



Living on the Darkside

It's the hottest topic of conversation in the modified world but what's it all about? At Fast & Modified if you follow us, we will lead you into the light...

If you've not heard about the developments in window

tinting over the last few months you must have been living under a rock! The speculation and rumours are rife as to what is happening, so as promised in last month's issue we have been out and about investigating the ins and the outs of this topic.

After a fatal accident involving a car with heavily tinted windows and a motorcyclist it was decided that the law should be clarified. It is this amendment to the Act which has caused concern among cruisers and tinters alike. The change in

wording is so small, yet it has such a big effect on everybody involved. Basically the Act now states that the windows and anything applied to the window must allow at least 70% of light to pass through.

Window tinting has survived over the last few years using a loophole in Section 32 of the Construction and Use Act. This act governs the safety of motor vehicles. Section 32 itself stated that the front drop glass (the glass in your front doors) should allow no less than 70% of light to transfer through. The argument which was being used was the fact that the pre Jan 2004 wording of the Act only applied to the glass itself and not to any film applied to that glass. On the back of this loophole many people have set up tinting businesses and became very successful.

With this new wording in the law the police have not been slow in making their intentions of enforcing it well known. At a recent cruise in Falkirk they were out in force along with the Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and their tint meter and at least fifty cruisers were given rectification notices due to the tints applied to their cars.

We caught up with David Waddle, one of the drivers caught in this crusade against window tinting. "We were all lined up, there

were loads of us being tested" he told us, "when they tested my windows I got a visible light transmission (VLT) of 22.9%" well below that of the 70% permitted. "They gave me one hour to get my car off the road and the car could not be taken back on the road until the tint had been removed" As you can see from the photos of the car, his tints are definitely not the darkest on the road.

David invited us along with him to the VOSA testing centre in Bishopbriggs when he was going to get his car re-tested after having the tints removed. This was an offer we couldn't refuse so off we went, along with Davie from Diamond Window Tinting to get a first hand view of how the tests take place.

Arriving at the centre we were greeted by two representatives of the VOSA who were going to re-test David's car. They were happy to talk us through the process involved in testing the tint, as well as giving us a little bit of help as to where the law really stands.

The unit used for testing window tints is called the Tint Man; this is the official testing unit. It consists of a light source which is applied to one side of the glass, while a sensor is applied to the other side. A beam of light is passed through the glass and the result is shown on the handheld unit. For

each piece of glass which is being tested this must be carried out three times, with the results being added up and an average being taken.

With his tints removed David's glass had a VLT of 79.9% so he was once again free to drive on the roads. However this was only after he had removed his tinted sunstrip from his windscreen. The VOSA stated that the sunstrip must be no more than 6cm deep. This however seems strange as we measured the standard tinted sunstrip on two standard cars which measured over 11 centimetres deep - more investigation into this is definitely needed and we will let you know what is happening.

Talking to the representatives of the VOSA they gave us some very handy information to pass onto all you cruisers out there. First of all they gave us the checklist (which you can see on the right) for exactly what procedures must be followed during the testing of the glass. If these procedures are not strictly adhered to you can question the result.

Secondly, they gave us a table showing how they have to deal with each level of tint, which you can see below.

Enforcement Standards	Action
Actual VLT	Action
<30%	Immediate Prohibition
>30% but <45%	Delayed Prohibition (usually 10 Days)
>45% but <65%	Advice Only

So what does it all mean? Well if you have less than 30% of light passing through your glass you will either be asked to remove the tints there and then or be given a period of grace to get the car home and the tints removed. With between 30 and 50% of light coming through you will be given ten days to get the tints removed. If you have between 50 and 70% of light coming through the glass you will be told that it is illegal but no further action will be taken. This comes from the recommendations that the VOSA work to when testing your cars.

Fast and Modified would like to remind you that all the information here is for entertainment purpose and we do not condone breaking of the law, however if you bend it that's ok ;)

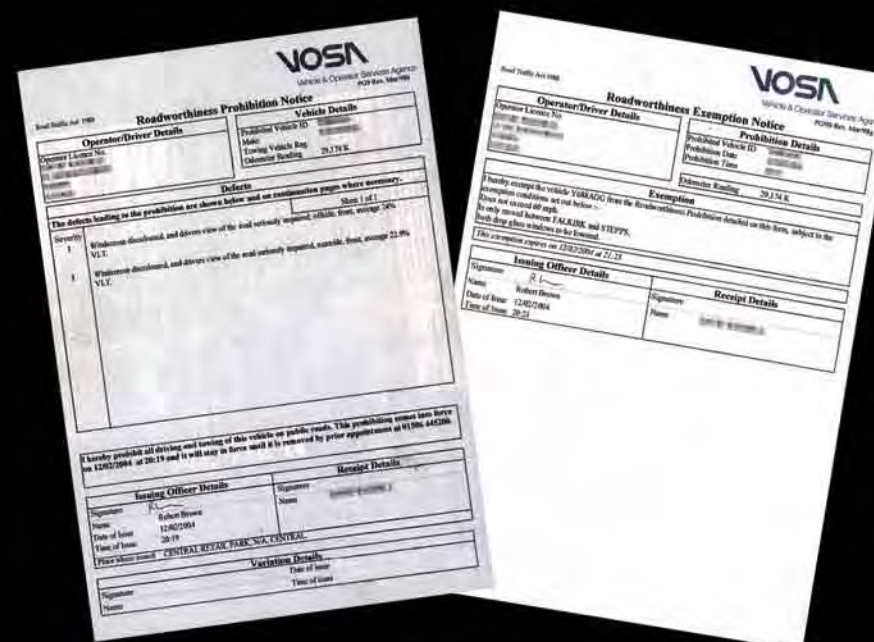
Non Instrumented Checks

If heavily tinted glass is encountered in situation when a TintMan meter is not available then a subjective assessment may be made. It will be made of the relevant glass from the driving seat with the doors closed. If it is obvious that the VLT is less than the legal requirements and the level of visibility of the surroundings has been obscured to the extent that the "danger of injury" criterion for immediate prohibition action has been met, then an immediate prohibition may be used. If the level of visibility is not obviously dangerous then advise that the legal requirements may have been breached, thus putting the onus on the owner to investigate further.

TINTMAN

The TintMan is the official VLT measuring device used by VOSA officials, Vehicle Inspectors and the police forces around the country. Created and manufactured by Turnkey Instruments and based on the way the human eye reacts to light. The device is very simple in operation (although officers do require a certain level of training before being allowed to operate the units). The unit comes in a small plastic case that houses the TintMan itself, some calibration glass and the emitter and receiver arrays. When a car is going to have its glass tested the unit is calibrated against the sample

glass in the case. Then the vehicle glass is cleaned and dried **1** before the emitter and receiver are placed on each side of the glass. A magnetic locking mechanism is used so the emitter and receiver are perfectly aligned. **2** The official using the device then presses and holds down the button on the front of the unit until **3** the reading stabilises (usually within 30 seconds). This test is carried out 3 times at varying points of the window (within the drivers viewing area) and an average is calculated. If the average reading falls under the amount allowed by law then the official has the right to take appropriate action. See the chart on the allowable percentages for more details.



Insurance Implications

One thing which you will need to check out with your insurance company is whether they will still insure your car with window tints.

Some insurance companies have expressed that they will not be insuring cars with window tints, while some others are still happy to insure you.

Make sure you check with your individual companies before getting tints!

Check List For Testing

This is a direct quote from the guidelines given to the VOSA agents that test your vehicles. It outlines the steps which must be taken in order for the test to be official.

- 1) Before use check and adjust the TintMan instrument sensitivity against the sample Reference Window having first made sure it is clean
- 2) Clean the areas of glass to be tested with one of the approved glass cleaners
- 3) Dry the cleaned areas of glass with lint free cloth
- 4) Before taking a reading make sure the source and detector are concentrically aligned and firmly against the material
- 5) In the case of windscreens take readings in the "primary vision area"* only *The primary vision area is the area of the windscreen through which the driver would normally look through the most. It excludes glass within 6cm of the top and bottom edges of the screen and

- within 9cm of the offside and nearside edges of the screen. For this purpose this memo the "edge" is where transparent glass ends. Exclude blackened glass at pillars used primarily for bonding the glass.
- 6) Allow 10 to 20 seconds with the button depressed for the light source intensity to stabilise.
- 7) If the low battery warning remains on do not accept the transmission reading and change the batteries before taking fresh readings
- 8) Take at least three measurements at different positions for each area of glass and calculate and average value.

