

INVESTIGATION

EVIDENCE shows laser guns have only ever undergone roadside tests



'Cover up' over laser gun testing

Home Office smokescreen over whether speed traps have been tested on bikes

BY STEVE FARRELL

THE Government has been made to look ridiculous by desperate Home Office attempts to hide the fact that type approval for speed detection equipment doesn't include accuracy tests on motorcycles.

Since admitting to MCN in October that "no tests were ever specifically done on motorcycles for any of the devices", the Home Office has repeatedly changed its mind.

It has stuck to its guns on the fact that the Home Office itself doesn't include bikes in its accuracy tests, but has issued a string of contradictory statements about police tests, which form part of the type approval process for equipment used by officers, such as handheld lasers.

Their most recent admission made to MCN is that there are no formally-established police accuracy tests of equipment on bikes in the type approval process. But that has come after months of contradiction in which the Home Office has repeatedly breached the requirements of openness set out in the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act and been threatened with a summons to give a straight answer in court.

The government department has

claimed in one breath that the police perform accuracy tests, and in another that it doesn't set out any requirements or instructions for them to do so. The Home Office is in charge of the type approval process, so if it doesn't set out the requirements then they're not formal accuracy tests.

The Home Office has claimed that the tests definitely include motorcycles, then said they are done on whatever vehicles pass during road tests – unlikely to

include bikes as they only make up around 1% of vehicles on the road.

It has also demanded that MCN submit the same enquiry multiple times and repeatedly failed to provide details within the 20-day time limit set out by the FOI Act.

Meanwhile, MCN reader Bernard Paton has been given the runaround with a similar FOI enquiry he made to help him fight a speeding charge. He threatened to request a court summons to Home Office official Mike Ruff

when he failed to provide relevant details within the 20-day limit.

"That seemed to focus their minds," said Paton, a retired 58-year-old BMW R1200GS rider from Northumberland.

Since then Paton has had a series of answers as contradictory as ours. He said: "If it's so straightforward, why is this necessary? It's like they're covering something up."

We're still chasing a full and frank answer to the question we first asked in October...



'My court summons focused the Home Office's minds'

BERNARD PATON

DO POLICE CONDUCT TYPE APPROVAL ACCURACY TESTS ON BIKES? HOME OFFICE CAN'T DECIDE...

DECEMBER 1 2005 - "NO"

"The police are not testing for accuracy. They don't test for accuracy. They haven't got the facilities."

Eric Brown, Home Office Scientific Development Branch (HOSDB)

JANUARY 6 2006 - "YES"

"Before a device is type approved a number of police forces carry out extensive practical testing at the roadside. These tests are carried out on the full range of vehicles, including motorcycles, and include tests against other type approved devices."

Mike Ruff, HO Road Crime Section

JANUARY 18 - "NO"

"As far as I am aware the Home Office

does not provide [the police] a minute-by-minute description of what should be done."

Eric Brown, HOSDB

JANUARY 19 - "YES"

"The main [police] test is an accuracy test against another approved device, done under operational conditions and using the traffic passing the test site."

Eric Brown, HOSDB

FEBRUARY 3 - "YES"

"As I have previously stated, the police do carry out tests on speed enforcement equipment... The police allow a combined error of both devices of 2mph so the maximum acceptable error between the device under test

and the HO approved device is 4mph."

Eric Brown, HOSDB

FEBRUARY 6 - "NO"

"I can confirm that no protocol/proforma has been issued by the Home Office detailing the tests which the Association of Chief Police Officers is to undertake on motorcycles... The HOSDB is of the opinion that motorcycles present no additional or different technical challenges to those presented by other vehicles. It is for this reason that HOSDB does not require devices submitted for type approval to be subjected to a unique set of motorcycle tests."

John Crozier, Home Office public order and police co-operation unit

Disabled riders lose out to drivers

AN organisation that hands out vehicles to disabled people has been accused of discrimination because it won't provide bikes.

That means that nearly a million people are told they can't ride motorcycles, according to the Disabled Motorcyclists Association (DMA).

Tony Pearson, DMA project manager, said: "Bikes can easily be adapted

for a range of disabilities. It's discrimination and it's up to them to prove that it's not."

Sue Armstrong, spokeswoman for Motability, the organisation which uses Government funding to offer vehicles to over 700,000 disabled people, said: "Motorcycles aren't available on the scheme. It's something we've looked at but we don't do it at the moment."

Lazareth goes mental on a quad



HERE'S an exclusive look at the latest creation from the lab of French custom guru Ludovic Lazareth.

This performance quad, called the Quadrazuma, is a Frankenstein's monster built from a butchered Yamaha

GTS1000, MT-01 and R1.

The double-chain driven machine makes 120bhp at 12,000rpm with the emphasis on "asphalt performance" rather than the off-road bias of most quads.

There's a fairly conventional

saddle and rear-end with double underseat exhausts straight off an R1.

Lazareth says the idea was to have "enough power for adrenaline liberty".

● See page 24 for our road test of the new Lazareth Dokuja.

Devitt's new price promise

DEVITT is promising to beat your best insurance quote in a special MCN deal this spring.

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