyshire Safety Camera Partnership operates all of its safety cameras above the ACPO threshold."

A spokesman for Cumbria said: "We prosecute at ACPO thresholds."

McQueen's garage sale

BIKES and riding kit owned by movie legend Steve McQueen are to be sold at auction.

The bikes show the star's love of classic machinery, as all three are pre-war. Earliest is a rare 1920 Indian Power Plus race bike, with a 'Daytona' low-seat frame. There's also a 1929

Harley-Davidson Model B and a 1934 Indian Scout.

Any of the motorcycles, which are all original and in immaculate condition, would be hugely valuable on their own merit, but the connection with McQueen boosts their value, meaning they could break records when

they go under the hammer in Los Angeles in November.

His widow Barbara McQueen Brunsvold is selling many of the actor's other belongings, including clothing and biking memorabilia.

For more details, visit www.bonhams.com/mcqueen



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The bureaucrats are safe - but are we?

'If you know a camera is set to nick you at 35mph, you stick to the limit. So why keep that fact secret?'

THE authorities claim that the lowering of speed camera trigger points (see left) is simply intended to cut speeds even further at danger spots, further increasing safety. A flawed argument, as ever, but let's give them the benefit of the doubt for once.

If this claim was true, why the need to be so secretive about the change? It's already the case that road signs have to alert you to cameras, while many partnerships will even tell you exactly where their vans will be each day. The idea is these warnings make you more likely to stick to the limit. And the exact same result would be achieved by ads or signs saying "drift over the limit here and you'll get flashed".

The only conclusion to be drawn from this lack of publicity is that because fewer people were being caught by cameras set at the old levels, the only way for the partnerships to keep the money rolling in at the same rate has been to drop the trigger points.

But why would a road safety body be worried about cashflow, as if they were a business? The obvious answer is simply to swell government coffers - but it's not quite that simple. The camera partnerships were set up to be self-funding, with any surplus cash from fines going to the Treasury. But if people speed less and fine revenue falls, while the costs of maintaining the camera network remain fixed, the partnerships face the real danger of going into the red. And while recent changes have tried to obscure the link between speed fine revenue and partnership funding, who would want to be in the hot seat on the day the books stop balancing?

We can only conclude that none of this is about better road safety at all. It's just a load of bureaucrats doing their best to ensure it's not their heads that roll in the next round of government cutbacks. If only...

'Speed thresholds have been reduced. That's a definite'

IAN BELL, ACPO

New anti-blind spot aid

BLIND spots in car mirrors that put motorcyclists at risk could soon be a thing of the past.

Sensing technology being developed by Siemens detect an impending collision and warn the driver to take avoiding action - greatly reducing the possibility of a car being driven into a motorcycle

because the driver is unaware of their position.

Project leader Enno Pflug told MCN: "These are technologies that provide easy information for the driver. For example, that somebody is in his blind spot.

"A lane-changing assistant, which monitors traffic approaching from

behind or in the driver's blind spot, will warn the driver if they are about to make a potentially unsafe lane change."

The same sensors also provide the system with information for a safe door-opening function.

Siemens intends to have running prototypes of the system in 2008.



SIEMENS' system will alert drivers to hidden hazards

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