

ANY QUESTION

ANSWERED ✓

If we don't know the answer, we'll find the person who does

Although they'd bring the ER-5 bang up to date, there are no road-legal aftermarket LED headlights



Special brackets may be required for running lights

OWNING & RIDING

Q Can I replace my headlight with an LED version?

I want to convert the headlight on my 2001 Kawasaki ER-5 to LED and put running lights elsewhere to increase my visibility. Is it legal and where do I start?
Rupert Vining, email

Answered by Chris Dabbs, MCN
There are no legal aftermarket LED headlights available yet, but

you can add running lights.

Mounting the units and routing the wiring safely and securely is the challenge. You will probably have to make special brackets and the wiring loom on your 2001 bike may be tired and the earths are likely to be in poor condition.

The next snag is connecting the LED lights' skinny cables to

the normal-sized cables in the loom. The easiest way is to use Japanese bullet connectors. Solder the skinny wire to one bullet, and crimp the other side with a crimp tool. Besides the usual insulation, the soldered connection would need insulating from vibration and corrosion with RTV silicone sealant or a semi-

flexible glue, such as CT1.

The wiring side is dead simple – take a tap off the feed to the tail light or pilot light and use it to power your extra running lights. The small draw of the LEDs is unlikely to need extra fuses. But because your bike is exposed to water, vibration and road dirt, the joins have to withstand that attack.



Early Honda CBR600 makes a good starting point for a budget resto

Q What makes a good mid-80s restoration project?

I'm hankering after a Japanese bike from my early riding career as a restoration project. I started riding in 1982 and had a succession of different bikes through the mid-80s. The list includes a Suzuki RG250, early Honda CBR600, 1987 Suzuki GSX-R750, Kawasaki GPX750R and a Honda CB1100R. Are there any makes or models that I should avoid, perhaps because of spares availability?
John Wellington, Castle Barnard

Answered by John Wyatt, Rising Sun Restorations

Kawasaki, Suzuki and Yamaha all have half-decent spares availability, with Suzuki the best of the bunch. For example, you can still pick up an original 1982 Suzuki GS1100 fuse box.

However Honda decided to control their spares' quality and stock levels by buying up a lot of their Japanese spares sub-contractors in the early 1970s. So there are fewer CB-series fuse boxes and indicators gathering dust on shelves.

Forget a CB1100R for that very reason, and because a donor bike will cost you £15,000, but a jelly-mould CBR600 is new and cheap enough to consider, as are GSX-R750s and GPZ900s.

Q Why is my Blackbird not charging properly?

I've a Honda Super Blackbird that's given me years of good service, and runs fine if I make short journeys. But when I stopped for fuel on a longer run recently the battery was stone-dead. When I called out the AA man, he was able to jump-start it easily enough and the charging circuit seemed to be working so I was able to ride home. Any ideas?
Ray Grant, Southend

Answered by Colin Barnes, Chas Bikes

This seems to affect quite a few Honda models as they get older. From my experience it's usually a failing regulator-rectifier. It seems that a failing reg-rec can cope with a short journey, but on a longer run it overheats, then shuts down until it cools down. It will only get worse, so a replacement is in order.



Deterioration of pipes feeding R1's injector bodies could restrict revs

Q Why won't my R1 rev past 7k?

The other night, in the cold and wet, my 2006 R1 wouldn't rev above 7000rpm. Once engine temp climbed from 60°C to 90°C it pulled cleanly to the redline. My dealer checked the fuel filter, EXUP and engine valves, throttle position sensors and throttle bodies, but to no avail.
Steve Kearn, email

Answered by Charles Marvell, Flitwick Motorcycles

It sounds like it is leaning out too quickly before it's up to temperature. Splits in the rubber pipes attached to the injector bodies that feed those sensors could be a cause.

I still think those sensors could be breaking down. They can be checked at various engine temperatures via the on-board diagnostic function.

If you have a Power Commander fitted, try disconnecting it. They can cause severe running problems that the bike's diagnostics can't identify.

TRAVEL & TOURING

Q Where can I go in Europe for £250?

Answered by Andy Davidson, MCN tourism specialist

Forget the Pyrenees or Italy's much-riden passes and take a trip to Europe's most biker-friendly region. The Black Forest of south-west Germany is biking nirvana, with miles and miles of stunning, not to mention perfectly smooth, tarmac that twists and turns through breathtaking scenery.

It's home to one of Europe's most beautiful roads, the B500

national highway. The road curves its way down the middle of the forest and wriggles up and over mountain passes with gorgeous scenery and rollercoaster turns. You can spend the entire day riding the B500 through a finely balanced blend of hairpins, lefts, rights and long, fast sweepers. A two-year-old with a crayon couldn't have drawn more twists, curls and whirls. Whether you start north or south, the road etches high up

the spine of a green mountain that incites you to ride and ride. You've 40 miles of it, which means you can ride at least four good laps in a single day, practising and perfecting your lines.

And you can do it all for £250. The Eurotunnel will cost you £50, two nights in a pension including breakfast will be around £50. You're looking at around £100 for fuel and £30 on food for a long weekend. Easy peasy.



Views of the Black Forest make the trip well worth it

TECH WATCH

Q Finding the perfect balance of fork damping

Almost all suspension feels good on smooth surfaces, but only some carries on feeling good over bumps.

Designing damper pistons that flow fluid inside forks and shocks, and the shim stacks to control them, takes time and money. It also costs money to keep internal friction at bay. That's why a set of Öhlins superbike forks will set you back thousands. You're paying for the precision of the machining, the accuracy of the damper cartridge bore, and trick coatings on moving parts. That matters if you're trying to outbrake Alex Lowes.

But say you're a manufacturer who wants to build in good ride quality for today's crappy roads, but your accountant retains a grip on production costs. One cunning



High-end Öhlins: costly for a reason

plan is to split the jobs of controlling compression and rebound between the two forks.

By convention, a normal fork leg handles damping in both directions, via separate rebound and compression pistons. So add two forks together and you have four expensive pistons in all, plus their awkward-to-assemble shim stacks. Giving the job of compression to the left and rebound to the right means you can use the same forks but with just one piston in each leg. You don't need compression adjusters by the spindle either.

The catch is you're halving the working piston area. So each fork dive or extension is controlled by fluid through a single piston, rather than two sharing the load.

In isolation, bikes with these internals, like the original Triumph Tiger Sport, ride pretty well, even on the hideously bumpy roads. But it will never be as good as a bike with damping pistons in both fork legs.

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MCN LAW

Your legal questions

Q I came off on 'excessive overbanding'. Can I claim?

I lost the rear end on a wet country road and ended up in a ditch. I hurt my shoulder quite badly, but I was able to pick myself up. When I went to inspect the road I noticed that the overbanding sealing the edge of a recent road repair looked much wider than usual, about 80mm wide. Can I claim from anyone for my injury and bike damage?
Tim H, Wrexham

Depending on the type of road, the local council or the Highway Authority is responsible for maintaining the road surface and all repairs. Authorities often contract this work out, but the contractors have a duty to make sure the road repairs comply with statutory requirements and repair guidelines. Those guidelines state that

'To prove your claim you may need evidence from an expert witness'

overbanding should never be more than 40mm wide or 3mm thick. If wider than 20mm, the material used is supposed to have a grit-like substance added to provide adequate wet skidding resistance.

The overbanding you describe clearly exceeds the recommended width and it also sounds like it may not have had the anti-skid protection. If you can prove that the overbanding did not comply, then it would likely be considered a hazard and you may well be able to bring a claim against either the authority or the contractors for misfeasance and/or negligence.

To prove your claim you may require evidence from a highway expert witness. Such experts are not cheap, so whether it is a reasonable expense will depend on the likely value of your claim.



Andrew Campbell, Solicitor and author of the MCN Law column for the last five years

Andrew Campbell, Bikelawyer. Visit www.bikelawyer.co.uk or email andrew@bikelawyer.co.uk or call 01446 794169

Bikelawyer
Motorcycle Accident Solicitors

Q What's the perfect choice for my first paddock stand?

I need to look after my Honda CBR125 myself so I am looking at getting paddock stands for the front and rear. What do I look for?
Alan Anderson, Ealing

Answered by Keith Roissetter, Infinity Motorcycles

You really only need a front stand if you are changing tyres, and I'd leave that job to the professionals. A universal rear paddock stand will happily fit your

bike for routine maintenance.

I prefer the cup designs that fit under the swingarm, instead of hooks that require swingarm bobbins to be installed and can foul the exhaust. Plus, the CBR doesn't have threaded sections to take the bobbins anyway.

Buy from a reputable firm, as there are some very cheap and nasty stands out there that will fold like origami, even under the weight of a CBR125.



Demon Tweaks Warrior from £17.50

MotoGP from £34.99

Oxford Big Black from £46.99

Oxford Premium from £59.99

R&G Racing from £74.99