

[Ride Free: new online motorcycle training to improve road safety](#)

News story

Ride Free is a free online training course that you should complete before taking your moped or motorcycle compulsory basic training (CBT).



The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has announced the launch of Ride Free – a free online training course that moped and motorcycle riders should complete before taking their [CBT](#) course.

It has been developed by DVSA, Highways England and other partners to help new riders prepare for a lifetime of safe riding.

What the course covers

The course contains 5 online learning modules covering:

- the Highway Code and hazard perception
- clothing, equipment and the importance of maintenance
- how a rider's behaviour can affect them and other road users

Create an account on the Safe Driving for Life website or sign in to start your [Ride Free](#) training.

Helping riders to stay safe

It's important new riders get professional training and have the right knowledge and skills to help keep them stay safe.

Mark Winn, DVSA Chief Driving and Riding Examiner, said:

As motorcyclists are amongst the most vulnerable road users it's essential they have the right knowledge and skills needed to stay

safe on Britain's roads.

Getting the right advice from a professional instructor and the new ride free course helps new riders get the most from their CBT and should improve road safety.

Tony Campbell, Motorcycle Industry Association (MCIA) Chief Executive, said:

It is important that new riders should be safer riders and receive the best training possible and for that reason, MCIA is proud to be part of the ride free initiative.

The course has won a [Prince Michael International Road Safety Award](#) and a [Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation \(CIHT\) Kier Road Safety Award](#).

When motorcycle tests restart

England

Motorcycle training restarted on 4 July and testing restarted on 13 July 2020.

Scotland

Motorcycle training restarted on 22 July and testing will restart on 3 August 2020.

Wales

Motorcycle training will restart on 27 July and testing will restart on 3 August 2020.

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[Grassroots Music venues to be saved by government cash](#)

- £2.25 million emergency support expected to benefit 150 venues across the country

The first tranche of funding from the Government's £1.57 billion cultural recovery package will be used to save around 150 grassroots music venues from

insolvency, Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden has announced today.

The £2.25 million of emergency funding will be used to support venues at imminent risk of collapse and it is expected to benefit up to 150 venues across the country.

The £1.57 billion package – the largest ever government investment in UK culture – announced earlier this month will be used to help support the performing arts and theatres, museums, heritage, galleries, independent cinemas and live music venues through the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Without our grassroots music venues, we wouldn't have The Beatles, Adele or Elton John. Nearly all of our globally successful music stars started out at UK clubs and live music venues – and we must make sure those organisations weather the Covid storm.

The first £2.25 million of our unprecedented cultural rescue package is targeted at their survival. We're working to deliver the rest of the £1.57 billion emergency package as quickly as possible, so that we can protect and preserve our precious culture, arts and heritage for future generations.

Darren Henley, Chief Executive of Arts Council England, said:

Grassroots live music venues perform a vital role in England's music ecology. As well as nurturing the next generation of talent across a huge range of musical genres, these are the places that spark that special connection between audiences and professional musicians. So, we're very happy to be administering this investment on behalf of DCMS to help make a positive difference to live music venues in villages, towns and cities across the country.

This package of support will be administered by Arts Council England (ACE) and will target music venues, including a number identified by the Music Venues Trust, that are at severe risk of insolvency. The funding will provide grants of up to £80,000 to help venues survive the next few months

The funding will be used to cover essential on-going costs for venues including rent, utilities, maintenance contracts and other bills.

Brit Award Winning Singer James Bay said:

It's vital that we don't lose any music venues. They are so important to every artist's growth, learning how to really turn a

live show from a good night to a great one. This funding is going to make a real difference, ensuring we do not lose these spaces, it's so galvanising and uplifting to know more help is on its way.

2018 Mercury nominee MC and producer Novelist said:

Grassroots music venues are the bedrock of the music industry, offering a real opportunity to develop your skill as an artist as well as cultivate a good fan base. Providing this vital funding to maintain the lifeblood of these types of venues will most certainly have a big impact for artists' development, as well as the way in which people interact with music. Small venues are a vital part of British culture and it's so important to preserve the heritage for future generations to come. In addition, for people who live in the more remote areas of the country, small venues are literally a treasure.

London-based Jazztronica and Hip Hop duo Blue Lab Beats, said:

Playing in grassroots music venues was where it all began to make sense for us – trying out new songs, building a fan base, developing our craft as performers, exposing audiences to the new Jazztronica sound. Without those venues there is nowhere for new British talent to take their first steps into music. That's why this rescue package for grassroots venues is so vital and should be embraced with open arms so we can save our venues for the future. We should also remember the people that run these venues and the live music workers that also need assistance-without them the venues mean nothing.

Beverley Whitrick of the Music Venue Trust said:

Music Venue Trust warmly welcomes this essential funding for desperate grassroots music venues facing urgent, short term challenges. Without this help, the sector would be facing a wave of permanent closures. Throughout this crisis we have worked closely with DCMS and are delighted that the urgent need for this intervention has been recognised and responded to."

It is expected that funding will be received by organisations within the next few weeks. Further details on how organisations can apply to the £1.57 billion package will be released in the coming days.

Subject to successful trials at a number of test venues, from 1 August indoor performances with socially distanced audiences will be able to take place.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

In January, The Government increased the business rates retail discount from one-third to 50% and extended that discount to music venues. This discount was applicable for 2020/21 and for those eligible music venues with a rateable value of less than £51,000. In March, the discount for the current financial year was extended further to 100% and applicable to music venues with a rateable value above £51,000 as well.

[Video-witnessed wills to be made legal during coronavirus pandemic](#)

- Government plans law change to allow wills to be witnessed virtually in England and Wales
- Reforms will be backdated to 31 January 2020 and will remain in place as long as necessary
- New laws to reassure public that wills witnessed via video link are legally recognised

Currently, the law states that a will must be made 'in the presence of' at least two witnesses. However while isolating or shielding some people have understandably turned to video link software as a solution – for example via platforms such as Zoom or FaceTime.

Ministers have today (25 July) acted to reassure the public that wills witnessed in such a way will be deemed legal, as long as the quality of the sound and video is sufficient to see and hear what is happening at the time.

These changes will be made via new legislation in September, which amends the law to include video-witnessing.

Crucially, the move maintains the vital safeguard of requiring two witnesses – protecting people against undue influence and fraud.

Justice Secretary & Lord Chancellor, Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP, said:

We are pleased that more people are taking the incredibly important step to plan for the future by making a will.

We know that the pandemic has made this process more difficult, which is why we are changing law to ensure that wills witnessed via

video technology are legally recognised.

Our measures will give peace of mind to many that their last wishes can still be recorded during this challenging time, while continuing to protect the elderly and vulnerable.

The measures will be backdated to 31 January 2020 – the date of the first confirmed coronavirus case in the UK – meaning any will witnessed by video technology from that date onwards will be legally accepted. The change will remain in place until 31 January 2022, or as long as deemed necessary, after which wills must return to being made with witnesses who are physically present.

The use of video technology should remain a last resort, and people must continue to arrange physical witnessing of wills where it is safe to do so. Wills witnessed through windows are already considered legitimate in case law as long as they have clear sight of the person signing it.

Simon Davis, president of the Law Society of England and Wales, said:

The government's decision to allow wills to be witnessed remotely for the next two years will help alleviate the difficulties that some members of the public have encountered when making wills during the pandemic.

The Law Society is glad to see that guidance has been issued to minimise fraud and abuse. We look forward to working with government to ensure the reform is robust and successful.

Emily Deane, Technical Counsel at STEP, said:

We are delighted that the Government has responded to the industry's calls to allow will witnessing over video conference. By removing the need for any physical witnesses, wills can continue to be drawn up efficiently, effectively and safely by those isolating.

STEP also welcomes the move to apply this retrospectively, which will provide reassurance to anyone who has had no choice but to execute a will in this manner prior to this legislation being enacted. We hope the policy will continue to evolve and enable more people to execute a will at this difficult time.

Notes to editors:

- Legislation via a Statutory Instrument will be laid in September and made retrospective to 31 January 2020. The measures will apply to England & Wales and remain in place until January 2022 however they can be shortened or extended if deemed necessary. After this point wills would return to being made with witnesses who are physically present.
 - The new law will amend the Wills Act 1837 to stipulate that where wills must be signed in the 'presence' of at least two witnesses, their presence can be either physical or virtual.
 - Wills still need to be signed by two witnesses who are not its beneficiaries and electronic signatures will not be permitted.
 - In the longer term the Government will be considering wider reforms to the law on making wills and responding to a forthcoming Law Commission report. The Law Commission has been consulted in the development of the Government's response to this issue.
 - Official guidance on [making wills using video-conferencing](#)
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[Her Majesty's Passport Office update on passport applications](#)

The necessary public health measures taken to suppress the spread of COVID-19 have had an impact on provision of passport services. In order to ensure our customers and employees remained safe, we had to reduce the number of people working from Her Majesty's Passport Office (HMPO) sites.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, HMPO has continued to operate and process standard passport applications. Those who are most in need of passport services have been prioritised and HMPO has issued more than 6,500 passports for individuals on compassionate and emergency grounds.

HMPO recognises that an increasing number of people who do not meet the urgent and compassionate criteria will want a passport more quickly as international travel restrictions continue to ease, particularly those with pre-existing bookings.

Therefore, where a UK-based customer can evidence they are due to travel within the next fortnight, and where HMPO has had their application for longer than 4 weeks for renewal applications, it will expedite their application so that it is delivered within 5 working days.

For adults applying for a passport for the first time, the required security checks mean that the process will take longer than renewals but HMPO are working hard to ensure that anyone with pre-planned travel does not miss out if their passport application has been submitted correctly and in good time.

If people find themselves in this situation then they should contact the Passport Advice line (0300 222 0000).

However, as HMPO always says, people should not book travel until they have received their passport and that advice still stands.

Overseas applicants who have an urgent need to travel will, as usual, be able to approach the Foreign & Commonwealth Office for an Emergency Travel Document (ETD). Where HMPO has had a passport application for 2 weeks longer than normal service standards, it will invite customers to contact us to arrange a refund of the cost of the ETD.

HMPO is encouraging everyone who needs to apply to do so [online](#) as this does help speed up the process. It is vital that everyone applying thoroughly checks that they are sending in the right documentation, have filled in the form accurately, and ensure their photo meets the correct specifications, as this will also speed up the process.

But what HMPO is also asking is that if people do not need to renew right now, then they should wait until after Summer. This is always a busy time and with the added difficulties during the coronavirus pandemic, HMPO has had to scale back its operation. But it is working hard to get services fully resumed as soon as possible.

Building resilience in the face of global climate risks

Thank you, Foreign Minister Maas. Heiko, it is always a pleasure to see you and join you at the UN Security Council. And to our expert briefers, to Colonel Mahamadou, to the Assistant Secretary-General, and to Ms Coral Pasisi, thank you for your insights and expertise in briefing the Council today.

Today's threats to prosperity are tomorrow's geopolitical problems. The briefers have clearly set out the impacts of climate change on international peace and security.

We, the United Kingdom, have kept this issue high on the Council's agenda since we first convened it in 2007, and unfortunately, what we said then and what many others have emphasised since, have been proven right.

This year, for the first time in its history, the top five global risks in the World Economic Forum's annual report were all environmental.

It is clear that climate change is a multiplier of stress and hardship. It hits hardest in the most vulnerable communities, in the most vulnerable countries and regions across the world.

As we have heard, scarce resources, economic shocks, displacement and sea

level rise lead to significantly higher chances of violent conflict. With the added multiplier, as we've all experienced during the course of this year, of COVID-19, the threat to peace becomes extreme.

We all feel the impacts of climate change, but they do not affect us equally. We know, for example, that women and girls suffer disproportionately. Gender inequalities can limit access to education and to decision-making, to food and adequate housing. Girls and women can be more exposed to disaster-induced poverty or exploitation. Women are significantly more likely than men to die during a climate-related disaster. And we know that gender-based violence – tragically, but true – and exploitation increase during crises. In their aftermath, women and girls are often subject to sexual violence and exploitation as they attempt to access food and other basic needs following disasters.

I know I joined you, Mr President, last week to focus on these specific concerns. And let me once again emphasise and reiterate that the United Kingdom is dedicated to tackling all forms of gender-based violence globally, including through the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative.

Our approach to climate security must be sensitive to these inequalities and deep concerns. Women's full, effective, pivotal and meaningful participation is key for sustainable peace. The evidence proves it. We must be led by the needs and priorities of women and girls and we must draw on their potential, their insights, their expertise, their experiences, to lead our response. The Security Council must take this opportunity to address this imbalance.

And of course no nation is unscathed. Every country needs to decide how to adapt to climate impacts, and how to build resilience.

At the heart of our priorities for COP26 next year, the UK wants to bring countries together to urgently increase climate action in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement and the objectives of the UN FCCC. At COP26, we will prioritise action that builds adaptation and resilience, particularly in climate-vulnerable regions, including through better coordination and increased finance. By building resilience, we can reduce risk, including climate-related security risks.

And also, if I may, Mr President, as the leaders of all 54 Commonwealth countries emphasised in their recent statement on the COVID-19 pandemic, we must come together, work collaboratively, collectively, to build back better. This includes continuing to advocate for small and vulnerable states, recognising that the pandemic has exacerbated many of the inherent challenges that these states already face. Working together benefits each and every one of us.

But above all, we need an evidence-based approach to climate security threats. With this approach, we can tailor solutions to the fragile and conflict affected states on our agenda. We have already done this on some resolutions at the Security Council, on Mali, on Darfur, on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on South Sudan and indeed Somalia. We now need to push for effective implementation of these resolutions. We need to integrate

climate resilience into our development, peacebuilding and humanitarian work. We need to use data, evidence and best practice.

To do this effectively, we need to understand the drivers of conflict and the implications for long term stability. I would like to echo calls for a comprehensive Secretary-General report to the Council on climate-related security risks.

Secondly, we would also welcome climate risk assessment and climate resilience as an integral part of the Council's work. This will correctly factor climate risks into UN operations, conflict prevention and resolution strategies and peacebuilding funds. Through the risk-informed Early Action Partnership, we will expand early action financing, improve early warning systems and build national capacity to respond and early to risks. We are supporting the development of a re-implementation plan that will make one billion people safer from disaster by 2025.

And thirdly, we will support strengthening the ability of the UN to enable analysis and action on climate risk as a fundamental way of working.

And finally, we will integrate climate forecasting with broader conflict prevention measures to keep our efforts on target.

In conclusion, Mr President, there is no doubt that climate-related security threats, as you yourself articulated, are real, they are immediate and they are here to stay. Therefore, we must work together so that the UN system can consider climate risks and threats holistically when we make decisions and implement them into UN mission planning.

Thank you so much.