

NTDA enjoys surge in membership interest as lockdown eases



The NTDA office fully reopened on Monday 22 June and one of the first pleasant duties the team was able to enjoy was to welcome Auto Technics (NW) Ltd T/A Southport MOT Centre into full membership of the Association.

Southport MOT's Managing Director, Chris Cross, discovered his passion for mechanics at the tender age of four years old. He would follow his father "like a shadow", watching and learning while he tinkered with motorbikes and cars. At the age of 21, Chris launched his own business as a mobile mechanic before moving to a workshop in Formby. He finally settled the business at its current location at 71 London Street, Southport, (pictured), twelve years ago.

The second new member the team welcomed in the same week, was JB Tyre Services Scotland Ltd based in Stepps, Glasgow. This independent tyre distributor, established in 2009, is run by David Robert and Stephen Brown and provides tyre services, including repair, in Bishopbriggs, Carntyne, Craigend, Cranhill, Glenboig, Lenzie, Millerston, Parkhead, Provanmill, Riddrie, Robroyston, Ruchazie, and of course Stepps!

The Association has generally seen a big surge in membership enquiries with tyre distributors, garages, fast-fit centres and wholesalers from Burgess Hill, Glasgow, Omagh, Southampton and Telford all requesting applications packs in the space of a week.

Commenting on this new interest, the NTDA Chief Executive Stefan Hay said: "During lockdown we have continued to support our members and the wider trade by successfully lobbying Government regarding tyre centres remaining open, tyre technicians being classified as key workers, cutting the MOT extension period and positioning members as essential to ensuring the UK's transport infrastructure is serviced and maintained. Furthermore, on a weekly basis, we have provided our tyre distributor members with advice on a range of things from sourcing PPE to furloughing staff and retail rates relief to practical tips for reopening post lockdown as well as the regular technical bulletins. Clearly this is now paying dividends as members and non-members alike see the tangible benefits of NTDA membership and we are delighted by the calibre of businesses now almost queuing up to join."



Furthermore, on a weekly basis, we have provided our tyre distributor members with advice on a range of things from sourcing PPE to furloughing staff and retail rates relief to practical tips for reopening post lockdown as well as the regular technical bulletins. Clearly this is now paying dividends as members and non-members alike see the tangible benefits of NTDA membership and we are delighted by the calibre of businesses now almost queuing up to join."

NTDA to launch Tyre Industry Key Worker Card



During the full lockdown period the NTDA was inundated with members seeking advice and guidance on the status of their employees as key workers.

According to Government guidance, garages are classified as an essential service provider and have therefore been allowed to remain open throughout lockdown to carry out “essential repairs or services”.

Many NTDA members remained fully open and others offered a full mobile response service, which definitely kept the UK moving in this time of crisis, but this did cause some problems. For example, some members’ employees were stopped by the Police on their way to work and questioned as to their reason for travelling, a particular problem when responding to roadside incidents out of hours.

In response to such incidents, the NTDA was able to provide letter templates to members and successfully demonstrate that due to the essential role tyre technicians play in keeping the supply chain flowing they are considered key workers and are fully covered by the definition previously published by the Government. Furthermore, very few, if any, NTDA members only fit tyres. Members carry out a range of wider automotive aftercare services such as repair, servicing and vehicle maintenance. With this in mind, they are, without doubt, essential to maintaining the transport infrastructure and fall, fully, into the Garage definition.

According to the NTDA’s Stefan Hay, the situation became more difficult once other sector employees came into consideration. *“The Government’s definition was clear and included those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the COVID-19 response, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass. Combine this with the need for garages to remain open and it is clear how important our sector is”*. He continued: *“Insofar as NTDA membership is concerned, we have people working in control rooms to deploy tyre technicians to the roadside to deal with tyre incidents, people re-treading commercial tyres, people engaged in repair and replacement services for construction plant, people working in logistics roles ensuring tyres and other auto-parts are delivered, members collecting end of life tyres for recycling, aftermarket technicians visiting sites to repair and calibrate equipment and managers visiting depots to check on employee welfare issues and these are just a few of the roles in our sector. What has become clear, is that all of these individuals need to be identifiable as key workers, especially in the future if we see a second peak of the COVID-19 virus and new lockdown restrictions are imposed, which is a distinct possibility.”*

To support the sector the NTDA is launching a **Tyre Industry Key Worker Photo ID Card** in response to that need. Similar card schemes have been recently launched by organisations such as the Institute for Vehicle Recovery with great success. The cards will cost £10 +VAT and be valid for 5 years and the NTDA, which is a registered data management organisation with the ICO, will hold a national database of all card holders. All employees of tyre manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, distributors and the associated aftermarket will be eligible for the cards, which must be applied for by their employer. *(Unlike the REACT and TTPDS licence cards this card is simply for identification and is not proof of competency)*. Application forms are available from the NTDA Membership Secretary Alison Keitch via: **info@ntda.co.uk** or **01296 482128**.

