

# A limit, not a target

■ A HUSBAND is not the best person to point out his wife's driving faults, as *County Gazette* Chief Reporter Phil Hill discovered.

Phil's attempts to explain to Leonor that speed limits were the maximum you should be driving rather than a starting point sparked many heated exchanges. She would reply: "Who's driving anyway?" to which he said: "Well, whoever it is she isn't doing it very well."

So, when Leonor was clocked at 39mph in Henlade - where else? - Phil had mixed

feelings. It was tempting to gloat - 'I told you so' - but there was the fear that the family income would be hit by a fine and increased insurance premiums, not to mention the stigma of a criminal record.

But help was at hand in the form of Speed Choice, a workshop which educates and convinces drivers in a way that eluded Phil.

Leonor says she has since given up speeding, so he popped along to the latest workshop in Somerset to see how they managed to achieve what he failed.



■ SOME OF the motorists who attended the Speed Choice workshop.

A GROUP of 15 drivers who had near misses have been shown the error of their ways.

They weren't near misses in the sense of narrowly avoiding accidents, though they could have been.

Rather, they were motorists 'flushed' by speed cameras doing more than the 30mph speed limit on roads across Somerset.

Instead of being prosecuted with the resulting fine, three penalty points on their licences and higher insurance premiums, they were given a constructive 'way out'.

Anyone caught driving over the limit but under 40mph in a 30mph zone can attend a Speed Choice awareness workshop at a cost of £60.

The atmosphere is totally non-judgmental - after all, who can honestly say they've never driven too fast?

Instead, it's all about educating motorists to realise why they shouldn't go over the limit.

Workshop leader Simon set the scene, saying: "The message is about safety, reducing the risks."

"The Highway Code says you have a one in 200 chance of being killed in a collision and we want people to understand the consequences of speeding."

Among reasons motorists at the workshop gave

for speeding were "my wife was getting the tea on the table", "I wasn't concentrating", "I hadn't seen the 30mph sign", "I didn't realise how fast I was going" and "I was distracted".

Some of those at the workshop, who included a man who had been behind the wheel over 60 years, thought speed cameras were installed at the roadside as a sneaky way of making money.

That may have been true in the early days when the first GATSOs were hidden away, but nowadays there are plenty of warning signs and much of the revenue goes on road safety measures in a bid to reduce casualty figures.

Research in 2003 showed average speeds at all camera sites fell by 10%, and the number of deaths and serious accidents dropped by 35%.

Simon's colleague, Pete, said: "There are key tips to avoid speeding - plan your journey, allow plenty of time, select a lower gear to keep better control (third in a 30mph zone), keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front, don't be drawn into speeding by others and check your speedo regularly."

So, what did the people who attended the Speed Choice workshop think?

Eve said: "It was very good. It opens your eyes and it has made me think a bit more."

Dennis said: "It was very interesting. I learned certain things I hadn't remembered. I've always observed the speed limits, but it was just lack of concentration this time."

Lucy said: "It was very good. I thought it was going to be painful, but it was interesting and informative. It will make me concentrate - it has made me more aware."



■ SPEED Choice workshop leaders Pete and Simon.

## ● SPEED CAMERAS

- Fixed cameras are installed at sites where there have been four crashes per kilometre resulting in deaths or serious injuries (KSIs) in the past three years
- Mobile cameras are used at sites with

two KSIs per km in the past three years

- Cameras designed to catch red light jumpers go up at traffic lights where there have been two KSI crashes in the past three years

## ● THE HORRIFYING STATISTICS

- Approximately nine people die and there are 568 injury crashes on Britain's roads each day
- There were 103 road deaths and 7,226 injuries in Avon and Somerset in 2001-02.

and 66 deaths and 6,839 injuries the following year

- The financial cost of injury collisions in the UK in 2004 was £17.5 billion - in Somerset the figure was £327 million

## ● THIS SHOULD MAKE YOU THINK

- A driver at 30mph will just be able to stop without hitting a person 23 metres in front of him
- At 40mph he will hit them at 26mph
- At 35mph the speed at impact will be

18mph and at 32mph it will be 11mph

- One in 40 pedestrians hit at 20mph will die
- Two in ten die at 30mph
- Nine in ten die at 40mph

## ● TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What's the only octagonal road sign?
2. What is the speed limit for cars and motorcycles on dual carriageways?
3. What's the average speed of traffic on Britain's motorways?
4. When and where was the first GATSO speed camera installed in this country?
5. What major new motoring law came into force from September 18 this year?
6. What's the recommended maximum

time you should drive before taking a break?

### HOW WELL DID YOU DO?

6. Two hours
5. In your vehicle
4. Children under three must use the appropriate child restraint for their weight
3. In 1992 in Twickenham, south London
2. 40mph
1. 50mph

● Drivers urged to slash speed: see Motoring, page 115