NEWS

Scotland to bring in tougher drink driving law

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Lower blood alcohol limits for drivers are set to be introduced in Scotland before Christmas, in a move that has been welcomed by road safety campaigners.

The change will mean a reduction in the legal blood alcohol level from the current 80 mg to 50 mg in every 100 mL of blood and brings Scotland into line with most other European countries, though for the first time drivers will be treated differently in different parts of the United Kingdom.

The UK is currently almost alone in Europe in having an 80 mg limit. Scotland's justice minister, Kenny MacAskill, said that lowering the level would make roads safer and save lives.

The new law will come into effect on 5 December if, as expected, it is approved by the Scottish Parliament. The change comes after a consultation in which almost three quarters of respondents backed the lower limit.

The UK road safety minister, Robert Goodwill, confirmed that no similar reduction was being considered in England. He said that tackling drink driving was a priority for the government at Westminster, and action included strengthening enforcement by removing the automatic right for drivers who failed a breathalyser test to demand a blood test and by introducing changes to breath testing equipment next year.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents has called on all parts of the UK to follow Scotland's lead. Sandy Allan, the society's road safety manager in Scotland, said, "There is a considerable body of research which shows that reducing drink drive limits is effective in reducing drink drive deaths and injuries. We would like to see the rest of the UK follow Scotland's example."

The Northern Ireland Assembly is considering introducing a 50 mg limit in a bill that could become law next year.

Figure

[Image: David Cheskin/PA Wire]