House of Commons
Transport Committee

Road safety

Second Report of Session 2012-13

Volume I: Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence

Additional written evidence is contained in Volume II, available on the Committee website at www.parliament.uk/transcom

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 10 July 2012
The Transport Committee

The Transport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Transport and its Associate Public Bodies.

Current membership

Mrs Louise Ellman (Labour/Co-operative, Liverpool Riverside) (Chair)
Steve Baker (Conservative, Wycombe)
Jim Dobbin (Labour/Co-operative, Heywood and Middleton)
Mr Tom Harris (Labour, Glasgow South)
Julie Hilling (Labour, Bolton West)
Kwasi Kwarteng (Conservative, Spelthorne)
Mr John Leech (Liberal Democrat, Manchester Withington)
Paul Maynard (Conservative, Blackpool North and Cleveleys)
Iain Stewart (Conservative, Milton Keynes South)
Graham Stringer (Labour, Blackley and Broughton)
Julian Sturdy (Conservative, York Outer)

The following were also members of the committee during the Parliament.

Angie Bray (Conservative, Ealing Central and Acton)
Lilian Greenwood (Labour, Nottingham South)
Kelvin Hopkins (Labour, Luton North)
Gavin Shuker (Labour/Co-operative, Luton South)
Angela Smith (Labour, Penistone and Stocksbridge)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the internet at http://www.parliament.uk/transcom. A list of Reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this volume.

The Reports of the Committee, the formal minutes relating to that report, oral evidence taken and some or all written evidence are available in a printed volume. Additional written evidence may be published on the internet only.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Mark Egan (Clerk), Jessica Montgomery (Second Clerk), David G Davies (Senior Committee Specialist), Tony Catinella (Senior Committee Assistant), Adrian Hitchins (Committee Assistant), Stewart McIlvenna (Committee Support Assistant) and Hannah Pearce (Media Officer).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Transport Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6263; the Committee’s email address is transcom@parliament.uk
# Contents

## Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road casualties in Great Britain</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key themes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our inquiry</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Leadership</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government's vision for road safety</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership on road safety</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Localism</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of localism</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority performance</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority resources</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of central Government</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Young drivers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road safety for young drivers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-driver training</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The driving test</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test changes</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Cycle safety</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclist training</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HGVs</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver training</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban planning and infrastructure</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times campaign</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Motorcycle safety</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report on the new European motorcycle test</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government response</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Speed limits</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 mph</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership working</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 mph</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Technology and engineering</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and engineering in the Strategic Framework</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9 Conclusion 31

Conclusions and recommendations 33

Formal Minutes 36

Witnesses 37

List of printed written evidence 38

List of additional written evidence 38

List of unprinted evidence 39

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament 40
Summary

In 2011, 1,901 people were killed in road accidents. This is the first annual increase in road fatalities since 2003 and a 3% increase compared to 2010. 25,023 people were killed or seriously injured, an increase of 2% from 2010 and the first annual increase since 1994. The number of people killed or seriously injured remains lower than any year since national records began, except for 2010. However, any increase in road deaths is cause for concern. We think that the Government should provide an explanation for these increases and reassurance that this does not mark the beginning of a worrying trend in road deaths.

The Government published its Strategic Framework for Road Safety in May 2011. In a departure from previous approaches to road safety, the Government has decided not to include the use of targets in its road safety strategy. Targets have been replaced with an action plan and outcomes framework, which consist of a number of indicators which will be measured, and a set of casualty forecasts. According to these forecasts, we should expect casualties to fall by 37% by 2020 (compared to the 2005-09 average). Defined targets to reduce road casualties have been an important contributor to improvements in road safety. We heard that targets help focus attention on road safety and prioritise resources. Yet they are not the only factor driving road safety improvements that we have heard about. Our evidence suggests that the principal factor in improving road safety is political leadership. For some, the presence of targets was a sign of this leadership. If the Government is not going to adopt this approach, then it should be making more effort to provide leadership in other ways.

Localism is a key theme of the Government’s strategy. It believes decentralising power and funding will allow local authorities to be more flexible and innovative in tackling road safety. We have found considerable variation amongst local authorities in their performance on road safety. Whilst there are examples of good practice, there are cases in which local authorities have not improved their road safety performance in recent years at all. We welcome the forthcoming guidance for local authorities on best practice in road safety, but simply providing guidance limits the Department for Transport to a passive role. Under conditions of reduced local authority resources and loss of skilled road safety personnel, the Government should not sit back and expect road safety to remain a priority. Stronger leadership and a clearer vision are required from Government to communicate the importance of road safety to local decision makers.

We have found particular issues in casualty rates for young drivers and cyclists. Road accidents are the leading cause of death for young people aged 16-24. Despite assurances that the issue of young driver road safety is a priority, we are not convinced that this is reflected in the road safety strategy. There are a variety of proposals which may help improve young driver road safety. The Government should review these and incorporate a targeted strategy to address young driver road safety into the Strategic Framework.

Cycling casualty reductions are highlighted in the Government’s vision for road safety. In 2011, 3,085 cyclists were killed or seriously injured. We heard about a number of different ways to improve cycle safety, including training, fitting HGV’s with sensors and providing infrastructure. This issue was brought to particular prominence by The Times cycle...
campaign, which we commend. We have heard expressions of support from Government for this campaign, which we would now like to see translated into action.

The planned update of the Strategic Framework for Road Safety in September 2012 is an opportunity for the Government to reassess its road safety strategy. In particular, given recent road fatality increases, it should update progress against its action plan and outcomes framework. We would like to see the inclusion of plans, outlined to us by the department, to name and shame local authorities that are under-performing on road safety, greater detail on the role of engineering to improve road safety and an outline of the Department for Transport’s efforts to provide leadership by joining up road safety work across Whitehall.
1 Introduction

Road casualties in Great Britain

1. 2011 saw the first annual increase in the number of people killed in road accidents since 2003 (figure 1). The number of fatalities increased 3% to 1,901.¹ Fatalities increased for car occupants (by 6% to 883) and pedestrians (by 12% to 453). The number of people who were killed or seriously injured (KSI) increased by 2% in this period to 25,023. In particular, KSI figures increased for cyclists (by 15% to 3,192) and motorcyclists (by 8% to 5,609).² Although the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents was lower than in any year since national records began in 1926 except 2010, the 2011 figures are a very worrying departure from a long-term trend of decreasing road casualties.

![Figure 1 Graph showing the number of road deaths across different user groups since 2000.](http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/tables/ras30069.2011 data from Reported road casualties: 2011 main results)

---

1 In 2010 there were 1850 fatalities, in 2011 there were 1901.

2 Reported road casualties in Great Britain: main results 2011, DfT, June 2012.

Table 1 The number of people killed or killed/seriously injured (KSI) in 2011 and the percentage change from 2010.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road user type</th>
<th>Casualty</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>% change from 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrians</td>
<td>Killed</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KSI</td>
<td>5,907</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclists</td>
<td>Killed</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KSI</td>
<td>3,192</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcyclists</td>
<td>Killed</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KSI</td>
<td>5,609</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car occupants</td>
<td>Killed</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KSI</td>
<td>9,225</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key themes

2. The Government published its Strategic Framework for Road Safety in May 2011. It is based on what the Government describes as the “key principles” of localism, the “Big Society”, non-regulatory approaches and deficit reduction.5 Its vision is for the UK to remain a “world leader” in road safety. The Government aims to maintain ongoing reductions in casualty numbers, whilst tackling specific issues for cyclists and children from deprived areas.6 The Government believes this can be achieved by encouraging best practice amongst local authorities. The Strategic Framework states that central Government’s main responsibilities are: providing national leadership, setting the legal or regulatory framework, agreeing international standards, managing the strategic road network, setting standards for safe driving, providing information and educational materials and sharing research or best practice amongst stakeholders.7 Empowering local decision makers, improving education and targeted enforcement efforts are the core components of the strategy.8 We have looked at aspects of enforcement activity previously.9

3. The UK has one of the lowest road fatality rates in the EU.10 In 2010 the European Commission set a target to achieve a 50% reduction in deaths on European roads by 2020.11 The Department for Transport supports the EU target, but does not subscribe to it. It notes that the target “does not mean that each member state is expected to deliver this reduction.” Those countries with higher casualty levels are expected to be able to achieve

---

4 Reported road casualties in Great Britain: main results 2011, DfT, June 2012.
5 Strategic Framework for Road Safety, Department for Transport, May 2011, p14-15 (hereafter referred to as Strategic Framework)
6 Strategic Framework p11-12
7 Strategic Framework p 38
8 Strategic Framework, p 6-11
9 Drink and drug driving law, First Report of Session 2010-12, HC 460
10 Data available from http://www.pacts.org.uk/statistics.php?id=59 Sweden has the lowest fatality rate in the EU.
11 Ev 111 para 27
higher reductions than countries such as the UK. Various aspects of road safety policy are negotiated at an EU level, for example motorcycle training, drivers’ working hours, and various technological regulations on vehicle safety.

Our inquiry

4. We launched our inquiry in September 2011. We asked for evidence about the Government’s Strategic Framework for Road Safety, in particular: the absence of targets from the framework, the role of decentralisation, the efficacy of the Road Safety Act 2006, and the Strategic Framework’s action plan. We received over 60 submissions of written evidence and held five oral evidence sessions. During oral evidence we heard from both Mike Penning MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for road safety, and Norman Baker MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for sustainable travel. During the course of our inquiry The Times started a high-profile cycle safety campaign and we heard evidence about their goals. In addition, we visited Halton Borough and Liverpool City Councils to discuss their road safety work. We saw driver training in action with Young Driver at Brent Cross. We also saw some HGV safety features in action from CEMEX at Parliament. We are grateful to those who provided evidence and hosted our visits and we would like to thank our specialist adviser Mike Talbot for his assistance.

5. As part of our call for evidence we asked about the Road Safety Act 2006, following the publication of a post-legislative scrutiny memorandum. The Act contains a range of provisions that related to enforcement, sanctions and driver education. We asked for evidence about whether this legislative framework is still appropriate. Witnesses told us that, broadly-speaking, it is.

6. In this report we comment on a number of aspects of the Government’s strategy for improving road safety. We consider the Government’s leadership in road safety, and the drive for a more localist approach to road safety, as these are key themes in the Government’s strategy. We explore the issues associated with certain road user groups that have been described to us as being particular vulnerable, noting those faced by young drivers and cyclists. We comment on continuing issues with the motorcycle test. We then assess broader road safety issues such as speed limits and the role of technology and engineering in the Government’s strategy.

---

12 Ev 87 para 24
14 See p 37 for full witness list.
15 Post legislative assessment of the Road Safety Act 2006, DfT, July 2011, Cm 8141
16 Ev 87 para 16, Ev 92 para 5, Ev 94, Ev 103 para 3.1, Ev 107 para 2.7, Ev 122 para 17, Ev 136 para 6,
2 Leadership

Government’s vision for road safety

7. The Government describes its vision for road safety as follows;

Our long-term vision is to ensure that Britain remains a world leader on road safety. There have been impressive improvements over previous decades and in recent years. We are committed to ensuring this trend is maintained. Alongside this our aim is to reduce the relatively high risk of some groups more quickly, in particular for cyclists and children from deprived areas.17

It sets out plans to achieve this vision through an action plan and an outcomes framework, which uses a set of indicators “designed to help Government, local organisations and citizens to monitor the progress towards improving road safety”.18 The Government expects that this will “be used against the figures for individual local authorities so that their progress can be compared against the national picture.”19

Leadership on road safety

8. The outcomes framework has replaced the targets which were a central feature of the previous government’s strategy for road safety.20 The only countries in the EU that do not have targets as part of their road safety strategies are the UK, Luxembourg and Malta.21 The Government justified their absence as follows:

While we believe that previous road safety targets have been useful we do not consider that over-arching national targets are still necessary for road safety in Great Britain. This is because we do not believe that further persuasion is needed on the importance of road safety. We expect central and local government to continue to prioritise road safety and continue to seek improvements. Instead we need to move to more sophisticated ways to monitor progress which is why we have developed the Road Safety Outcomes Framework.22

9. Most of our witnesses were in favour of using road safety targets.23 For example, the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) told us that:

Internationally, the evidence is clear that those countries over the last 20 years that have had a target for casualty reduction have achieved higher levels of reduction in fatalities than those countries without. The average over the period is 4%, but that

17 Strategic Framework p 20
18 Strategic Framework p 72
19 Ibid
20 Ev w22 para 1
21 Q 295
22 Ev 86 para 6
varies between 4% and probably about 17%. You can see that having a target has provided leadership from Government, which has meant that those other institutions, whether they are local government, the private sector or the public sector, have all had a common goal at which to aim.24

Such support mostly arose from the consensus that targets help focus efforts and resources on road safety initiatives. For example, we heard that a target-driven approach “helps concentrate the mind”25 and would “encourage best practice and accountability”26, particularly at a local level to “explain to local politicians” why road safety should be a priority.27 In particular, targets were useful for helping prioritise road safety resources for stakeholders such as the police.28 The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) told us that:

The reality is that there is a whole range of pressures on policing as there is for other public agencies about what the specific priority is there and then. [...] Home Affairs issues the strategic policing requirement, but it does not include road safety and KSIs as part of it. When chief constables are looking at how they manage their resources and deliver in terms of safety, they will not necessarily look at roads policing because there are no national targets.29

10. Mike Penning MP, the road safety minister, agreed that targets “have helped to focus minds” but went on to argue that “if you have simplistic targets, then you will get simplistic answers.”30 He contended it would remain best practice for local authorities to maintain road safety efforts regardless of the presence of targets.31 He also pointed to the potential issues associated with targets:

There is no doubt that the targets did help the drive down, but-and it is a very big but-if you set targets, it is always the easier options that people will look at. People will do the things that are simpler and easier, but the more difficult things will not get done.32

A number of local authority witnesses told us that they used targets as part of their local road safety strategies.33 We will be interested to see if this approach is reflected in the forthcoming guidance for local authorities.

11. Some witnesses argued that the absence of defined goals pointed to a broader sidelining of road safety in the DfT. For example, PACTS argued that the absence of targets itself might not be an issue, were it not for a context of:
ending the war on the motorist, axing grant for road safety partnerships, cutting capital for speed cameras, however popular or unpopular they were, moves to raise the motorway speed limit to 80 mph, suggesting that a target does not matter, and also moving toward a four-year MOT.\textsuperscript{34}

**Evaluation**

12. Despite the absence of targets, the strategy does set out expected progress on road casualty reductions and states that “we could see fatalities falling by around 37\% to 1,770 by 2020”. However, it emphasises that “this is neither a target nor a hard forecast”.\textsuperscript{35} We questioned Mr Penning on what it was therefore intended to be. He said “it is not a target”,\textsuperscript{36} but went on to argue that this “does not mean there is no target within the strategy, because there is a long term strategy and a long-term target for it.”\textsuperscript{37} He continued:

In terms of road safety the coalition agreement does not say, “This is the target for the next 10 years,” but there is a set of targets and achievements that we would like to get through.\textsuperscript{38}

13. It is unclear to us what the 37\% casualty reduction figure in the Government’s strategy stands for or how progress towards or away from this figure should be viewed. The Department should provide a clearer explanation of the role of casualty forecasts in its road safety strategy. We recommend that it set out in its annual report whether road safety is improving each year in line with its forecasts, or, if not, explain what is going wrong. The Government should also state what action it will take if its road safety forecasts turn out to be inaccurate.

\textsuperscript{34} Q 93
\textsuperscript{35} Strategic Framework p11-12
\textsuperscript{36} Q 366
\textsuperscript{37} Q 335
\textsuperscript{38} Q 331
3 Localism

Role of localism

14. Localism is a key theme of the Government’s road safety strategy. The Government believes that decentralisation will “create more room for local flexibility and innovation” by “decentralising funding” and removing targets.39 Mike Penning MP argued in favour of such an approach as follows:

Local communities are much more responsible in driving the agenda forward in their areas. They know their roads and their communities better than we in central Government do, but we will give them all the help we can. As you said, the money was hypothecated or ring-fenced into set areas before, but we have now removed that. I am very pleased that we did so, because it has allowed the local authorities to start thinking out of the box and not say, "The only way to do this is x", normally with cameras, but look at other options as well.40

In order to support local authorities in road safety delivery, the Government will provide a "local comparison website and the Road Safety Observatory Portal for professionals, which are both under development".41

Local authority performance

15. Local authority road safety performance is variable. As figure 2 illustrates, there is no clear pattern in their performance (figure 2). The Government states that its casualty reduction forecasts “can be achieved with the variation in performances at the local authority level narrowing and moving towards the level of the top performers”.42

39 Strategic Framework p8
40 Q 332
41 Ev 86 para 9
42 Strategic Framework p67
Figure 2, reported road KSI casualties by local authority area.

Reported KSI road casualties, local authorities, 2010

LONDON

Number KSI
- 78 to 417 (99)
- 55 to 78 (90)
- 38 to 55 (93)
- 0 to 38 (98)
16. Local authorities have also had variable levels of success in reducing casualties (table 2).

Table 2 KSI road casualties by local authority area - the best and worst performing local authorities, comparing the 1994-98 average with 2006-10 average.43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top</th>
<th>Bottom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halton</td>
<td>West Sussex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry</td>
<td>Bury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telford &amp; Wrekin</td>
<td>Southhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackpool</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barking &amp; Dagenham</td>
<td>Calderdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shropshire</td>
<td>Brighton &amp; Hove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent</td>
<td>Redcar &amp; Cleveland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillingdon</td>
<td>Bournemouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doncaster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr Penning told us that he believes some local authorities are lagging behind in their progress as a result of not adopting best practice:

I am also aware that other local authorities [...] no matter what target was set, have just ignored it. It is not because they do not want to improve things, but, frankly, the best practice just has not got through. We need to push out best practice from places such as Halton. Also, if we believe in local democracy, how can you live in a community where a local authority is not promoting road safety in the way that other areas are? It is not about money. In most cases, it is about mindset and priorities.44

Local authority resources

17. Road safety resources at a local level have come under a number of pressures. There have been cuts to capital elements of road safety grants and road safety funding is no longer ring-fenced.45 This means funding for road safety measures cannot be guaranteed during competition for resources.46 In addition, there are other pressures on local authority funding from wider Government funding cuts.47 Several witnesses linked reductions in local authority resources to loss of road safety provision. The Institute of Advanced Motoring believes road safety is facing greater cuts than other policy areas at a local authority level48 and told us that:

Road safety is already suffering because of this perception that we do not have targets and perhaps, if cuts have to be made, they can be made in this easy area. We do need

43 Local Transport Today, LTT 582, 21 October – 3 November 2011
44 Q 341
45 Local transport governance and finance in England 2010, Library Standard Note, SN/BT/5735
46 Ev 117 para 2.4, Ev w65 para 2.10, Ev w6 para 3.4, Ev w19 para 3.2, Ev w22 para 2, Ev w57 para 1.4
47 Ev 107 para 2.6
48 Ev 90 para 3.4
that leadership from central Government to make sure the local authorities know that this is an important area. [...] We are seeing a lot of redundancies, and a lot of people with many years’ experience are leaving their local authorities because they are closing road safety units. It is not universal. Some authorities are good. The Government struggle to highlight those authorities where there is best practice.\(^{49}\) [...] What we are seeing is that the rate of cuts for road safety and the road safety education heading are higher. They are about 19% compared to an overall 9% cut in local authority spending.\(^{50}\)

The damage arising from loss of funds was echoed by local authorities.\(^{51}\)

One of the benefits of the road safety grant that went was that it was ring-fenced for use in road safety activity. Now that it has been rolled into the local government formula grant settlement, it is far harder to make the argument with financial officers and politicians about the value of road safety that may or may not happen when you are arguing against social services, libraries, culture, old people and young people.\(^{52}\)

Local authorities also commented on the loss of skills.\(^{53}\) For example:

In three out of the four authorities in South Yorkshire there is nobody left now with road safety officer experience. If you look back to Local Government Association guidance on best practice for the number of road safety officers per authority, the guidance is one road safety officer per 50,000 population. It means that we are something like 10 road safety officers short on those guidelines because of what my colleagues said about voluntary early severance, part-time working and a lack of recruitment.\(^{54}\)

There is a risk that decentralisation of responsibility for road safety could lead to further variability in performance, depending on the resources provided for road safety at a local level.\(^{55}\) As part of its evaluation of the Strategic Framework for Road Safety, the Government should publish an analysis of the resources used for road safety at a local level to highlight best practice by local authorities, in particular noting innovative practices and multi-agency approaches to achieving road safety goals.

**Role of central Government**

18. If the Government wants the UK to remain a world leader in road safety, continued efforts in this field must be maintained. The Government expressed its desire to share best practice to encourage local authorities to improve road safety in their areas. It is producing guidance for local authorities to help achieve this. However, it is unclear to us what levers

\(^{49}\) Q 14
\(^{50}\) Q 15
\(^{51}\) Q 155 Nick Clennett
\(^{52}\) Q 155 Ken Wheat
\(^{53}\) Q 156
\(^{54}\) Q 157 Ken Wheat
\(^{55}\) Ev w71 para 4.1
the Government can use if local authorities choose not to prioritise road safety, particularly given the funding pressures at play. Whilst we welcome the promised guidance to help local authorities, guidance will not necessarily lead to action, especially if the skills and resources to put the guidance into practice are not available at a local level. The Government should not passively expect road safety to remain a priority. Mr Penning told us that he plans to “name and shame” worst performing local authorities, but this proposition is not contained in the Strategic Framework. **The Government should explain how it intends to measure which are the worst performing local authorities and how it expects “naming and shaming” them will improve their performance.**
4 Young drivers

Road safety for young drivers

19. Road accidents are the main cause of death for young people aged 15-24. In 2010 there were 283 fatalities amongst car occupants aged 16-25. 158 young drivers were killed. Young male drivers are particularly at risk of being killed or seriously injured in car accidents. 27% of 17-19 year old males are involved in a road collision within the first year of passing their test. The Government has assured us that reducing the number of young people killed on the roads is a priority. In its response to our second report on the cost of motor insurance, the following commitment was given:

It is a particular priority for this Government to sustain the sharp reduction in the figures of young driver fatalities. The Government recognises that, for young drivers in particular, the most effective way of reducing costs of insurance is to reduce the number of road accidents and casualties for this group and it will continue to work with the police, road safety groups, service providers and road users to achieve this. The road safety strategy proposes a large number of actions and measures, including on-going and new measures to look at driver training and testing.

20. The Government describes its strategy to improve young driver road safety as follows:

We propose to make further progress in reducing novice driver and rider collisions using an approach based on:

- education first - we will continue to explore further ways to ensure that young people acquire the appropriate skills and attitudes;

- developing a new post test vocational qualification - we will work with trainers, insurers and young drivers on an effective successor to the Pass Plus scheme. This will help newly qualified drivers to gain the necessary attitudes and experience to be safe and responsible road users, with appropriate accreditation and assessment built into the process to ensure market confidence in the new qualification;

- including safety messages in the theory test;

- modernisation of the driver training industry so that instructors can offer the range and standards of service that consumers need, and consumers can make an informed choice as to which instructor best meets their individual needs; and

- improving the content and delivery of motorcycle training so that it meets the needs of modern day riding.

57 Strategic Framework p 6
58 Reported road casualties 2010 p36
59 Novice Drivers, Seventh Report of Session 2006-07, HC 355-1
60 The cost of motor insurance: Government Response to the Committee’s Fourth Report of Session 2010-12, p9
61 Strategic Framework p53
The number of vehicle collisions resulting in death or serious injury involving a young driver (17-24) is an indicator in the outcomes framework to monitor progress in this area. During our inquiry we have heard about a range of options that witnesses thought the Government should pursue to reduce casualties amongst young drivers. These include pre-driver education, changes to the driving test and post-test measures.

**Pre-driver training**

21. A number of witnesses proposed that young people should be trained in motoring skills before undertaking formal driver training in order to embed basic skills and road safety awareness at an earlier age. PACTS acknowledged that there is a gap in the educational provision for young people of secondary school age, compared to the effort put into road safety education for primary school pupils. Quentin Willson advocated early driver education as a way of fostering a safer attitude toward motoring before young people are “completely corrupted and corroded” by the “awful mental detritus” of poor road safety messages they might otherwise receive. He highlighted research from Sweden which indicated that early pre-driver training could reduce KSIs by up to 41% amongst young drivers. Such a programme worked because younger learners were “hugely receptive, anxious to learn and have mastered the all-important below-the-dashboard techniques before they start learning on public roads.”

22. However, others took a more cautious approach to pre-driver education. PACTS and Brake warned that pre-driver education risked fostering “complacency” or “overconfidence” amongst young drivers. These organisations argued that any such training must not only be skills-based, but also must actively work to challenge attitudes and highlight the risks involved in driving.

23. Mr Penning acknowledged that pre-driver education was an area in which more work could be done, but did not outline specific plans in this area:

I think that we could be targeting people even younger than that in understanding not how to drive a car, but the principles and the dangers involved, and dealing with drink and drugs and natural peer pressure.

**The driving test**

24. Many of our witnesses said that the driving test is not currently fit for purpose. The Government has made a number of changes to the driving test since taking office.
DSA told us that the driving test is kept under “regular review”. They explained that there had been recent action to improve the test:

Initiatives recently introduced or forthcoming include:

- case studies included in theory tests since September 2009;
- stepping up our encouragement of practical test candidates being accompanied on test by their driving instructor since April 2010;
- an assessment of independent driving during the practical test was introduced into all our practical tests with effect from October 2010;
- no longer publishing questions currently “live” in the theory test (from January 2012);
- trialling film clips with road safety messages in theory tests from September 2011; and
- completion of phase one of a trial to assess the effectiveness of a new approach to Learning to Drive. The initial findings are expected in spring 2012.70

We recommend that the Department provides an update of the initial findings of the Learning to Drive programme with its response to this report.

25. Mr Penning told us that he had “looked carefully” at the test and he believed these changes were “pretty radical”.71 However, he also acknowledged that there was more work to be done.72 On this matter, we agree. For example, the idea of introducing a training logbook is being explored to track the number of hours training learners receive and the types of skills they gain.73 Brake told us that about 50,000 young drivers each year pass their test with less than six months’ driving experience.74 The absence of motorway or night driving from the test was also noted.75

Post-test changes

26. Different ways of improving road safety for newly qualified drivers were raised with us during the inquiry. The IAM advocated post-test interventions to improve driver training. It highlighted an Austrian example whereby a 33% reduction in young male deaths on the road was achieved through the provision of three post-test training interventions.76

---

70 Work of the Driving Standards Agency and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, HC 1610-i, Ev 20 para 17
71 Q 360
72 Q 360
73 Q 363
74 Q 144
75 Q 25, Ev 150
76 Q 20, Q 21
However, the ABI argued that “if you have a test which means you have to have post-test training, there is something wrong with the test.”

27. The ABI, alongside others, favoured graduated licensing instead, which places restrictions on particular types of behaviour for those who have recently passed their test. In particular, restrictions on the number of passengers who could be carried or on night-time driving were proposed. Brake also favoured graduated licensing as a means for novice drivers to “develop their skills and experience gradually over time while their exposure to the riskiest situations is restricted.” Our predecessor Committee called for the consideration of graduated licensing as part of much needed reform of the driver training process.

28. Mr Penning told us that he was “looking very much” at such measures. However, he was “not convinced about the evidence on graduated testing” and believed existing post-test training “has not worked”. In particular, he noted that young people seeking employment opportunities could potentially be disadvantaged by restrictions on their freedom to drive. The road safety strategy states that “we will work with trainers, insurers and young drivers to ensure there is an effective successor to the Pass Plus scheme.” Yet progress in this area seems to have stalled. In addition, insurers told us that they would not offer discounts as incentives for young drivers to undertake such training.

Conclusion

29. The ABI told us that “the Framework does not take a robust approach to young driver road safety” and we are inclined to agree. We have heard many different proposals for reducing the casualty rate amongst young drivers during the course of our inquiry. These cover pre-driver education, changes to driver training and post-test training or restrictions. We recognise that some aspects of previous attempts to improve young driver safety have not worked as well as hoped (for example, Pass Plus) and that international experience might not be directly applicable to the UK. Our predecessor Committee called for reform of the driver training system in 2007. However, we remain concerned that there is no clear strategy for young drivers, particularly in respect of the action expected from local authorities and other parties, despite the Government’s commitment to us that this would be a “particular priority” of its new Strategic Framework. We recommend that the Government initiate an independent review of driver training to assess thoroughly the

---

77 Q 21
78 Q 25
79 Q 126
80 Novice Drivers, Seventh Report of Session 2006-07, HC 355-1,para 29
81 Q 363
82 Q 362
83 Q 363
84 Q 362
85 Strategic Framework p9
86 Q 24
87 Ev 112 para 2.2
various options put forward to reduce the casualty rate for young drivers and make recommendations about which are likely to be most effective. We recommend this review be completed before the end of this Parliament.
5 Cycle safety

30. Cyclists are specifically identified in the Government’s vision for road safety as a group in which casualty numbers need to be reduced. 3,085 cyclists were killed or seriously injured in 2011. This is a 15% increase on the previous year. However, there is evidence of recent increases in the number of people cycling and the frequency with which they do so. It is therefore difficult to tell the extent to which these increases in casualty numbers are a function of there being more cyclists on the roads. A rate-based measure of cycle casualties, as proposed by the outcomes framework, should help to clarify this. Nonetheless, increasing numbers of casualties in any road user group is unacceptable. A number of solutions to help reduce cycle casualties have been put to us, and are discussed below.

Cyclist training

31. The wider uptake of cycling in recent years is to be welcomed, but the Road Haulage Associated warned that

We have seen a very rapid increase of cyclists who may have a fairly low level of appreciation of risk. [...] We have to be aware that there is a very rapid increase of cyclists who are not given very much instruction as to good road behaviour. [...] I wonder if there is more scope for cycle awareness training, even when they buy a bicycle. "What is the best way to operate your bicycle?"

£11 million a year is currently provided for Bikeability training in schools. Cycling group CTC noted this, but highlighted a relative absence of training provision for adults: "we think there needs to be training made available for adults who wish either to discover or rediscover cycling later in life to give them the confidence and skills to handle the major roads."

HGVs

32. HGVs are involved in 20% of collisions where the cyclist was killed. CTC argued that more could be done by the haulage industry to address these statistics. In particular, it argued in favour of fitting lorries with sensors to make cyclists more visible to the driver. We saw some of the systems that can be added to HGVs during a demonstration by

---

88 Strategic Framework p11
89 Reported road casualties in Great Britain: main results 2011
90 Q 418
91 Ev 139 para 3
92 Q 43, Ev 139 para 3
93 Q 397
94 Q 55
95 Strategic Framework p50
96 Q 57
97 Q 52, Ev 152
CEMEX on the Parliamentary Estate. We heard about their experience kitting out their HGV fleet with sensors and mirrors. There are a range of options for the types of systems that can be fitted. The RHA warned us that

We are aware of the possibilities of sensors. We believe that in the long run it is very likely that some sort of sensors will come into the HGV sector. [...] There is a risk that sensors create an additional input for the driver, who has a lot going on around him. We just want to be sure that they are not counterproductive.

CTC acknowledged that “sensory overload” was a potential issue for drivers, but insisted that sensors were cheap and could save lives. The Government should consider how to encourage greater adoption of these measures.

Driver training

33. Several witnesses argued that drivers needed to be more aware of vulnerable users. This awareness could be improved by including cycle or pedestrian safety as an element in the driving test. Mr Penning told us that there was ongoing work in this area that may address these concerns.

Urban planning and infrastructure

34. Despite the growing popularity of cycling, we were told that “the infrastructure stays static.” The paucity of infrastructure for cyclists was described to us by James Harding, editor of The Times, as follows:

At the moment our cities are not fit for cyclists. They are dangerous for cyclists and we need to build new roads and new pathways. We have to rethink our cities in much the same way as a few really wonderful cities in Europe.

He argued that this could be addressed by greater investment from Government, possibly by using a fixed proportion of the Highways Agency budget.

35. An alternative suggestion was that greater consideration should be given to cyclists during the planning process. Jon Snow told us

There are all sorts of planning regulations that facilitate living in an urban area. [...] It is absolutely essential that, if cycle safety is to be developed, there has to be
compulsion in the planning system to make provision in every new urban development for the bicycle.

Mr Penning expressed some sympathy for the idea of building cycle provision into developments from an early stage as part of improvements to the road network:

If you are building something from scratch, there is no real extra cost in building into it that you are going to make sure that cyclists and pedestrians are in it. [...] We have only a limited amount of money, but when we do adapt, especially within my network, one of the things I am very conscious of is that we must make sure that the connectivity is there. There should not be any extra cost if you start from scratch.

36. Road engineering measures can be particularly important to help improve cycle safety. However, Norman Baker, Minister for sustainable travel, pointed out that the provision of infrastructure and inclusion of cyclists in the planning process was not simply a matter for the DfT, but needed a joined up approach across departments. For example, the Department of Communities and Local Government “need to ensure that there is proper provision in the planning regime to take account of” cycling. We have not seen much evidence to suggest that the DfT is making sure that the necessary joint working is happening.

37. Part of the Government’s localism agenda looks to free local authorities to make their own decisions on the prioritisation of projects and resources at a local level. Despite the good intentions expressed by Mr Penning and Mr Baker to support the provision of cycle infrastructure, ultimately Mr Baker acknowledged that decisions on whether to build this infrastructure are not in the hands of the DfT:

in terms of cycle lanes from local authorities, we would not get into doing that, in the same way as we do not allocate money for bollards. We just do not get involved in allocating at that micro level. We allocate a transport block to local authorities, which they are able to spend as they see fit for their transport priorities.

We agree that joint working between departments will be necessary to achieve road safety outcomes. We recommend that the Government shows how its efforts to work in partnership with departments such as DCLG and local authorities have been effective in encouraging the provision of cycle infrastructure and outlines which problems in securing this joint-working have yet to be overcome.

The Times campaign

38. The Times has proposed an eight point manifesto to improve cycle safety following an incident in which one of its news reporters, Mary Bowers, was left critically injured after being hit by a lorry whilst cycling to work in November 2011. This manifesto echoed many
of the points we have considered in this report.\textsuperscript{110} In response to this campaign, the Prime Minister said:

I think The Times campaign is an excellent campaign. I strongly support what they are trying to do. Anyone who has got on a bicycle - particularly in one of our busier cities - knows you are taking your life into your hands every time you do so, and so we do need to do more to try and make cycling safer.\textsuperscript{111}

We commend The Times campaign’s work to draw attention to the work needed to make cycling safer. We consider the points contained in its manifesto provide a roadmap for how cycle safety can be improved. \textbf{Given the Prime Minister’s support for The Times cycle campaign, we recommend that the department issue a formal response to each of its eight points showing how they are being addressed and, if a point is not being acted on, what alternative action is being taken to address the matter.}

\section*{Leadership}

39. Several witnesses felt that there was a lack of leadership from Government in the area of cycle safety. Indeed, Jon Snow told us that "there is no leadership in Government in cycling at all. It is a completely neglected area, whatever it says on the paper."\textsuperscript{112} He argued that Government departments with an interest in cycling must work together more effectively because "leadership looks like joining up Government."\textsuperscript{113} James Harding proposed that there should be individual commissioners in major cities to highlight the interests of cyclists.\textsuperscript{114}

40. There have been a number of recent announcements regarding funding for cycling or cycle safety initiatives:

- £15 million for cycle safety schemes outside London was announced in June 2012. This fund aims to tackle those junctions identified as being particularly dangerous for cyclists.\textsuperscript{115} Further details will not be available until the autumn.
- £15 million in the 2012 Budget to TfL for investments in cycle safety, which will include improved provision for cyclists at junctions across the capital as part of TfL’s cycle safety junction review.\textsuperscript{116}
- £15 million allocated to an initiative with Sustrans and the Cycle Rail Working Group.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{110} The campaign considered fitting safety equipment to lorries, redesigning dangerous junctions, collecting better data on cycle accidents, earmarking £100 million from the Highways Agency budget for infrastructure, improving training for cyclists and drivers, changing the default speed limit in local areas without cycle lanes to 20 mph, encouraging businesses to sponsor cycle infrastructure and appointing city cycling commissioners.

\textsuperscript{111} Cameron backs cycle campaign as calls grow for extra funding, \textit{The Times}, 23 February 2012

\textsuperscript{112} Q 391 Jon Snow

\textsuperscript{113} Q 411 Jon Snow

\textsuperscript{114} Q 413 James Harding

\textsuperscript{115} Further boost for cycle safety, DfT, June 2012, http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/statements/baker-20120626a

\textsuperscript{116} Budget 2012, HM Treasury, HC 1853, para 1.220
However, there is little detail available on the projects to which this money is allocated, the progress in allocating and initiating cycle safety schemes, or the success in delivering road safety outcomes. Prior to The Times campaign on cycle safety it was difficult to see how the Government was showing leadership in cycle safety. There is now evidence of commitment, but, as Jon Snow said, leadership requires joining up Government. We are not convinced that this is happening and therefore there is much work still to be done.

6 Motorcycle safety

Report on the new European motorcycle test

41. In March 2010 our predecessor Committee published its report into the new European motorcycle test, which changed the way in which motorcycle driver competence was assessed in the UK. There were numerous criticisms of these new arrangements, particularly the decision to move part of the test off-road. As a result, the Government initiated a review of the test in June 2010, with a view to redesigning the test once more. This revised test may be implemented in some areas from next year. It will involve candidates moving back on-road for their test and as a result a number of the off-road test centres developed for the European test will be redundant. The capital cost of these centres was £71 million.

42. We encountered real concerns that lessons had not been learnt from this debacle. The Motor Cycle Industry Association warned that the same problems could arise with future European directives without proper evaluation of this “mess, complication and bureaucracy”. Given the long-running difficulties experienced by the department in producing a clear and coherent strategy for motorcycle training, we recommend that the DfT should, in its reply to this report, explain what lessons it has learnt from this episode and how it will go about implementing future European directives on the subject of driver or rider training without undue delay.

Government response

43. We have not yet received a response from the Government to the 2010 report. This is despite assurances from Mr Penning that the DfT would produce the response “as soon as we can” or even “before the recess”. The department has provided some information about its progress in this area. We are prepared to wait for a formal response to this report until the Government’s policy is finally decided, but in the meantime, we recommend that the department write to us on a quarterly basis to explain progress in this area.

118 Strategic Framework p53
119 Q 61
120 Q 374
121 Work of the Driving Standards Agency and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, HC 1610-i,Q20 (Rosemary Thew)
122 Q 61
123 Q373
124 Q 378
125 Letter from Mr Penning, dated 27 March 2012, published on Transport Committee website
7 Speed limits

20 mph

44. Local authorities have found 20 mph zones to be a useful tool to improve road safety, particularly by reducing pedestrian or cyclist casualties.\textsuperscript{126} For example, impact with a vehicle at 20 mph is survivable, but at 30 mph most pedestrians would sustain fatal injuries.\textsuperscript{127} The Government states that:

We plan to revise and reissue the guidance on speed limits in urban areas with the aim of increasing flexibility for local authorities. We will provide an economic tool to help them to assess the full costs and benefits of any proposed schemes. We expect this toolkit to help local authorities to make robustly defensible decisions about local speeds.\textsuperscript{128}

45. There is evidence of significant public support for these zones.\textsuperscript{129} However, securing the resources to implement them can be an issue. Sustrans noted that "it has been very expensive to put in a zone in the past".\textsuperscript{130} In particular, additional police resources may be required to enforce lower speed limits.\textsuperscript{131} We heard of the difficulty in prioritising resources under conditions of broader police cuts and that policing 20 mph zones is "just another drain on the resources".\textsuperscript{132} ACPO told us that "inevitably, as pressure is applied to police resources, as anywhere else, some decisions may be taken as to what effort and energy resources will be put into dealing with road safety and making sure that that is dealt with on a threat and risk basis."\textsuperscript{133} ACPO advises that 20 mph zones should be instituted only in areas where other measures had been taken to make them largely self-policing because if "it does not feel or look like it should be a 20 mph limit, then the vast majority of drivers will not self-police."\textsuperscript{134}

Partnership working

46. The Government expects the road safety agenda to intersect with a number of policy areas. For example, the strategy makes reference to both health and sustainable travel funding sources.\textsuperscript{135} We heard about the importance of agencies working in partnership. One area in which this approach has been reflected is the implementation of 20 mph zones. We heard from Liverpool City Council about its work with the Primary Care Trust to fund the introduction of 20 mph zones in residential areas. We welcome the development of

\textsuperscript{126} Strategic Framework p 37, Q 50, Q 424 James Harding
\textsuperscript{127} Ev 141 para 13, Ev w28 para 27
\textsuperscript{128} Strategic Framework p 37
\textsuperscript{129} Q 50
\textsuperscript{130} Q 50
\textsuperscript{131} Q 50
\textsuperscript{132} Q 162
\textsuperscript{133} Q 247
\textsuperscript{134} Q 247
\textsuperscript{135} Strategic Framework p9
innovative working methods to help fund these zones at a local level. The Government should encourage the development of inter-agency partnerships and include examples of best practice in securing joint working in its forthcoming guidance for local authorities.

80 mph

47. We heard a range of views regarding the possibility that the Government may raise the motorway speed limit to 80 mph, including many witnesses who worried that the proposals would result in more deaths on the road. We also heard concerns that drivers would be encouraged to push beyond this limit. Mr Penning informed us that a consultation period would begin soon. There had been extensive discussion, but the DfT was “not quite there yet” in terms of finalising the proposals. He hinted that options for consultation included maintaining some parts of the motorway at existing speed limits and stricter enforcement of the 80 mph limit than was currently the practice for the 70 mph limit. We recommend that as part of its consultation the Government calculates the costs associated with stricter enforcement of an 80 mph limit and creating more variable speed limits on sections of the motorway network deemed inappropriate to see an increase to 80 mph. We will be interested to see the consultation that emerges from the Department’s evidence gathering process. The possibility of increasing the motorway speed limit has been discussed since September 2011, it is now time for the DfT to publish its consultation document or to explain the reason for delay.

48. The Secretary of State has powers to change the motorway speed limit by statutory instrument without parliamentary control. To ensure that there is adequate opportunity for parliamentary oversight, the Government should ensure that any decision to increase the speed limit should follow a debate in the House on a votable motion.

136 Ev w28 para 29
137 Q 106, Q 107
138 Q 347
139 Q 345
140 Q 351
8 Technology and engineering

Technology and engineering in the Strategic Framework

49. The Government expects developments in technology to play a clear role in improving road safety in the long term.

In the longer term, with improvements in technology, e.g. collision avoidance - which will continue to transform the way we drive and use roads and the ability of the system to protect all road users when things go wrong - allied with safer and better driving, we will see a very different world.142

Developing and improving technology for the future is therefore a key part of the Government’s vision. However, there are no indicators in the outcomes framework to assess the progress in developing and adopting such new technologies. If the Government wishes to encourage consumer knowledge of such technology, then an indicator looking at the proportion of vehicles purchased with a 5 star EuroNCAP (European New Car Assessment Programme) rating, which rates the performance of new vehicles in crash tests, would be useful.

50. On the other hand, engineering to improve road design is mentioned only briefly in the Government’s strategy.143 Indeed, road safety improvements in the near-term from engineering are absent from the action plan and outcomes framework, a fact which was commented on by a number of those providing evidence.144 Several existing indicators describe the role of engineering in road safety, which may prove a useful source of information to measure progress in this area. For example, EuroRAP (European Road Assessment Programme) rates roads according to their safety. The way it does so may provide an opportunity for the Government to include a road engineering indicator in its outcomes framework. The IAM stated:

There is no doubt that EuroRAP has reached a level of detail and scientific rigour where it could be used as an indicator, certainly to allow local authorities to look at their own roads and to compare different regions. The key thing about EuroRAP is that it looks at the risk of those particular roads. It is about road design rather than road behaviour. In many cases it highlights simple things like white lining, realigning bends and lighting junctions. It is simple engineering measures.145

Having the right road design and engineering schemes in place is important to help reduce the number of road accidents. Engineering measures can be particularly important for vulnerable road users such as cyclists, for example in preventing accidents by redesigning junctions. We recommend that the Government includes engineering measures in its outcomes framework, for example by providing EuroRAP assessments of road safety.

---

142 Strategic Framework p11
143 Q 234, Q 235, Ev 111 para 23, Ev 113 para 4.3
144 Q 233, Q 234
145 Q 33
Collaboration

51. The Government makes reference to “collaborative research” as part of its road safety strategy. In areas such as technology and engineering, Government may be needed as a catalyst to bring together the relevant parties from research and industry to help achieve policy objectives. Professor Carsten told us that “the Government need to be a player or UK plc, research establishments, vehicle manufacturers and other technology providers need to work together”. However, the Government gave little detail regarding the its to contribute to organising such initiatives. The strategy does outline plans to encourage the development of technologies at EU level. Specific commitments include proposals to amend standards for HGV mirrors and work in the European Commission to develop standards under the Intelligent Transport Systems Directive. We recommend that the Government provides an update on progress in those areas which it committed to developing at an EU level in the last road safety strategy and sets out forthcoming areas for prioritisation.
Conclusion

52. The period since the Coalition Government took office has seen the first increase in road fatalities since 2003, despite there having been no overall increase in road traffic. This is a worrying development and raises questions about the Government’s road safety strategy. These casualty figures should be a wake-up call for the Government to step up and provide stronger leadership in the road safety field. The Minister, Mike Penning MP, told us that success of his strategy could be judged by seeing a reduction in road casualties. From the latest figures, it would appear there is a risk that the strategy is insufficient. In the response to this report, we recommend that the Government outlines why it thinks road deaths increased in 2011.

53. The Government’s vision is for the UK to remain a world leader in road safety. It hopes to achieve this by “giving local authorities the tools they need to tackle problems on their networks, rather than dictating specific solutions to them.”

Road safety targets have played an important role in driving the UK’s positive road safety record, a point which Mr Penning himself acknowledged. However, we understand Mr Penning’s position that continual improvements in road safety can be driven without a specific target. Indeed, the variability in local authority performance over the period for which road safety targets have been in operation highlights that there are factors beyond targets which help drive improvements in road safety. Our evidence suggests that the principal factor is political leadership. If there is a strong message from central government that road safety is a priority and this is high on the agenda at a local level, then safer roads are more achievable. For some, these messages are clearest when it is in the form of targets. If the Government is not going to adopt this approach, then it should be making more effort to provide leadership in other ways. Unfortunately, this has not happened. There have been a number of mixed messages on road safety from the Government. It is telling that Mr Penning himself struggled to clarify some of the goals of his strategy to us. The public and the road safety sector must surely be similarly confused.

54. Localism is a key part of the Government’s road safety strategy. The Government believes local authorities have a better understanding of the needs of their local communities and should be more responsive to those needs. The strategy therefore gives “local authorities more freedom to assess and act on their own priorities.” However, there are a number of challenges currently faced by local authorities which may undermine their ability to deliver road safety outcomes. In particular, reductions in funding are putting pressure on the availability of money for road safety initiatives and of staff with the expertise to enact them. To encourage local authorities to improve road safety at a local level, the Government intends to produce guidance and facilitate the sharing of best practice by creating an online portal for road safety professionals. The effectiveness of this initiative may be limited by the loss of local authority road safety officers and their expertise. Mr Penning also told us of plans to name and shame the worst performing local authorities, though we have not yet seen this plan progressed. Since the Government’s broader localism agenda seeks to encourage local decision making, we are unclear as to

150 Ev 86 para 3
151 Ev 86 para 10
exactly what influence the Department for Transport can exert on the process by which local authorities decide to allocate resources. In addition, though a localist approach can be appropriate for responding to local needs, there are other areas in which the DfT should play a more active role in securing cross-Government action, for example in pushing forward technological developments or providing appropriate infrastructure.

55. Road accidents are the leading cause of death for young people aged 16-24. The Government has failed to grasp the nettle in this area. Despite having told us action to improve young driver road safety would be given significant importance, the strategy does not deliver this. The Government should be taking more radical action to address this situation.

56. The Government’s strategy highlights cyclists as a group in need of particular action to improve their road safety. On this, we agree. However, there does not appear to be a defined action plan to reduce cycle casualties. This perhaps highlights a tension between the Government’s aims and its localism agenda. Whilst the Government may wish to prioritise cycle safety, the measures to achieve that, particularly in the provision of infrastructure, appear to fall largely outside the DfT’s remit.

57. The Strategic Framework sets out a role of central Government in providing information for the public. Information campaigns have been successful in the past and the THINK! brand has become well-recognised. Such campaigns are expected to continue as part of the Government’s road safety strategy. Mr Penning told us that consideration was being given to the possibility of THINK! campaigns for young drivers and cyclists. The Government should update us regarding the development of new advertising campaigns for road safety, particularly on how it intends to engage with social media to help improve public awareness.

58. The DfT must make greater efforts to encourage the cross-Government working that is necessary to establish the importance of road safety and secure the necessary outcomes. Whilst the Government has made several announcements regarding the provision of funding for cycle safety, there has been little detail provided as to the schemes which will benefit from this funding, the timescale for implementation, or the desired results.

59. A year has now passed since the publication of the Strategic Framework for Road Safety. The next version is due in September 2012. This provides an opportunity to include a number of areas insufficiently addressed in the original strategy - including engineering measures to improve road design and technological research. It is also an opportune time for the Government to publish an update of its progress against the action plan and outcomes framework, to clarify its vision, highlight areas of local authority innovation or best practice, and reassess the strategy in light of recent worrying casualty numbers.

152 Strategic Framework p38
153 Strategic Framework p55
154 Q 447
155 Ev 88 DfT
Conclusions and recommendations

Leadership

1. The Department should provide a clearer explanation of the role of casualty forecasts in its road safety strategy. We recommend that it set out in its annual report whether road safety is improving each year in line with its forecasts, or, if not, explain what is going wrong. The Government should also state what action it will take if its road safety forecasts turn out to be inaccurate. (Paragraph 13)

Localism

2. As part of its evaluation of the Strategic Framework for Road Safety, the Government should publish an analysis of the resources used for road safety at a local level to highlight best practice by local authorities, in particular noting innovative practices and multi-agency approaches to achieving road safety goals. (Paragraph 17)

3. The Government should explain how it intends to measure which are the worst performing local authorities and how it expects “naming and shaming” them will improve their performance. (Paragraph 18)

Young drivers

4. We recommend that the Department provides an update of the initial findings of the Learning to Drive programme with its response to this report. (Paragraph 24)

Conclusion

5. We recommend that the Government initiate an independent review of driver training to assess thoroughly the various options put forward to reduce the casualty rate for young drivers and make recommendations about which are likely to be most effective. We recommend this review be completed before the end of this Parliament. (Paragraph 29)

Cycle safety

6. The Government should consider how to encourage greater adoption of these measures. (Paragraph 32)

7. We agree that joint working between departments will be necessary to achieve road safety outcomes. We recommend that the Government shows how its efforts to work in partnership with departments such as DCLG and local authorities have been effective in encouraging the provision of cycle infrastructure and outlines which problems in securing this joint-working have yet to be overcome. (Paragraph 37)

8. Given the Prime Minister’s support for The Times cycle campaign, we recommend that the department issue a formal response to each of its eight points showing how
they are being addressed and, if a point is not being acted on, what alternative action is being taken to address the matter. (Paragraph 38)

9. Prior to The Times campaign on cycle safety it was difficult to see how the Government was showing leadership in cycle safety. There is now evidence of commitment, but, as Jon Snow said, leadership requires joining up Government. We are not convinced that this is happening and therefore there is much work still to be done. (Paragraph 40)

**Motorcycle safety**

10. We recommend that the DfT should, in its reply to this report, explain what lessons it has learnt from [the delay to revising the motorcycle test] and how it will go about implementing future European directives on the subject of driver or rider training without undue delay. (Paragraph 42)

11. We recommend that the department write to us on a quarterly basis to explain progress in this area. (Paragraph 43)

**Speed limits**

12. The Government should encourage the development of inter-agency partnerships and include examples of best practice in securing joint working in its forthcoming guidance for local authorities. (Paragraph 46)

13. We recommend that as part of its consultation the Government calculates the costs associated with stricter enforcement of an 80 mph limit and creating more variable speed limits on sections of the motorway network deemed inappropriate to see an increase to 80 mph. (Paragraph 47)

14. The possibility of increasing the motorway speed limit has been discussed since September 2011, it is now time for the DfT to publish its consultation document or to explain the reason for delay. (Paragraph 47)

15. The Government should ensure that any decision to increase the speed limit should follow a debate in the House on a votable motion. (Paragraph 48)

**Technology and engineering**

16. We recommend that the Government includes engineering measures in its outcomes framework, for example by providing EuroRAP assessments of road safety. (Paragraph 50)

17. We recommend that the Government provides an update on progress in those areas which it committed to developing at an EU level in the last road safety strategy and sets out forthcoming areas for prioritisation. (Paragraph 51)
Conclusion

18. The period since the Coalition Government took office has seen the first increase in road fatalities since 2003, despite there having been no overall increase in road traffic. This is a worrying development and raises questions about the Government’s road safety strategy. These casualty figures should be a wake-up call for the Government to step up and provide stronger leadership in the road safety field. The Minister, Mike Penning MP, told us that success of his strategy could be judged by seeing a reduction in road casualties. From the latest figures, it would appear there is a risk that the strategy is insufficient. In the response to this report, we recommend that the Government outlines why it thinks road deaths increased in 2011. (Paragraph 52)

19. The Government should update us regarding the development of new advertising campaigns for road safety, particularly on how it intends to engage with social media to help improve public awareness. (Paragraph 57)

20. A year has now passed since the publication of the Strategic Framework for Road Safety. The next version is due in September 2012. This provides an opportunity to include a number of areas insufficiently addressed in the original strategy - including engineering measures to improve road design and technological research. It is also an opportune time for the Government to publish an update of its progress against the action plan and outcomes framework, to clarify its vision, highlight areas of local authority innovation or best practice, and reassess the strategy in light of recent worrying casualty numbers. (Paragraph 59)
Formal Minutes

Tuesday 10 July 2012

Members present:

Mrs Louise Ellman, in the Chair

Steve Baker
Jim Dobbin
Julie Hilling
Kwasi Kwarteng
Mr John Leech
Paul Maynard
Iain Stewart
Graham Stringer

Draft Report (Road safety), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 47 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 48 read.

Amendment proposed at the end of the paragraph to insert “, with the department setting out the financial implications of the proposals and a calculation of the expected increase in deaths and serious injuries as a result of the increased speed limit.” —(Mr John Leech.)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 1

Mr John Leech

Noes, 6

Steve Baker
Jim Dobbin
Kwasi Kwarteng
Paul Maynard
Iain Stewart
Graham Stringer

Paragraph agreed to.

Paragraphs 49 to 59 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for placing in the Library and Parliamentary Archives.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 4 September at 10 am]
Witnesses

Tuesday 17 January 2012

Quentin Willson, Writer and Commentator, Nick Starling, Director of General Insurance, Association of British Insurers, Neil Greig, Director of Policy and Research, Institute of Advance Motorists and Edmund King, President, Automobile Association

Tony Russell, Transport Engineering Manager, Sustrans, Roger Geffen, Campaigns & Policy Director, the UK’s national cyclists’ organisation, CTC, Craig Carey-Clinch, Managing Director, Rowan Public Affairs Ltd and Motor Cycle Industry Association and Jack Semple, Director of Policy, Road Haulage Association

Bill Duffy, Campaign Co-Ordinator, Pro-MOTe and Jim Punter, Chairman, MOT Trade Forum

Tuesday 24 January 2012

Rob Gifford, Executive Director, Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, Julie Townsend, Campaigns Director, Brake, and Malcolm Heymer, spokesperson, Association of British Drivers

Nick Clennett, Head of Transport Strategy, Gateshead Council, Local Government Technical Advisers Group, Peter Francis, Programme Manager, West Midlands Road Safety Partnership, Ken Wheat, Partnership Manager, South Yorkshire Safer Roads, and Simon D’Vali, Chair, West Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership

Professor Oliver Carsten, Professor of Transport Safety, Institute for Transport Studies, and Richard Cuerden, Technical Director for Vehicle Safety, Transport Research Laboratory

Tuesday 7 February 2012


Brian Simpson MEP, Chair, European Parliament Transport and Tourism Committee, Ellen Townsend, Policy Director, European Transport Safety Council, and Szabolcs Schmidt, Head of Road Safety, European Commission

Tuesday 6 March 2012

Mike Penning MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and Andrew Colski, Head of Road Safety Policy, Department for Transport
**Tuesday 24 April 2012**

*Jon Snow*, newscaster and cycling advocate, *James Harding*, Editor, The Times, and *Josie Dew*, author and cycling advocate

*Mike Penning MP*, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and *Norman Baker MP*, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport

---

**List of printed written evidence**

1. Sustrans
2. Association of British Drivers
3. Department of Transport
4. Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM)
5. South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership
6. Chief Fire Officers Association
7. Motor Cycle Industry Association (MCI)
8. Association of Chief Police Officers
9. West Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership
10. Organisations within the road safety community
11. Association of British Insurers (ABI)
12. Jim Punter, Chairman, MOT Trade Forum
13. Brake
14. West Midlands Road Safety Partnership
15. Road Haulage Association
16. Professor Oliver Carsten
17. Automobile Association (AA)
18. Local Government Technical Advisors Group (TAG)
19. PRO-MOTE
20. CTC, the national cyclists’ organisation
21. Police Federation of England and Wales
22. Quentin Willson
23. PACTS

---

**List of additional written evidence**

(published in Volume II on the Committee’s website www.parliament.uk/transcom)

1. Age UK
2. Core Cities
3. RAC Foundation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Evidence No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Stephen Plowden</td>
<td>Ev w9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>AIRSO</td>
<td>Ev w12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Road Safety Analysis Limited</td>
<td>Ev w14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Road Safety Markings Association</td>
<td>Ev w15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>RoSPA</td>
<td>Ev w18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Jeanne Breen and Kate McMahon</td>
<td>Ev w22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Road Danger Reduction Forum</td>
<td>Ev w31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Motor Cycle Industry Trainers Association</td>
<td>Ev w33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>ADEPT</td>
<td>Ev w34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>TND Anderson</td>
<td>Ev w35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Transport Safety Research Centre, Loughborough University</td>
<td>Ev w38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>NECTAR</td>
<td>Ev w40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Kenneth Todd</td>
<td>Ev w43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>John Ball</td>
<td>Ev w44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Continental Automotive Trading UK Ltd</td>
<td>Ev w45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The Caravan Club</td>
<td>Ev w47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>RoadPeace</td>
<td>Ev w48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Campaign to Protect Rural England</td>
<td>Ev w50: Ev w54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Optical Confederation</td>
<td>Ev w55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Institution of Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>Ev w57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>SMMT</td>
<td>Ev w60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>London Councils Transport &amp; Environment Committee (TEC)</td>
<td>Ev w62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Colin Clarke</td>
<td>Ev w65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Transport for London</td>
<td>Ev w70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Enterprise Rent-A-Car</td>
<td>Ev w73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>20's Plenty for Us</td>
<td>Ev w74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>John Morrison, Sevenoaks Cycle Forum</td>
<td>Ev w75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Allister Carey</td>
<td>Ev w57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of unprinted evidence

The following written evidence has been reported to the House, but to save printing costs has not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library, where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Parliamentary Archives (www.parliament.uk/archives), and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to The Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW (tel. 020 7219 3074; email archives@parliament.uk). Opening hours are from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays.

Joy Barnes
Peter W Jones
## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government’s response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

### Session 2012–13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report Type</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Report</td>
<td>Road safety</td>
<td>HC 506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorporating HC 1738</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Report</td>
<td>Flight time limitations</td>
<td>HC 164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorporating HC 1838</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Special Report</td>
<td>Sulphur emissions by ships: Government Response to the Committee’s Sixteenth Report of Session 2010–12</td>
<td>HC 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Special Report</td>
<td>Draft Civil Aviation Bill: Pre-Legislative Scrutiny: Government Response to the Committee’s Thirteenth Report of Session 2010–12</td>
<td>HC 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Oral evidence**

**Taken before the Transport Committee**

**on Tuesday 17 January 2012**

Members present:

Mrs Louise Ellman (Chair)

Jim Dobbin
Mr Tom Harris
Julie Hilling
Kwasi Kwarteng

Paul Maynard
Graham Stringer
Julian Sturdy

---

**Examination of Witnesses**


**Q1 Chair:** Good morning, gentlemen. Welcome to the Transport Select Committee. I would like to start by asking you to give your name and organisation, if you are representing an organisation. This is to help our records.

**Edmund King:** I am Edmund King. I am President of the Automobile Association and a visiting Professor of Transport at Newcastle university.

**Quentin Willson:** I am Quentin Willson, motoring journalist and creator of the “Worst Driver” television format, which goes out in 60 different countries.

**Nick Starling:** I am Nick Starling, I am Director of General Insurance at the Association of British Insurers.

**Neil Greig:** I am Neil Greig, Director of Policy and Research at the Institute of Advanced Motorists.

**Q2 Chair:** One of the issues that are being debated about the Government’s proposals is their stated intention not to have targets in relation to road safety. Do any of you have views on that? How important do you think the absence of targets is? I know some of you have referred to this in written evidence. Is there any point you would like to raise? Mr King, do you want to say anything on that?

**Edmund King:** Our view is that road safety targets in the past have worked very effectively. Unlike in some other spheres of Government policy, we do not think that the targets have distorted policy because that has been one of the general arguments. But, when you have targets for casualty and fatality reductions, it helps to concentrate the mind and in terms of leadership. Certainly, within our own company, the AA, we have targets that we strive to achieve. If after six months you are not on target, you review and question why, and change your policies. In road safety, it is important to have overall targets but then to have sub-targets as well. For example, the previous Government had a sub-target for young drivers. There is possibly a case now for having a sub-target for older drivers, with an ageing population. Targets can help to concentrate the mind.

The current Government talk more about a framework with outcomes. Of course outcomes are very important—the outcome of having the safest roads in the world and so on—but, to get to that outcome, you need targets to help you on the way. Outcome can be a very general aspiration, whereas a target helps to focus the mind. Particularly if you are decentralising and giving more powers to local authorities to carry out their own road safety policies, it is perhaps more rather than less important to have targets.

**Q4 Chair:** Do you think that it is the Government’s responsibility to pursue those initiatives or is it to do with local government or any other sector?

**Quentin Willson:** The big joined-up strategy of road safety—the really clever, smart thinking about how we protect people from themselves—must, ipso facto, come from the Government. We have reached a plateau now where we need to look at what is new, bright and clever to reduce casualties and serious injuries on our roads. I would worry very much that, if we devolve too much responsibility to local councils, that consistency of message gets diluted or, dare I say it, spoilt by well-intentioned and laudable initiatives at a local level.

This is a time for us all to say that we can change people’s view of good driving and make bad driving socially unacceptable, make it stupid and point fun at...
bad drivers. To do that, you need a strong strategy that comes from central Government which is then backed up at a local level. But the local level must be given the same tone of voice and the same consistency of communication—and here is the key word—to engage motoring consumers and make them change their behaviour. Without engaging them, you will never get them to take part in any initiatives and to protect themselves and their loved ones. We need to talk in a different language with a different tone across the whole of society. That must come, I believe, from central Government.

Q5 Chair: Are there any other views on targets?

Nick Starling: We think good targets work. These targets have worked, though, as you will know from another inquiry. Madam Chairman, the insurance industry has not seen the reduction in accidents that has happened elsewhere because of the personal injury problems that happen. First of all, targets are good because they encourage best practice and accountability. If one local authority is meeting targets and another one is not, you can sit there and say, “Why is one working and why is one not?” They do work. Bad targets distort; good targets encourage. We would support that.

Picking up on the latter point you made, it is for Government to give direction on all of this, but it is for everyone to be part of the solution, and the insurance industry is part of the solution. If we want to tackle the big issues like young drivers, it takes leadership from Government but it takes others to play their part in helping to solve the problem.

Q6 Chair: Mr Greig, in your written evidence you talk about the importance of targets. Do you think that is as important as you have stated there?

Neil Greig: Yes; we share the view that these targets have worked. They have brought organisations together. The police, the NHS and Safety Camera Partnerships have all used that common target to bring their policies together. But we also question the assertion that it has stifled innovation. I have no evidence that I can see that innovation has been stifled in road safety because of targets. It is quite the opposite. Targets have galvanised local initiatives of all different sorts. There is a vast amount of work going on out there. With Prince Michael of Kent, I run safety awards, for example. We get a vast amount of new initiatives every year. The innovation is there and the targets brought that all together. They did work for road safety.

Q7 Paul Maynard: I want to stick with targets, please. I am struck by the extent to which everybody’s evidence seems to regard this road safety strategy as hanging or falling on whether there should be targets or not, which rather struck me as a case of lazy thinking on the part of the road safety community. I wanted to ask your view on whether you think it is possible to have an indicator which is meaningful but which is not an official Government target.

Edmund King: You can, but isn’t that just semantics? Whether it is an indicator or a target, the end game is to reduce casualties. By having a target, it concentrates the mind. What you call it is possibly semantics, isn’t it?

Q8 Paul Maynard: That is why I was referring to lazy thinking. Why is a culture of continuous improvement not the equivalent of a target? Surely that is what the Government are aiming for.

Edmund King: Because it helps to concentrate the mind. In business we could say to staff, “You should have a culture of continuous improvement”. But, if at the staff’s annual review you are basing that on some loose philosophy of how the company is going, it is not quite as effective as saying, “You haven’t actually met your targets. Can you explain it?”

Q9 Paul Maynard: In a previous answer you suggested that having targets in road safety was not distorting. Can I challenge you on that? If one of your key performance indicators is the number of children killed or seriously injured, which we have seen falling partly as a result of fewer children walking to school, is it not the case that the easiest way to meet that as a central target in big capital letters in a Government policy document is to discourage children from walking to school, which surely many other groups within society would argue is a bad thing?

Edmund King: No, I do not believe so. Everyone I have spoken to in road safety, if there is a target, wants to go beyond that target. The target is trying to point them in the right direction.

Q10 Paul Maynard: So a culture of continuous improvement is—

Edmund King: That is part of it, yes. The targets should ensure that there is continuous improvement.

Q11 Paul Maynard: Can you point to any other overseas jurisdictions which have hard and fast targets such as you are calling for?

Edmund King: The European Commission is advocating a target of 50% reduction in fatalities. That is probably quite broad because it is across the whole of the EC, whereas within a country it can be more defined and perhaps more achievable.

Q12 Paul Maynard: I have one final question, if I may. Would you therefore agree that many of the jurisdictions which have adopted the OECD’s Towards Zero philosophy start out with much higher fatality records than we do in the UK and that we are already one of the best performers in the world? Therefore, a philosophy of continuous improvement is more meaningful than an arbitrary target of, for example, zero that probably cannot be met anyway?

Edmund King: No, because Sweden has a vision for zero fatalities and, along with the UK, is one of the safest in the world. I do not think we are in conflict here. You can do both. You can continuously improve, and that can be your philosophy, but still have targets.

Q13 Paul Maynard: We will probably come back to you on that.

Nick Starling: Can I make a quick observation? The premise of your question was that we are saying that everything hangs or falls by targets. We are certainly
not saying that. What we are saying is that it is absolutely crucial in road safety to focus on where the big problems are. From our point of view the big problems are massively those of young drivers. That is what the primary purpose should be. We think targets are very useful, but we are not saying the whole thing stands or falls by targets.

**Quentin Willson**: Your question is underpinned by a philosophical problem that we should acknowledge now, and that is that you have to have targets in the short term because road safety and the reduction of casualties, terrible though this sounds, is not something that engages the community. It is something that the driver does not take seriously enough. That is our central problem here. We have to change the perception and the assumptions of this country about road safety and the fact that good driving is something to be admired. Therefore, in the short term we have to have recognisable and measurable targets.

In a perfect world, your view that we need a policy of continuous improvement is the view I would subscribe to, but in the short term I believe targets have worked. It is a cultural shift that we need.

**Q14 Jim Dobbin**: I am interested in this debate about who is best placed to manage this. Is it going to be central Government or local government? I would have thought that central Government was there to finance and offer guidelines, and local government knows best how to do it locally. Is the view that the police and local authorities do not have the experience or enough skills to implement these road safety measures?

**Neil Greig**: I would say they do have those skills. They have shown that over a long track record. What we are already seeing is that, perhaps because of the perception that we do not have targets, against the background of a local need to cut public spending, we are already picking up that the road safety headlines are being cut harder and faster than the overall spending. Road safety is already suffering because of this perception that we do not have targets and perhaps, if cuts have to be made, they can be made in this area. We do need that leadership from central Government to make sure the local authorities know that this is an important area. It is like road maintenance. Often you can cut these things and there is no immediate impact, compared to closing a nursery school or whatever. The figures are showing that the cuts are there. Local authorities have the expertise. In many areas they are losing that expertise. We are seeing a lot of redundancies, and a lot of people with many years’ experience are leaving their local authorities because they are closing road safety units. It is not universal. Some authorities are good. The Government struggle to highlight those authorities where there is best practice. Certain areas are much better than others. There is a large variation in local authorities and regions across the UK. We should be trying to narrow that gap.

**Q15 Chair**: Is that a general picture, Mr Greig, on local authorities cutting back?

**Quentin Willson**: We have been doing a survey looking at the published figures, which is last year’s figures obviously, and then there are some advance figures. It is in our evidence. What we are seeing is that the rate of cuts for road safety and the road safety education heading are higher. They are about 15.8% compared to an overall 9.5% cut in local authority spending. It is one of the Departments that seems to be getting hit hard.

**Q16 Graham Stringer**: You have talked about targets. Road accidents have been cut, first of all, by targeting drinking and driving and by improving the design of roads and cars to reduce deaths. What would reduce accidents by the greatest amount now? What is the next target?

**Quentin Willson**: Education, absolutely and fundamentally. It is the three “E”s: education, enforcement and engineering. In terms of education, we need to look at the driving test. I believe it is not fit for purpose. We must also look at how the next generation of drivers is taught. I believe we teach children at the wrong time. It is no good at 17. I would like to see driving on the GCSE syllabus like Citizenship. As far as I am concerned, the big question for this Committee and for society at large is how we improve driver education to change the mindset of young drivers who then become adult drivers.

**Q17 Graham Stringer**: There seem to be two difficult groups. One is those people who just ignore the problems caused by alcohol and driving. There is a core of people who will go out and have eight or nine pints.

**Quentin Willson**: The motoring underclass.

**Q18 Graham Stringer**: Yes, that is one way of describing them. Then there are daft young men. Do you really think you can get to those two groups by education?

**Quentin Willson**: I think the motoring underclass will never be educated and will never change their behaviour. Therefore, the second “E”—the enforcement one—is really important. There are 2,000,000 uninsured drivers on UK roads.

**Nick Starling**: It is about 4%. I can follow up on that.

**Quentin Willson**: It is a frighteningly large figure. They are allowed to carry on broadly unchecked because we simply do not have the necessary levels of enforcement. I believe this is a very dangerous minority that causes a lot of damage to other road users. They threaten our lives and are allowed to get away largely unchecked because the amount of traffic police are just not around. To control that deeply dangerous social group—this motoring underclass—I believe that you would have to have an increase in police enforcement.

**Nick Starling**: The answer to the first part of your question is that young drivers are a huge issue. It is an absolutely massive issue. Put bluntly, our members pay the bills for people being killed and seriously injured. It is not unusual to have claims of up to £20 million for a single crash. This is where there are three or four passengers in the car; they get what are euphemistically called “life-changing injuries” and
they require lifetime care. It is an absolutely massive issue for our members. One in five young drivers will have a crash after passing their test. They are 10 times more likely to be killed—

Q19 Graham Stringer: Can I just interrupt? You say “young drivers”, but it tends to be young men, doesn’t it? They are more at risk than young women. Nick Starling: It is largely young men with passengers in the car. They may themselves not be drinking. They may be perfectly legal. That is the massive problem. We think that is a nettle that Government have simply not grasped. No Government has grasped this. They seem to be more concerned about young drivers as voters rather than young drivers as safe citizens. We think that is the area where a massive amount is needed.

But there is hope. You mentioned uninsured driving. You can act on things like uninsured driving and we have started to have success because of different ways of enforcement. You can tackle things by enforcement, but it is education and getting the driving test and training right. If the driver testing system was a school, Madam Chairman, that school would be in special measures. It is just not working. We think it is education, getting the test right and a fundamental look at making people realise what the issues to do with driving are. We can make a big change if we can tackle that.

Q20 Chair: Mr Willson, in your written evidence you spoke about the importance of educating young people at a younger age, before they are actually drivers. Do you think that is important?

Quentin Willson: This is probably the most important thing that we, as a Committee and as a society, could do to reduce the death toll on UK roads for young drivers. If you look at the notion that we take a 17-year-old boy after he has immersed himself in video games like Grand Theft Auto and watched every single episode of “Top Gear”, by the time he sits behind that steering wheel he is completely corrupted and corroded by all the incorrect road safety messages. I do not believe you will ever be able to get past all that awful mental detritus that he already has in his head. He is less receptive because he is of that age. He is rebellious. He is less open to suggestion and to learning.

If you train them to drive on private land with dual-control cars and with specially qualified instructors at, dare I say it, 12, 13 or 14, when they are much more receptive and have not been corroded by these external social influences, then I believe you do that rare, rare thing. You change the mindset, where they are then able to take all the important road safety messages to mind.

You also have them doing what we call the “below the dashboard” stuff early, so that when they go on public roads to drive at 17—I am not arguing to reduce the age of testing—they can then deal with the grim subject of how not to kill themselves and others. It is something that we should think very carefully about. We should train younger drivers, pre-licence drivers, much earlier.

I submitted to the Committee some research from Sweden done by the Swedish Government, where they tested drivers who had gone through early pre-licence training to normal drivers who had just gone through the normal Swedish driving situation. The reduction in those vulnerable groups was a 41% decline in KSIs. That is one of the largest reductions of any road safety campaign globally.

I firmly believe that we should look very carefully at a pilot study to see just how beneficial this could be to change the mindset. This is what I mean when I talk about these big shiny initiatives that are separate from accepted road safety thinking. There will be those who say that it is wrong to teach kids to drive early because they will just go and steal cars. They are going to steal cars anyway if they are of that mind.

There is an organisation in the UK called Young Driver that has already trained 25,000 kids. The data are there for us to drill deep into to see how their behaviour on the road is different from their peers. I passionately believe that this is a way of getting to grips with this young driver problem.

Neil Greig: It is very important. I do not want to demean the motoring underclass. It is a male issue, but there is an issue about all young drivers lacking in experience and not being prepared properly by the current test regime. We think the test does not prepare them for rural driving and night-time driving—the sort of things that actually kill them. I do not think you want to get diverted too much down the line of dealing with the motoring underclass as a male issue. It is an issue for all young drivers. We have research from Sweden, for example, that shows that, if you have more experience before, during and after you are driving, then you are more likely to be safe. The key issue for us from this strategy is the idea of what happens post-test. The risk is highest in the first six months of solo driving. Often we look at 17 to 24-year-olds, but it is actually 17, 18 and 19-year-olds. It is that first six months of solo driving. We just cast them adrift to learn by their own mistakes, often without giving them the proper experience of the roads that will kill them. We need to review learning how to drive and the driving test itself but also that post-test licensing phase. We are very keen that in those first six months to a year we don’t just hand the keys over and set them free. They should have some further interventions to help them deal with solo driving.

Q21 Chair: Would that be compulsory interventions?

Neil Greig: It is compulsory, for example, in Austria, where they have noted a 33% reduction in young male deaths on their roads since they brought in a system whereby you have three further interventions. There is no graduated licensing and no restrictions. You still get to go out at night with as many passengers as you like, but you have to come back for three further short interventions and one day with your peers to discuss attitude and things like that. It seems to have worked very well in Austria. We think we need something like that, which is part of this continuous learning and does not just set you free when you pass the test, because that is when you really start to learn how to drive.
Nick Starling: I agree with that up to a point, but, if you have a test which means you have to have post-test training, there is something wrong with the test. We think it is very interesting to get kids to learn the techniques, as Mr Willson is suggesting, but there has to be a structured learning period; you have to learn under certain conditions and in a certain period of time. You cannot just do an intensive course and go straight on the roads. We do think there needs to be post-test restrictions. The clearest one and the most concerning one is the passenger issue. If a young boy gets into a car with three passengers, that triples the chance of having a crash. That is just an unacceptable statistic.

Edmund King: Could I just add something on the education? It is the education of parents as well. We did a survey last year which asked, “What is the biggest risk to your teenage son or daughter?” The results came up with knife crime, gun crime, HIV, drink and drugs, whereas being a passenger or indeed a driver in a car was very low down. Yet, in terms of accidental death, that should be at the top. As a society we are still not totally aware that, for your teenage son, getting into a car is probably the most at risk he will ever be. That is one point.

Quentin talked about training under the age of 17. I know this Committee has taken evidence from the Under 17 Car Club that has shown some good evidence that people get rid of the adrenalin before they get on the road. They have been on the skid pan and they have done all that. Certainly in my family, my nephews and nieces have all been through that and not one of them has had an accident since. That helps, but it does tend to be middle-class kids that go on those courses. What we are trying to do is open something up to everyone. There is now a BTEC in Driving Science that we are promoting through free software to every school in the UK. It is a programme called “Drive iQ”. You can start this online before the age of 17. It looks at the whole thing about attitudes and what causes crashes. It tries to get kids to think about the consequences of road safety before they get behind the wheel. That then goes on and it gives them a qualification. It covers things like night-time and motorway driving.

If you can get the insurance industry to offer a substantial insurance discount for people who do that kind of tailored course, that will be a step in the right direction, as will insurance products that monitor the way young drivers then drive. We are looking at a product that does not just look at the time of day you drive but how you drive, accelerate, brake and corner. One of my colleagues has it on his car testing. Last week his car was picked up by the garage for a service. On the read-out the acceleration and braking went up 40%. You could see that the guy that picked up his car for the service was doing 51 mph in a 30 mph limit. You may think that is Big Brother, but at least it helps to see how people are driving and whether they are driving responsibly. If parents have that data, there is probably something they can do about it.

Q22 Chair: Mr Starling, would insurers be prepared to reduce premiums for young people if they either had additional training or their driving was examined and shown to be safer?

Nick Starling: Insurers already encourage safer driving via the no claims discount. The no claims discount delivers what it says on the tin.

Q23 Chair: Yes, but would you reduce premiums for young drivers who undertook this experience?

Nick Starling: If young drivers can demonstrate that they are driving safely and if they can get through that first year without having a claim, then their premium starts to come down.

Q24 Chair: Mr Starling, I am asking you to respond to these questions.

Nick Starling: No. Insurers are not going to take a punt on just saying; “You are doing this training; therefore we will offer you a discount.” First of all, you want people to do training to become better drivers. If people are doing training just for the motivation of getting lower insurance premiums, that is the wrong way round. If there is a demonstration that these sorts of systems work, then very quickly the premiums will start to come down.

I will mention telematics. At the beginning of my remarks I said that everyone has to be in this together sorting this issue out. Telematics is where the insurance industry is making a big contribution to road safety and young driver road safety. Most of our members are now looking at different sorts of products. What is interesting about the telematics products is that they work by encouragement. You build up rewards by driving safely. I have heard stories of young people lending the car to their parents and telling their parents to drive slowly so that they don’t mess up their rewards system. Telematics is a good and promising way forward, but just to say; “You are doing training; therefore you get a discount”, is not going to sort out the problem.

Quentin Willson: But the industry does need to help and offer consumers a fiscal incentive to change their behaviour.

Nick Starling: No claims discount does it.

Chair: Mr Starling and Mr Willson, can you address your comments here please? We do not want the witnesses arguing. Your differences of view are noted.

Q25 Julian Sturdy: I have two points. First, we have talked about pre-test education and I entirely agree with what has been said so far. There are also post-test qualifications. What do you all think about the system still running in Australia, where you have a provisional system after you have passed your test? You pass your test and then you have 12 months on a “P” plate, where speed limits are slightly restricted and access to certain routes is probably restricted as well. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Nick Starling: We have always advocated that there should be graduated licensing; in other words, there should be restrictions on particular forms of behaviour after you have passed your test. The main one that has always concerned our members has been the number of passengers. Night-time driving is another issue. There might be other possibilities. Another possibility would be a two-stage type test, which is what happens
with motorcycles, for example. We believe that there does need to be some sort of post-test restriction.

Neil Greig: But in a way that is a slightly negative way of looking at it. It is basically saying that, once you have passed your test, you are not really ready to drive. Surely it would be better to try and get those attitudes and dangers sorted out before you pass your test rather than giving you the test and then saying, “You can’t drive with two passengers.” Sometimes it is useful to take two passengers. It might be the designated driver and the others are not drink-driving. There are immense complications in how you would police curfews on young drivers. In our view we would rather sort out the problems before giving them the test.

Quentin Willson: We should make sure the test is fit for purpose and that we teach them how to overtake and drive at night, which we just don’t do. That means we are failing them.

Neil Greig: Experience is important, in our view. Experiencing these things yourself is the best way to learn. If you restrict that, then you are postponing that inevitable point when you are going to be on your own, learning to overtake on a dark road at night. A lot of the graduated licensing systems from around the world are not really similar to our own. They often start driving earlier; so you are talking about 15 or 16-year-olds having restrictions and then at 17 coming into line with us. It is often quite difficult to compare what is happening elsewhere with what is happening in the UK. For us, again, we just think that first six months is the key. They have to have experience, but if they had some kind of further interventions as well, which may be part of the continuous learning, I do not see any particular problem in having a test. You are always going to have that situation where you are on your own for the first time or you are in a car with a bunch of young people as well who are going to cause problems for you. You can talk and learn about it, and perhaps learn some strategies for how to deal with peer pressure, but you don’t get the experience until you have actually done it.

We need to get that in some kind of semi-controlled environment. If you start having night-time curfews, it is difficult to enforce. There is a huge impact on the rural economy. Young people going out at night is all part of the economy at the moment and it would have a big impact on them. Things like controlling the size of car engines is not really an issue. I would rather see them being encouraged to be in modern cars with ABS and the full crash protection. They are often driving older cars, which does not help the problem either.

Q26 Julian Sturdy: Can I go back to the three “E”s of education, engineering and better enforcement? You have just pointed out about the new technology coming forward now with cars. If we could get all these improved—obviously engineering technology is improving, but assuming we could get better education and improved enforcement—does that strengthen the case for upping the speed limits on motorways to 80 mph?

Quentin Willson: I worry about upping the speed limit on motorways. I know it is difficult to enforce a 30 mph speed limit and a 70 mph speed limit that is widely abused.

Q27 Chair: What about the proposal to increase the speed limit to 80 mph?

Quentin Willson: I think it would have to be variable. There are some roads—a dual carriageway going through Bedford or wherever—where you could not have an 80 mph speed limit. It would have to be just on motorways and as that variable. There is a danger that people travel over the posted limit now. I guess it is about 75 mph or 76 mph. Raise it to 80 mph and they will be going even faster. We need to look at it very carefully, but it would have to be variable and apply only to motorways. Any benefits to society about us all getting to work earlier because it is going to make us go faster is complete moonshine. We need to look at this carefully and understand that people are not as skilled as they used to be driving cars. We do not want to see amounts of people going down motorways at 90 mph and feeling that they can because there are no police cars out there to stop them, because there aren’t.

Q28 Chair: Are there any other views on the safety implications of raising the motorway speed limit to 80 mph or other speed issues?

Edmund King: Driving at 80 mph in a modern car on a modern motorway in good weather a safe distance from the car in front is safe, if you have all those criteria. I am quite attracted to the French system whereby, if it is raining, icy or snowy, the limit drops. It is a kind of common-sense approach in terms of variables. The variable is not just the quality of the road; it is also the weather. If you do that, then 80 mph is probably a safe limit.

The problem on our motorways quite often is not sheer speed but the way people drive. Tailgating—driving too close to the car in front—is a much bigger issue than speeding. The problem there is that, with the reduction in traffic police, we are not prosecuting people for tailgating or other forms of dangerous driving. I think that would have more effect.

There is an argument though that currently, if you are doing between 70 mph and 80 mph on a motorway, it would be incredibly rare that you would be stopped by the police and prosecuted. Our slight fear about that is, if that is the case, that some people are a bit lax about speed limits in a 30 mph or a 40 mph limit. If we did have an 80 mph limit in good weather and on decent motorways, and all the other limits are enforced, that would be progress.

Q29 Chair: Are there any other views on speed limits?

Nick Starling: From our members’ point of view motorways are not the problem; it is rural roads and some urban roads. I would agree with what other witnesses have said. On three or four-lane modern engineered motorways where you can vary the speed, it could work. The main issue is away from the motorways in terms of road safety from our point of view.

Neil Greig: Motorways are a small part of the accident problem. On managed motorways there is a
large amount of CCTV. You know what is happening up ahead. You can vary it up and down. It goes down at the moment; it could go up if the conditions allow it. These managed motorways are being extended across and around urban areas such as the M42 and M1 into more rural motorways as well. There will be a lot more motorways with that technology on it that can see what is happening ahead and can vary the speed limit and enforce it. The problem is that 80 mph is about the average now. People know that with the guidelines you can get away with 78 mph. Under the guidelines of 10% on top of 80 mph, you could be heading towards 90 mph or even higher. People will learn that; they know that. If it is enforced on a managed motorway which has the traffic and speed cameras on it, you have more chance of perhaps controlling that very high end. It still does come down to driver behaviour as well.

Q30 Graham Stringer: Didn’t the Secretary of State quote some evidence when he was mooting the idea of having an 80 mph limit that the average speed only increased by 2% if you upped the speed limit to 80 mph? Are you aware of the Secretary of State’s comments and do you know the evidence base that he was using?

Neil Greig: I am not aware of that particular comment. There is some evidence that I have seen recently from the US where there was an increase in accidents when they put up the speed limit on Interstate motorways. Again, it is hard to compare directly what was going on. There is an indication that people do feel quite comfortable. They are driving at a speed where they feel quite comfortable. They will start to feel a bit more uncomfortable when they get into the 90s. We are talking about the majority of people. There will always be this minority who will want to push the limit on every occasion, but for the majority of people they seem to be quite comfortable with what is happening on the motorways just now.

Q31 Mr Harris: In international comparisons are any of you aware of any other country where the national speed limit has been raised and the level of road accidents has consequently been reduced?

Quentin Willson: No.

Q32 Chair: The silence answers that.

Neil Greig: Only the opposite.

Q33 Paul Maynard: I have a question for Mr Greig on two tables in his evidence. I was particularly struck by Table 1.1, which showed the regional disparities in deaths per 100,000 people in 2009. The east midlands has a death rate twice that of the north-east, which struck me as a particularly strong argument for a more localist approach. How do you think Government can utilise the EuroRAP statistics on particular roads, which struck me as a useful tool for local councils to have at the heart of their road safety strategy, and how can that be better integrated into what the Government are doing? That seems a more powerful indicator of where and why accidents are occurring than the rather crude national level that many road safety charities wish to focus on.

Neil Greig: There is no doubt that EuroRAP has reached a level of detail and scientific rigour where it could be used as an indicator, certainly to allow local authorities to look at their own roads and to compare different regions. The key thing about EuroRAP is that it looks at the risk of those particular roads. It is about road design rather than road behaviour. In many cases it highlights simple things like white lining, realigning bends and lighting junctions. It is simple engineering measures. Ultimately, though, from an IAM perspective, how people drive on those roads is going to be important as well. We think EuroRAP is important because, as with Euro NCAP, it has brought up the quality of cars. EuroRAP is bringing up the quality of roads, but we are still going to have this problem of poor quality of driving even on those roads that have been improved. We have certainly supported EuroRAP as an indicator which could sit quite happily alongside other national indicators.

Q34 Paul Maynard: Finally, I have a question on Table 1.2. You made the point earlier about the 15.8% reduction in local government spending on road safety. Could you explain this table a little more? I note that funding has increased for road safety from £102 million in 2008–09 to £123 million in 2009–10, sharply increasing to £147 million in 2010–11, and then back to £124 million in 2011–12. While you are technically correct that there is a 15.8% drop compared to last year, could you explain a little more about why it is still higher than it was in 2009–10 and what led to the spike between those two years?

Neil Greig: I am afraid it has just been due to some form of local government policy. I do not know why that spike has occurred. For us, the key point that I was making in that table was that the rate of reduction seems to be faster in road safety education spending than for total local authority spending. I am not aware of why that particular figure is so much higher. We make the point that spending on road maintenance and road safety goes up and down. There is very little long-term planning. It is very difficult to plan without knowing what money you are going to get, the type of initiative change or the grant support changes. That makes it difficult to pick out the real trends there. The key thing is that this is based on a survey of a lot of authorities. Some are spending more and some are spending less. We want to iron that out to get some kind of level playing-field.

Q35 Paul Maynard: You would agree that it is not a simple, straightforward picture as that diagram shows.

Neil Greig: It is not simple, but we have certainly had information from certain authorities that they are cutting and from others that they are adding.

Q36 Jim Dobbin: The issue of education has been discussed, mainly targeted at young people and schools. Last week I was driving down to London on the M6 and it was closed for five hours, probably longer, because two HGVs had jack-knifed. One of the drivers was killed. Mr King mentioned tailgating. It is never as bad as with HGVs. What can we do about that? Are refresher courses needed? It is
exceptionally dangerous and it is happening all the time.

Edmund King: There is no doubt, when you look at
motorways, that there are a disproportionate amount of
incidents involving HGVs, particularly in poor
weather. With snow and ice, the number of trucks
jack-knifed is a particular problem. It is something
that the Highways Agency has started to look at,
giving more specific warnings for HGVs, particularly
in bad weather.

The other issue there is the influx of foreign trucks. If
you go on the M2 or the M20, you have to have your
wits about you if you are in the central lane because
of the problem of side swipes from trucks without the
additional mirrors. Again, initiatives have been taken
at the Port of Dover and elsewhere of giving
additional mirrors, but there are still problems there.
The point you make about looking at truck safety,
particularly in relation to motorways, is perhaps one
to which not enough attention has been given.

Q37 Chair: Would you be able to give us any
information on the extent of that problem with the
foreign trucks? Do you have any information about that?

Nick Starling: Madam Chair, we did some work on
this a couple of years ago which I am afraid I do not
have at my fingertips, but we can certainly let you
have that.

Q38 Chair: Would you be able to send us some
information on that?

Nick Starling: Yes.

Neil Greig: The actual Government figures show that
foreign-registered vehicles are quite a small problem.
They cover that in the annual road safety statistics,
which I can forward to you.

Q39 Chair: If the frequency of MOT testing is
reduced, what impact would that have on road safety?

Quentin Willson: I think that way disaster lies. I am
really passionate about this. To take away this vital
yearly check for car safety would cost society an
awful lot more than the notional bureaucratic and
personal cost for people to MOT their cars. We know
that people’s ability for servicing and being aware of
how a car works has declined dramatically. To take
that away and have things like tyres, ball joints,
steering racks, brakes and brake pipes inspected only
eyery two years would take us the way France has
gone with their two-year MOT. You can just see that
the cars over there are woefully badly maintained. The
French Government agree that this is a contributory
factor to accidents and fatalities.

Most people don’t have access to look under their
cars. Even the most hardened car enthusiast does not
have a ramp. Some 50% of the tyres coming off cars
at the moment are illegal. That is a statistic from
Goodyear Dunlop. If you take that two-year check
away, given the amount of miles people do, you
reduce the safety of the national car parc significantly.
It is a very dangerous thing to do.

Edmund King: If I could just add to that, from a
motorist’s point of view—we have done various
surveys of 20,000-odd drivers in AA Populus polls—
94% think the MOT is important to road safety; 62%
felt that if it was a two-year MOT there would be
more unsafe cars on the road; just 13% indicated that
it would save them money and that was an important
criteria. Even for the drivers themselves, they do not
resist having an annual MOT because they see it as a
safety check. Our figures also show that 15% of
people have cut back on servicing in the last year or
so due to the cost of fuel. If they are cutting back on
servicing and then if they are only having an MOT
every two years, there will be more cars out there
with faulty brake lights, faulty tyres and so on, and
potentially more accidents. It really is a retrograde
step and I do not understand why the Government
have even considered it.

Nick Starling: This is not an area where we have done
any analysis or have any particular evidence from our
members. It is important to remember that everyone
has an ongoing responsibility to make sure their car is
safe on the road. There is always a slight risk that, if
people leave it for the annual check, then they are
not taking that ongoing responsibility. We think it is
important that people look after the safety-critical
parts of their car. The two-yearly MOT is a good way of
doing that. We need to look at all the evidence, but
the key thing is what Mr Willson suggested: the tyres,
the brakes and so forth. We need to make sure that
people know they have to be maintained properly and
safely. Whatever we have, we need a good and
rigorous regime for that.

Neil Greig: At the IAM we are perhaps more open to
the idea of change. You have to remember that
mechanical defects as a contributory factor in
accidents is very small. It is in single figures. That
still equates to a couple of hundred people injured
and killed in a crash where mechanical failure was an
issue, but it is a tiny part of the overall crash position.
Several years ago we were quite vocally in favour of
increasing the frequency of MOTs from the point of
view of saving the motorist money and the fact that it
was not a big issue in road safety terms. We got some
information from VOSA as to why cars fail on the
first MOT at three years old. They are failing for
tyres, brakes and key safety-critical items. We backed
off because we said we can’t be calling for MOTs at 4–2–
or extending it, when virtually new cars, still under
warranty, are still failing for safety-critical items.
There is a need for a much deeper investigation. Why
is it? If you look at Europe, they have much lower
failure rates, even when they have less frequent tests.
They are supposed to be a similar level of MOT test.
The level is set by the EU. We go above that but some
countries stick to the level. Why is it that in certain
countries very few cars fail at three years? What is
happening in the motor trade in the UK that we are
having these three-year-old cars, still under warranty
and often sold with a three-year service package,
failing their MOT? There is a deeper issue here about
how we use the MOT as a safety check rather than
proper servicing. That is an attitude thing which may
be very difficult to change, but it is worth looking at.
It does cost consumers an awful lot of money to have
these extra MOTs.

We do not want to do away with the MOT. There are
environmental as well as safety benefits of an MOT,
but there is an issue here as to why we are so out of step with many other modern states in Europe when it comes to the way we look after our cars and the failure rates particularly for those very new cars compared to other countries.

Chair: Thank you very much for coming and answering our questions.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Tony Russell, Transport Engineering Manager, Sustrans, Roger Geffen, Campaigns & Policy Director, the UK’s national cyclists’ organisation, CTC, Craig Carey-Clinch, Managing Director, Rowan Public Affairs Ltd and Motor Cycle Industry Association, and Jack Semple, Director of Policy, Road Haulage Association, gave evidence.

Q40 Chair: Good morning and welcome to the Transport Select Committee. Could I start by asking you to give your name and the organisation you represent? This is to help our records.

Jack Semple: I am Jack Semple, Director of Policy at the Road Haulage Association.

Craig Carey-Clinch: I am Craig Carey-Clinch representing the Motor Cycle Industry Association today.

Tony Russell: I am Tony Russell. I am Transport Engineering Manager at Sustrans.

Roger Geffen: I am Roger Geffen. I am Campaigns & Policy Director at CTC, the UK national cyclists’ organisation.

Q41 Chair: Thank you. Are the Government right to stop using targets as a way of improving road safety? Do you think that is a big issue?

Tony Russell: I will kick off from our perspective. We have reservations over there not being any targets. We welcome the range of indicators that are put in the outcomes framework, but we have concerns that the absence of any targets is going to make it difficult, particularly at the local level, for local authorities to be able to argue the case in a situation of tightening resources for a prioritisation of road safety.

As we heard from the previous evidence, road safety targets in the past have proven to be very effective. We feel that it is a retrograde step not to have any targets. They need to be intelligent targets, in the sense that we welcome the introduction of rate-based measures in the indicator table. We would particularly like to see targets relating to the level of usage by pedestrians and cyclists rather than just absolute numbers or per population. We feel that not having targets would impinge on the effect of local delivery as well as the wider ability for the framework to deliver real reductions in road accidents.

Q42 Chair: Would you like to see local targets?

Tony Russell: We would like to see national targets and we would like to see Government working with the local authorities, encouraging them to come up with their own local targets that may reflect the national targets. If there is a national target, there are implications locally as to how that is adopted. In the sense of cascading down, yes, there would be some sort of local element to that.

Jack Semple: We do not have very strong views either way. We are conscious that, while there have been targets to reduce accident rates, most of the impact of change has come from the vehicle manufacturers meeting EU regulation. That has been fairly widely agreed across Government.

From our point of view, we would like to see a further increase in identifying the cause of accidents and solutions and monitoring performance. Up until now the substantial reduction that we have had has not, in the main, been the result of UK Government policy. I think that has been fairly well acknowledged. While targets may be useful, more important is action and monitoring what is going on.

Q43 Chair: Are there any other views on it?

Craig Carey-Clinch: With regard to the motorcycle community and industry, the experience of targets has been somewhat mixed. Some points were made by the previous witnesses about the need to measure progress, as one would in any company, and that is a very important thing to do. But a more holistic approach to the notion of targeting needs to be done with certain vehicle user groups where, for example, small numbers of increases or decreases can result in massive percentage change.

We feel that rate-based targeting was something that was not exploited properly by the previous Government, or this one for that matter, as a true indicator of how our road safety has progressed. The absence of targets is a worry but one that is perhaps manageable if the indicators are used properly and local authorities are given the correct guidance regarding how they should progress in their area and due to local circumstances. Again, it is about the Government not disconnecting locally but providing that guidance.

Roger Geffen: I will just pick up on the points that Craig and Tony have both made about rate-based targets. This is the bit that we think is really important. Any measurement of cyclists’ safety, whether it is a target or an indicator, should be rate-based. We welcome the fact that the Government have decided to go with rate-based measures so that, when cycle casualties go up slightly, you don’t get alarmist headlines if cycle use has increased more steeply and therefore cycling has become safer.

It is good that the Government have done that at the national level. It is less easy to do it at the local level simply because most local authorities do not have a good measure of cycle use in their areas. As an interim measure, we advocate the adoption of perception-based targets alongside the rate-based measures so that you are asking people whether they
think that cycling and, indeed, walking are getting safer in their areas. If people think that cycling is getting safer, they are more likely to cycle. More and safer cycling can and does go hand in hand, as CTC showed in our “Safety in Numbers” report. Cyclists gain from safety in numbers. The more cyclists there are, the safer cycling gets. That benefits health, the environment and a whole load of other things too. It reduces risk for other road users as well. It is important not to have alarmist headlines when cycle casualties go up slightly without looking at what is happening to cycle use. The important bit is to motivate local authorities to go for more, as well as safer, cycling.

Q44 Jim Dobbin: On this point about who is best placed to manage and deal with road safety, I am getting the impression that there is a feeling here that central Government is probably best placed to do that. That is not my view. I would like some clarification on that. Is it your view that those at local level, whether it is police or local government, do not have the skills to manage this process?

Craig Carey-Clinch: I would suggest that, if you allow a free-for-all, then you tend to find a lot of wheel reinvention going on. We noticed this with the motorcycle safety schemes, for example, at local authority level. Some extremely good schemes came out, but what we tended to find was that a lot were just copying standards and then adding a new title to it or a new way of promoting it. It was almost like a badge-collecting idea, when in fact what you have nationally is a lot of best practice that can be exchanged. This is not to advocate that central Government should take control of all local road safety, but to an extent there is a need for that guidance and a need for the bringing together of certain skills, best practices and expertise, and advocating centrally to local authorities that in making their own decisions they should not indulge in wheel reinvention.

Q45 Jim Dobbin: To follow that through, is there any indication that since the spending review there has been an increase locally in road hazards?

Craig Carey-Clinch: It is difficult to tell, but we have seen a reduction in the number of local road safety officers. There is less prioritisation towards vulnerable mode road safety. I include cycling as well as motorcycling in this. In fact we could do with a lot more local partnerships and a lot more prioritisation, because at the end of the day road accidents cost the community quite large amounts of money and the impacts locally are extremely severe.

Roger Geffen: I would flag up that point about road policing as the area where we are seeing the most immediate cutbacks. That may lie behind the fact that in the last year the rate for serious and fatal cyclist injuries has gone up. It may be that is just because the measurement of cycle use has not been accurately collected. There are real doubts about the measurement of cycle use at the national level, let alone the local level. What is clear is that in recent years cycling has been getting safer over the past decade. Cycle casualties dropped by 17% and cycle use grew by 20%, so the risk of cycling dropped by 31% over a decade. However, in the past year that may have gone into reverse. We do not know why, but it may be related to a reduction in road traffic policing. That possibility certainly concerns us.

Q46 Jim Dobbin: Mr Geffen, what is your view of cyclists who continually go through red lights?

Roger Geffen: CTC is not here to defend illegal behaviour by cyclists any more than you would expect the AA or the RAC to defend illegal behaviour by drivers. In road safety terms it is not a huge issue. We saw figures only last week from Transport for London that showed that, in the last three years for which they have data, jumping red lights or disobeying junction controls accounted for 5% of cyclists’ fatal and serious injuries in London. 15% were accounted for by drivers jumping red lights. It is one of these things. Jumping a red light on a bike is illegal and can be dangerous. Jumping a red light in a car is much more dangerous, and that is where policing priorities need to lie. They need to tackle the real sources of danger and fear that deter people from cycling. We are all in favour of an increase in road policing as I have explained. If some of that comes down on errant cyclists that is fair game, but the priority has to be reducing danger at source.

Q47 Chair: You have mentioned reductions in road traffic policing and local authority funding. What evidence do you have for that? How widespread is all of that? Can anyone comment on that?

Jack Semple: We are trying to get specific quantified evidence at the moment. We have a concern that on the police side there has been a reduction in road policing, specifically in the haulage industry. Some expertise with regard to trucks and haulage behaviour may be being lost around the country by police forces that are under pressure to make cuts. The Home Office focus on road safety policing is not particularly high. We are also engaged with VOSA, and we are very keen for the Department to ensure that VOSA’s funding for enforcement at the roadside and at depots, where that is appropriate, is maintained. Most of it comes from the industry, but the Department has itself made a contribution which has been increased, as the Committee will know, because much of it came from the Committee’s report two or three years ago.

Interestingly, there was then a specific issue in respect of the safety of foreign vehicles, which the Department itself said were three times more likely to be in an accident. I do not have the latest statistics to hand, but they suggest that the effort that has gone into policing in respect of foreign vehicles, where there had been a big deficit, has produced some beneficial road safety outcomes. It has reduced the accident rate for foreign vehicles. The accident rate is still higher than for UK trucks, but that is an example where money has made a difference and we are very keen to ensure that the effectiveness of VOSA’s effort is maintained, particularly at a time when the police are cutting back in their resources.

Craig Carey-Clinch: From the perspective of where the industry sits, we are concerned about potential contraction in the ability of forces to maintain...
BikeSafe officers and general road traffic policing by motorcycle. We have seen a reduction in motorcycle units over the last few years. Clearly that has an impact on safety.

Slightly broader, of course, is the Stolen Vehicle Squad, and particularly the Met’s Stolen Vehicle Unit has seen a lot of threats of late. The whole area of police engagement with motorcycling and general road safety has been under threat. Some very serious underlying results could occur from this if it is not arrested.

**Q48 Paul Maynard:** Forgive me if I return to my favourite topic of targets. I would aim my question at Mr Russell. I am particularly interested in the impact of nationally set targets on local government decision making, particularly in regard to children walking to school and the information you have referred to about more and more children being driven and the impact that has on congestion. Would you at least agree with me that there is no incentive for local government to support charities such as Living Streets that try to develop walking buses if they are being measured on a KPI regarding children killed or seriously injured, which might go up if they promote more children walking to school? There is a perverse incentive in there, is there not?

**Tony Russell:** Yes. That is what we are highlighting in the point we make in our submission. It comes back to Roger’s point about a rate-based indicator or target. Whether we are talking of indicators or targets, the same issue applies. In the case of children walking to school, if it can be put in the context of the numbers of children walking to school against the level of casualties, then that enables a rate-based target to be produced. That is probably one at a local level that is more practicable to move forward with than an overall one. A lot of local authorities do already collect data on children walking to school, although it is not a requirement on them any more. They have in the past certainly had that data. That would enable that very specific rate based indicator to be picked up on, either as an indicator or a target, and to make it more meaningful. It is a very important one, and, as you say, it can potentially lead to decisions that are using evidence that is unhelpful or misleading.

**Roger Geffen:** I was briefly adding that I absolutely take the point about perverse disincentives. That is exactly why we argued that the current road safety framework should be rate-based rather than absolute numbers, to get away from the previous perverse disincentive on road safety officers to not want to encourage cycle use.

It is therefore very welcome that the Government have adopted the rate-based indicator. We now think they need to go further and disapply anything that is purely set in numerical terms for casualty reduction disapply these to walking or to cycling simply because it is so important to be incentivising more as well as safer walking and cycling on public health grounds, quite apart from the environmental and other wider benefits.1

---

1 I wish to make it clear that I wasn’t calling for numerical targets/indicators to be disappplied across the board, but that they should be disappplied to walking and cycling.

---

**Craig Carey-Clinch:** I would add something here further to what Roger is saying. If you look at the 40% arbitrary targets in the early days from the 2000 road safety strategy, when you are getting the absolute numbers in the way they were in those days, then such targets may seem more achievable. If you continue with these arbitrary similar percentage rate targets, you are going to end up with diminishing returns, as we saw from the last set of strategies. Europe is a prime example. The 40% or 50% target for the year 2010 came nowhere near it. The British record was much better, and yet there is now talk of a further 50%. Rate-based targeting can target effectively rather than just being somewhat arbitrary. Like CTC, we have common cause on this particular issue of rate-based targeting.

**Q49 Paul Maynard:** I would like to follow up on that with you. I enjoyed reading your evidence and I spent most of last night trying to work out whether this particular motorcycling campaign had had the most impact on me. It was about opening your door and having someone slam into it. I could not remember whether it was BikeSafe, Think Bike, DriveSafe, RideSafe or whatever. I take your point that there is a diversity of provision, as it were. In terms of whether localism can work, should the measure be the impact on the motorist/motorcyclist or should it be on the diversity provision in the first place? If it is doing the trick, does it matter who is providing it? That is a very open question to which I do not know the answer.

**Craig Carey-Clinch:** You get to the nub of the point that we made in our written evidence about the proliferation of different sounding schemes that all do the same thing. It is wasteful of resources in the first place. In terms of the motorcyclists themselves, it sends out the message, “What am I supposed to do then?” There are all these different schemes and ideas out there, and this is where the localism needs to meet the national framework of that guiding hand on best practices and things like that. That would be the key thing with this.

**Q50 Julian Sturdy:** I want to touch on 20 mph zones. There have been a number of campaigns running across the country to convert large residential areas to 20 mph zones. This is going beyond the 20 mph zones we have seen around schools and specifically targeted areas. Do you think that local authorities should have more powers to introduce 20 mph zones, or do you see that there are knock-on consequences that could come out of this?

**Tony Russell:** The short answer is that, yes, we do. We are very aware of the strong evidence for benefits within 20 mph zones, where there is physical traffic calming. What is now being explored more is relaxing the requirements for physical features to enable areas to implement 20 mph limits without the same sort of costs. That is what is done in a lot of cities on mainland Europe. There are 30 kph areas with selected traffic calming, but it does not often have the same level of physical features.

At the moment it is early days of monitoring the scheme that has gone in at Portsmouth, and I think, Oxford, which have had some monitoring and shown...
the benefits in their particular situation. There are a number of other schemes that are in and are actively being monitored. We would certainly like to see it being made easier for local authorities to use their discretion in implementing 20 mph limits and zones within a structure that they feel is appropriate at a local level rather than just the national rules that they have to follow. It has tended to be very expensive to put in a zone in the past and it has limited what you can do.

Roger Geffen: Could I just add to this? In a recent Government-commissioned evidence review from the Transport Research Laboratory into what physical design features of our roads and junctions most affect cyclists’ safety, anything that deals with speed reduction came out top, with 20 mph having a particularly strong evidence base of a real impact on cyclists’ safety and indeed for pedestrians and all other road user categories. The best evidence base is around 20 mph.

Bearing in mind that children’s injuries overwhelmingly happen near their homes during the school holidays, weekends and evenings and not at the school gates, we think it is really important that people should live in a 20 mph zone. Simply concentrating around the school gate merely encourages the idea that children are driven to school and all that matters is that they can run safely from the car door to the school gate. That is why we think it is absolutely vital that we should extend 20 mph schemes more widely.

We think it is important to bring out the fact that 75% of the population support 20 mph speed limits, and that is 72% among drivers. We think it is important that the Association of Chief Police Officers revises its guidance. One of the reasons why local authorities struggle to introduce 20 mph is because the local police force says, “We won’t enforce it.” It is important that education and enforcement are linked—was that a point touched on in the previous evidence session. If we promote the idea that 20 mph is the right thing to do, and then you reinforce that by taking enforcement action to back up that is the right thing to do in a residential street, then you get the right outcome for driver behaviour. You legitimise nicking the idiot drivers who continue to drive down residential streets where children might be playing. The two have to go hand-in-hand. Making sure that ACPO is on board is a critical step to making it easier for local authorities to implement 20 mph.

Craig Carey-Clinch: This is one area where a certain amount of care does need to be taken. The evidence base, as Roger has outlined, is extremely powerful to support these 20 mph zones. The 20 mph zones are one of those things where localism has a real role to play. We need to be careful that we do not see a blanket ideology of 20 mph override a pragmatic case that is supported by local people.

My main concern with the blanket-whole-district limits, which are not effectively targeted, is that we generate a culture of disrespect. We know already that a lot of people ignore these limits. If you disrespect one limit, then perhaps you start to disrespect others. When people do not respect the law, that is when we see real problems. So, yes, for 20 mph limits where there is proven local need, but be careful about just applying a blanket ideology of speed reduction.

Q51 Chair: The Government want to reduce road casualties among children in deprived areas. What do you think should be done to address that and deal with that? Do you think the Government’s proposals will make any progress in that area?

Roger Geffen: I would agree about keeping the community on board. That is important.

Craig Carey-Clinch: I can kick off on that one. It is education. I fully support the calls being made by previous witnesses on road traffic education in schools. It is a key fundamental. The idea of road use or interaction with transport is something that affects us all almost from the day we are born, and yet there is a paucity of education in schools to prepare people for road use, whether they are a walker, cyclist, motorcyclist or car driver. That is the starting place.

If you look at vehicle use in deprived areas where you sometimes get vehicle crime and that sort of thing, you need engagement with local communities and the ability to provide provision for local motor projects, which are again about responsible road use. You also need to reduce illegal motorcycling particularly in some semi-rural areas, such as off-road biking and things like that, through the provision of fully structured off-road motorcycle schools. Again, these are things which engage young people and bring them in. You can engage them in sport as well as more responsible road use. There is a whole range of measures here—a package—that needs to be considered.

Q52 Chair: Are there any other views on how to bring those casualty rates down?

Roger Geffen: There are four main areas that need to be focused on, all of which are about tackling people’s perceptions as well as the actual dangers that deter people from cycling. One is speed and speeding, which brings us back to 20 mph but also reduces speeds at major junctions as well. That is a proven safety intervention.

We need to make sure that local authorities follow the Government’s guidance on cycle-friendly planning and design and that it is not seen as optional because it really is safety-critical, most critically on major roads and junctions. There should be good cycle-friendly design of major roads and junctions. We need road traffic policing and tackling bad driving, backed up by the education campaigns. As I say, education and enforcement are complementary and need to be linked, but boosting road traffic policing is another area where the strategy is weak.

Finally, there are the threats to cyclists posed by lorries. Lorries are involved in around 20% of cyclist fatalities and over 50% of cyclist fatalities in London and probably also in other large cities. We are very concerned that the road safety Minister gave the go-ahead for a trial of longer lorries on UK roads. Having made what we believe were two misleading statements to Parliament about the safety impacts of that, and having then gone ahead with this via a mechanism that effectively bypassed parliamentary scrutiny, we are very concerned about this. We hope
that the Committee will question the Minister about this and at least ask him to put the record straight on those two misleading claims. I am happy to provide further information about them.

Q53 Chair: Mr Russell, did you want to comment on this?
Tony Russell: Yes. I was going to pick up on your question about children in deprived areas particularly as well. It links into what we were saying earlier about 20 mph limits. I entirely agree with Craig on the community aspect of it. In a deprived area, the lowest 10% of deprivation has something like three times the number of child pedestrian accidents as the top 10%. There is a very big difference. A certain element of that is the higher exposure. If one can make the environment of driving safer, one would be one element that could be used to move that forward. As we are saying, that needs to be a local decision with community involvement. It does very much link in with the sort of thing Craig was just talking about on the wider education. Potentially, if there is that support, there could be quite a bit of improvement. We are talking about locations where there are not a lot of alternatives for choices people have to walk. There is the higher exposure and not a lot that can be done to reduce that, whereas in other areas kids may be taken off the road and ferried to school in cars. We have already covered that before. There is a difference there as to what the options are. There are very few options in terms of change of choice.

Q54 Graham Stringer: I want to follow up on Mr Carey-Clinch’s response. It is easy to say that education is the answer to this. If you look at some of the areas we are talking about where the incidence of accidents on children are high, these children do not go to school. There is a very high truancy rate. They often come from dysfunctional families with chaotic lifestyles. Children are wandering about on the streets at all times of day and night. You are not going to get through to those young people in classrooms that they do not attend. They are often functionally illiterate. Isn’t the answer that you have given to that question too facile?
Craig Carey-Clinch: You make a very fair point. As I mentioned also in my response, the engagement goes beyond just basic pre-school leaver age and a schools-based curriculum. There is a role for local community projects such as those run in Wickham, north London and elsewhere around the country that engage those young people who are the most deprived and who are referred because of truancy issues. They are very effective in engaging young people, skilling them up in certain areas and giving them the feeling that education has value again as well as imparting certain messages about road safety education. It is not just the case of motor projects but also in many other areas. I am sure that others round the table would be able to come up with some of those things. You are absolutely right that to focus just on schools would be too narrow an answer. We need to look at community-based education projects using road use and road safety as a way of engaging young people in other areas and helping to skill them up. It can be an extremely valuable resource where they are properly supported.

Q55 Chair: Mr Semple, should it be compulsory for lorries to be fitted with sensors to make cyclists more visible?
Jack Semple: The issue of cyclists and lorries is clearly a very important road safety issue. Ironically, it has become increasingly important at a time when, as I understand it, the KSI rate has in fact reduced for cyclists, particularly in London. To put it in a little bit of context, the University of London reported that overall the number of people killed in accidents involving HGVs over a period of about 10 years fell by 45% up to 2007. However, this is an issue that the RHA and I believe the entire haulage industry certainly takes very seriously. Trucks are basically good for cities. They bring food and jobs to people and are essential. If you look at what the issues are in terms of fatalities—my colleague on my left will correct me if I am wrong—there were 11 last year involving goods vehicles in London. It was of that order anyway. If we look at what is happening and what is the cause of these accidents, this is an issue that we are seeking to drill down further with Transport for London and the Met Police. It is not at all clear what is going on beyond the superficial detail. Clearly in some cases there has been driver error. In one case recently the driver was over the blood alcohol limit and he was on his mobile phone, which is clearly totally unacceptable. We have heard a lot this morning in the earlier session about training of drivers. We have to appreciate that cyclists are also road users. The need for cyclist training is very strong and has been recognised by cyclists’ groups and Tfl.
In terms of what has changed, the lorries that are coming into London are getting safer. We have seen a very rapid increase of cyclists who may have a fairly low level of appreciation of risk. In some cases they are careless as to the risk. It would appear that some of these serious accidents are as a result of cyclists doing what they are advised not to do.
In terms of sensors specifically, there have been accidents involving trucks with sensors. We are aware of the possibilities of sensors. We believe that in the long run it is very likely that some sort of sensors will come into the HGV sector. I would be keen to see the results of research as to how many of the accidents in London, for example, would have been prevented by sensors. There is a risk that sensors create an additional input for the driver, who has a lot going on around him. We just want to be sure that they are not counterproductive.
I am sorry to give an answer at some length, but I would like to quote a piece in one of the haulage industry’s magazines recently—Commercial Motor. It describes a driver in London at 8.30 am: “Every time he stops at traffic lights he is surrounded by cyclists and has to be very aware of what is going on.” The magazine did say that a number of these cyclists moved off on the red light, but we will leave that aside.
There is a very important issue for the haulage industry to be increasingly alert. That is something that we are bringing to our members. Our training organisation includes cycle awareness specifically in all its relevant courses. There is also an issue in terms of cyclist awareness. We have to be aware that there is a very rapid increase of cyclists who are not given very much instruction as to good road behaviour. This is a national issue. I know we have often focused on London in terms of the discussion, but this is a national issue. I wonder if there is more scope for cycle awareness training, even when they buy a bicycle. “What is the best way to operate your bicycle?”

From the haulage industry’s point of view, we are aware. A driver is acutely aware, above all, of his left-hand side, looking in his mirror and being aware of what is going around the vehicle but particularly on the left-hand side. The RHA is working to raise awareness further and we will be doing more on that.

**Q56 Chair:** Should the driver Certificate of Professional Competence include training about cyclists?

**Jack Semple:** As an HGV driver, you are trained and it is essential in all HGV driver training to be aware of what is going on around you, particularly, if you are turning left or pulling away from a junction, what is happening on your inside. In fact all car drivers should do the same, but it is particularly important for trucks. Cyclists is one area of awareness, but it is a particularly acute area because the consequences are so severe.

Ideally cyclist training should be part of broader road safety awareness training, but at the same time, if it is a specific issue for specific users, then by all means highlight it. That is what we have done as well.

**Q57 Chair:** Mr Geffen, there has been reference to the need for cyclists to be trained better as well.

**Roger Geffen:** I totally agree on the need for cycle training. The road safety strategy at the moment prioritises training for children. That is very welcome, but we think there needs to be training made available for adults who wish either to discover or rediscover cycling later in life to give them the confidence and skills to handle the major roads.

There are a whole range of ways to address the risks cyclists face from lorries. You are right to mention sensors and cameras. They are both very cheap. It is very cheap to fit lorries with these systems. You are right that there is a possibility that it adds to the sensory overload on the drivers, but it is also possible that it could save lives. Therefore, that is something else that should be tried.

We should be looking at lorry routing and how we can simply reduce the number of lorries on the roads in our major towns and cities. We should be looking at the monitoring of drivers. The driver who was goodness knows how far over the limit and talking on his mobile phone had a whole history that should have taken him off the road. How come he wasn’t? There is a whole load of health and safety management.

We have to look at what continental Europe does. What do cities with far higher levels of cycle use do?

In Holland, a lorry driver would be surrounded by a lot more cyclists. What are the solutions that are working and still mean that cyclists are safer? The Government have many roles to play in investigating a lot of different, possible solutions to lorry safety and monitoring their effectiveness. That is important too. All of these things need to be monitored because we do not really know what works. If I can just make one final point, lorry driver awareness training is also important. Lambeth council has been offering cycle training, not just cycle awareness training, to its fleet of refuse drivers. The feedback seems very positive. That, too, is something we should be looking at.

**Q58 Julie Hilling:** I want to follow up on this about motorcycles and whether there is more that needs to be done on motorcycle training in terms of vehicles and particularly heavy goods vehicles.

**Craig Carey-Clinch:** Motorcycle training and testing is currently subject to quite a lot of review processes. The simple answer is that modules that can help to raise awareness of riders of different hazards of road users are extremely important, but I would say this is a holistic process. We have all talked about the need for various road user groups to be made more aware of each other. If you look at the configuration, well over half of all motorcycle accidents are usually “looked but didn’t see”-type collisions.

With regard to lorries, it is important that young riders in particular are aware of the situation which faces cyclists. They must make sure they are aware that that lorry that has pulled out is not going to be turning left. There are modules that can be built in with this. As I say, the whole thing is under review at the moment. There is a DfT/DSA review along with the industry and user groups. Of course, as training progresses, with the introduction of the Trainers Register in the longer term, these are all things we will be considering.

**Jack Semple:** If I could come back briefly on a couple of points, I know the Government’s strategy paper identifies reducing cyclist casualties as one of its key priorities, along with children in poor areas. I am not sure that at the moment that is fleshed out in very much detail in the strategy document, unlike certain other areas.

It is very easy to focus attention on the HGV-operating community, who are absolutely essential to the economy and for the people who work and live in this country. Clearly, if there is a non-compliant driver, he is breaking the law just like anybody else who is breaking the law. He should not be, and there is not anybody in the industry, and certainly in the RHA, who would defend that sort of thing. We have to get the balance right here. The number of trucks on the road in the UK has reduced over decades. The number of cars and cyclists has increased. I am just a little wary that the debate might get skewed a little bit and focused on trucks. We are working to increase driving standards further. There is regulation which is becoming increasingly tight, with the possible exception of foreign operators which we have discussed. It is a difficult message but an important message. There is the need for the cyclist community...
to recognise that they are in effect vehicle users as well and they are the only sector of the vehicle users who do not have to show any demonstration of road craft. That is not to put over a message in any aggressive manner, but we have to understand what the issues are. Hopefully, that is a common position for us.

Q59 Julie Hilling: I also want to ask about physical fitness of drivers, particularly HGV drivers, bearing in mind the amount of sleep apnoea that is reputed to be affecting HGV drivers.

Jack Semple: There is quite a strong appreciation of sleep apnoea at the moment. From middle age, drivers have to have a regular medical every five years. There is obviously an onus on the medical profession to be aware of sleep apnoea as well. An employer has and recognises an obligation to be aware of health issues and driver competence issues. He has a very clear commercial as well as road safety interest in doing so. One area where we are getting increasing discussion is mandatory retirement at 65, which I think could be a bigger issue going forward. I know the CBI has expressed some initial concern on this in terms of HGV drivers. After age 65 an HGV driver has to have a medical every year. The Government and the state have said he is fit to drive, and for many firms that may create some degree of difficulty. We have members who have discussed this issue and there is some concern as to how this is going to work out in future. That is an area we will be watching very closely. We do not have a clear view from members generally, but at the moment, where we discuss it in a forum such as regional councils or whatever, there is a concern that this is not going to be good for road safety.

Q60 Julie Hilling: Should the testing be made more stringent? Clearly there are a lot of drivers who have sleep apnoea who are not being diagnosed. How do we change the current situation?

Jack Semple: The medical profession has an onus to identify where there is a problem, particularly when drivers go into the higher risk ages, and they are tasked by the Government with passing the driver as medically fit to drive.

Q61 Chair: The changes in motorcycle testing have been controversial. Could you give us a view, Mr Carey-Clinch, on how you see the current position in relation to safety?

Craig Carey-Clinch: In terms of the review, a six-month revue that turns into 18 months plus is not exactly something we very much welcome. As we are all aware from a previous inquiry into this matter, the six or seven lines of European directive text has turned into a need for this multi-purpose test centre and millions of pounds spent, with a commensurate reduction in the accessibility of motorcycle testing and our great concern that we are seeing a culture of permanent learners emerging.

The test review is making progress, albeit somewhat slowly. I would say that the Ministers and officials at DfT have fully engaged this. They want to see progress and a conclusion that is a positive one. They have committed to a single event on-road motorcycle test, which would not be returning things to where they were but would be an adaptation of a test that is accessible and can be delivered outside multi-purpose test centres. Research is being done into this. I would caution on items such as research, but, at the end of the day, a view has to be taken on the results of such research, which we have not seen published as yet, and to bear in mind pragmatism—for example, things like emergency stop and other manoeuvres which were done on the road quite safely in a test for in excess of 50 years. We do not see any reason why some of that should not be returned to the road.

We have been advised that there is a possibility that the new test will start to come on-stream in certain areas from next year. We would like to see that broad commitment is kept to. In the meantime there is a wider review such as the Register of Motorcycle Trainers or Car Driver Trainers as well. That came in under the 2006 Road Safety Act. The register is something which we do welcome broadly. It is essential with regard to motorcycling that the position of approved training bodies is maintained and that the Trainers Register could result in a fragmentation of the whole system and a reduction in standards, when in fact the ATBs themselves provide a vehicle by which we can maintain, improve and monitor standards. This is something we very much want to see in the longer term.

To take a broader point, we are about to implement yet another European directive, which was introduced without the previous directive being evaluated for its effectiveness. The broad point is that, far too often, we see a maintenance of the imperative of vehicle control skills as being the things that are tested rather than the ability, mentality and skill sets needed to interact with modern traffic. We feel that the Government should be far more hawkish if any further proposals for machine control skills are put into further European directives. If anything, further European directives need to correct some of the mess, complication and bureaucracy that has emerged from ones that have gone before.

Q62 Chair: But in relation to road safety.

Craig Carey-Clinch: This is in relation to motorcycle training and testing. With regard to the current review, we would like to see a speedy conclusion. We would like to see a conclusion which is along the lines of those commitments that were made by Ministers at the commencement of this Government.

Q63 Chair: Mr Semple, the Government’s road safety action plan includes measures on dealing with non-compliant HGV vehicles and drivers. From what you were saying before, are you suggesting that is not a very important area?

Jack Semple: It is a very important area. It is an important area for the Government. I hope that they maintain adequate financial resources to achieve what
they want to achieve. That is our concern. Getting on for four years ago now, the Government substantially increased the amount of money they gave to VOSA specifically to tackle the foreign lorry issue. Clearly we want to ensure that that money is well spent. We are talking to VOSA at the moment about how we think they might do it better. Our concern would be that, if that money was removed or wound down, given that it was a three-year increase, we would return back to near zero, particularly at a time when the police have been disbanding some of their groups around the country at a county level that have experience in road haulage policing.

Q64 Chair: In your written evidence you talk about the problem of the lack of suitable places for drivers of HGV vehicles to stay overnight in safety. Is that a very big issue?

Jack Semple: We have probably one of the worst facilities for drivers in Europe. There is potentially a road safety issue here because a driver clearly wants to have an adequate place to stop and take his statutory rest period. It has to be a place which is suitable and secure as well. We have had extreme instances of police moving on drivers at the end of their driving day because the lorry parking area where they have stopped is deemed to be insecure. That is at the extreme. The basic point is that there are not enough places in many parts of the country for a driver to stop and take a statutory rest.

Q65 Paul Maynard: As a point of information, I know that one of the unimplemented sections of the 2006 Road Safety Act was the ability of the Secretary of State to designate road picnic areas. If that was implemented and acted upon, would that be a step forward to solving this particular problem? That links into the tiredness issue that concerns us more generally.

Jack Semple: Provided there was provision for HGVs to stop there, yes, clearly. There are whole areas of the country. London is one and round about Dartford. There are others in the north-west and the midlands.

Chair: Thank you very much, gentlemen, for coming and answering our questions.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Bill Duffy, Campaign Co-ordinator, Pro-MOTe, and Jim Punter, Chairman, MOT Trade Forum, gave evidence.

Q66 Chair: Good morning, gentlemen. Welcome to the Transport Select Committee. Could I have your name and the organisation you represent, please? This is for our records.

Jim Punter: My name is Jim Punter and I am Chairman of the MOT Trade Forum. I am also an editor of the MOT Testing Magazine, which is a specialised publication for MOT testing stations and testers. I am the proprietor of a small independent garage in west London. The MOT Trade Forum supports the Pro-MOTe campaign.

Bill Duffy: I am Bill Duffy. I am co-ordinator of the Pro-MOTe campaign. I am also Chief Executive of Halfords Autocentres, which, for the Committee’s information, has a network of MOT test stations.

Q67 Chair: What is the current failure rate for MOTs, Mr Duffy?

Bill Duffy: There was recent information from VOSA that showed on Class IV MOTs—which is cars and car-derived vans—it is around 39.8%. It was 40.6% in the previous year.

Q68 Chair: What are the areas where the failures are found?

Bill Duffy: They are principally safety-related things that should concern us. The main areas are brakes, which account for about 11% of the failures. Steering and suspension account for around 15%. Lighting is almost 19% of the failures. These key safety areas, as we would class them, would be around 45% of all the MOT failures.

Q69 Chair: Do you get the impression that drivers are taking a deliberate decision not to look at the maintenance of the vehicles because they know they are coming in for an MOT test? It was suggested to us in evidence earlier today that that might be an attitude.

Bill Duffy: The importance of the MOT, which was one of the reasons we raised this with your Committee because we were amazed that it did not appear in the Government’s safety framework at all, is that it makes a very good contribution to road safety. In this country people have become very dependent on the MOT as a safety read-out on how their car is doing. There is certainly evidence to suggest, even from the MOT fail rate itself, that people are not maintaining their cars as well as they used to. In 2005 the fail rate was 33.5%. The MOT has not changed very much, only little bits round the edges. There is a very distinct trend of a worsening vehicle parc in terms of condition. Certainly garages and motoring organisations are seeing many more breakdowns related to poor maintenance. There are a lot more illegal tyres and some very serious braking issues.

Q70 Chair: Do you have any evidence that you could provide us with which would show that?

Bill Duffy: It would be a pleasure to take any member of your Committee, or the Committee, and visit any MOT test station to see the condition of cars that are coming in. The MOT fail rate itself is a very good indication of that worsening trend in the vehicle parc.

Q71 Chair: Would you support any changes in the system?

Bill Duffy: Yes, I would, but I might add to my previous answer that VOSA statistics are showing that there are over 800,000 vehicles per annum out of the 26.8 million tests done that are regarded as dangerous...
to drive. That is an increasing trend. Of those 800,000 in the most recent statistics, 83% were for the key safety items that I mentioned earlier. In terms of supporting changes, the Pro-MOTe organisation is about the single issue of urging the Government not to reduce MOT frequency because it is dangerous. With regard to Halfords and our involvement with other trade associations, we can see that the MOT has been around since the early 1960s and could do with improvement. We have given some ideas to the Transport Minister on how those could be improved. I would be happy to supply those ideas and thoughts to the Committee.\(^2\)

**Q72 Chair:** We would like to know those, if you could send us that.

**Bill Duffy:** We would be happy to send those to you.

**Q73 Paul Maynard:** Just continuing on that point, if the Government wish to reform the MOT and to change it in the way you have described, is this the wrong reform or is it just that the MOT should stay as it is? What are the risks of doing nothing and changing nothing at all? Is anything broken?

**Bill Duffy:** Of course, even with the current system we have a high fail rate. Four in 10 cars are failing. Even at three years old, when the first test is done, we are seeing about 20% of cars failing. Those are not good statistics, remembering that we are all supposed to have our cars legal and roadworthy at all times, not just on the day of the MOT. The MOT itself has to help us all improve road safety. We should be looking to reduce the failure rate. That will only come about by improving maintenance standards and conditions of cars.

The last Government looked at this issue for three years, between 2006 and 2008. Their very authoritative report in 2008 showed that up to 400 additional road deaths and 2,500 serious injuries would be caused by a change in frequency. It is this one serious point of the review and the proposals that the Government are currently thinking of that concerns us the most.

There are other areas of the MOT that could be changed and reviewed. For example, it does not look at the latest technology and safety systems in cars such as ABS and other electronic systems that are in the car that could contribute to road safety if we knew that they really worked, but they are currently not part of the MOT.

**Q74 Julie Hilling:** Are the failure rates skewed at all by people taking their car for their MOT and then getting the work done on it afterwards? They are deliberately taking it in to see what it is going to fail on. Does that skew figures in any way?

**Bill Duffy:** To the degree that they are skewed I do not know, but I would agree with your general idea. We think that in the UK it has become the thing to do. You have the MOT to find out what is wrong and just fix that. Some of the statistical rise is because people are not spending money on their cars and the condition is deteriorating. Because the MOT industry in the UK tends not to charge for a retest, which they can do if the customer has work in the garage, they tend to think, “The retest will be free; so I will just find out what’s wrong and I’ll fix that.” To what extent it skew figures, I do not know. Certainly the condition of cars is deteriorating.

**Q75 Julie Hilling:** When you talk about the condition of cars deteriorating, is there anything about the modern car that leads to that deterioration?

**Jim Punter:** Yes, there is. In fact you will find that longer service intervals and the better reliability, which is ironically one of the central planks of the Government’s idea that they might reduce the frequency of MOT testing, has the contrary effect. If people can drive their cars, nothing goes wrong and they do not have to worry about taking it for a service so frequently, they are misled into believing that that means that everything is fine in the car, and it is not necessarily so. I can add to your earlier point. One of the reasons why the culture in this country tends to turn around the annual MOT is because there are only two countries in Europe where you can have your vehicle tested and repaired at the same place that is in Holland and Britain. In the rest of Europe you have to go to a stand-alone testing facility.

I can add to something that the gentleman from the Institute of Advanced Motorists said here. He queried why the French first failure rate of four years is 5%, whereas ours is 20% at three years. If a Frenchman wants to get his car MOT tested at four years, if he takes it in for the test and it fails, he then has to take it to another garage to have it repaired, and take it back to that first testing station to have it tested again and pay twice. In our country, by and large with most testing stations, you can take it into your testing station and, if the car fails, you can leave it there and then collect it later. You will probably not be charged the retest. That of itself is likely to have an effect on increasing the initial failure rate because people go into the MOT testing station for the express purpose of finding out what is wrong, rather than knowing that it is going to pass because they have had it serviced prior to that.

**Q76 Julie Hilling:** Can I add as well that it is not just about leaving your car at that MOT testing station? There is also an arrangement as I understand it—certainly with the person who does my MOT—that the mechanic will take it there and you do not pay for a retest as long as you take it back that same day. I am just checking that I am right. You don’t have to leave it for the people who are doing the test to repair it. There is not a second charge, even if somebody else does it.

**Jim Punter:** It can happen in three different ways. You can have your car MOT tested and it fails. You can leave it at the testing station, go home and then pick it up later when it is repaired together with an MOT certificate. You can take your car away and have it done somewhere else, at a different car repair business. You might go to Halfords, for example, instead of your local little independent garage. Halfords then effect the repairs, and, if you want to, you can take it back to the first garage because if they

---

\(^2\) See Ev 137
have a marketing offer of “retest free” you will not have to pay for another retest.

There are these variations in the market; there are a number of different ways that it can be done. The whole point is that in this country, because we have this combination of both test and repair at the same premises, it is a significantly less burden on motorists than it is in other countries where the motorist has to do a double journey and go to a different place to have it repaired from where he has it tested and local garages. They will normally prosecute, but there are not that many.

**Bill Duffy:** I would add, just to help, that certainly the former Secretary of State’s view was that cars are much more reliable, they are more technologically advanced and therefore why do we have to test them so often? Even extended warranties fool people into thinking that the car is going to be safe for longer. As Mr. Punter mentioned, with extended service intervals, you now think they are indestructible, but the tyres still wear out at pretty much the same rate. The bulbs in the lights go out and the brakes wear. It is those safety things that the MOT helps people capture and keep safe. This is where the two things are disconnected. Cars are definitely better than they were and more reliable, but they still need to be safety checked annually in order to protect road safety.

**Q78 Julian Sturdy:** Has there been any evidence about behavioural change in Europe when the switch came in?

**Jim Punter:** There has not been any significant change in Europe. The only change in Europe was in the Dutch test, as I recall, where they changed the frequency for petrol cars and kept diesel cars the same for political reasons. In Holland you could have exactly the same vehicle, a Fiesta or an Escort, and if it is a diesel it is tested every year and if it is petrol it is tested biennially. That is the only real significant change. Throughout the rest of Europe they have all sorts of variations. In Germany, for example, they have 3–2–2, so the first test is after three years and then it is two years thereafter. There is significant variation throughout Europe as to how they implement the test. It is implemented by a directive which is not prescriptive about the process of the test; it is merely prescriptive as regards the content of the test. The British test is probably the best in Europe. I have seen MOT testing throughout Europe. It is highly prescriptive by the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency as to how testers do it. The testers themselves are highly controlled as to what happens to them if they do it wrong. There is a very sophisticated disciplinary system with regard to penalty points and short-term cessation. You cannot test for a month and it goes beyond that as well. We probably have the best quality of testing in this country as well as the annual test. It is perhaps a small contributory factor as to why, historically, we have among the very best road safety record in the world.

**Q79 Julie Hilling:** Following on with standards, is there any evidence of MOT test centres saying, “I will give you the certificate as long as you get this fixed”?**

**Jim Punter:** We do not know the evidence, but that is fraud. There are very few cases that are clearly fraudulent. The Vehicle and Operator Services Agency have an intelligence section. If they hear of fraudulent MOT testing, they will carry out surveillance. It is something like the television detective series. They will commisser an announcer’s bedroom in the testing station and see the vehicles going in and coming out. They can get a live record of what is happening on the test because the MOT computer can be linked to the laptops of their vehicle examiners. They will normally prosecute, but there are not that
many prosecutions each year. There are about six to 10.
With regard to MOT test quality, they carry out what they call a compliance check. A computer will randomly select a testing station and they will then send two of their officials to the testing station. They will retest a car that has been recently tested. They do this on about 1,000 or more tests each year to get some idea of what the compliance rate is. That compliance rate was running at round about 10% or 12%, but after the Davidson Report they changed the way they did the checks day-to-day, rather than the compliance checks, to a risk assessment system rather than the vehicle examiners going into the testing stations on a regular basis.
This took a bit of bedding down. The compliance rate went to a 15% error rate, but in the last annual report from the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency it went down to 12%. Within that 12% there is an interesting factor. A test can be done wrong either because a pass certificate is issued where it should have failed or the other way round. Despite a lot of press coverage that testing stations failed vehicles to get the repair work, a higher proportion of that 12% are vehicles where testers passed the vehicle when they should have failed it rather than the other way round. I know the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency are putting a lot of effort into getting that 12% down to a lot lower.
The trade bodies can urge their members to do better, but ultimately it is a highly controlled situation and we are working very closely with the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency to do better. There is in fact going to be a disciplinary review with meetings between VOSA and the trade later this month on 26 January to start seeing how we can improve quality more broadly.

Q80 Chair: I would like to clarify two points. How many jobs would be lost in the industry? You mentioned jobs and apprenticeships going. Do you have any numbers for that?

Bill Duffy: Absolutely; they are contained in that. We believe that the industry recruits up to 30,000 young people every year, many of them into proper apprenticeships. It is a very big employer.

Q81 Chair: If you have any estimates on apprentices as well, we would like to receive that, please.

Bill Duffy: I will certainly send you that.3

Q83 Chair: The other point is that, in looking at value for money for the motorist in having the MOT test as it is, could you repeat the figures that you gave for the cost of the MOT test compared with the money saved on additional repairs that would be required if you did not have them as often?

Bill Duffy: Of course, yes. We can give you the full detail on that. On average we have said that motorists would incur annual savings of about £24 a year if the regime went to 4–2–2. That is a saving of £20 on an MOT fee, some personal time and fuel costs in travelling to the station. Motorists would incur increases in costs of about £82 from additional repairs—and we go through why that is—and additional insurance premiums estimated by the ABI to be around £46. The ABI regard the MOT as a useful risk guardian.4 Therefore, they feel that less frequent MOT testing means more risk. There are also additional fuel costs. That is where we derive it from. I will send the Committee this information for the motorist and for the UK as well.5

Q84 Chair: Finally, are you equally concerned about the proposed lengthening of time before the first MOT and the subsequent stages?

Bill Duffy: Absolutely, yes.

Q85 Chair: Is it equal? It isn’t one rather than the other.

Bill Duffy: Just more than half of three-year-old cars are generally company cars owned by businesses and fleets. You might expect they would look after those extremely well. Just under half of them would be for private individuals. 20% of them still fail their first MOT. The latest DfT study shows that that would go up to 40% if we moved to four years. That is also a very dangerous idea from the point of view of road safety and how that would contribute to road deaths. They estimate that that alone could add 50 or so to the road deaths figure in the UK each year.

Chair: Thank you very much. We will be pleased to receive any further information on the areas we have identified. Thank you, both of you, for coming and answering our questions.

3 See Ev 138
4 I wish to make clear that while the ABI (Association of British Insurers) does indeed believe that less frequent MOT testing means more risk, the estimated additional insurance premiums of £46 contained in our report, “A cost too far”, is ours and not the ABI’s. Pro-MOTe has written separately to the ABI to inform it of this error too.
5 See Ev 138
Tuesday 24 January 2012

Members present:

Mrs Louise Ellman (Chair)

Steve Baker
Mr Tom Harris
Julie Hilling
Mr John Leech

Paul Maynard
Iain Stewart
Graham Stringer
Julian Sturdy

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Rob Gifford, Executive Director, Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, Julie Townsend, Campaigns Director, Brake, and Malcolm Heymer, spokesperson, Association of British Drivers, gave evidence.

Chair: Good morning and welcome to the Transport Select Committee. I understand there is a declaration of interest from Mr Stewart.

Iain Stewart: I am a trustee of PACTS.

Mr Leech: So am I.

Steve Baker: I am a patron of the Association of British Drivers.

Q86 Chair: Would our panellists like to say who they are and who they are representing? This is for our records.

Rob Gifford: Good morning. I am Rob Gifford. I am Executive Director of PACTS—the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety—but I am also speaking here on behalf of the 14 other organisations that signed the joint memorandum that we submitted to the Committee.

Julie Townsend: I am Julie Townsend, Deputy Chief Executive of Brake, the road safety charity.

Malcolm Heymer: I am Malcolm Heymer, a traffic management adviser for the Association of British Drivers.

Q87 Chair: Mr Gifford, are the Government right to drop targets in relation to road safety?

Rob Gifford: The short answer, Mrs Ellman, is no. We can have a debate about semantics and whether we mean "targets" or a "performance outcome framework". Internationally, the evidence is clear that those countries over the last 20 years that have had a target for casualty reduction have achieved higher levels of reduction in fatalities than those countries without. The average over the period is 4%, but that varies between 4% and probably about 17%. You can see that having a target has provided leadership from Government, which has meant that those other institutions, whether they are local government, the private sector or the public sector, have all had a common goal at which to aim. In our view, the Government were wrong to drop the target principle.

Julie Townsend: We would second that. We think that local targets are valued within the sector and that they would be welcomed by practitioners. Given the Government’s focus on localism and devolving a lot of responsibility and decision making to local level, having national targets to create impetus and to drive progress at both local and national level is even more important.

Q88 Chair: Could there be local targets rather than national ones?

Julie Townsend: We think that local targets are valuable as well. Ideally, we would like to have seen targets at national level but also local authorities encouraged to implement targets locally that show how they will contribute to national progress. Clearly there are some measures where it is more valuable to monitor and establish progress at national level because of the small numbers involved.

Q89 Chair: Mr Heymer, you have a very different view, don’t you? Could you tell us what your view is and why?

Malcolm Heymer: Basically, the ABD would agree with the Government that targets are probably no longer necessary. Our concern is that targets tend to produce actions that are aimed more at achieving the numerical figure than the method by which it is achieved. For example, with reductions in killed and seriously injured—KSI—figures, it can lead to pressure being put on police officers attending road accidents to categorise borderline serious injuries as perhaps slight injuries in order to improve the numbers. We also know, as this Committee has accepted in the past, that there is significant under-reporting of non-fatal injuries so that, when the Government claim that the 40% casualty reduction target for KSI as set for 2010 has been achieved, we don’t know whether that has actually been achieved or it is just a quirk of the figures and the under-reporting.

Q90 Chair: Do you have any actual evidence that pressure has been put on police officers?

Malcolm Heymer: There is certainly anecdotal evidence from one police force where a police officer admitted that people in the Safety Partnership who were in charge of trying to meet the targets were putting pressure on police officers to make such judgments, yes.
Q91 Chair: Where was that pressure coming from? Who was doing it?
Malcolm Heymer: From the Highways Department or the Transport Department responsible for achieving the targets.

Q92 Chair: Was that locally or from the Government? Who was doing it?
Malcolm Heymer: It was locally.

Q93 Paul Maynard: I realise that this might be regarded as an issue of semantics, but it does seem to go to the heart of the road safety debate here. I spent the weekend reading the road safety strategy of every Australian state, New Zealand and a number of Canadian provinces in addition to our own. What strikes me is that we are a world leader already in road safety. It is clear from the Government’s own documentation that there is a philosophy of continuous improvement if all their actions are delivered. On pages 11 and 12 it states what it expects the outcome to be. I am concerned that the road safety lobby, whatever the benevolent reasons might be, prefers the comfort blanket of national targets when, despite our excellent achievements, we have striking regional disparities that I believe should be the focus of a road safety strategy. Why do you think the road safety organisations in this country disproportionately favour national targets compared to many other countries?

Rob Gifford: First of all, other countries have favoured targets as well. I accept that we may be going through a process of philosophical change. If you look at the OECD report on Vision Zero, what underpins many of the new generation of strategies is the adoption of what is called the systems approach, similar to that in air and rail, where you recognise that humans, machines and environment interact with each other, and the system designer and regulator has a responsibility to ensure that the system is safe before the human being is allowed to operate it. That is where we are beginning to move. That is certainly what has happened in Sweden with Vision Zero, in the Netherlands with the concept of sustainable safety, and, I would suggest, in many of the Australian states.

I recognise that underneath your question, with reference to continuous improvement, there is a really interesting issue. I was sitting in the Public Gallery last week, and when I heard the question, I thought, “That’s a fantastic question; I don’t know how I am going to answer it if you ask me again.” But you gave me a week to think about it, so I am very grateful.

I would answer it in three parts. First, the principle of continuous improvement requires leadership. I would be comfortable if I felt the leadership from the current Government was a very strong one. I have a fear, though, that the leadership we have had from this current Government is very mixed on road safety. Secondly, if I put together ending the war on the motorist, axing grant for road safety partnerships, cutting capital for speed cameras, however popular or unpopular they were, moves to raise the motorway speed limit to 80 mph, suggesting that a target does not matter, and also moving toward a four-year MOT, possibly, plus biennially after that, the mood music suggests that this Government believe that road safety is not such a high priority as their predecessor—or their predecessor Conservative Governments; I am not making a party political point. Continuous improvement works where there is an environment of leadership. It works in rail and air, because it is a closed system and it has a stronger regulatory framework. It is written into law in the European Aviation Safety Directive and in the European Railway Safety Directive.

Thirdly, in order to prove continuous improvement, you need to know where you are and have some way of measuring that you are improving. I accept that a target of just death and injury is an outcome measure. I am also interested in the inputs. What is the percentage of vehicles and the vehicle fleet that are Euro NCAP 5 Star? What is the percentage of people who are now complying with the 30 mph speed limit voluntarily in free-flowing traffic? Continuous improvement requires you to develop a system of measuring inputs and outputs much more. It is very complex. It is where we are going to have to go, by the way, but we are probably one step behind rail and air. Of course, we have many more crashes than in rail and air and therefore we have many more things to investigate.

Julie Townsend: We believe there is a wider issue here with the strategic framework. The lack of targets is one part of it. There is also a lack of ambition, drive and leadership in progressing road safety and bringing down casualties as rapidly as we possibly can. As a charity that provides support to families whose lives have been devastated by road death and injury, we witness first hand the appalling suffering that results from these crashes. We know, of course, that these deaths and injuries are preventable. We believe therefore that we should be viewing them as an unacceptable occurrence. We believe the only acceptable number of deaths and serious injuries is zero. We advocate a long-term vision of working toward eradicating road deaths and serious injuries. We believe that targets can be incredibly valuable in helping us to drive progress and move toward that long-term goal.

Q94 Paul Maynard: Leaving aside your vision of the perfection of mankind with regard to driving, which I am sure is laudable but unachievable, do you believe that both Brake and indeed the wider road safety lobby here in the UK have endorsed the safe system approach to road safety, or do you feel that you are still relying upon the model where the driver is the key variable and the key problem, and other systems-based approaches are less valid in achieving your admittedly laudable but frankly unachievable goal of zero deaths?

Julie Townsend: We do support the systems approach. We believe that, yes, people will always make mistakes using roads and we should be creating an infrastructure, safer vehicles and a system that allows for those mistakes but ensures that deaths and serious injuries do not result from them.

Q95 Paul Maynard: How is the safe system reflected in your campaigning?
Julie Townsend: We believe, in particular, in improving the safety of people on foot and bicycle within communities. To give you an example, we believe that we should be enabling and encouraging local authorities to implement more widespread 20 mph limits and safer infrastructure for people on foot and on bicycles that, in particular, allows for the mistakes of vulnerable road users, not least children, who of course will always make mistakes using roads but who don’t deserve to die for those mistakes. That is one example of our campaigning where we believe that infrastructure needs to be improved within communities to allow for the mistakes of the individual road user.

Q96 Mr Leech: Mr Heymer, what are the main aims of the Association of British Drivers?
Malcolm Heymer: In a nutshell, what we would like to see are sensible restrictions sensibly enforced. In other words, the vast majority of drivers are safe and responsible drivers. There is a minority of course who are not, but what we want to see is a road safety framework within which the safe majority is not needlessly penalised for minor technical transgressions, and enforcement is targeted toward those who are causing the real problems and are responsible for a high proportion of the casualties that take place.

Q97 Mr Leech: Do you consider yourself to be a road safety organisation?
Malcolm Heymer: Yes.

Q98 Mr Leech: Why is it then that the views of the Association of British Drivers are so at odds with every other road safety organisation?
Malcolm Heymer: We believe that our views are based on empirical evidence that goes back decades, particularly, for example, in the case of speed limit setting. That evidence has now been dismissed and speed limits are being set at lower levels. That is having an adverse effect on compliance and therefore on road safety generally.

Q99 Chair: I just want to clarify that. Are you saying that lower speeds are having an adverse effect on road safety?
Malcolm Heymer: No, not lower speeds—lower speed limits. If speed limits are set below a level that the majority of drivers consider to be reasonable, you get a very high level of non-compliance. You get a greater disparity of speed and more frustration. A small minority of drivers will obey the speed limit even if they think it is really silly, and that will result in a large queue of drivers behind who want to drive at what they consider to be normal speeds. That leads to frustration and dangerous overtaking. It can also lead to long queues of traffic that prevent side road traffic from entering or crossing a main road. You get additional conflicts and even road rage as a result. If you have sensibly set speed limits, which means set at the 85th percentile level, which is the level that 85% of drivers would not want to exceed anyway, experience that goes back, certainly in the United States, to the late 1930s has shown that the safest level at which to set speed limits and you get the lowest casualty rates.

Q100 Mr Leech: In a previous answer you admitted that there was no empirical evidence that there was misreporting of serious injuries. You just talked about anecdotal evidence.
Malcolm Heymer: No. The anecdotal evidence was not about the under-reporting of serious injuries. That has been acknowledged by this Committee in a previous report. What I was referring to was—

Q101 Chair: Let me just get the record straight. The previous report was to do with statistical reporting and not to do with people being pressured to define things differently from how they might have actually been. I just want to put the record straight on that.
Malcolm Heymer: No; there are two separate issues here.

Q102 Mr Leech: You said that you relied on empirical evidence, but, whenever I have heard you in front of this Committee, the evidence that you have given has always been anecdotal evidence about why the Association of British Drivers takes the view that it does.
Malcolm Heymer: No, it is not anecdotal at all. The empirical evidence is based on speed and accident surveys that have been taking place for decades in Britain, as well as in the United States and elsewhere.

Q103 Mr Leech: The Association of British Drivers supports the increase in the speed limit on motorways to 80 mph.
Malcolm Heymer: Yes.

Q104 Mr Leech: Given that we have among the safest motorways in the world, regardless of whether changing the speed limit has an impact, why would we want to risk the chance of making our motorways more dangerous?
Malcolm Heymer: Obviously the ABD does not believe that it would make motorways more dangerous. The Department for Transport figures show that, averaged over the motorway network, the 85th percentile speed of cars on the motorways is 79 mph. That will vary from motorway to motorway. That means, with the 85th percentile being the ideal speed at which to set the limit, 80 mph is in accordance with that and it is therefore the right speed limit for motorways in the majority of cases. Of course there are places where a lower speed limit may be necessary. There are sections of motorway today at 50 mph and 60 mph, and they would no doubt remain the same.

Q105 Mr Leech: If the 85th percentile is currently 79 mph, is there not a suggestion among different organisations that, if you increase the speed limit to 80 mph, the 85th percentile will go significantly above 80 mph?
Malcolm Heymer: I know a lot of people believe that, but the evidence is that it is not so. I have a case in point, admittedly from the United States. It is a dual three-lane freeway, which is the equivalent to one of
our three-lane motorways. In the 55 mph era the 85th percentile speed was 73 mph. That is 18 mph over the speed limit, and in fact 98% of drivers were exceeding the speed limit. When the limit was raised to 70 mph on that road, the 85th percentile fell to 72 mph. The mean speed only increased by just over 1 mph, so there was a reduction in the spread of speeds as a result.

Q106 Mr Leech: Would you not accept, though, that there is a significant difference between a speed limit of 55 mph and 70 mph?

Malcolm Heymer: Indeed, yes.

Julie Townsend: I would first like to draw the Committee’s attention to the very extensive academic evidence that charts the relationship between speed and both crash frequency and severity, which is referenced in Brake’s written evidence. There is also a huge amount of evidence showing the effectiveness of lowering speed limits within communities to 20 mph and the reduction in casualties among vulnerable road users and, in particular, among children. A relatively recent study that looked at 20 mph zones in London, to come back on one of Mr Heymer’s points, found no indication of migration of crashes to surrounding roads.

On motorway speeds, we have evidence that, if the motorway speed limit was raised to 80 mph, there would be an increase of around 3 mph in average speeds. It has been predicted by a Norwegian academic, Rune Elvik, who created a very widely referenced in Brake’s written evidence. There is also a huge amount of evidence showing the effectiveness of lowering speed limits within communities to 20 mph and the reduction in casualties among vulnerable road users and, in particular, among children. A relatively recent study that looked at 20 mph zones in London, to come back on one of Mr Heymer’s points, found no indication of migration of crashes to surrounding roads.

Q107 Chair: Mr Gifford, would you give the views of the organisations that you are representing?

Rob Gifford: Our position might be a bit nuanced of the organisations that you are representing?

Malcolm Heymer: Our position might be a bit nuanced of the organisations that you are representing?

Rob Gifford: Our position might be a bit nuanced of the organisations that you are representing?

Malcolm Heymer: Yes, in France, of course, the car speed limit-increase-deaths

Influencegovernment/Motorway_speed_limits_-_costs_...
about “might” and supposition. You are not talking about actual evidence.

Malcolm Heymer: There is also a coroner’s inquest from late 1996 that specifically cited one of these new speed limits as being a contributory factor to a fatal accident.

Q114 Mr Harris: Fair enough. You mentioned in your earlier comments about targets and that you don’t like them. Is it your view that national targets have been counterproductive in the fight to reduce road accidents?

Malcolm Heymer: They can be, because they may channel energy into the wrong direction, rather than looking at the real reasons for road casualties and addressing them.

Q115 Mr Harris: If we had not had those national targets for the past 20 years, would we have a lower accident rate now?

Malcolm Heymer: Not necessarily. We may well have had the same accident rate. If you look at fatality rates, which are the only ones which are reliable, because fatality reporting is virtually 100%, the rate in this country has been reducing ever since 1950. That was the first year when traffic data was available in order to compute a fatality rate. The same trend has been seen in every other developed country. The only real fluctuations in the fatality rate that are recognised in the Government’s framework are in relation to economic performance. In other words, in times of low economic growth the fatality rate comes down faster than during the good economic times. This is again found in every other country. I refer in the written evidence to the Canadian researcher Al Gullon, who found a 99% correlation rate between GDP and the fatality rate. That is very striking. To a large extent fatality rates come down almost regardless of what road safety interventions are introduced.

Q116 Mr Harris: Are you saying that we don’t need road safety interventions?

Malcolm Heymer: No. We certainly need them locally, as we used to do in the 1960s and 1970s, engineering out accident blackspots. Building motorways, which are the safest roads, has helped to reduce casualties.

Q117 Mr Harris: Would I be being unfair if I suggest that your organisation sees road safety enforcement as a bit inconvenient?

Malcolm Heymer: No, as long as it is the right sort of enforcement against those people who are acting in dangerous and irresponsible ways.

Rob Gifford: I never like to come to a Committee meeting where witnesses disagree with each other, but I think I have to. I have heard Mr Heymer use the phrase “minor technical transgressions” and imply that what we should be doing is enforcing road traffic law on those people who are dreadful sinners. I absolutely agree with that, but road safety is never a matter of either/or. A minor technical transgression, by which I think he means breaking the speed limit, could in other circumstances lead to a fatality.

If you look at the analysis of why incidents occur, it is a combination of acts of violation—the things people do that are wrong—and the latent conditions, the conditions of the environment in which the activity is going on. That is long established in industrial analysis, particularly through the work of James Reason at Manchester university in a book called Managing the Risk of Organizational Accidents.

In certain circumstances, I, as an entirely law-abiding motorist but committing a minor technical transgression, can kill someone. We need to enforce the law on both groups of people. That means the really serious offender—the person who does go out to kill—and the rest of us, who just need to be reminded every so often.

Q118 Mr Harris: You pre-empt my next question. I was about to ask Mr Heymer this. You mentioned minor technical transgressions. Could you give us an example of a minor technical transgression that should not be prosecuted or enforced?

Malcolm Heymer: As Mr Gifford has suggested, minor transgressions of speed limits in places where it is safe to do so. Speed limits in this country are set at multiples of 10 mph. They are quite rigid. You can go from a 30 mph limit to a 40 mph limit at an instant point. What is regarded as perfectly safe on one side of that line suddenly becomes dangerous on the other side.

Q119 Mr Harris: Is there an alternative methodology for changing speed limits?

Malcolm Heymer: Obviously you don't want speed limits to change too often. Within a speed limit you are going to have sections where it is probably not safe to drive up to the limit.

Q120 Mr Harris: ACPO guidelines are generally 10% +1.

Malcolm Heymer: 10% +2, yes.

Q121 Mr Harris: You are not going to get done for doing 31 mph in a 30 mph limit.

Malcolm Heymer: No, of course not.

Q122 Mr Harris: But if you are doing 39 mph you will get done. Are you saying that is a minor technical transgression?

Malcolm Heymer: It depends on the nature of the speed limit at that point.

Q123 Chair: Who should be deciding whether it is a minor transgression?

Malcolm Heymer: The police should be using their discretion, as they used to do in the pre-speed camera era.

Q124 Mr Harris: Mr Gifford, my ears pricked up when you talked about the road safety improvements abroad. You said there was an average of 4% increase and it went from 4% to 17%.

Rob Gifford: Yes.
Q125 **Mr Harris:** I am no mathematician, but if the average is 4%, it means that some of the reductions were less than 4%.

**Rob Gifford:** Indeed they were. The point is that the average is 4%. I take your point.

**Mr Harris:** I was just being pedantic.

Q126 **Julian Sturdy:** In last week’s evidence session we talked a lot about education at an early age, so not when people are taking the driving test but going into schools and getting young children at 13 or 14 years of age and educating them about the issues of driving and the consequences that can have. It is targeting boys specifically, who do tend to have a problem when they pass their driving test. What are your views on that? Is there any specific view that the Government should be doing more and targeting education at that sort of level?

**Rob Gifford:** We need to be very careful. I know that there are some people who are very keen on getting young drivers behind the wheel at the age of 13. The key thing here is about attitude rather than skill. Anybody can be trained to move a lump of metal. It is what you are thinking about while you are moving that lump of metal, if I can put it crudely. My concern is that a focus on pre-driver training that only looked at manoeuvring, clutch control and so on would have a counterproductive element. It would breed complacency among the 17 or 18-year-olds, who would then think, “Right, I have passed my test. I can do it.”

What we probably need to do, given that this age group are at risk whatever they do—because it is not just on the road that they get killed but it is also sex, drugs and failure at school—is to have, and I hesitate to use a clichéd word, a holistic approach to risk education in the teenage years, which could well include road use. There is certainly a big gap between the amount of work we have done for primary pupils in terms of safe road use and for those in secondary schools until they get to the age of 17, when we let them behind the wheel of a car. We need to package it much more cleverly than just saying, “Come on, you can have a go in this Ford Mondeo and really enjoy yourself by putting your foot down in safe circumstances on an airport runway.”

**Julie Townsend:** We would agree that an approach of compulsory road safety education within schools, aimed at raising awareness of the risks and the steps that young people can take to help reduce those risks, would be extremely valuable. We would also have concerns about the introduction of skills-based training at a young age. First, there is some evidence that skills-based training can cause heightened overconfidence in terms of young drivers’ ability to handle different situations. There is also a concern about promoting learning to drive at a young age and encouraging more people to learn young. That is a risk of introducing skills-based training at a young age. The approach that we support in terms of reducing risk among young and inexperienced drivers is a more structured learning-to-drive system. We advocate graduated driver licensing, which breaks the learning-to-drive process down into stages. It means that new drivers develop their skills and experience gradually over time while their exposure to the riskiest situations is restricted. We are talking about a minimum learning-to-drive period, followed by a test and then a novice driving period with licence restrictions.

We now have evidence both from overseas and within the UK that this would be an effective approach in reducing casualties involving young drivers.

Q127 **Julian Sturdy:** Going back to the speed limits, on the education side there was also talk of the three “E”s: education, engineering and enforcement. We know that engineering is improving. New technology is coming on board all the time with vehicles. When we are talking about speed limits, is there not a case for talking about more variable speed limits up to 80 mph, but in the right weather conditions? It would be very similar to what happens on the continent and in France—reducing speed limits in more adverse weather conditions and higher levels of congestion.

**Rob Gifford:** The evidence from the M42 Active Traffic Management scheme, where speed limits are reduced from 70 mph to 60 mph and occasionally 50 mph, and include when traffic flows demand the use of the hard shoulder, is that journey times have become more predictable. It has not been tested at its ultimate. There has not been a fatality, but certainly the number of serious and slight injuries has fallen. The overall emissions from vehicles on that section of motorway have fallen. You can get better reliability, journey times and capacity from lowering speeds rather than raising them. That is quite interesting, because it is, in a sense, counterintuitive. The same is true on the M25 around Heathrow.

You could be clever and say they can go up at some point and they can go down, but you would have to put in a whole technological infrastructure on the motorway network to ensure that that information was available to drivers. That is therefore quite a cost in these times of austerity. When Justine Greening was here as Secretary of State, I certainly heard her comment on improving the experience of the “user” of the network. Reliability is what people want more than anything.

Q128 **Chair:** Ms Townsend, do you agree with that, or do you have any other views?

**Julie Townsend:** First, I would like to point out that the example Rob is giving is a stretch of motorway where variable speed limits are being used, up to the current maximum limit of 70 mph. That goes without saying. We absolutely support those sorts of initiatives and are aware of the evidence that lowering the limit where there are congestion problems, as well as bad weather conditions, helps to improve traffic flow and journey times. We advocate wider use of variable speed limits within our existing limit.

The fact remains that we have evidence that, if we were to up our maximum limit to 80 mph, it would result in an overall increase in emissions and casualties. We remain fully opposed to that proposal.

Q129 **Steve Baker:** Starting with Mr Gifford, to what extent does the panel believe that people consent to the current motorway speed limit?
Rob Gifford: I suppose it depends on how you ask that question.

Q130 Steve Baker: I am asking if you think that people consent to it.
Rob Gifford: I think people consent to its being 70 mph, yes. They may not abide by it, which is a different question.

Q131 Steve Baker: I think that means they don’t consent to it.
Rob Gifford: We don’t know. That is my point. At least, I don’t know whether, for example, the AA through their Populus poll have asked people what they think the motorway speed limit should be. I am giving you a personal answer.

Q132 Steve Baker: But you accept that people don’t obey the 70 mph limit.
Rob Gifford: I accept that the evidence from the Department’s speed surveys suggests that the average motorway speed limit in free-flowing traffic is 79 mph. I don’t know whether that means people are thinking about this.

Q133 Steve Baker: So the evidence is that people don’t comply with the motorway speed limit.
Rob Gifford: That does not mean they don’t consent to it.
Julie Townsend: I would agree with that. It does not add up to say that, because people break a speed limit, it means that they don’t agree with the limit being set at that particular level. The research that we and others have carried out into driver attitudes shows that there is widespread understanding of why limits are set as they are. There is widespread understanding of the fact that, if you drive faster, the risk increases. There is also research that shows the different psychologies of speed. The majority of people that break speed limits do so occasionally and accidentally. It is only a very small proportion of those who break the speed limits who—

Q134 Steve Baker: If I understand your argument correctly, if I can paraphrase it and make sure I condense it correctly, the majority of people do break the motorway speed limit despite the fact that they consent to it. Is that what you are saying?
Julie Townsend: Yes.

Q135 Steve Baker: They break the limit but they do consent? Julie Townsend: We know that the majority of people do break speed limits from time to time. Only a minority completely adhere 100% to speed limits at all times.

Q136 Steve Baker: But on the motorway the average speed is 9 mph in excess of the limit.
Rob Gifford: For car drivers.
Malcolm Heymer: Clearly, if somebody says they believe a speed limit should be 70 mph and then they do more than that, I would have said that is hypocrisy.

It is like saying, “It’s okay for everybody else to be limited to 70 mph, but not me.” The fact that 50% of people break the speed limit means that 50% of people don’t think the speed limit is correct.

Julie Townsend: That is a widespread attitude among drivers. We know from research that the majority of drivers regard their driving skills to be superior to those of others and above average. There is widespread complacency about the importance of adhering exactly to the law on our roads. Because there is complacency, that does not automatically mean that people don’t agree with the way that limits are set.

Q137 Steve Baker: But you believe that compliance with the law and attitude of willingness to comply with the law are promoted by having a speed limit that is lower than that at which most people drive on the motorway.
Julie Townsend: I don’t believe that we should be realigning our speed limits with the fact that there is a significant part of the population that is currently breaking that law.

Q138 Steve Baker: So you don’t believe in government by consent in a democratic society.
Chair: I don’t think you have to answer that.
Steve Baker: You always do that on the fun ones.
Chair: Answer it if you want to.
Julie Townsend: I don’t think we have had any indication that there is majority support among the general public for a higher motorway speed limit.

Q139 Steve Baker: Except for the empirical evidence of the speed at which they drive on the motorway.
Julie Townsend: There is a difference between the speed at which people drive and their behaviour, and views about what is the most appropriate limit.
Rob Gifford: I would like to make one point, Mrs Ellman. I wanted to add to Mr Baker’s line, that we should not forget that there are a lot of people who don’t have a car and who therefore will not be displaying a view one way or another about a speed limit. There are a number of people who probably like to drive on the motorway at 70 mph; I plead guilty myself. We may be causing road rage among Mr Heymer’s members—I don’t know—when my wife and I are on the motorway. To make a policy change on the basis of a smaller minority of drivers is questionable, and it would not be one that I would make if I was the Secretary of State. I would be focused more on safety.
Mr Harris: For the record, Mrs Ellman, I may well be one of Mr Heymer’s hypocrites, because I support the current speed limit of 70 mph and regularly travel above 70 mph.
Chair: We will move on quickly.

Q140 Julie Hilling: I want to change the subject completely and ask about fitness to drive, what effect you think that has, and whether there should be any changes. I am particularly thinking about sleep apnoea

3 http://www.brake.org.uk/latest-news/220910.htm
4 http://www.roadsafetyforum.org.uk/index.aspx
and eyesight. Do you think there should be more done in those areas?

Julie Townsend: We are concerned that poor driver eyesight is a widespread problem. It is one of these issues where we don’t have a clear picture of the number of casualties exactly that result from poor driver eyesight. However, we have indications from surveys of drivers that there is a large proportion of the driving population that are not getting their eyes tested regularly, and a large proportion of drivers who should be wearing glasses or lenses but regularly do not when they drive. We have evidence of the very significant effects that poor eyesight has on driving performance.6 7

We have a European directive coming in that aims to standardise driver eyesight standards across the EU.8 We believe that what we have in place at the moment is not adequate to ensure that drivers on our roads have an appropriate standard of eyesight. We don’t believe that the number plate test is adequate. It does not look at peripheral vision and it is not an accurate measure of visual acuity, which is the one thing it does look at. We believe we should be having proper scientific eyesight tests at the point of taking your test and on a regular basis thereafter. We have suggested that demonstrating that you have had an eyesight test every 10 years at the same time as renewing your photocard is an option that the Government should be looking at to ensure appropriate standards among drivers.

Q141 Julie Hilling: What about sleep apnoea?

Julie Townsend: In terms of sleep apnoea, again we don’t have an accurate picture of the number of casualties that are resulting from this problem, but we have indications that it is likely to be a widespread problem, particularly among commercial vehicle drivers.9 We believe that there is a wider issue with the Government needing to do more to engage fleet operators, in particular, in promoting best practice and encouraging policies and procedures to reduce road risk among at-work drivers, such as introducing screening for sleep apnoea. There is very little contained within the strategic framework in terms of promoting fleet safety. There is nothing contained within the action plan in the strategic framework in terms of what would be delivered by Government to improve the safety of at-work drivers. We believe that is a major omission. Certainly Brake is very active in promoting fleet safety through our fleet safety forum. We no longer receive any Government support or engagement on that front as we have done in the past.

Rob Gifford: I am glad we have mentioned driving engagement on that front as we have done in the past. We no longer receive any Government support or promoting fleet safety through our fleet safety forum. This is a major omission. Certainly Brake is very active in improving the safety of at-work drivers. We believe that is a major omission. Certainly Brake is very active in promoting fleet safety through our fleet safety forum. We no longer receive any Government support or engagement on that front as we have done in the past.

Q142 Graham Stringer: On the eyesight test, do you think there is a case for more regular compulsory testing of eyesight for the over-65s? There have been some horrific accidents with elderly drivers. In one case in my constituency, they did not even know that they had wiped out half a family on a road, because they basically were half-blind. Do you think there should be compulsory testing every two years after the age of 65 or 70?

Rob Gifford: I am not sure that I can categorically answer that one, to be honest. I would like to think about it. What I can say is that there is much more that we could do to intervene earlier. Some local authorities have schemes aimed at older drivers—there is SAGE in Gloucestershire and there is also a similar scheme in Suffolk—to which older drivers can refer themselves, are referred by the police if they are involved in an incident, or are referred by the GP. We do not have a national scheme of that type. It is down to individual local authorities to decide its importance. Part of that process of assessment is checking that they can pass the number plate test. There are probably some earlier interventions. I believe the eyesight test is free once you are over 60.

Graham Stringer: It is.

Rob Gifford: There is no suggestion that that should be removed. Again, the optician ought to be asking, “Are you still driving?” I am not sure that that is always a prompt question within the actual eye test. We could be doing more preventative work, if you see what I mean, as well as the regulatory work.

Q143 Graham Stringer: Is there any evidence about whether lighting on motorways reduces accidents? There is possibly more data now that lights are switched off for five hours during the night in a way that they were not previously. Is there evidence one way or another on this?

10 In one case a driver went on to cause a fatal crash, ending a young life, due to falling asleep at the wheel, despite having sought medical advice.
Rob Gifford: It is interesting you should ask that question, because at a meeting of our Road Environment Working Party this afternoon we are going to talk about that very issue. Can I send you a note?

Q144 Graham Stringer: Yes.

On age, young drivers are most at risk in the year after they qualify for driving. Do you think there is a case for raising the driving age to 18?

Julie Townsend: The system that we advocate of graduated driver licensing would mean that you could not drive independently until the age of 18, if you incorporated within that a 12-month learning period. It would mean you could start learning to drive when you turn 17 and you can stipulate within that a certain number of hours of supervised tuition. Then, when you reach age 18, you can drive independently but with restrictions placed on your driving. We believe that strikes a balance between enabling new drivers who are learning young to develop experience over a longer time period and driving on a range of different types of roads in different weather conditions, but also enabling those young people who need to drive to get to work or college to start driving independently at a relatively young age, albeit with those restrictions to limit exposure to risk.

Rob Gifford: Again, we need to improve the entry points as well. There is an interesting European initiative known as Goals for Driver Education, which tries to move young drivers beyond normal vehicle control to the purpose of the journey. We need to incorporate that so that we can improve the learning as well as the post-test changes that Julie is talking about.

De facto I would suspect that most drivers are not driving until they are 18. It is probably 17 years and nine months or 10 months when they get their full licence. It is that first six months, whatever age they are, when they are most at risk and it is about improving that exposure.

Julie Townsend: About 50,000 17-year-olds pass their test each year with less than six months’ driving experience. There is a concern that we have a significant number of young people who are becoming fully licensed and hitting the road with very little driving experience under their belts, but we should also be considering in the mix the reason for many young people learning to drive young. We have seen a trend in recent years of a lot of young people delaying learning to drive until later in life, which means that the risks they face in those early years of driving, despite the inexperience, will be lower, because it is a combination of youth and inexperience that combines to put young drivers at risk.

We know from research that the reason a lot of young people are learning to drive young is due to limited access to public transport; expensive public transport; and feeling that other options are not available to them. We believe we should be looking at the bigger picture of the different transport options available to young people, as well as looking at how we can improve the safety of those who do need to drive.

Q145 Paul Maynard: Ms Townsend, you cited the Norwegian evidence. Can you confirm that that applies to if we were to introduce an 80 mph speed limit across the entire motorway network irrespective of road conditions, because it seems that one possible outcome would be a trialling of the 80 mph on only certain sections and not in wet weather? It would seem that the 25 fatalities figure is a key part of the argument.

Julie Townsend: I will go away and double-check that, but I believe that to be the case. Those figures are based on an across-the-board rise.

Q146 Paul Maynard: Even more quickly to Mr Gifford—and forgive me for trying to be fashionable—crowdsourcing, Wikipedia and Google are all big things at the moment. We have one excellent non-governmental source of information at the moment, the EuroRAP survey on how dangerous roads are, which does not feature in the Government’s strategy as far as I can see. We will be hearing later about the stillborn national speed limit database, which is crucial if we are going to have ISA. What is your view as the road safety guru of the nation, as it were? How can we—

Chair: It’s meant to be a quick one.

Paul Maynard: In these times of austerity, how can we bring these sources of information into play that don’t require Government funding? Is it anything you have given thought or consideration to?

Rob Gifford: The Government have to say it is important: the private sector, the public sector and the Big Society of road safety. I am not being flipant here. I think road safety is a very good example of the Big Society in operation. It is not central Government that does it; it is us that do it—it is a shared responsibility. If central Government said, “This matters,” a lot of us would turn round and say, “Okay, we will make it happen for you.”

Q147 Julian Sturdy: My question is very quick to all the panel. Is the current driving test fit for purpose? A simple yes/no answer will suffice.

Rob Gifford: No.

Julie Townsend: No.

Malcolm Heymer: No.

Q148 Julie Hilling: I have a quick question. It is on penalty points and people driving with more than 12 points on their licence. What should be done about them?

Chair: Can we have very quick answers?

Rob Gifford: We need to identify why they have been allowed to carry on. We need to talk to magistrates and tell them that they should not be. It is as simple as that.

Julie Townsend: We think it is unacceptable that such a huge proportion of drivers are allowed to carry on driving when they have been given umpteen chances to mend their ways. We already have plenty of room built into the system for people to see the error of their ways. We should not be giving them a second chance when they hit 12 points as well.
**Examination of Witnesses**


**Q150 Chair:** Good morning, gentlemen. Would you give your name and organisation for our records?

**Nick Clennett:** I am Nick Clennett. I am here representing Local Government Technical Advisers Group.

**Peter Francis:** I am Peter Francis from the West Midlands Road Safety Partnership.

**Ken Wheat:** Good morning; I am Ken Wheat. I am the South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership Manager.

**Simon D’Vali:** I am Simon D’Vali. I am representing the West Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership.

**Q151 Chair:** Mr D’Vali, in the written evidence we have had from the West Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership, you talk about the Government’s strategy being “a missed opportunity to forge partnerships and continue the reductions made in road deaths and injuries.” That is a pretty strong statement. Why do you say that?

**Simon D’Vali:** It is, Chair, but the document as it stands seems to be going back to earlier times. We have proved over the last 10 years that having targets set out in the strategy has worked very well in terms of road safety and casualty reduction. Bradford itself, as part of West Yorkshire, has also proved in the last 13 years that partnerships and partnership working is a key area for casualty reduction. We have adopted a multi-agency approach to this, bringing on board the health service, police, fire, ambulance and other professionals in and outside the field. That has given an overarching view on road safety. The current partnership just feels that this document is moving away from that. We should be looking at forging partnerships rather than holding authorities to account. That is our view.

**Q152 Chair:** Are there any other views on whether national targets should be maintained? Do you have views on the Government’s views on that and on what you might do locally?

**Nick Clennett:** It has been very useful to have targets. In terms of local authorities, it allows them to set agendas to try and meet those targets and it directs resources, although in relation to road safety I would say that road safety practitioners would always want to reduce accidents. To have those targets and to be measured against them allows you to put the resources where you need to and explain to local politicians why we do the things that we do.

**Q153 Chair:** Do you really need national targets? Can’t you do things locally?

**Peter Francis:** They provide us with the opportunity to galvanise people into action. It also sends out a message to local authorities that road safety is important. There has been a slide in the last 12 months or so where perhaps local authorities don’t see road safety with the same importance that they did previously, because there is nothing to measure them by and nobody is holding them to account.

**Q154 Chair:** Mr Wheat, do you have similar views?

**Ken Wheat:** The absence of a national target, even though perhaps there are projections and forecasts with a number associated with that, reinforces the impression to me that is given in the document that it is transferring responsibility and accountability from the Government to local authorities without perhaps acknowledging the need to support local authorities to meet those responsibilities. Local authorities have to have targets, but it would be helpful to us, when we are arguing for limited resources, to say, “These are to meet national targets.”

**Q155 Chair:** The written evidence that you have all submitted talks about the challenges facing local government at the moment in relation to funding and removal of certain grants. Is that not something that local government could overcome if it was really concerned about road safety?

**Nick Clennett:** That is quite a difficult one. Local authorities across the country and road safety practitioners have worked very hard with their finance officers and chief executives to persuade them of the importance of continuing their funding, particularly for camera partnerships where all the funding has gone now. It is difficult to assess where that funding should come from. It makes it difficult for road safety officers to win the case.

**Ken Wheat:** One of the benefits of the road safety grant that went was that it was ring-fenced for use in road safety activity. Now that it has been rolled into the local government formula grant settlement, it is far harder to make the argument with financial officers and politicians about the value of road safety that may or may not happen when you are arguing against social services, libraries, culture, old people and young people. Those are the debates that go off in town halls in October. It is more difficult to argue that case now that that funding has been subsumed in the
local government grant settlement than it was previously.

**Q156 Chair:** What about the skills available in local government? Has there been any reduction in officers with particular road safety skills?

**Nick Clennett:** My experience has been that over the last 12 months we have lost a significant number of skills, not just in road safety but across the board, due to the cuts in funding. In the majority of cases it tends to be the older people, because they are the ones who can access their pensions, so we tend to lose a lot of experience.

**Q157 Chair:** Is that a general picture?

**Peter Francis:** Yes, I would agree with that. It is not the fact that these people probably would have retired anyway in two, three or perhaps four years’ time, it is the speeding up of that process, and the lack of succession planning, that has hindered us in retaining those skills and knowledge.

**Ken Wheat:** In three out of the four authorities in South Yorkshire there is hardly anybody left now with road safety officer experience. If you look back to Local Government Association guidance on best practice for the number of road safety officers per authority, the guidance is one road safety officer per 50,000 population. It means that we are something like 10 road safety officers short on those guidelines because of what my colleagues said about voluntary early severance, part-time working and a lack of recruitment.

**Simon D’Vali:** And the removal of the road safety grant at the same time.

**Q158 Mr Leech:** What use do you make of local authority powers to reduce speed limits to 20 mph?

**Simon D’Vali:** In West Yorkshire we adopt a local area committee system, which is a devolved responsibility down to local level. The powers from the executive function of the council are removed to a local area to allow our members to make decisions on that. We still operate within the guidance of current national legislation. We take on board the relaxation of that has come in recently from the various documents that we use on how we go about processing that, but the local authority is able to determine speed limits at a very localised level, which is good for us.

**Ken Wheat:** We make use of the legislation in South Yorkshire and have a small number of 20 mph areas. South Yorkshire Police, however, have a current policy that they don’t enforce 20 mph areas because they don’t have the resources or the technology to do so. We have to look at implementing engineering measures to engineer the speeds down to 20 mph so that they are effectively self-enforcing them. There is an issue then of the money you have to spend and the popularity or unpopularity of them when you start introducing traffic-calming measures.

**Q159 Mr Leech:** Would you prefer the police to enforce the 20 mph zones?

**Ken Wheat:** Certainly, but I do understand the police’s issues and problems with that. There are other ways of tackling it through Community Speed Watch and things like that. We are awaiting the new legislation that is promised—the change to the circular.

**Q160 Mr Leech:** Why would the police see that as any more resource-intensive than enforcing the 30 mph speed limit?

**Ken Wheat:** I personally cannot speak for the police, but my impression is that it is much more resource-intensive in terms of having bobbies on the beat, if you like. The current technology—cameras—is not type-approved in order to be able to secure a successful prosecution. That is my understanding of the situation, but, as I say, I cannot speak for South Yorkshire Police.

**Q161 Mr Leech:** Is that the same experience in other areas?

**Simon D’Vali:** I would say in terms of West Yorkshire that it mirrors very much what Ken has said there. Roads policing is down to a level now where it is just another part of the cuts that the police are facing. It is just another thing to do. I am sure that is how it is seen.

**Q162 Mr Leech:** Is that fair? In my experience that has been going on for many years, where the police have seemed reluctant to enforce speed limits on local roads or to put enough resources into it.

**Simon D’Vali:** In terms of what we have now in West Yorkshire, we have dedicated roads policing teams. Before, with the road safety grant, we would have supported that financially by paying for certain items. For example, when a roads traffic unit wanted to go out and do enforcement, we would pay for their time to go and do that out of the road safety grant. That money is no longer there; so it is just another drain on the resources that were there previously. I dare say the extra 20 mph zone is just something that is on top of more roads policing.

**Q163 Chair:** Is that work continuing? Has that gap been filled by the police?

**Simon D’Vali:** Things have changed since the road safety grant was removed, in that we have dedicated roads policing teams. However, they are shared between various authorities. I would not like to comment that we have any more or less roads policing in those areas. It just seems to be another drain on a resource in terms of having manpower to do a job.

**Q164 Mr Leech:** Could changes in legislation be made to make it cheaper to introduce 20 mph zones by reducing the amount of legal work that needs to be carried out to change the speed limit?

**Ken Wheat:** That is planned. The Government are planning that.

**Q165 Chair:** That is under the current plans.

**Ken Wheat:** Yes, but, as I understand it, the guidance—the circular—that advises on how that is to be done, and advises local authorities on the national approach, has yet to be released.

**Q166 Chair:** But you think that will be helpful in doing this.
Ken Wheat: That will be helpful.

Q167 Mr Leech: What impact will that have on the cost of implementing a 20 mph speed limit?
Nick Clennett: Most local authorities are putting 20 mph speed limits in. Of course, you have the ‘20’s Plenty’ approach, which is not backed up with legislation but is there to try and encourage. Obviously you cannot enforce that. If you take a more engineered approach with traffic regulation orders and signage, obviously it is a bit more expensive but much more robust. You want to be evidence-led in how you deal with 20 mph zones. The Association of Chief Police Officers’ stance on 20 mph is that they want certain criteria to be in place before they will enforce it. That basically says that people travel at 20 mph or within that region already, and therefore it is an exception where people travel over that, which makes it quite difficult. Local authorities are very much in favour of 20 mph, but the most serious accidents are not happening between 20 mph and 30mph.

Q168 Chair: Are there new regulations coming in which are going to make it easier to implement 20 mph zones? Are you aware of anything?
Nick Clennett: I am not unhappy with the legislation as it is.

Q169 Mr Leech: Do you all support a reduction in the default limit to 20 mph?
Nick Clennett: In certain areas. We need to be careful that we don’t suddenly say that every site is suitable for a 20 mph zone.

Q170 Mr Leech: That is not what I was suggesting. I was suggesting that the default would be 20 mph, and then roads where 20 mph was not appropriate could be rated at 30 mph or 40 mph or whatever it might be.
Simon D’Vali: That is only at a local level.
Nick Clennett: That is certainly worth exploring.

Q171 Chair: At a local level.
Ken Wheat: Our Safer Roads Partnership supports the ‘20’s Plenty’ initiative. We don’t have a policy, as I understand it, on whether we support a default of 20 mph. You certainly have to separate casualty reduction from anxiety relief in an argument like this. Thank goodness we don’t get that many killed and seriously injured casualties in residential areas where there would be the default. Certainly, if the default is 20 mph, then for it to be effective it has to be enforced. The speeds have to come down to that default limit. That is the issue for me. It is how you enforce, introduce and fund a 20 mph default.

Q172 Mr Leech: Isn’t the issue at the moment that when people move into a 20 mph zone it seems a slow speed, so therefore they are less likely to stick to 20 mph, whereas if you have a default limit of 20 mph people would be used to driving slower?
Ken Wheat: I take your point.

Q173 Graham Stringer: A number of very young people are killed on the roads on off-road vehicles such as mini motors. Do you think those vehicles should be brought into a registration scheme or regulated system?
Chair: There are no views.
Graham Stringer: It surprises me that there is no response, because there are a number of young people killed on our roads every year with these off-road vehicles. I am surprised that there is no response on how you deal with that problem.
Simon D’Vali: Is it a particular problem? I am not aware that that is any higher priority than any other aspect of child KSIs on the network.

Q174 Graham Stringer: There are children, in effect, driving off-road vehicles on roads, and they are often squashed by lorries and buses. Sometimes the vehicles themselves break down and it does not even involve another vehicle, but young people are killed every year on the roads on off-road vehicles.
Ken Wheat: We certainly have an issue with off-road motorcycling, but those casualties, if they are off-road, don’t feature in our casualty stats. If they are off-road and they have an accident or incident on the roads, then they do feature in our casualty stats. Our casualty stats in South Yorkshire don’t record a great number of road traffic collisions involving off-road vehicles, if that answers your question.

Q175 Graham Stringer: It doesn’t really.
Ken Wheat: We have an issue with off-road vehicles, but they are being driven off-road.

Q176 Graham Stringer: But sometimes they are being driven on road.
Ken Wheat: They have accidents off-road and they feature in casualty stats in terms of hospital admissions, but they don’t feature in terms of road traffic collisions that are reported to the police. Where those off-road vehicles are involved in a road traffic collision then they are recorded by the police, but in South Yorkshire we don’t have a problem with off-road vehicles having on-road collisions.

Q177 Paul Maynard: That answer has just demonstrated why national targets distort local priorities. You have just said you have an issue, but you won’t do something about it because it does not feature in your casualty targets. Would that be a correct interpretation?
Ken Wheat: Not quite, because it would feature in our casualty targets if they were road traffic collisions.

Q178 Paul Maynard: But they are on private land, so you don’t do anything about it. I don’t want to labour the point. It is just an observation.
Ken Wheat: We do do something about it.

Q179 Chair: Is it recorded anywhere?
Ken Wheat: It is recorded in hospital admission statistics.

Q180 Paul Maynard: To what use do you put the Road Safety Action Plan and the outcome measurements? How do they impact on the work you do? What use do you make of them?
Nick Clennett: Evidence-led solutions are very important. The evidence that we collect, however those statistics are collected, is very important in determining how we tackle road safety incidents. There is a lot of value in them as long as what we are measuring can be measured and understood.

Ken Wheat: In South Yorkshire our strategy, which is called “Making South Yorkshire Roads Safer”, is a 10-year strategy. It very much follows the aims and ambitions of the Government’s document. Our performance measurements are based upon the outcomes framework and the action plans in the Government’s framework, with certain adjustments for local issues. As the gentleman said, we are evidence-led; so we look at the evidence, formulate the strategy and measure our performance. That informs the review of the strategy, which is reviewed every year, and the process continues.

Q181 Paul Maynard: In your local strategy you presumably have local targets, do you?
Nick Clennett: Yes.
Ken Wheat: We have set aims.

Q182 Paul Maynard: I want to ask Mr Clennett this question directly. One of the more powerful pieces of evidence we had last week was that the injury rate per 100,000 in the east midlands was twice what it was in the north-east. What are you doing in the north-east that they are not doing in the east midlands?
Nick Clennett: I can tell you what we are doing in the north-east, obviously—

Q183 Paul Maynard: But what are they not doing in the east midlands? I am sure you are all doing wonderful things, but why are you twice as safe as the east midlands? Are you so much better or are they so much worse?
Chair: What do you think you are doing right, Mr Clennett?
Nick Clennett: In the north-east there are two camera partnerships, which are very powerful tools for road safety. One covers the Cleveland area and the other covers the Northumberland police area.

Q184 Paul Maynard: Do they have no traffic cameras in the east midlands?
Nick Clennett: They will have traffic cameras; it is all linked together. Certainly the Northumbria Safer Roads initiative has a very strong publicity and education campaign. That is a very important element in road safety. It is not just about catching people and enforcing by doing engineering. Education, publicity, promotion and training are vitally important, particularly for vulnerable road users. We do an awful lot of work on that.

Simon D’Valli: I want to clarify a few points there. It is very easy to look at authorities on performance in terms of a casualty level. There are areas of casualty reduction that are outside the remit of road safety or, indeed, there are other factors that play a part in that, such as social deprivation and unemployment. It is not just the geographical make-up and the capital work that we do or even the revenue work like education. There are other themes that may not feature in the framework that have a substantial effect on the rates of casualties in certain areas around the country.

Q185 Chair: There are other things you are doing that might not be technically—
Simon D’Valli: There are other things outside the remit of what we actually do.

Q186 Paul Maynard: That does not appear to explain why the more affluent parts of England are the more dangerous roads, according to these indicators. You have all stressed the importance of national targets, having a national strategy and a degree of national leadership. Yet you also speak of what you are doing at a regional level in your own areas. To what extent do you think that, by focusing on the lack of a national target, you are somehow trying to avoid accountability for what is occurring in your own regions? How do you have accountability for what occurs in your own regions?
Simon D’Valli: We have accountability now.

Q187 Paul Maynard: To whom?
Simon D’Valli: To the community as a whole.

Q188 Paul Maynard: How is that exercised?
Nick Clennett: Through our local transport plan.
Simon D’Valli: Exactly. That would be the LTPs and work with the integrated transport authority.

Q189 Paul Maynard: What happens if you don’t achieve safer roads?
Nick Clennett: We will still be challenged on whether or not we meet our targets locally.

Q190 Paul Maynard: What happens to you if you don’t? Are there any sanctions?
Simon D’Valli: We used to be led on performance-related grants that used to come out. They were stopped some time ago. That still does not stop us striving for safer roads. The consequences of that are that road casualties go up. What we are trying to say here is that we have an approach where we can all understand that there is a problem, and leadership from the top down is very important. However, we must not ignore the fact that a lot of what we do is bottom up. It is community-led, but it needs direction from central Government and the DfT.

Peter Francis: In the west midlands our road safety partnership board is made up of elected members from each of the local authorities. That will be put through to the planning and transportation sub-committee for the west midlands. I am often called to account to that higher committee to explain performance, to set out a plan for the next 12 months and to identify how we are going to tackle those issues by working in partnership. On a personal level, I feel that I am constantly being scrutinised about how we are doing through various committees which are led by elected members.

Q191 Chair: You are called to account by elected members, basically.
Peter Francis: Yes.
Q192 Julie Hilling: I want to ask a question on speed cameras. Since the lack of funding for speed cameras has there been a reduction in speed cameras in your areas? What do you think the effect of that has been?

Nick Clennett: Speaking for Tyne and Wear and Northumberland, we work very hard with the chief executives and the police to secure the funding, because we have used the NDORS money as well as funding from the local authorities to keep the partnership moving forward. The risk there, of course, is whether we catch people committing offences who end up on training courses. If people continue to commit offences, it will continue in force, but if that does not occur then that funding will dry up.

Ken Wheat: As a result of the funding issues, but also as a result of good business practice, South Yorkshire is reviewing all of its cameras, including fixed cameras. We have a decommissioning strategy that is looking at reducing, over a period of time, from 57 fixed cameras that we have at the moment to something like 35.

Q193 Chair: What is that based on? What is the reason for doing that?

Ken Wheat: That is based on a year’s worth of data from the fixed camera sites measuring speed and volume, as well as a look at the casualty rates and also alternatives that could do the same job, such as variable message signing and speed information devices and so on.

Q194 Julie Hilling: Where the speed is being kept down, you are then going to decommission the cameras.

Ken Wheat: We will decommission the cameras.

Q195 Julie Hilling: Don’t you think the speed may be being kept down because there is a camera there?

Ken Wheat: No, because we bag the camera over and study it over a period of a year, as I say. We don’t just leave the camera housing in place.

Q196 Julie Hilling: As a motorist who hates speed cameras, but as a person living in a community that loves them, when I think there is a speed camera I make sure, as I am sure we all do, that I am travelling at the appropriate speed.

Ken Wheat: But the camera is bagged over and it is quite clear it is decommissioned. The trial runs for a year.

Q197 Julie Hilling: Do you have a big sign up saying, “Camera decommissioned”?

Ken Wheat: Effectively, yes.

Q198 Julie Hilling: But don’t you have a sign at the start of it that says, “Traffic enforcement cameras on this stretch of road”? Do you get rid of all of that?

Ken Wheat: All of that signage that goes with the warning is removed.

Peter Francis: We would probably come down on your side in the west midlands. We tend to leave the camera housings in place because the partnership does believe there is a deterrent effect, even though we don’t actually deploy to them. We only deploy to about 90 of our 300 cameras because that is all we can afford to do at present. We deploy to the most risky sites—what we grade as red/amber sites. Clearly there is a partnership view among the elected members that leaving housings in situ does have a deterrent effect, although there are probably one or two we would like to take out.

Q199 Mr Leech: I have a follow-on question for Mr Francis. You say that about a third of your cameras are active.

Peter Francis: Yes.

Q200 Mr Leech: Do you keep it quiet as to which ones are active and which ones are not?

Peter Francis: We are required now to publish data from each of the sites. We think that is a bit of a disadvantage to us, because we do have an increase in vandalism and damage at those sites that have clearly been identified as the most active sites. That again pushes further cost down to local authorities, because we either have to repair them or do something with them to restore them to looking like they are being used.

Q201 Mr Leech: We have two safety partnerships who have taken a completely different view on whether or not to bag them over or leave them there. From your experience of talking to other safety partnerships around the country, do most people follow Mr Francis’s model or Mr Wheat’s model?

Nick Clennett: We have certainly decommissioned sites, but based on evidence that speeds and accidents have reduced. A lot have simply been very historical, before camera partnerships were formed. They were dealing with the perception of problems rather than real accidents.

Simon D’Vali: We would follow exactly what Nick has said there. At the end of the day, before the legislation was in place, certainly some cameras around the UK were installed on a perception basis—I would not use the word “whimsical”—rather than its being data-led. We would look to decommissioning those if that was the case.

Q202 Julie Hilling: I want to come back on what you were saying. It seemed to me that you were saying there is a bit of a perfect storm of the road safety grant going; cuts to police officers, road safety officers and engineers; and cuts to speed cameras. Is it your opinion that there is, and therefore what should be done, and are there specific things being lost in terms of road safety within what you seemed to be describing as a storm?

Nick Clennett: It might be too early to tell. When you look at the dedication of the remaining officers in dealing with road safety, because for engineers road safety is the top of the list, that dedication helps to overcome some of those problems but does not mean that there won’t be a longer-term problem as we fail to have proper succession planning.

Ken Wheat: There has been a bit of a storm. Certainly in South Yorkshire, we are sailing into calmer waters because there has been a policy shift. The policy shift has really been to educate errant drivers rather than...
to penalise them. That has allowed us an opportunity through the Safety Camera Partnership to introduce things like driver improvement and speed awareness courses, which generate some income to allow us to put that back into road safety initiatives. We are only just emerging into the light following that storm. One of the things we have been very keen to keep going is the Safety Camera Partnership, because that does allow us to introduce these educational-type activities rather than the penalising activities. The police are recognising errant driver behaviour rather than criminal driver behaviour. It is quite encouraging that if we follow that policy shift—

**Q203 Chair:** So you are looking at that different approach.

**Ken Wheat:** That is the area that we are looking at in South Yorkshire.

**Q204 Chair:** Are there any other comments?

**Peter Francis:** Our concern is that we need to be cautious about trying to develop a strategy which is based on raising income rather than the safety issue. We are quite concerned about our safety camera strategies being about trying to make as much money as we can.

**Q205 Chair:** Do you think that is a danger at the moment?

**Peter Francis:** It is a danger. We have had quite a lot of splits among the partnership as to how we make that work. Certainly from a local authority point of view, they still have the liability for the upkeep of the housings on their highway, but they don’t have any income to do that, because the income runs through the speed awareness courses, which the police and the company who run the courses keep for themselves.

**Q206 Chair:** There is a company running the course.

**Peter Francis:** There is a private company running the course, which of course is not accountable to any of us as such.

**Q207 Chair:** Are there any other comments? Do you have anything additional, Mr D’Vali?

**Simon D’Vali:** Going back to the effects of this in West Yorkshire, the figures are not in yet, but the early indications are that we are seeing a slight increase in child KSIs across West Yorkshire. There could be multiple reasons for that. As Nick pointed out, it is quite early to start pointing the finger or looking at the reasons why, but it is the loss of certain grants like the road safety grant and elements where we have money for education and training purposes where we would see these knock-on effects. That now goes into the councils for general consideration against other budgets. It is these types of things where we would see this knock-on effect.

**Q208 Chair:** We would like to have some information on what the trend is from the data.

**Simon D’Vali:** We will know more clearly in six months’ time. We generally go January to January, and the figures will be released this week.

**Q209 Chair:** When you have them, it would be helpful for us to have them.

**Ken Wheat:** I can certainly confirm and let you have South Yorkshire’s provisional figures. As Simon said, we mirror that in South Yorkshire. Our provisional figures are that KSIs have gone up this year, as have child KSIs. It is too early to say what the reason is for that because things like this are complex. When there has been a low point you may have a bounce back.

**Chair:** If you let us have whatever information you have, it would be helpful for us. Thank you very much, gentlemen, for coming and answering our questions.
Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Oliver Carsten, Professor of Transport Safety, Institute for Transport Studies, and Richard Cuerden, Technical Director for Vehicle Safety, Transport Research Laboratory, gave evidence.

Q210 Chair: Good morning, gentlemen, and welcome to the Transport Select Committee. Could I have your name and organisation for our records?

Richard Cuerden: My name is Richard Cuerden. I am from the Transport Research Laboratory.

Professor Carsten: I am Oliver Carsten. I am from the University of Leeds Institute for Transport Studies.

Q211 Chair: The written evidence we have had from you suggests that you are very dismissive of the Government’s approach and don’t think they are looking at proper use of Intelligent Speed Adaptation. Could you tell us why you feel so concerned, Mr Carsten?

Professor Carsten: Yes. In many ways Intelligent Speed Adaptation fits in entirely with the Government framework, the “nudge” strategy and the idea of encouraging road users to behave better. What has been disappointing is the lack of follow-through on that. We need to get away from the idea that the only way to make drivers obey the speed limit is to enforce speed limits because there will always be gaps where drivers are complying. We have heard that on the motorway network. In its advisory form, which we have been testing in Lancashire and where we are getting positive results in greater compliance with speed limits across the board, particularly in that purely advisory form of adding a speed limit to a sat-nav, you would think the Government would be really gung-ho about promoting that—and they are not. They are very dismissive of it in their own way. They would rather it went away, I think, and I find that extremely disappointing. We should be taking advantage of new technology where it can deliver. Where we know it is effective we should use it, particularly where the benefit-to-cost ratio is so high. This is something that is extraordinarily cheap to deploy. We are talking about £10 million to £20 million to create a national speed limit map. Yet so far we have managed to do three highway authorities or three areas of the country. As far as I know, London is not even being maintained; so we may be going backwards.

Q212 Chair: You say that development of these speed limit maps has been curtailed.

Professor Carsten: The previous Government was encouraging highway authorities, albeit very slowly, to develop the map. They were giving a little bit of a nudge and extra money through the road safety partnership grants and whatever. That was slowly happening. It was happening far too slowly, because I don’t really see why it should take 20 to 30 years to do something as simple as moving from pieces of paper sitting in people’s drawers that record where the signs are to an electronic database. It is something that is unbelievably straightforward to do. It cost £20,000 to do the whole of London. In Lancashire it cost about £150,000 to get that accurate information. We are talking peanuts here, and big benefits, if we can get people to comply voluntarily. People indicate that they like the system and favour its deployment. We just need a bit of central leadership.

Q213 Paul Maynard: You have just said now that your understanding was that the Government wished this would go away. Is that your perception or is it based upon something specific that has occurred?

Professor Carsten: Yes, it has occurred specifically; they have stopped any funding through the road safety partnership grant scheme for the development of the maps. As I put in my evidence as well, there are various other tweaks that one could do to encourage the deployment of Intelligent Speed Adaptation that have not happened. One example is Euro NCAP. Under the Euro NCAP advanced initiative there is Intelligent Speed Adaptation on the table to encourage the car manufacturers to fit it, so they would get points. I asked the Department for Transport whether I could get paid to go as an expert, as I knew the Department for Transport itself was not sending one. I was told that in the current political climate that is not favoured. That was the answer.

Q214 Paul Maynard: Financially, the Government have said, “We are not funding this project any more.” Have they indicated to you that they are actively hostile to the concept or is it merely that the money isn’t there to proceed at this moment, because that is an important distinction?

Professor Carsten: No, it isn’t money. Let us just be clear. What I was asking for in going to Euro NCAP was travel expenses to go to three meetings in Europe.

Q215 Paul Maynard: More generally, your £10 million to £20 million was travel expenses to go to three meetings in Europe.

Professor Carsten: The £10 million to £20 million was not necessarily going to be Government money. That was going to be partnership money. They would probably have to put up half or less of that to get it to happen. We are talking very small sums of money. Yes, they have completely stopped that. What is going to happen now of course is that, even if motorists want to be advised about it and even if the satellite navigation systems and other providers want to provide the information, they cannot because we don’t have a national database. Maybe there will be some highway authorities that do it, but driving is not a local thing. People don’t just drive in one particular area. They don’t drive just in London or Lancashire. They go across the borders, one community to another. They will expect national speed limit support. It is only natural that you would want that.

Q216 Paul Maynard: You have referred to the sat-nav companies. The emergence of sat-nav was a commercial innovation in itself, although it initially arose out of American military GPS research. Why can’t the sat-nav companies themselves aggregate this information and deliver the product you want?

Professor Carsten: They can aggregate the information but they cannot aggregate it accurately. How is a sat-nav company to know when a local street has gone from a 30 mph speed limit to 20 mph? Unless they have spies in every highway authority, they could not possibly acquire that information.
Q217 Paul Maynard: They could ask the highway authority.
Professor Carsten: They could ask the highway authority to supply it, but that is exactly what we need. We need a structure in place to provide this information, and that is what is lacking.

Q218 Chair: Are you saying that is what is required?
Professor Carsten: Yes. We need a national structure to provide a central database that can then be sucked into the various authorities. As I said, we are talking about a cost here of something like 10 or 20 fatalities. We are talking very small amounts of money. It is far less than we spend on speed cameras and so on. To me it beggars belief that it has not been done.

Q219 Paul Maynard: While I am sympathetic to the points you are raising, you are curiously making me less inclined to criticise the Government over this by what I might call your obstinacy over looking at how we might achieve this very important goal in an age of austerity where we need to find new ways of doing things. Could you explain to me very clearly once again why the only way this can be done is by the Government putting their hand in their pocket?
Professor Carsten: I don’t think we are talking about the Government putting their hand in their pocket to anything more than a negligible extent.

Q220 Paul Maynard: That is a lot of money to some people.
Professor Carsten: Let me just make it clear at the moment how speed limit orders are processed. A local authority processes a speed limit order at the moment and then has to notify central Government that it has been done. There is already a procedure and storage in place, but it is all done by paper. We need to make all that mechanism electronic. That does not mean it would cost more; it would probably cost less. It would be more effective. The highway authority would notify that it wants to change the speed limit on a particular road at a particular time, push a button and send that off to a central database. It is just the initial putting together of that database that is lacking. There is no drive to do it. I suspect that, even if it was co-ordinated nationally and everybody was brought together, it could probably be done for far less than the £10 million I have talked about because many highway authorities would be willing to invest in it. We are talking about leadership rather than finance.

Q221 Iain Stewart: I would like to have a clear idea of what Intelligent Speed Adaptation can achieve. Are you envisaging that you look at the current maximum road speeds across the network and then, if a driver exceeds it, there would be a warning or some sort of limitation, or are you envisaging it becoming something more adaptive so that on a road the speed limit might be 60 mph but the conditions at that time, be it temperature or volume of traffic, warrant a 50 mph limit as an advisory limit? Do you envisage this scheme giving that sort of information to drivers?
Professor Carsten: We can already give extra information to drivers. In our Lancashire map we added in locations where there were known problems: in other words, speed-related crashes—for example, sharp curves on rural roads. You can easily compile those into a map and then you can advise people about an appropriate speed for a curve. All those things can be done extra. We could of course have some communication system so that when you were driving on a managed motorway you got the current speed limit on your dashboard. Further, we could move to pretty flexible limits. We have had some discussion earlier about whether speed limits should be in 10 mph increments. We have 1930s technology with signs on posts. Eventually, when every car has the technology, we are going to move to fully dynamic speed limits where people are advised and told about the speed limit for the circumstance at the particular time, given the current conditions.

Q222 Mr Leech: I want to ask a very different question. Do either of you know what proportion of the current motorway network does not have a 70 mph speed limit?
Chair: Mr Cuerden, can you help us on that?
Richard Cuerden: No. Do you want it in terms of miles?
Mr Leech: Yes.
Richard Cuerden: I could find out and let you know.

Q223 Mr Leech: On the M60, the Manchester ring road, there is a section around Stockport on the clockwise bit that has a 50 mph limit rather than a 70 mph limit. My concern is whether, if we increase the speed limit to 80 mph, enough work has been done on what sections of the motorway network would not be considered to be appropriate to increase the speed limit from 70 mph to 80 mph. Has any work like that been done, to the best of your knowledge?
Richard Cuerden: The Highways Agency has a pretty good understanding of its network in terms of motorways and major roads. There is quite a large evidence base on where incidents are happening and the speed limits. I do not know what has happened more recently with the talk of going to 80 mph. My view would be that a universal jump to 80 mph is not a terribly sensible thing to do, but there is data there to look at. I just don’t know if it has fully analysed it.

Q224 Mr Leech: Do you know whether there is any data on the sections of motorway where the speed limit is consistently reduced? Do you know whether or not there is more breaking of the speed limit in those areas of the network?
Richard Cuerden: That is a great question. I don’t believe that is altogether national. Locally, it may be held, but not nationally. That would be a piece of work to try and collate some information there.
Professor Carsten: On the managed motorway network—the M42, M25 and so on—when speed limits are brought down, then the speed limits are also enforced. Motorists know that, so they comply with those. I don’t know, on the general motorway network, with the 50s, 40s and 60s, without camera support, whether those speed limits are violated more or less than they are on 70 mph stretches.
Q225 Mr Leech: There is fairly strong anecdotal and empirical evidence that the managed motorways around the M42 work very well. This is just anecdotal evidence, but when I drive along that section of the M60, there is not very much evidence of people slowing down through the section at 50 mph. My concern is whether or not, if we have a speed limit of 80 mph, we will see a big increase in accidents where the speed limit is already lower, because car drivers will be going even faster in areas where the speed limit is supposed to be lower.

Professor Carsten: I could not answer that.

Q226 Mr Leech: You are not aware of any evidence.

Professor Carsten: No.

Q227 Chair: If we look at the Government’s road safety strategy generally, do you think there is enough emphasis on technology there? I don’t want to get back to the specific issue, which we have aired very fully, but how do you see that strategy in relation to using technology for road safety?

Richard Cuerden: From a personal point of view, I have been active in vehicle technologies now for about 20 years. In the work that TRL and my colleagues have done, we have identified that if you look at the casualty savings over that time they have been attributed to the vehicle and vehicle technology, and perhaps an awful lot to secondary safety in recent years, the Euro NCAP stuff, so when the car crashes, how well are the people in that vehicle or outside of it protected? That is very briefly covered within the strategy.

There is mention of the move toward the newer technologies, the crash avoidance technologies, but again, very briefly, what are those technologies, and what should we be looking to do, be it Intelligent Speed Adaptation, advanced braking systems, blind spots or lane departure warnings—the list goes on and on.

When I speak to motor manufacturers they often talk about loads of technology being out there, but which ones are going to work? It is a bit like being in a sweet shop for them. They can choose all these technologies and the consumer can go and buy a car or a truck or whatever they want with all these different gadgets on board, but understanding how effective they are is key. If we don’t prioritise those, how can we promote the best technologies going forward?

Q228 Chair: Do we know what is effective?

Richard Cuerden: Yes and no. There is never a simple answer; I am sorry. We have some good evidence on perhaps the easy wins—things like making sure people wear seatbelts is a good way forward. There are things like managing speed, or at least taking speed out of the collision. We looked at collisions and how often people brake, and, when there has been a crash, how many people got their foot on to the brake pedal and braked significantly. We had about 50%. Half of the people out there who are crashing don’t have time, don’t react quickly enough, or for whatever reason don’t brake in a crash. If you had some technology on board that would brake the car for those people when the car detects that they are not doing perhaps what they ought to do and a collision is imminent, it is going to happen—you could save lives and reduce injury.

Q229 Chair: What are the barriers to developing and promoting things like that?

Richard Cuerden: That is a great question. All of this technology is governed at a European level, as I see it. A lot of my work now is through Europe. If you want to encourage, you are going to do it in one of two ways. You are either going to regulate for it or put it into a consumer test, a Euro NCAP-type system, so that the consumer will be so aware of it that they will want to purchase it, or you are going to make manufacturers all play on a level playing-field. The barriers at the moment on some of these issues are lack of understanding of which horses to back and having the evidence to say, “That’s the technology we really ought to be going for.”

Q230 Chair: Who should be producing that evidence? What I am trying to work out is, if this knowledge is around, what needs to be done to make a difference?

Professor Carsten: I don’t think the knowledge is around on many of these systems. For example, if we want to prevent fatigue-related accidents or road departure crashes, there is some knowledge around. Generally, that knowledge is acquired through real-world trials. For example, they are often European-funded and sometimes conducted in different parts of the world such as North America, Australia or wherever. We need to gain the evidence to prove what is effective. There is only any point in giving points stuck to systems at Euro NCAP, or promoting directives on systems, if we know they are going to be effective.

Q231 Chair: Who should be responsible for working that out?

Professor Carsten: That is partly an EU responsibility, but it is also partly a Government responsibility in the UK, so that they have the evidence when they go to the EU table and can say, “Do we support this directive?”, or “Do we support promoting this system over another?”, to go for what is most effective and what is the least cost option in terms of that effectiveness.

Q232 Chair: Do you think enough is being done at a national level to do this?

Professor Carsten: In the past we have been fairly active in carrying out research on these vehicle technologies. That is another area where everything has stopped completely. As far as I know, the Government have not funded any major research in the new technologies area or new vehicle systems in the last couple of years. One of the things that is lacking as well is a little bit of leg-up or support for European research. When TRL or the University of Leeds get involved in European research projects we are not paid the full cost of doing it. A few tens of thousands of pounds, not millions even, but hundreds of thousands of pounds so that we do not lose money.
on doing that research, which of course makes us reluctant to participate, would be a great help. That is not forthcoming at the moment.

**Richard Cuerden:** With regard to the other big part of the evidence base from which we have benefited, the UK has been a world leader in terms of the accident studies we have taken over perhaps 30 or 40 years now, but certainly in the last 10 or 15 years. There are plans in place now to start some in-depth accident studies again, which is great news. These are going to provide us with the information of what works and does not work. It helps to identify the problem. What you get from police data and trials are really good indicators, but it is quite high level.

If you are looking at something quite complicated—whether a certain braking system is better than another one or whether a seatbelt system with an airbag, pretensioner and load limiter and all of the different technologies on board are effective for everybody from my mum to my children who may be in the vehicle—we need that high level of information. Industry cannot provide that. That is something on which Government have to lead, in a consortium ideally, but getting that in-depth data is crucial. My personal view is that you then get a little bit of a leg-up for UK plc because we have this unique asset that we can take to Europe and other places and use.

**Q233 Chair:** Can I go back to the Department for Transport’s road safety strategy, which is what we are discussing here? Would you say that the issues you are talking about are reflected sufficiently in that general approach?

**Professor Carsten:** I think they are slightly reflected in the general approach. The general tenor of the road safety framework is one that decisions should be devolved to local authorities. First, local authorities clearly cannot make decisions on vehicle systems. That is incongruous. Secondly, for more technology-based solutions it is said that the Government can rely on vehicle manufacturers and Europe to do it. That is all very well, but the Government need to be a player in that. They could also compensate not only for individual deficits but they can help to compensate for road design deficits. That is a bit of vehicle technology. That is the way I could see it.

**Q234 Chair:** Mr Cuerden, do you want to add to that?

**Richard Cuerden:** I am an engineer, so I am biased; I will put my hand up on this. The strategy is education and enforcement, and then there is a bit of engineering in that. There is a bit of vehicle technology. That is the way I could see it.

**Q235 Chair:** You put engineering and technology third.
Richard Cuerden: The lead came from the Department for Transport. It was Government-led.

Q240 Julie Hilling: Can I ask about current telematics in cars? When we did our inquiry into the cost of motor insurance we looked at that for young drivers, but there is a question about it for all drivers. Is the current standard of telematics adequate to reflect insurance premiums?

Professor Carsten: The pay-as-you-drive insurance schemes and whatever could be more sophisticated. One of the big potentials of telematics over the next 10 or 20 years in driving down casualties is going to be in the fleet market. We have moves toward making fleets more responsible for road safety management. There is an ISO standard coming. It is ISO 39001 on road safety management, which is going to promote road safety management within organisations, and organisations will increasingly be telling their drivers, “You have to comply with the rules of the road. We are going to be making sure that you wear your seatbelt, you don’t break the speed limits and you drive in a fuel-efficient manner,” and so on. Yes, I see a lot of potential there for delivering road safety. The technology is adequate. What we don’t know yet is how much the technology can deliver in terms of improved performance. One of Richard Cuerden’s colleagues, Shaun Helman, made a presentation a couple of weeks ago to the Road User Behaviour Working Party of PACTS, which I chair. It was a review of the evidence base on work-related road safety. The solid evidence base on what is effective was extremely thin. Again, we need the knowledge. People delivering the product will often talk it up, for obvious reasons, and will say that they are getting brilliant results, but we need an evidence base to support that and to promote best practice. Without the evidence base, we don’t know what best practice is.

Richard Cuerden: Just to add to that, where lots of things become lacking is the evaluation process. The technology is there and it works fine. In my view, and it is not my area of expertise, I have seen some really nice examples for young drivers where they get feedback on their driving through these systems and they do get all the green lights when they do everything well. It looks really neat, but I don’t know how well up until now we have evaluated that. It is very difficult in a cost-benefit way to see how much we should promote. If it is really effective, the cost can go up a little bit. If it is just a little bit effective, you start to go there. It is evaluating what data already exists.

Q241 Julie Hilling: When you are talking about potential, is that about needing to improve the technology we have or is the technology already developed to an adequate standard to do what you have just been talking about?

Richard Cuerden: The technology is adequate. What we need is how much the technology can deliver in terms of improved performance. One of Richard Cuerden’s colleagues, Shaun Helman, made a presentation a couple of weeks ago to the Road User Behaviour Working Party of PACTS, which I chair. It was a review of the evidence base on work-related road safety. The solid evidence base on what is effective was extremely thin. Again, we need the knowledge. People delivering the product will often talk it up, for obvious reasons, and will say that they are getting brilliant results, but we need an evidence base to support that and to promote best practice. Without the evidence base, we don’t know what best practice is. Richard Cuerden: Just to add to that, where lots of things become lacking is the evaluation process. The technology is there and it works fine. In my view, and it is not my area of expertise, I have seen some really nice examples for young drivers where they get feedback on their driving through these systems and they do get all the green lights when they do everything well. It looks really neat, but I don’t know how well up until now we have evaluated that. It is very difficult in a cost-benefit way to see how much we should promote. If it is really effective, the cost can go up a little bit. If it is just a little bit effective, you start to go there. It is evaluating what data already exists.

Q242 Chair: Who should be doing that evaluation? Whose responsibility should that be?

Richard Cuerden: This is probably a little bit out of my area. In the evaluation of all these technologies, if you, as a society, want to save lives and reduce...
casualties, there is some central need for it just from a public health point of view. There are many companies out there that are developing the technologies and want to sell them. There is all of that stuff going on. Perhaps some collaboration needs to be brought together, and there is the insurance industry of course. But, ultimately, in my view, it has to be led by a Government body.

**Professor Carsten:** One of the reasons why the UK has been one of the best-performing countries in the world, if not the best-performing country, is because there has been an evidence base for road safety policy. If research is not funded, that evidence base will no longer exist.

**Q243 Chair:** Are you concerned on the current plans that that is the way it is going?

**Professor Carsten:** At the moment there is almost zero funding for new research initiatives. There is almost zero support for large European initiatives where, of course, by being one of 10 or 20 partners in a European project, you can leverage the contributions so that you get very large benefits from a small investment.

One example was in the last Transport Research programme, the one with the December deadline. There was a call for a large-scale naturalistic driving study across Europe. That is basically putting technology into vehicles—the kind of telematics systems we have been talking about, but often with video cameras and so on—to observe what people are doing. That would help us to understand, for example, why young drivers improve so much in the first six months. We really don’t know that. The plan is to get 2,000, 3,000 or 4,000 vehicles equipped across Europe and then running for a year or two to collect data, just to find out what people are doing, what problems occur and how people deal with near crashes so that they do not turn into crashes. A contribution of £500,000 or £1 million would make a huge difference to UK participation in those kinds of research initiatives, and that is simply not happening.

**Richard Cuerden:** I would like to add to that slightly. I don’t know what is coming in the future so I don’t know what the Department for Transport has in mind for a research programme. Certainly in the past, the research organisations, not just the two represented here, have had a bit of a heads-up as to what is being planned. There have been priority areas and people can decide if they want to work in that area and build businesses or understand what research needs to be done. Having that forewarning would be very helpful to the people out there who are doing this research and certainly to people like me, who are trying to keep members of staff and skills in place.

**Chair:** Thank you very much indeed for coming and answering our questions.
Tuesday 7 February 2012

Members present:
Mrs Louise Ellman (Chair)
Jim Dobbin
Mr Tom Harris
Julie Hilling
Mr John Leech
Paul Maynard
Graham Stringer
Julian Sturdy

Examination of Witnesses


Q244 Chair: Good morning, welcome to the Transport Select Committee. Could you start by giving us your name and the organisation you are representing? This is to help our records.

Suzette Davenport: I am Suzette Davenport, deputy chief constable of Northamptonshire police and the ACPO lead for roads policing.

Alan Jones: My name is Alan Jones. I am an inspector in South Yorkshire but lead for the federation nationally on road policing.

David Etheridge: I am David Etheridge. I am the chief fire officer from Oxfordshire county council fire and rescue service. I take the lead role for road safety on behalf of the Chief Fire Officers Association.

Q245 Chair: Thank you very much. ACPO tell us in their written evidence that getting rid of targets is “somewhat risky”. Could you perhaps tell us a little more about what you mean?

Suzette Davenport: From a number of perspectives, the evidence over the last 10 years with partners is that there has been a significant reduction in killed and seriously injured RTCs, which has had a significant impact on local communities and resourcing, whether it is policing or health resources and so on. You have the details of the economic cost of both fatal and seriously injured RTCs.

The difficulty is that without leadership from Government on some national targets—and I understand the localism agenda—you leave the decisions in terms of effort, energy, leadership and resources to local authorities. In doing so, particularly at the moment given the economic climate, the challenge is what a local priority is. There are inevitably some things that local authorities absolutely have to do—and we have seen this over the last couple of years or so—because they are going to impact here and now. Yes, there are risks around road safety, but they are potential risks as opposed to specific risks now. With regard to prioritising resource, effort and energy, there are risks if they do not do that together with us. The evidence for that, now that the road safety grant has gone, is that some of the camera safety partnerships and reduction partnership strategies no longer exist and the emphasis is now almost exclusively on the police as opposed to a partnership approach. As I am sure you are aware, it needs education, enforcement, engineering and partnership work to have the biggest impact on road safety.

I understand why the Government have done it. My view would be that some national targets that help support and drive the local activity of the range of agencies that contribute to road safety would be more helpful.

Q246 Chair: You are suggesting that having the national targets affects what the other agencies do, are you?

Suzette Davenport: Yes. It is about a holistic approach and bringing all the effort and energy together to have the biggest impact. Without some of that drive from Government, my view is that that effort will get dissipated and we will see an increasing trend in terms of both killed and seriously injured RTCs.

Q247 Mr Leech: I want to pick up on what you have said. Is that true of the police as well as other agencies? It has been suggested that certain elements of road safety to do with enforcement of 20 mph speed limits and things like that have not been enforced in the past. Are you suggesting that, by removing these targets, the police may have even less of an emphasis on some of these road safety elements?

Suzette Davenport: Police officers are there to protect life and property. It is not just the legal position but the moral and ethical desire on behalf of police officers to protect life and property. Inevitably, as pressure is applied to police resources, as anywhere else, some decisions may be taken as to what effort and energy resources will be put into dealing with road safety and making sure that that is dealt with on a threat and risk basis. Forces have reorganised to bring units together to be as effective as they can be. On the specific question you ask in relation to 20 mph limits, my view as the ACPO lead is that it is no good just putting signs up saying, “This is now a 20 mph limit.” If we do that and it does not feel or look like it should be a 20 mph limit, then the vast majority of drivers will not self-police. That means you are just down to enforcement. That is not an effective way of achieving the road safety outcomes that we desire, not just as to 20 mph areas but others as well.

Q248 Mr Leech: As a follow-on from that comment, if there was a default speed limit of 20 mph on local roads, would it be easier then for the police to enforce...
those 20 mph limits because that would be the norm rather than the exception?

Suzette Davenport: There has been lots of academic evidence about driver behaviour and what they will and won’t accept. My view is that, given where we are now, that would be really difficult. If we go back to what the threat and risk is, where there is a proper threat and risk the police will seek to enforce, but, where it is just a local desire that we have 20 mph because it makes us feel better rather than that there is a specific threat and risk, then we will prioritise our resources to where we think there is a threat and risk, which is, in effect, the approach that we take to other speed limits, whether by police officers or automatic detection.

Q249 Paul Maynard: Tempted as I am to ask whether reassurance policing is about making us feel better, I suspect that is for the Home Affairs Committee next door.

Suzette Davenport: Clearly it is.

Q250 Paul Maynard: I go back to the issue of targets, which I seem to raise with every panel, and your concern over the need for a national target. Would you agree with me that an effective chief constable and police authority should be able to analyse the indicators that the Government are collecting and publishing and make an assessment for themselves of their relative standing within the UK? For example, the East Midlands—which I think includes Northamptonshire—have the highest death rate per 100,000 of any region in the country. Should that not be enough of an incentive to local decision makers to prioritise road safety without the Government setting crude arbitrary targets that might not relate to your local specific conditions?

Suzette Davenport: It is a very valid and legitimate question. Chief constables absolutely can, and arguably should, take the approach that you have suggested. The reality is that there is a whole range of pressures on policing as there is for other public agencies about what the specific priority is there and then.

On behalf of ACPO, I lead to ensure that we encourage, enthuse, cajole and sometimes embarrass forces that are not delivering in a way that we think they should to deliver outcomes. Home Affairs issues the strategic policing requirement, but it does not include road safety and KSIs as part of it. When chief constables are looking at how they manage their resources and deliver in terms of safety, they will not necessarily look at roads policing because there are no national targets. That is despite the fact you can almost guarantee that, for every local committee you go to and the consultation we undertake with the public, speeding and antisocial behaviour invariably feature in the top five of the priorities for the local public.

It is absolutely a legitimate question. My view is that having a national target will help support, encourage and enthuse chief officers to make sure that road safety and KSIs are still on their agenda.

Q251 Paul Maynard: Have you seen the paragraph in the Government’s road safety framework where they set out what they expect will be the reduction in KSIs if all their various activities are put in place?

Suzette Davenport: Yes.

Q252 Paul Maynard: Do you regard that as a target in all but name? Does that not give you something to work towards?

Suzette Davenport: It is not a target. It is saying, “We would like you to do these things to achieve this outcome.”

Q253 Paul Maynard: If it said at the top “Target”, you would be happy then.

Suzette Davenport: The issue is about responsibility and being held to account, and the mechanisms that we have through targets to be held to account for delivery of outcomes.

Q254 Paul Maynard: We have signed up to a Vision Zero target, which is a philosophy of continuous improvement. I am trying to understand whether the problem is not with the Government so much as the decision-making structures within local police forces, and indeed local government generally, in that they cannot act without someone in Whitehall telling them, “There, there; you are doing the right thing. Off you go.”

Chair: Mr Jones, could you perhaps comment on Mr Maynard’s question, because in your written evidence you talk about roads policing and numbers of police for that duty being reduced. Do you think that is connected to the targets issue?

Alan Jones: I would support what DCC Davenport says regarding the target issue. You have to look back on the fact that targets have set the standard and there has been a consistent standard set for a good number of years. Through those national standards we have all witnessed a significant reduction in collisions and injury on the road. That is a glue that binds the interaction between thinking and determination to reduce casualties. The real concern is about national versus localism and how it will work on a local basis. One of the key issues that I think is important—and I need to stress this point—is the Government’s 20% reduction in policing and funding and the fact that the Home Office and DfT need to think more collaboratively in terms of what their expectations are. We continually hear the Home Secretary say that the role and function of the police is to reduce crime, but in all this there is a big issue on road policing delivery and the function of road policing. There is a significant loss of police officer numbers now delivering front-line operational policing. You cannot sustain a 16,000 loss in police officer numbers, and as much again in back-office staff, and continue to do the same.

If you look at forces like Devon and Cornwall, they have significantly reduced what was a fantastic unit delivering road policing. The skills and experience that that force had have been lost to response policing. Last week we heard that in West Midlands 65 front-line police officer roles will go to support back-office
functions. This is happening around the country. There comes a point where we have to ask at what point we can continue to sustain the delivery of enforcement, education and all the other issues, not just with road policing but peripheral key issues as to crime reduction, crime fighting and crime enforcement. Targets are important, but I honestly think we have to get the message right that, if you are going to do this, there is a risk and it needs to be a proportionate risk being taken between the local and national factors.

Q255 Chair: Mr Etheridge, you have also written about targets and problems relating to joint working and the role of the fire and rescue service. Is that again to do with national targets or are there other factors such as lack of funding?

David Etheridge: We have to accept that road safety is a multi-agency responsibility and therefore needs a multi-agency response. That will involve cross-local authority working, cross-services in the local area working and also of course cross-Government Departments. The whole issue on targets is a very interesting one as to whether that would be a driver for this to happen locally, or whether it would happen locally regardless of whether there is a national target. As for the strategic framework and identifying the direction of travel—whether if all of these indicators and the current working of the high-performing areas continue, we will see an outcome—by default, ultimately, that could be treated as a target. I would suggest that, if you look at the key performance indicators within the framework of the strategic framework itself—the outcome framework—we need to be able to recognise whether we are achieving success right across the country rather than it just being a local issue.

There is an important leadership role for central Government here to indicate that this is a priority and clearly there is an economic cost of this nationally, but I think the economic cost of it locally is very acute. If I may just give an example from my own authority, I am part of Oxfordshire county council. I have the privilege to sit on the leadership team of adult social care. We see the victims of road traffic accidents and the ongoing social care costs associated with that. There was a case some time ago of a 23-year-old young man who received life-changing but not life-threatening injuries through a road traffic accident. Potentially that individual could live for another 60 years. The cost of care of that individual as it stands today is £100,000 per year. Based over that individual’s life that is a £6 million cost, just based on today’s figures, let alone ongoing care or inflationary increases and so on. Clearly, there is a local authority and an adult social care need for everybody right across the public sector to work together on this. If that could be driven slightly more by a central Government overarching target, we would welcome that because it sends a very clear signal to all agencies that this is a priority.

Q256 Graham Stringer: Inspector Jones, you said that there have been cuts in police forces of 15,000 officers, and that is undoubtedly true. Has that disproportionately affected the enforcement of road safety?

Alan Jones: The 16,000 is the HMIC’s figure over the period. Police officer numbers are down by about 5,000 over the last 18 months or two years, and that will continue to drop significantly. Inevitably, as police forces are expected to continue delivering the same but with less and with efficiencies—and I accept there are efficiencies within the system—there has to come a point where chief officers take a decision as to what is the priority in their local area. One of the key areas we have to consider is what will happen when police crime commissioners come along and what their emphasis may be in terms of local road safety issues.

Q257 Graham Stringer: I understand that, but I am more interested in finding out what has happened now and whether there has been a disproportionate impact on road policing at the moment.

Alan Jones: At the moment it is too early to give a definitive figure in terms of how road policing has been affected by this, but there is clear evidence relating to Devon and Cornwall, the West Midlands and other forces if you talk about policing of the motorways and general enforcement activity as police forces are reducing their commitment to policing the roads on a central basis. There has to be an inevitable impact from that.

Q258 Graham Stringer: Can you quantify that in any way in terms of officer hours on motorway duty?

Suzette Davenport: May I come in here, Chair? It is difficult to have a direct correlation with the numbers. It is not just specialist roads police officers that have a contribution to make to policing the roads. It is all of the officers to a varying degree. We could do some work, if it would help the Committee, to identify a number of input measures. There are some difficulties just looking at input measures, the number of specialist road police officers and the numbers of tickets, whether they are fixed penalty tickets for road policing matters or speeding tickets. We could get some of those input measures for you, but what we cannot do now is say, “I can draw a direct correlation between the numbers of people and what is happening in terms of road safety.”

Going back to the point that Mr Maynard made earlier in relation to the partnership working, it is not just the impact on policing and chief officers looking at the targets. It is about driving the partnership work, which collectively will make a far bigger difference than just policing and looking at road safety issues.

Q259 Graham Stringer: I understand that. It should be possible to get statistics that show how many hours police officers are spending patrolling motorways now compared to two years ago.

Alan Jones: You can use your own example of travelling up and down a motorway. If you look back a few years, you would probably have seen a police car.
Q260 Graham Stringer: My example probably would not be very good. I am looking for hard statistics.

Suzette Davenport: We would not be able to provide you with that data.

Alan Jones: That is difficult at this stage, but I agree with Ms Davenport that that is something that we could provide in terms of the question that has been asked. You could project that over the next two or three years.

Graham Stringer: That would be helpful.

Q261 Chair: Inspector Jones, we would like to get solid information if you can find that.

Alan Jones: I am sure we could do that.

Q262 Chair: You talk about a reduction in numbers and we have had representations from people who say that they have never seen a police traffic officer on certain individual roads. We would like to have some hard facts about that.

Alan Jones: That would be helpful and I am sure we could work that through with ACPO support.

Suzette Davenport: I would just make the point that we would need to distinguish between specialist roads policing officers and our more generic officers and police staff members who make a contribution to policing the roads.

Q263 Graham Stringer: Staying on motorways, the Government are consulting at the present time on the possibility of increasing the speed limit on motorways from 70 mph to 80 mph. What impact would that have, do you think, if the Government decided to go to an 80 mph speed limit?

Suzette Davenport: From an ACPO perspective, we are not against looking at consultation on 80 mph. We would want to see and comment on the research that demonstrates the implications of doing so. As we know, 70 mph was first set a number of years ago. Some of our motorways are safer now and illuminated most of the time. Cars are much safer than they were when that speed limit was first set 40 or 50 years ago. However, there are some places on the motorway where my view is that that would not be appropriate. There is a balance between setting a one-size-fits-all versus what is best in terms of road policing. In keeping the roads safe, the difficulty is that it is an easy message to give to the public—to say that all motorways are 80 mph. My view is that it is the conditions that have an impact.

I was on the M40 on Monday at six o’clock in the morning. It was raining, snowing and the visibility was poor. In my view, people who were probably doing 70 mph were going too fast for that road at that time. I would be far more in favour of looking at variable speed limits that can be enforced and that help people to make decisions about what is appropriate at that particular time. We are not averse to 80 mph, but it is not appropriate in all circumstances.

Alan Jones: If I can make an additional comment to that, the issue on 80 mph is certainly something that we should seriously consider, but we also need to look at the enforcement parameters around that. We need to send a clear message that, if 80 mph is the limit, then 80 mph is the limit. This business about adding another 10 mph or 12 mph on to the guidance and everything else means that the 80 mph speed limit is probably 90 mph before enforcement is taken. That is a key point. When you look at the issues on that, it sends a message to the public that, if 70 mph is the limit at the moment, they are all right doing 75 mph, 77 mph or perhaps 80 mph. If you look at a lot of drivers, they probably do that kind of limit where it is deemed safe to do so. My concern would be where the enforcement parameters sit in and the impact that might have on other speed limits in other areas.

Q264 Graham Stringer: Let me be clear about what you are saying. You are saying at the moment, I think, that there is probably a tolerance of 10% plus on speed limits.

Alan Jones: Yes.

Q265 Graham Stringer: Are you saying it is ACPO’s view that, if it went up to 80 mph, there should not be any pluses—any tolerance above the 80 mph?

Alan Jones: My view and the federation’s view is that we would have to be very firm about that because it sends a message to the public. What message are we sending to the public? That is the important thing on that. What is the speed limit? If the speed limit is 80 mph, what can I drive at before any enforcement action is taken?

Q266 Chair: Is it ACPO’s broad proposition that it should be kept to very specifically? Can that be done?

Suzette Davenport: In our earlier discussions with the DTI, while we are not averse to looking at the implications of moving to an 80 mph limit, we would not want to see a concomitant rise in the thresholds that go with it. It would not necessarily be dead on 80 mph, but what we would not want is effectively saying to the public, “It’s okay to drive on the motorways at 89 mph.” I know that members have already had evidence presented to say that the average speed on motorways is 79 mph. What we would not want to see is a concomitant rise of the perception that it is effectively okay to travel at 90 mph.

Q267 Mr Leech: If the assumption is that there would need to be a proper enforcement of the 80 mph speed limit, would that require more police resources?

Suzette Davenport: Not necessarily because you can do it by automatic detection in some places.

Q268 Mr Leech: You are talking about average speed cameras or fixed speed cameras. In terms of actual policing, the cost of implementing speed cameras across all the motorways to enforce those speed limits would be very high. Would there be an assumption that the police would be expected to be more visible and enforcing that 80 mph limit more stringently?

Suzette Davenport: Again, as in my previous comment, we would need to look at what the threat
and risk is in this particular area and whether it is a good use of resource in terms of the threat and risk around road safety to deploy our resources to that. There is an expectation that we would enforce as we do. I understand the costs associated with the infrastructure around cameras, but the cost of police resourcing is such that we would need to look across the board to understand where you get the best benefits for your investment in terms of resources.

Q269 Mr Leech: If significant resources were not put into introducing more speed cameras on motorways, would you accept that in order to enforce the 80 mph properly, given that we have an issue with police vehicles not necessarily being visible on the motorways at the moment, there could be a serious resource implication for the police?

Suzette Davenport: Hence my saying that, while we are not averse to 80 mph, we would need to understand what the implications of moving to 80 mph are, and therefore how we might use our resources to support enforcement.

Q270 Chair: Are you saying there would be a resource implication? That is the question Mr Leech was putting.

Suzette Davenport: Yes, potentially.

Alan Jones: I agree entirely. I think there would be a resource implication; there has to be. If we look at the amount of motorway that is covered by automated speed cameras at the minute, it is only a relatively small section. It is the M25, parts of the M1, the M40, and M42. There are some issues on that if the speed limit is put up. Again, it is the message we send to the public. If you are going to exceed the speed limit, what are the risks of being caught and prosecuted for that offence? It is a very valid question. The question is who can and who does do the enforcement, if police forces are so stretched that they are unable to deliver that kind of service in terms of priority.

Q271 Julian Sturdy: Ms Davenport, when we were talking about speed limits, you touched on the conditions dictating speed limits. That has been talked about within the Committee over a number of different hearings. If we went to a more continental variable speed limit and increased it to 80 mph but the speed limits were reduced under certain conditions, how effectively could that be enforced?

Suzette Davenport: Again you are back to the same response to Mr Leech as to the range of capable guardians, whether that is police officers or Highways Agency. Although they do not enforce speed limits, they still have an effect on a number of drivers and their behaviour, yes, through police enforcement and automatic detection.

Q272 Julian Sturdy: On a technical point—say, for example, you had an 80 mph limit and suddenly weather conditions dictated that that should quickly be reduced to a 60 mph limit—if you have cameras on that section, can you automatically alter the setting on the cameras so that they move at the same time down to a 60 mph limit?

Suzette Davenport: Yes, we do have cameras. There are fewer rather than more of the cameras that can do variable speed limits and will change in accordance with the conditions as they are set.

Q273 Julian Sturdy: You are saying fewer rather than more.

Suzette Davenport: Yes.

Q274 Julian Sturdy: My next point is that, if we did go for a variable speed limit, the cost implications would be considerably more than just moving to a straight 80 mph limit.

Suzette Davenport: Yes; there would be cost implications, but that would be balanced against the benefits that you accrue in not having the KSIs, clearly.

Q275 Mr Harris: I find it very odd that ACPO do not apparently have a view on whether the speed limit should go up to 80 mph. I find that odd. Are you trying not to annoy Ministers or something?

Suzette Davenport: No, not at all. The research has not been done to understand what the implications are. I would not want to presume one way or the other without having an evidence base to say, “For these reasons ACPO think it is either a good idea or not a good idea to increase the speed limits on motorways”—whether that is all or some of our motorways. You would quite properly ask me, “What is your basis for either supporting or not supporting it?” We do not have the evidence base. Once we have that, we will consider it and then we will form a view as to whether we support for all, none or some motorways.

Q276 Mr Harris: This debate about whether or not we raise the national speed limit has been going on certainly throughout the whole of my adult life. It is not a new debate. I find it odd that an organisation as important and influential as ACPO are trying to remain above the fray on it. I accept the question of evidence. Are you aware of any country—and I address this to the whole panel—where the national speed limit has been raised and that has led directly to a reduction in accidents and casualties on the roads?

Chair: Mr Etheridge, do you have any views on this?

David Etheridge: I am not aware of a country that has done that. I would support ACPO’s position on this, which is that common sense would tell us that there must be a direct link between speed and those numbers killed and seriously injured on the roads. All of the road safety professionals working right across key stages within schools and working with driver enforcement schemes, for example, following a speeding fine, will indicate that speed is a direct contributor to those figures. Common sense would tell us that, if you increase the speed limit, there must be some form of correlation in terms of an increase in KSIs. However, I am not aware of any absolute academic research that concludes that that is the outcome. From the point of view of the Chief Fire Officers Association, we would welcome the opportunity to
comment on that research and potentially challenge any findings that come out of that because, in our experience, the vast majority of accidents that we go to are caused by excessive speed and driver behaviour. There is a very clear message that can go out from an increase in speed limits on the sort of encouragement in driver behaviour that we work so hard to try and counteract through all of our educational programmes right across fire services within the UK.

Q277 Mr Harris: Do I detect disagreement between ACPO and the federation as to whether or not there should be a large leeway if we went up to 80 mph? I think you were suggesting, Mr Jones, that if you go above 80 mph—

Alan Jones: The federation view is that we should leave the speed limits as they are. It is dead simple. If there is a move—an initiative—to increase the speed limit to 80 mph, then the point we are making is that there has to be a limit around that because it gets crazy in regard to what speeds you might be going at before enforcement action is taken.

Q278 Mr Harris: The federation supports not—

Alan Jones: Our position is that we are quite happy to leave the motorway speed limit at 70 mph. If there is a push to move the speed limit to 80 mph, and that is a political will, then obviously that is a matter for politicians and Parliament.

Q279 Mr Harris: Ms Davenport, if it went up to 80 mph, do you have a view as to whether or not ACPO should have new guidelines about 5% plus one?

Suzette Davenport: Our position is that we do not discount the potential to go to 80 mph, as we have already discussed, but our position is very clear that we would not want to see the sort of 10% plus two, which is generally the rule of thumb in enforcement, for the very reasons that the Committee has heard before. There is a direct correlation between speed and road safety. However, motorways are our safest roads. It is about finding that balance in what the will of the public and Government is and making sure that the advice we give from an ACPO perspective supports the evidence for what is best.

Q280 Mr Harris: You do not have any figures in mind.

Suzette Davenport: No, I haven’t.

Q281 Mr Harris: Someone travelling at 85 mph or 86 mph.

Suzette Davenport: No, and it would be improper for me to try and guess. I want the evidence which provides me with the basis for saying we think we should do X, Y or Z.

Q282 Paul Maynard: Could I return to DCC Davenport’s written evidence? Leaving aside paragraph 3.8 where you seem to question whether any of our Committee’s reports actually achieve anything, one of our reports that I did hope began to achieve some change was that into drink and drug driving. I was particularly interested in your section on drug screening by the roadside. You cited evidence from Australia, but you did not source it, where it was found that there was a 25% false positive or negative.

Suzette Davenport: We can do, if that would be helpful to the Committee.

Q283 Paul Maynard: That would be very helpful indeed. One of our key findings was that we believed that Government should accelerate the introduction of roadside drug testing units. Could you explain a little more as to why you have such misgivings about this?

Suzette Davenport: I do not have misgivings about screening in terms of drink-drive. The issue in terms of drug-drive and roadside kits is that currently, for somebody to be impaired through drugs, which is the current legislation, you have to prove, first, that they have had drugs and, secondly, they are impaired. If you have a roadside screening device, that gives you nothing more at the moment. We will still have to prove that they are unfit through doing the field impairment test and that they have drugs in their body. You will still have to go through the process of going back to the police station and having a medical practitioner do a test on them.

The position of ACPO has been clear for a number of years now. The police see the coalition Government wanting to press ahead with this. We need an absolute offence that says, “If you have these drugs in your body at this level”—just as we do with drink-driving, which we now have for 45 or 46 years—“then you are committing an offence.” The likelihood is that, if you have those drugs at that level in your body, then you are going to be impaired.

My misgivings at the moment are that we will still have to go through the process of demonstrating drugs and impairment; so we do not gain any benefits to policing at all. There is no point buying the equipment.

Q284 Paul Maynard: Virtually every Australian state’s road safety strategy focuses on drug-driving as part of the Safe Systems approach. When you cited Australia in your evidence, are you aware of any precise activities that Australian state governments are undertaking to tackle drug-driving that we are not doing in the UK? Clearly, they are prioritising it more than we are but potentially not very well, if your evidence is to be believed.

Suzette Davenport: My trusty colleagues who do lots of detail have done work in relation to understanding that detail. You may be aware that we have started piloting drug screening devices. As part of looking at those and working with the DTI, we have said that these are good or not so good pieces of equipment. The type of approval process in the UK is the best in the world, so they will always come and look at ours. That is why we have looked abroad to see what is happening elsewhere and have found, as we have demonstrated in the written submission, that there are issues with those. We would not want that because we

would not want it to be undermined, which again goes back to the points I have made about, “Give us an offence and give us the right kit.” We absolutely understand the link between impairment and road safety. We want to press ahead and support the Government in dealing with drug-driving, but at the moment we are not in a position to do that either from a legislative or equipment point of view. Certainly my colleagues can get information in relation to the work that has been done in Australia to understand what it is they have been doing.

Q285 Jim Dobbin: An offender has the option of either having some education or going on a course instead of accruing points. Do you maintain that this has been effective?

Suzette Davenport: Very much so. The feedback we get from the courses is hugely positive. I have a number of letters that are sent to me that say, “I wish we could have done this course before.” I have talked to Ministers about the driver improvement schemes and how we might get some elements of those into the training that people do before they actually get into a car and drive of their own volition, through the learning to drive process. There is a report that has been done that looks at the national driver offender retraining schemes—NDORS. That has not been released yet, but that is very positive in terms of the impact. It is hugely positive. The new ACPO roads policing strategy talks about supporting those people who have a moment’s lapse of concentration as opposed to offenders who are going to break the speed limits and have an impact on road safety. It is really important that we have a range of responses that can deal with the range of people who are on our roads and might have a lapse of concentration versus those who say, “I am going to speed and put people at risk regardless.”

Q286 Jim Dobbin: What is the percentage of offenders who choose that option?

Suzette Davenport: We do not have that specific detail to hand. We say, “If you are within this range of speeding offence, whether it is 30 mph, 40 mph or 50 mph, then you can opt to have this course. You do not have to. You can opt to have this course, and therefore you do not get the points but you have to pay for the course.” I was with my road safety team about a month ago. The vast majority of the people who are offered it take it; very few don’t.

David Etheridge: It is very important that education is the key here. We have just had a discussion about drink, drugs and speeding. Clearly, these things are all directly linked into driver behaviour. It is important to understand that there is an opportunity particularly for organisations such as fire and rescue, right across the UK, to link into other agencies and to help support that education. If I can give an example, within my own authority in Oxfordshire we have directly linked into the youth courts. For any young person coming through the youth courts who has been convicted of a motoring offence—it could be speeding, taking a vehicle without consent, driving without insurance or drink or drug-related—part of their post-sentencing activity is that they come to the fire and rescue service for an evening and spend some time with us. We take them through a very hard-hitting educational programme, which has some very graphic images. We then quite literally put them in a car and provide them with the experience of being cut out of a car using the hydraulic equipment. I am very proud to say that to date, that has resulted in a 100% success rate against those individuals not reoffending to do with vehicle crime. That is replicated right across the UK with fire and rescue services. I think that is a very good example of where the brand imagery and the brand social positioning of fire and rescue services can be exploited a lot more to support the education work that goes right across both the public sector within the police and indeed lots of the voluntary sector to do with road safety as well. To us, education is the key. We have to be very sure that we can feed into the educational system and the national curriculum an opportunity to build in the solution for the next generation. Rather than us treating the symptom, we should be treating the root cause, which is very much to do with driver behaviour. The earlier we can get involved with students through key stage education, the less impact there will be on society later on.

Q287 Chair: Mr Etheridge, do you think that the Department’s framework as set out at the moment will help or hinder the fire and rescue service to do that sort of work?

David Etheridge: To be very frank, the level of fire service commentary in there is light. Fire and rescue services up and down the UK are significantly involved with road safety now because it is part of our business. Over a third of our calls now are associated with activity on the roads. We have managed over the last few years to halve the amount of accidental fires in homes and indeed halve the amount of deaths in homes. That is a good example of the powerful nature of the fire service brand in terms of community education. There is absolutely no reason why that could not be replicated in road safety, particularly if there was more funding and potentially legislative change that identified that fire and rescue services could be a vehicle to help manage this risk going forward.

Q288 Chair: What kind of change do you need?

David Etheridge: At the moment, for example, under the Fire and Rescue Services Act we have no statutory requirement to be involved in road safety at all. We do it because clearly it is the absolutely the right thing to do. For local neighbourhood action groups and local crime and disorder partnerships, speeding and vehicle driver behaviour are always an issue at local level. The fire and rescue service is very well placed to pick up on those local feelings and to react accordingly to local wishes. When it comes to some of the larger scale educational programmes and Government thinking, there is clearly a role for the fire and rescue service going forward to help educate the next generation of drivers coming through.
Chair: Thank you very much for coming and answering our questions.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Brian Simpson MEP, Chair, European Parliament Transport and Tourism Committee, Ellen Townsend, Policy Director, European Transport Safety Council, and Szabolcs Schmidt, Head of Road Safety, European Commission, gave evidence.

Q289 Chair: Good morning and welcome to the Transport Select Committee. Last year the Committee went to Brussels and we had the pleasure of meeting your Committee, Mr Simpson. I am very pleased indeed that you have been able to come along here today. Before we start the questions, could each of you give us your name and position? This is to help our records.

Szabolcs Schmidt: My name is Szabolcs Schmidt. I am the head of unit for road safety at the European Commission Services.

Brian Simpson: I am Brian Simpson, MEP for the north-west of England and chairman of the European Parliament’s Transport and Tourism Committee. My name is Ellen Townsend. I am policy director for the European Transport Safety Council. We are a non-governmental organisation with 45 members from across the EU. We have five UK members. One of the founder members is the Parliamentary Advisory Council for the Transport Committee—PACTS.

Q290 Chair: Is the UK a world leader in road safety?

Brian Simpson: The UK is certainly up there at the top as far as road safety is concerned, but we also need to recognise that we cannot be complacent about that. I often hear the phrase, “Our road safety record is better than x, y or z”, and in pure statistical terms that is probably correct, but we still have a death and injury toll on our roads that is far too high. As I have often said, Chair, if other modes of transport lost 2,500 to 3,000 people every year, then we, as politicians, would be jumping up and down wanting to know what we are going to do about it. Yet, on the roads, we have that kind of death toll and we seem to tinker at the edges with it. If you ask, “Is it better than in a lot of the other EU member states?”, the answer is resoundingly yes in statistical terms, but I always bring in the caveat that we cannot be complacent.

Q291 Chair: The European Commission still has targets for road safety, but the target to halve deaths between 2001 and 2010 was not met. Do you think that targets are the most effective way of dealing with this issue?

Brian Simpson: I really do think we need targets because, unless you have something to aim for, you lose the vision or focus of what you are trying to achieve. The European Parliament was quite critical of the Commission failing to reach the targets but then was also very much in favour of Vision Zero and the targets set out by the Commission in their road safety programme. I have listened to the debate on targets, both prior to us sitting here and also reading the reports from when you have questioned other people on targets, and I think targets are needed. I cannot get my head around why the UK Government want to take away targets on road transport but are very obsessed with targets in other areas. Education springs to mind. For me, if you need targets in education, surely you need targets in road safety where you are talking about people’s lives. I am happy that we have targets and I would hope the UK would also reintroduce targets.

Q292 Chair: Are there any examples of targets being set at a local or regional level rather than a national level in any European countries of which you are aware?

Brian Simpson: Every member state sets its targets at a national level. Where you have devolution of government, for example, in Germany, where you have the Länder, which are very strong, they will have their targets set within the national framework. You do have these targets that are there for people to aim for. In the European Union, and certainly the Commission has tried to do this, we have tried to harmonise the targets across the whole. That is a difficult task in itself because the situation you find in Germany, the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden is a lot different from what you would find in Bulgaria, Romania and the countries of eastern Europe. We still believe that setting something to aim for in European targets, even if it is a very harsh target to hit, is something worth doing.

Q293 Mr Leech: How many of the different members of the European Union reached the target of halving the number of deaths by half?

Brian Simpson: On a target of halving deaths, I would imagine not many would have reached it. I do not know the exact figures. Ellen might have better figures than I on that. I do not necessarily think that hitting the target is the key here. It would be wonderful to hit the target, but it is the fact that there is a target at all and it is something to work to. That is the principle that we have taken in Parliament.

Q294 Mr Leech: But is there any correlation between countries with tough targets doing better than countries without individual national targets?

Ellen Townsend: There was some evidence presented by one of the previous experts that cited a calculation of 4% average greater reduction in deaths in countries where there were strict targets, and I do have the
figures. What is interesting, the UK being one of the
EU15, is that the EU15 managed to achieve a minus
47% reduction as a whole. That is very close to the
minus 50% target. About 10 countries did manage to
do over 50%.
I would like to stress that one of those 10 was Sweden.
If we are talking about competition at the higher end
of the front-runners, the UK being one of the top three
countries in road traffic deaths, Sweden is the other
country with which the UK is quite often compared.
Sweden managed to do minus 50%. I would like to
pass the message on that it is possible to do even
better, even if you are one of the top performers.

Q295 Mr Leech: Did the countries that reached that
minus 50% target all have individual national targets?
Ellen Townsend: Yes. The only countries in the EU27
that do not have national numerical binding targets
are the UK, Malta and Luxembourg. Germany has just
adopted a new nationwide reduction target last
autumn. It is quite a historic thing. That really leaves
the UK with Luxembourg and Malta.

Q296 Mr Leech: Is there any correlation between the
best reductions being in countries where they have the
toughest targets to reach?
Ellen Townsend: Looking at the countries that have
managed to reduce massively, it is one of the key
elements. ETSC comes forward with a number of
reviews.

Q297 Chair: Could you say what ETSC is?
Ellen Townsend: European Transport Safety Council;
that is my organisation. We have a number of reviews.
One of them is “A Methodological Approach to
National Road Safety Policies” published in 2006. It
is basically a review that says these are the ingredients
that you need to put into place, and that includes
having a vision, a target, a road safety plan, objectives
and a review of the whole thing. A target is an integral
part of that.

Q298 Mr Leech: It would be fair to say that you
think targets are a good thing.
Ellen Townsend: Yes, crucial.

Q299 Mr Leech: And they have a significant impact
on reducing the number of deaths.
Ellen Townsend: Yes. If I may add one last sentence,
they are linked to political will and taking
responsibility for progress.

Q300 Chair: Your answer is yes.
Ellen Townsend: Yes.

Q301 Jim Dobbin: We had a discussion in the first
session about speed limits. It is common knowledge
that speed limits in some European countries are much
higher than here. Do you think that is a good example
for us to follow?
Brian Simpson: I don’t know, Mr Dobbin, because in
some instances the speed limit is slightly higher, but
that is because they are in kilometres per hour as
opposed to miles per hour; so it is 120 kph as opposed
to 70 mph. Technically, I would think you are right,
but the standardisation tends to be at 120 kph, except
Germany, which does not have a speed limit on its
autobahns, although it does put in speed limits on
certain sections of autobahn where it feels it is
dangerous and needs to be done. Germany is the only
country that does not have a maximum speed limit,
and I look to Ellen for confirmation.
Ellen Townsend: Yes.

Q302 Jim Dobbin: Where there is a speed limit, how
strict is the enforcement?
Brian Simpson: When you are looking across 27
member states you will always get a variance in how
it is enforced. That is always one of the key issues for
my Committee. You can pass as many regulations as
you like, as you will all know, but if you do not
enforce them then you have a problem. I believe there
is a very strong correlation that where you have “the
better countries”, if I can use that term, for accidents
and deaths, that is where the road regulations are
enforced more stringently.

Q303 Jim Dobbin: Do you think it would be a good
move for the situation in Europe to be translated into
this country and accepted here?
Brian Simpson: There are certain elements of what
other countries do that could be used in the UK by
way of road transport. I do not think you can have a
one-cap-fits-all and just plonk it on a country, but
there are elements that we do that are important in
road safety. There are also things that the UK could
do. The classic example of that is that the UK could
sign up to the cross-border enforcement regulation,
which they have failed to do. They are the only
member state that has not done that.
When you talk, as you did earlier, about speed limits
and how to enforce the speed limit on the motorway
if it goes up, at the moment you have 70,000 non-UK
drivers who break speed limits and go through red
lights, but you do not prosecute them. They go over
to their own country and you cannot get at them. In
that sense this is what this cross-border enforcement
legislation is designed to stop, but the UK would not
sign up to it.

Q304 Chair: Could you explain to us how it would be
different if the cross-border legislation was signed
up to?
Brian Simpson: I am not trying to do the
Commission’s job here, but what would happen with
cross-border enforcement is that, if you commit an
offence in another member state, they could then ask
you—in the case of a UK driver they would ask the
UK—to enforce their regulation, pick up their fine,
put on their points or whatever it is so that you could
not get away from the force of the law.
Where you have serious accidents, where there is
death or serious injury, the laws are in place anyway
to arrest people and hold them accordingly. We are
talking here about speeding offences, non-payment of
the congestion charge, jumping a red light or
whatever. At the moment you cannot prosecute non-
UK drivers if they go back to their home country.
Ellen Townsend: Maybe I could add a couple of
words on a possible rise in the speed limit. As a road
safety organisation, we also would not like to see an increase in the speed limit on the UK highway. Mr Etheridge from the fire service very clearly made a good case about it. If you have an increase of speed, that will lead to greater severity in terms of crash results.

ETSC is gathering data from across the different EU countries and looking at progress in relation to different indicators. Three years ago we published a report comparing the different numbers of death rates on the motorways. I just want to cite a couple of things. First, 8% of the total deaths in the EU occur on the motorways. That is data for the EU 25 from 2006. However, motorways account for only 1% of all roads. Yes, they are safe, but there is still a lot more that can be done to make them safer.

If I can pick up on the point made by Mr Harris, I would say that increasing the speed limit would not be one of the ways of making roads safer. You were asking before about what other countries were doing in terms of best practice on highway safety and what could Great Britain learn from other European countries. Mr Leech mentioned section control, so speed enforcement time over distance, which I understand is already here on some sections of the UK highway. This is seen to be very effective. I have an example here from Italy. They introduced it first as a pilot but now it is being stretched across their whole highway network. They have managed to halve deaths on the section of the highways through using section control. That has been evidenced and looked at.

Q305 Chair: We have some specific areas of concern. One is to do with the very high death rate among young drivers. Are there any lessons that we could learn on how to address that in a more effective way? There is a very high death rate for young and novice drivers. Do you have any suggestions as to how that could be addressed? Are there any examples in the rest of Europe as to how that is looked at in a more effective way, perhaps by graduated licences or training pre and post-test?

Szabolcs Schmidt: I will start with that and if you allow me later on I will give a few facts and figures on the speed limit.

Q306 Chair: No; I am asking you about young drivers. I want to know about the young drivers.

Szabolcs Schmidt: With young drivers, we are in an area of course where we have a shared responsibility. The competence of the European Commission in terms of legislation is rather limited. A lot of actions need to be taken at a national, if not a local, level. One of the few areas where the community could become active is in driving licence regulation. We have a huge problem with young drivers, and especially young drivers on motorcycles—the so-called powered two wheelers. There, indeed, we have had an amendment of the driving licence legislation. It was the third amendment in 2009 to be transposed. Graduated access to licensing was introduced at European level for powered two wheelers. We think it is really important because these are very dangerous vehicles, not only for the driver himself but for more vulnerable participants in transport such as cyclists and pedestrians. We have a clear legal obligation that, from 2013 onwards, there needs to be graduated access for those who would like to enter the highest ceiling, unless they have reached a certain age.

By the way, we are still looking forward to receiving the complete transposition from the UK of this directive, which has not yet taken place. It will be one of the big works of the European Commission to make sure that the legislation in force is correctly applied in a harmonious way throughout the EU so that we do not find the situation that in one member state it is applied in one way and in another way in another member state.

Beyond that, we are certainly promoting the graduate access posts in advance at a very early stage, starting with school age, by having dedicated curricula on road safety to train young people how to behave. For the time being in terms of legislation, we think it is more appropriate to focus the European report on those groups that are really vulnerable, and, as I explained, these are usually the young people on powered cycles.

Having said that, we are financing and undertaking a lot of campaigns. For instance, under the Cypriot presidency there will be a so-called "Road Safety Day"—we will organise it with a certain frequency—that will be dedicated to this group of young people. It should deal with questions arising from the driving behaviour of young people. Of course, these will be recommendations to be taken on board by the various member states.

Brian Simpson: Chair, in Dieter Koch’s report to Parliament, to answer your question succinctly, there are four sections in which we specifically look at young drivers, including the graduated driver, education and all of that. There is also education not just on driving but on the problems of driving while drunk or under the influence of drugs and so on. I am sure you will find paragraphs 28 to 32 of that report interesting, if your secretariat can dig it out.

Q307 Chair: If there are any examples of greater success than we achieve, please direct our attention to that. That would help us because we do not seem to have grasped this nettle very well. We do not seem to have managed to achieve significant changes.

Brian Simpson: Okay.

Q308 Julian Sturdy: Mr Schmidt, I want to clarify what you have just said. Are you saying that there is an EU directive coming forward regarding the access to the graduated licensing and that will include better education in schools at a certain age? Is that what you are saying? Are you hoping that all member states would sign up to that? I just need to clarify that I have that correct in my mind.

Szabolcs Schmidt: Perhaps I was too quick. There are two distinct things. One is all the measures that can be taken at national level, such as education at school, which are not covered by the driving licence at all but are strongly promoted by the European Union by way of giving grants to organisations and by awareness-raising campaigns and so on. It has nothing to do with the driving licence legislation. These are so-called "soft" measures.
Q309 Julian Sturdy: Which you are promoting. Szabolcs Schmidt: Which we are promoting and where we have no power to enforce it. Where we have power to enforce is the graduated access to the licence for heavy motorcycles. From 2013 onwards, at the age of 16 you can only drive a limited engine size and then you can gradually improve by two steps, unless you have reached the age of 24, when you can have direct access to the heavy cycle.

Q310 Julian Sturdy: That is for motorcycles only then. Szabolcs Schmidt: This is only for motorcycles because we identified that that is the most vulnerable group. These are young people who are not trained and are not well advised to access the streets immediately with heavy motorcycles. That is why this graduated access will become legally binding all over the EU from 19 January 2013 onwards. Brian Simpson: The Motorcycle Action Group are not overly enamoured with it, as I am sure you are aware.

Q311 Julian Sturdy: I just wanted to be clear in my mind. On this point, in previous sessions we have talked about the UK driving licence test. A number of people have said that in its current form they do not believe it is fit for purpose. What are your views on that and what is happening in the rest of Europe regarding an improved test process and enforcement around that? Brian Simpson: It is a problem Europe-wide. There is exactly the same issue. I do not think the driving test is strict enough in the UK. I do not think it is strict enough throughout Europe.

Q312 Julian Sturdy: It is not just a UK issue: it is a Europe-wide problem?

Brian Simpson: It is not just a UK problem at all. Szabolcs Schmidt: There is an additional problem in that the way in which you obtain a driving licence is very diverse across Europe. There are very different ways to get a driving licence and this makes a comparison very difficult. On the other hand, and I come back to your very first question, if you look at the overall performance of the UK in terms of road safety, it cannot be the worst system, but there is always room to improve. This is always something we are considering. We do not yet have concrete proposals, but we are considering and working upon common curricula so that every driving instructor throughout Europe should at least provide the same level of education to his trainees. This is something we would like to achieve in order to improve the road safety record.

Q313 Julian Sturdy: I have one more point. Moving on to cyclists, incidents in the UK involving cyclists have gone up recently. When I go to Europe on holiday with my family it is quite prominent in certain cities that cycling is very well promoted. In certain areas safety would be classed as being a lot better in certain cities. What do you think the UK can do to improve the safety of cycling within our cities? I am a York MP, a renowned cycling city, but again talking to local constituents they still want a safer city for cycling. Are there lessons we can learn from that?

Brian Simpson: There are two issues for me on that. One is education of more motor vehicle drivers as to the presence of not just cyclists but pedestrians. It is what we call the vulnerable road users. Again, in the report from the European Parliament there is a whole section on vulnerable road users, including cyclists. If you get a few minutes you may want to have a look at that. The difficulty in the UK is that you need to segregate the cyclists out from the other road users. Sticking a two-foot wide lane with a yellow line on the main road through Wigan doesn’t do it, frankly. That is what we have got to look at. Also, with road safety, I would plead with you not to forget that road infrastructure has a big role to play in road safety and reducing accidents. It is the way roads are constructed. That is particularly the case with vulnerable road users. It is where you site your zebra crossings and how you work your level crossings, which we have a problem with in the UK. As you will be aware, motorists seem to have this bizarre death wish to cross a level crossing when a train is coming. It is how you educate people about that, but it is also how you look at your infrastructure to try and help. We have a problem in the United Kingdom particularly with cyclists. City roads and urban areas tend to be tight. We ask cyclists to share the road with other road users, and that is probably a recipe for disaster. If they do not do that, they go on the pavement, and that is a recipe for disaster for the pedestrians.

Szabolcs Schmidt: I would like to add something to that. It is a very sensitive area for us because it is typically a case for subsidiarity. Cyclists would hardly ever approach a trans-European network for which we feel responsible. This is a typical case, not just for national authorities but often for local authorities to find appropriate solutions. We can certainly promote best practice to help this process. I know my colleagues from the so-called Urban Transport Unit are working on that. To give you an illustration, I fully agree with what MEP Simpson has said, but in order to give you the opposite example, if you are forced to share roads, there is not only the possibility to segregate traffic but to turn it around. There is, for instance, a recent example from Belgium where vehicles are allowed to visit the cycle lanes as guests. In other words, the road is dedicated as a cycling lane, and the private cars or vehicles have to line up behind the cyclists and drive at such speed and with such care that they do not cause danger to the cyclists. This is just to illustrate that there are many ways to deal with it. It depends very much on the local situation.

Something which we did at European level, and which in this respect is very important, is the blind spot mirror. We have introduced legislation under which every new heavy goods vehicle has to be equipped with a blind spot mirror in order to spot cyclists more easily. We went further and imposed on the operators of heavy goods vehicles a retrofitting requirement. Now you will not find a single truck without blind spot mirrors. That has certainly contributed to easing the problem a little bit.
Q314 Chair: To which countries does this apply?
Szabolcs Schmidt: All over Europe.
Ellen Townsend: Everywhere.
Brian Simpson: Everywhere, yes. It is a European directive.

Q315 Jim Dobbin: On this issue of cycling and who is a danger to whom, as a Member of the Council of Europe, when I go to Strasbourg, I always feel under threat from cyclists. It might well be that I am an irresponsible pedestrian; I do not know. What is your view of that?
Brian Simpson: I think you should stand outside the Berlaymont as well as in Brussels. That is another one.

Ellen Townsend: I have a couple of things to say. Generally, what is good for cyclists is also good for pedestrians. Again I cite Sweden as an example and as your main competitor. They managed specifically to reduce the number of pedestrian and cyclists’ deaths by 50% in 2001–2010. What did Sweden do, and is GB doing the same thing or not? What can be learned from that? They invested heavily in what Brian has already mentioned, which is the separation of pedestrians and cyclists through infrastructure measures. They also rolled out 30 kph or 20 mph zones. So another thing was the management of speed at the lower end. We were talking earlier about speed on the highways—in urban and also residential areas specifically.

The last point where the UK should be playing a more proactive role—I know we will come to vehicle safety—is in terms of trucks and bikes interacting. There is a lot more that can be done to look at underrun protection. If a truck is involved in a collision with a cyclist, there are further improvements that can be made to make the underrun of the heavy goods vehicle better so that the unfortunate cyclist or pedestrian would be more likely to survive. Again, that is an area where the EU has exclusive competence, but the UK has a seat at the table to argue for stronger legislation. We really need that leadership from you.

Q316 Mr Harris: Mr Simpson, I can confidently predict that you are about to get a lot of mail from members of the CTC—formerly the Cyclists’ Touring Club—complaining about the notion that we should segregate the main traffic from cyclists. If I am wrong they can correct me, but their view would probably be that the roads are there for everyone and it is up to motorists and cyclists to understand each other’s behaviour; that is how you reduce accidents.

Are there other nations who have done what you are advocated for a much greater extent in having separate infrastructure? As you rightly say, it is difficult to do it in cities where things are very tight. In the Netherlands or Sweden, for example, is a huge amount of money spent on completely separate cycle paths as opposed to the way we do it here?

Brian Simpson: Getting letters from CTC is nothing new. I have been getting them from all kinds of user groups. Where we have seen that separation taking place and where it is possible to do it—in some instances it is just not possible to do it because of the very physicality of the city or whatever—then we have found it has been safer for cyclists to ride without fear of being knocked off by other road users.

Q317 Mr Harris: Have those countries that have seen a much bigger increase in cycle usage done that by enrolling other road users to understand the behaviour of cyclists or by creating a separate infrastructure?
Brian Simpson: They have done both. Once you do it, by its very nature you have the education process in place. Those countries that have done it also tend to be more cycle-conscious—some would say cycle-crazy. The Low Countries, Sweden and Denmark have an education from day one. When you see the kids on their bikes in these countries with mum and dad, and the little ones on the back, that is when they start their education. We don’t; we tend to give an 11 or 12-year-old a bike and say, “There’s your bike at Christmas, son. Away you go”, and we send him straight on to the A49 or whatever. There is an issue there as to education, but I think one leads to the other. That is why those countries with what is seen as a more pro-cycling approach have the least accident figures.

Szabolcs Schmidt: I can add to that from my empiric experience with my children who visited school in Germany at that time. There was indeed a dedicated lesson at the age of seven or eight on how to behave on a cycle and what to do. It underlines what MEP Simpson has just said. That is in a country that opts for a separate lane system.

Brian Simpson: We used to do that in this country. For those of us old enough to remember the cycling proficiency test in the school backyard: guilty as charged.

Q318 Mr Harris: We have new standards in schools, but it is not quite the cycling proficiency test.
Ellen Townsend: I can add one last thing on cycling. This is not just part of the new EU White Paper on Transport to tackle climate change; it is one of the priorities within the UK as well. The Transport White Paper advocates cycling and walking for all journeys under 5 km. ETSC say that they are risky forms of transport, but, instead of saying we do not want people to walk, we want to make that much safer and encourage people to do that.

Another point which we have not touched on yet is the “safety in numbers” concept. I have been living and working in Brussels for 10 years. When I arrived I was one of the few to cycle, but now there is a modal split of about 5%. The more people there are out cycling is very good in terms of increasing the awareness of other road users, as we said before, with pedestrians or drivers not being shocked that there is a cyclist whistling past.

Q319 Julie Hilling: I would like to ask one last question on cycling and then ask some on health. Are other EU countries better at enforcing cyclists to obey the traffic laws? A huge problem is the fact that cyclists think it is fine to go through red lights and a huge amount of money is spent on completely separate cycle paths as opposed to the way we do it here?

Brian Simpson: Getting letters from CTC is nothing new. I have been getting them from all kinds of user groups. Where we have seen that separation taking place and where it is possible to do it—in some instances it is just not possible to do it because of the
users. Do other countries have better methods of enforcing it?

Szabolcs Schmidt: To give you one example, in some countries, for instance, if a person is preparing for a test for a driving licence for a motor vehicle, if he or she is caught for a bicycle violation or even as a pedestrian for crossing on a red light, it is noted down and it will have an impact on his or her admission to the test. They would need to wait for another six months or something like that and take lessons. You have countries where the enforcement of the traffic rules on these non-registered road users is also taken care of, to some extent at least.

Ellen Townsend: I have an example to cite from the police in Germany. I can send it to you in a note, but they ran a campaign whereby during the first period they were just stopping cyclists and saying, “You just went through a red light. I am not going to fine you this time, but do you realise what that could actually mean to yourself and other road users? By the way, this is part of a campaign and we are going to come back and within two months this would be the fine that would be incurred by your particular offence.” They then came back at a certain time afterwards and did proper enforcement of cyclists. That is a classic approach to effective enforcement. It is linking the preventative with the explanatory, and then following up, hopefully, with a smaller percentage that was ignoring the original advice.

Brian Simpson: Again, it is the same old issue. Those who enforce their traffic regulations will enforce their bicycle regulations as well.

Q320 Chair: It is a general issue of enforcement. 
Brian Simpson: Yes.

Q321 Julie Hilling: I want to ask about health issues related to driving. I am interested in eyesight testing and also sleep apnoea. Could you tell us what health checks you believe there should be?
Chair: Do you think there should be mandatory eyesight testing?
Brian Simpson: In this Dieter Koch report again, you will find that he believes there should be mandatory eye tests from age 65.
Ellen Townsend: It is every 10 years and for older drivers every five years, “older” being over 65.

Q322 Chair: That is after the age of 65.
Ellen Townsend: That is right.
Brian Simpson: That is what is in the recommendation.

Q323 Chair: There is an ongoing issue about diabetes as well. Could you tell us where that is up to? There is some discussion going on about that and the definition.
Brian Simpson: Yes, there is.
Szabolcs Schmidt: This affects a Commission directive, which stems from the driving licence directive. I am afraid there might be some misunderstanding or misreporting in the media. As a matter of fact, in the framework of testing fitness to drive there is a detailed description in the technical annex of how people who are suffering from diabetes shall be treated. As a general principle, of course, people who have diabetes have full rights to drive their vehicle and it is in no way limited. However, it also defines the severe cases—those cases which really pose a threat to road safety. It is very simply defined. A group of medical experts has worked on that for a long time. It simply says that, if a person cannot control his diabetes himself and he or she requires medical assistance or becomes unconscious, then this is a clear indication that the diabetes is not under control. If that is repeated, this person should be checked to see whether he or she can keep their driving licence.

Something along these lines has always been practised in the UK. I cannot imagine that it is something strikingly new because it is the principle that those people who have such severe diabetes should submit themselves to a reassessment. Of course, if it is brought under control, they will get their driving licence back. It is stricter for professional drivers. A single such hypoglycaemic event should call for the withdrawal of the driving licence if the test shows that he has no control of the sickness.

Q324 Chair: Are you saying, Mr Schmidt, that that particular directive should not alter the current situation in the UK, because there has been some concern about what the directive actually means?

Szabolcs Schmidt: I do not honestly know what the situation was before in the UK. I am referring to the overall good performance of the UK. This is part of the overall situation. The UK has looked very seriously into the fitness to drive for health reasons in the past. If doctors have seen that a person cannot continue to drive easily because of health reasons and must undergo treatment, it also happened in the past, and now there is a European directive which specifies what should happen and gives a very clear definition. It is now crystal clear to everyone what a severe event is. It is the case which I have described. I cannot tell you what past practice in the UK has been, but I have a suspicion that there is a little bit of misreporting or perhaps the UK authorities have put something stricter in place than the EU directive. I cannot exclude that; I do not know.

Brian Simpson: That is my information as well. Chair. The DVLA and the Department for Transport considered that these new rules are more clear-cut than previous EU rules and, therefore, the current UK standard will need to be interpreted more strictly than previously. That is what was said to me. We now have a common definition of what it is. It is having a severe attack more than once a year, with “severe” in turn being defined as necessitating the assistance of another person. That is what the definition is. The DVLA has now decided with the Department for Transport that we need to be stricter in the UK than we have been in the past. That is the thing I had been questioning, and you may wish to.
Chair: Thank you for clarifying that.

Q325 Julie Hilling: Are you looking at other medical conditions? As I say, sleep apnoea is something that we know affects an awful lot of lorry drivers. Is this something that is being looked at across Europe?
**Brian Simpson:** It is.

**Szabolcs Schmidt:** That is why I raised my hand. As to the first part of your question, we are now setting up a similar working group of medical experts to define the criteria for sleep apnoea. In due course there will be a definition of when sleep apnoea leads to a situation where fitness to drive needs to be reassessed.

**Q326 Julie Hilling:** Are you looking at any other medical conditions?

**Szabolcs Schmidt:** Yes. It is already in place for epileptics and on eye testing. Cardiovascular diseases are currently being reassessed. There is already a definition, and experts in the medical field have informed us that it needs some fine tuning, which is ongoing. So these are the areas.

**Q327 Chair:** There does not seem to be a lot of connection between the UK policy and some of the European initiatives like EuroRAP, looking at the safety of the roads and indeed the vehicles. Do you think that is a big problem?

**Brian Simpson:** I do, but always recognising of course that road safety in the generic sense in the end, if you take away the driving licence regulations and the health requirements, is a thing for member states and subsidiarity. Ellen mentioned earlier that the lack of joined-up thinking and looking at best practice is quite stark when you look at road safety in particular, not just in the UK but across the EU as a whole. I go back to what I said right at the very beginning. We have the best road safety record; we do. But it has made us a little bit cocky and a bit complacent, in my opinion. We still have 2,500 deaths a year and a load of accidents and injuries. There is still work to be done. In that regard we should be getting more involved in what is going on in other countries through the European Union. Let us have a look at that best practice and see what can be done.

When you look at things now generally, there are some good ideas that we had in the UK that are now being used in European countries. There are ideas they have had that we have used over here. For example, there are chevrons on motorways, to give you a classic example, and “Mind your Distance”. France had that idea first. There is a lot we can do by working together. There is also a role here for the European Union to co-ordinate that so that we can work together for what is best for each individual member state.

**Q328 Chair:** Thank you very much indeed to all of you.

**Brian Simpson:** Chair, can I make one point because I would be shot if I did not make it? One of the things that came out of the report by Mr Koch, which we have not touched on, is blood alcohol levels. In particular, the UK has the highest blood alcohol tolerance, if you like, within the EU. My Committee is very committed to the fact that blood alcohol levels should be harmonised downwards. We have an agreement on 0.5%. Some would rather go even further. I know it is something that we have looked at in the UK, but they would have killed me if I had gone back and had not mentioned it to you.

**Ellen Townsend:** I would support that.

**Chair:** You have sparked off another question.

**Q329 Julie Hilling:** Can I ask about the evidence of more accidents when people are driving between 0.5% and 0.8%? What evidence is there of this?

**Chair:** We did in fact look at this issue in earlier sessions. One of the questions that came up was enforcement being more effective than lowering the limit. I really do not want to open up the whole topic, but Ms Hilling has asked for your comments.

**Brian Simpson:** Enforcement is key. Again, you can have whatever level you like if it is not enforced.

**Ellen Townsend:** We would also need more enforcement of drink-driving in the UK. ETSC has also done a comparison of the numbers of breath tests per 1,000 population. If you look at Finland, Sweden and the countries at the top, there are between 385 and 287 checks per 1,000. I will have to double check that.

**Q330 Chair:** We did look at this issue before, but Mr Simpson was right to bring our attention to his concern here.

**Brian Simpson:** I had to.

**Szabolcs Schmidt:** It is also very much a question of message, especially to young people. If they see that alcohol and driving do not fit with each other—not even a single glass of beer normally—then this is a very important message to improve the road safety record. The UK is performing very well, and I have said it several times, but there is one particular issue. If you look at the statistics, young drivers below the age of 25 are not as good as the EU average, and also motorcyclists. Everything that can help young drivers to be oriented in the right direction, and alcohol is one of the big problems, could be helpful in that respect.

**Chair:** I thank all of you very much indeed for coming and assisting us in our inquiry so well.
Tuesday 6 March 2012

Members present:
Mrs Louise Ellman (Chair)
Steve Baker
Jim Dobbin
Mr Tom Harris
Julie Hilling
Mr John Leech
Paul Maynard
Iain Stewart
Julian Sturdy

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Mike Penning MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, and Andrew Colski, Head of Road Safety Policy, Department for Transport, gave evidence.

Q331 Chair: Good morning, Minister, and welcome to the Transport Select Committee.
There are no targets in the Government’s strategy on road safety, and the Department says that it does not feel that there is a need for national targets to support road safety. Local government has suffered a great loss of funding, including the loss of ring-fenced grants for road safety. In that context, how are the Government showing leadership in relation to road safety?
Mike Penning: In terms of road safety the coalition agreement does not say, “This is the target for the next 10 years,” but there is a set of targets and achievements that we would like to get through. You have hit the nail on the head by saying that, in these difficult economic times, we have removed the ring fencing, particularly on road safety cameras, but we are continuing to fund local government as best we can. However, two things will make that very difficult. If we believe in localism, which the coalition Government and I do, it is very difficult to pass more and more responsibility down to local government— with less money, as you say—but at the same time say to them, “It is a national target that you should do this.”
The other thing that is significant is this. There is no doubt that the targets did help the drive down, but—and it is a very big but—if you set targets, it is always the easier options that people will look at. People will do the things that are simpler and easier, but the more difficult things will not get done because it is an overall target rather than an ambition based within the various sectors. Although there are people who are concerned about the strategy in that there were targets, it was, as I am sure you would agree, warmly welcomed that we got it out as early as we did, and with the cross-Government strategy and localism, I think it is a good strategy that we are taking forward.

Q332 Chair: Where is the leadership from the Government or the Department in this?
Mike Penning: Targets do not mean leadership. Targets mean, “Here is a target. By the way, you go off and do it.” That is what we will be saying to local government. What we are saying across the strategy is that we need to drive down the very good road safety figures that we have now and to look at the more difficult areas. If you look at the strategy, you will see that we are particularly targeting areas that would have been easier to leave behind if there was a set target across the board. I do not accept your analogy that perhaps there is no leadership; there is strong leadership, but a lot of this has to be done at the local level. Local communities are much more responsible in driving the agenda forward in their areas. They know their roads and their communities better than we in central Government do, but we will give them all the help we can. As you said, the money was hypothecated or ring-fenced into set areas before, but we have now removed that. I am very pleased that we did so, because it has allowed the local authorities to start thinking out of the box and not say, “The only way to do this is x”, normally with cameras, but look at other options as well.

Q333 Mr Leech: ACPO has told us that, with an absence of targets, police forces were unlikely to prioritise casualty reduction because they had to meet other targets. Interestingly, when I met GMP—Greater Manchester police—a couple of days later, they said they were prioritising road casualty reductions because of the number of casualties that there had been in the area. How do we make sure that all police authorities prioritise road safety in the same way as GMP, because ACPO says others almost certainly will not?
Mike Penning: I spoke at the ACPO road safety conference in the Midlands this year and took extensive questioning for nearly an hour. That matter was not raised with me, although I see that it was mentioned in its evidence to you. Best practice in a lot of authorities—Manchester is a classic example—is that they will continue to prioritise it, because that is their job. It is difficult because, although we have started to remove targets across Government, we have not removed them completely. I do not think that there is any doubt that the commissioner’s priorities will be based around this. In central Government we have said that we wish to improve the excellent record that we have on road safety and on people killed or seriously injured, but it has to be a bottom-up and not a top-down way of approaching it.

Q334 Mr Leech: Is there not a real danger, if a police force has targets for burglary reduction or whatever but does not have a target for road safety, that resources, which are quite difficult at the moment, will clearly be focused on those areas with targets?
Mike Penning: I accept the point you are making, Mr Leech, and difficult decisions have had to be made.
However, your own authority in your part of the world made a conscious decision not to do that, and it is for us as politicians, from central Government as well as in our constituencies, to make sure that those priorities are kept, because road safety saves lives. That is crucial. At the same time, ACPO will tell you—I have discussed this with the association—that if you have a simplistic target, you get simplistic answers. At the moment, we need to be much more targeted about the problems in our local areas.

Q335 Mr Harris: Minister, you said in your opening statement that you thought the road safety record in Britain was good. In your opinion, what role have nationally set targets played in achieving that good record in the past?

Mike Penning: As I said a moment ago, I think they have helped to focus minds—there is no doubt about that—but I also said that, if you have simplistic targets, then you will get simplistic answers.

For instance, the police in your local area will tell you, as they said to me before I became a Minister, that we need to drive down the number of people using mobile phones when driving. At the moment it is not on our target tick box, and we do not get brownie points for pulling it off. Some of us in Opposition, with some colleagues in Government, went to see the Minister and said, “Look, if the police are asking for it, give it to them.” Actually, prosecutions for that offence have hardly changed, yet it is a very serious offence that needs to be addressed, because distraction when you are driving is one of the main culprits in accidents. I think you will find that it has had its day—that is what we feel as a Government—but that does not mean there is no target within the strategy, because there is a long-term strategy and a long-term target for it. What we are not saying is, “You will do this,” or, “You will do that,” because we do not know in central Government what will be best for local communities.

Q336 Mr Harris: You say that you have a long-term target, but your strategic framework states that a 37% casualty reduction is neither a target nor a definitive forecast. What is it?

Mike Penning: It is not a target, otherwise we would not be having this discussion. You would be saying, “There is a target there. Are you going to hit your target?”

Q337 Mr Harris: I am just giving you an opportunity to clarify that because you said you do have long-term targets.

Mike Penning: Yes, but it is not a target. Do we want to drive down the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads? Yes. Do we feel that the road safety strategy will help to do that? Yes. Do we feel that local authorities and local communities should take responsibility as we drive forward with localism? Yes, we do.

Q338 Mr Harris: You do not see any kind of contradiction in admitting that nationally set targets have in the past helped us to achieve one of the best road safety records in Europe and saying that removing those targets will also help us to maintain that record?

Mike Penning: You used the word “help”. It was your word, not mine. It did help. I said that.

Q339 Mr Harris: It did help.

Mike Penning: Yes.

Q340 Mr Harris: Are you saying, therefore, that removing them will also help?

Mike Penning: I am saying that we have got to a position where we are very low in Europe, as you said, and even worldwide we are doing remarkably well, but we also need to look at how to break through that next barrier and get it even lower. I repeat that simplistic targets are not the answer; that is certainly the Government’s view. To be fair, in Opposition we said that we would look at removing targets because they are too simplistic. We do not want people concentrating on the target instead of on what we need to do.

Q341 Paul Maynard: Forgive me for sticking with targets, but the Chairman and I visited Halton and Liverpool last Thursday to look at what they were doing at the local level. Halton, which is a Labour-controlled council, gave some very interesting answers to our questions about targets. It has been the best performing council in reducing KSIs by some 73%, but councillors said that they were relieved that there were no longer national targets as they were crude and would force them to squeeze out more despite having over-achieved already. However, there is clearly still a problem in that many parts of the country have not achieved Halton’s high level of performance. Doncaster was cited—an area that has seen no reduction at all. What can central Government do, if anything, to help areas such as Doncaster, where national targets have clearly not made a difference, to make the difference that we all want to see?

Mike Penning: I would also like to praise Halton, because the work it has done over the years has really helped in moving the debate forward. I am well aware of the work that has been done there, but I am also aware that other local authorities—not only the one that you mention, Mr Maynard—no matter what target was set, have just ignored it. It is not because they do not want to improve things, but, frankly, the best practice just has not got through. We need to push out best practice from places such as Halton. Also, if we believe in local democracy, how can you live in a community where a local authority is not promoting road safety in the way that other areas are? It is not about money. In most cases, it is about mindset and priorities. I did not know that Halton councillors had said that to you, Mr Maynard, but I am ever so pleased that they did because it backs up exactly what the Government’s strategy is.

Q342 Paul Maynard: Another thing I discussed with Halton councillors was why they felt that road safety was such an important issue for them as elected members and why that was not necessarily the case for other councils. It was interesting to note that they
were very clear about it not being a matter of party politics but about the linkages to their local area and the impact of road traffic accidents there. What work are the Government doing with local councils that are not achieving in order to get this culture change? It is clearly at the heart of what Liverpool and Halton are doing, but it is missing in other areas.

Mike Penning: There are two ways of doing it. You can use a big stick, if you wish, saying, “This is the Government target and this is the way you should do it.” We have tried that, and in some areas it clearly has not worked. We are getting out into those local authority areas. My colleague Norman Baker and I wrote to every local authority leader earlier this week setting out best practice and offering assistance and help on how to go forward. This is not party political, as you rightly say. It is about local democracy. We have published all the data on speed cameras so that everyone knows whether they are doing their job or not. In some areas there were no accidents before the speed cameras were introduced and now there are more accidents, so something is clearly going seriously wrong and those cameras should be redeployed or removed altogether. Speed cameras have their place, but, as we are all aware, they were used to raise cash rather than doing the job for which they were designed, which was to prevent accidents. However, we have to work with local government, and my officials are regularly out there trying to help them, but you can only help those who want to be helped. As for those that do not want to be helped, I would argue that that is a local democracy issue, and perhaps the local community should tell them exactly what people would like in the area, because I know what I would like in mine.

Q343 Steve Baker: In the absence of targets, how will we know in five years whether or not the strategy has been a success?

Mike Penning: Because of the percentage of killed and seriously injured. We keep the data and we will publish it. We will name and shame local authorities, which I did not say in answer to Mr Maynard’s question. It is important, if you believe in local democracy, that you have the facts in front of you—an evidence base. You will have seen that in the first two quarters this year we sadly had a decline—a slight reverse—in performance and then we had a third quarter when it went the other way again. We must not look at these things in isolation over a short period; the trend is better, but it will become harder to continue that trend as we go forward. We must then look at the huge success that managed motorway networks have achieved, although I accept they have been very expensive, especially the early ones. We are considering whether we need to do hard shoulder as well as managed motorways, or whether we should use the technology just for managed motorways and perhaps look at hard shoulder later on when we have more capital funds available. That is something that we are looking at now; the proven technology is there. We could do exactly what you suggest, but I have to address this question of the advisory and mandatory path within the legislation, which is very complicated under UK law.

Q344 Iain Stewart: When looking at areas where an 80 mph limit would not be appropriate, are you thinking of systems such as that in France, where there is a default lower speed limit on the motorways in adverse weather conditions?

Mike Penning: I hate to say this, but parts of the French motorway network have technology that is slightly in advance of ours. They have the ability to move information out to the motorist in a different way. They also have a different system from us. We have advisory and mandatory speed limits, whereas in France they tend to be mandatory. We can look at the huge success that managed motorway networks have achieved, although I accept that they have been very expensive, especially the early ones. We are considering whether we need to do hard shoulder as well as managed motorways, or whether we should use the technology just for managed motorways and perhaps look at hard shoulder later on when we have more capital funds available. That is something that we are looking at now; the proven technology is there. We could do exactly what you suggest, but I have to address this question of the advisory and mandatory path within the legislation, which is very complicated under UK law.

Q347 Chair: When do you expect to go out to consultation on the 80 mph speed limit?

Mike Penning: When you expect to go out to consultation? We announced right from the start that we would look at the national speed limit on motorways, but there would be some motorway areas where that would not be viable. Before we go out to consultation, we are looking at getting the evidence base together so that we can and will go out to consultation. Will there be parts of the motorway network that will not change if we agree to go to 80 mph? Yes, there will, but the key is that it will be a proper consultation. I remember sitting before this Committee previously saying that consultations have to do what it says on the tin. It must be a proper consultation. A lot of work will need to be done on exactly where 80 mph is or is not viable, particularly looking at the road safety against the flow argument, but we have to be honest with the public. If you have ACPO in front of you, I hope you ask them whether they enforce up to 80 mph on the motorways, because the answer will be no. The motorway speed limit was set in 1965, but vehicles, drivers, the test and everything has changed quite dramatically since then. But we will consult, and it will be a proper consultation.

Q346 Iain Stewart: When looking at areas where an 80 mph limit would not be appropriate, are you thinking of systems such as that in France, where there is a default lower speed limit on the motorways in adverse weather conditions?

Mike Penning: I hate to say this, but parts of the French motorway network have technology that is slightly in advance of ours. They have the ability to move information out to the motorist in a different way. They also have a different system from us. We have advisory and mandatory speed limits, whereas in France they tend to be mandatory. We can look at the huge success that managed motorway networks have achieved, although I accept that they have been very expensive, especially the early ones. We are considering whether we need to do hard shoulder as well as managed motorways, or whether we should use the technology just for managed motorways and perhaps look at hard shoulder later on when we have more capital funds available. That is something that we are looking at now; the proven technology is there. We could do exactly what you suggest, but I have to address this question of the advisory and mandatory path within the legislation, which is very complicated under UK law.

Q347 Chair: When do you expect to go out to consultation on the 80 mph speed limit?

Mike Penning: When you expect to go out to consultation? We announced right from the start that we would look at the national speed limit on motorways, but there would be some motorway areas where that would not be viable. Before we go out to consultation, we are looking at getting the evidence base together so that we can and will go out to consultation. Will there be parts of the motorway network that will not change if we agree to go to 80 mph? Yes, there will, but the key is that it will be a proper consultation. I remember sitting before this Committee previously saying that consultations have to do what it says on the tin. It must be a proper consultation. A lot of work will need to be done on exactly where 80 mph is or is not viable, particularly looking at the road safety against the flow argument, but we have to be honest with the public. If you have ACPO in front of you, I hope you ask them whether they enforce up to 80 mph on the motorways, because the answer will be no. The motorway speed limit was set in 1965, but vehicles, drivers, the test and everything has changed quite dramatically since then. But we will consult, and it will be a proper consultation.

Q346 Iain Stewart: When looking at areas where an 80 mph limit would not be appropriate, are you thinking of systems such as that in France, where there is a default lower speed limit on the motorways in adverse weather conditions?

Mike Penning: I hate to say this, but parts of the French motorway network have technology that is slightly in advance of ours. They have the ability to move information out to the motorist in a different way. They also have a different system from us. We have advisory and mandatory speed limits, whereas in France they tend to be mandatory. We can look at the huge success that managed motorway networks have achieved, although I accept that they have been very expensive, especially the early ones. We are considering whether we need to do hard shoulder as well as managed motorways, or whether we should use the technology just for managed motorways and perhaps look at hard shoulder later on when we have more capital funds available. That is something that we are looking at now; the proven technology is there. We could do exactly what you suggest, but I have to address this question of the advisory and mandatory path within the legislation, which is very complicated under UK law.

Q347 Chair: When do you expect to go out to consultation on the 80 mph speed limit?

Mike Penning: When you expect to go out to consultation? We announced right from the start that we would look at the national speed limit on motorways, but there would be some motorway areas where that would not be viable. Before we go out to consultation, we are looking at getting the evidence base together so that we can and will go out to consultation. Will there be parts of the motorway network that will not change if we agree to go to 80 mph? Yes, there will, but the key is that it will be a proper consultation. I remember sitting before this Committee previously saying that consultations have to do what it says on the tin. It must be a proper consultation. A lot of work will need to be done on exactly where 80 mph is or is not viable, particularly looking at the road safety against the flow argument, but we have to be honest with the public. If you have ACPO in front of you, I hope you ask them whether they enforce up to 80 mph on the motorways, because the answer will be no. The motorway speed limit was set in 1965, but vehicles, drivers, the test and everything has changed quite dramatically since then. But we will consult, and it will be a proper consultation.

Q346 Iain Stewart: When looking at areas where an 80 mph limit would not be appropriate, are you thinking of systems such as that in France, where there is a default lower speed limit on the motorways in adverse weather conditions?

Mike Penning: I hate to say this, but parts of the French motorway network have technology that is slightly in advance of ours. They have the ability to move information out to the motorist in a different way. They also have a different system from us. We have advisory and mandatory speed limits, whereas in France they tend to be mandatory. We can look at the huge success that managed motorway networks have achieved, although I accept that they have been very expensive, especially the early ones. We are considering whether we need to do hard shoulder as well as managed motorways, or whether we should use the technology just for managed motorways and perhaps look at hard shoulder later on when we have more capital funds available. That is something that we are looking at now; the proven technology is there. We could do exactly what you suggest, but I have to address this question of the advisory and mandatory path within the legislation, which is very complicated under UK law.

Q347 Chair: When do you expect to go out to consultation on the 80 mph speed limit?

Mike Penning: When you expect to go out to consultation? We announced right from the start that we would look at the national speed limit on motorways, but there would be some motorway areas where that would not be viable. Before we go out to consultation, we are looking at getting the evidence base together so that we can and will go out to consultation. Will there be parts of the motorway network that will not change if we agree to go to 80 mph? Yes, there will, but the key is that it will be a proper consultation. I remember sitting before this Committee previously saying that consultations have to do what it says on the tin. It must be a proper consultation. A lot of work will need to be done on exactly where 80 mph is or is not viable, particularly looking at the road safety against the flow argument, but we have to be honest with the public. If you have ACPO in front of you, I hope you ask them whether they enforce up to 80 mph on the motorways, because the answer will be no. The motorway speed limit was set in 1965, but vehicles, drivers, the test and everything has changed quite dramatically since then. But we will consult, and it will be a proper consultation.
Mike Penning: The consultation will plainly say that we are looking at raising the national speed limit on motorways to 80 mph where applicable—where it is safe to do so.

Q349 Chair: Will you be suggesting some rather than others?
Mike Penning: No. That will be part of the consultation. Just to clarify the matter, some of our motorways are dual carriageway—in other words, there are two lanes and not three, four or five, or even six in some cases. My personal view is that 80 mph on a two-lane motorway would not be appropriate, but we will look at the evidence and see whether I can be convinced one way or the other. That is an example of where we will consult and ask whether it is right. We must remember that motorways have evolved enormously since 1965: we now have four and five-lane motorways, and the legislation needs to adapt to that.

Q350 Steve Baker: Would you agree that the evidence shows that large numbers of motorists, perhaps the majority of car drivers, do not obey the 70 mph limit on the motorways?
Mike Penning: Yes.

Q351 Steve Baker: Do you agree that that shows a contempt for the law and we ought to deal with it?
Mike Penning: It shows a contempt for the law, but it also shows some understanding of what happens in prosecutions. It is for the police to tell you, but the reason they have not been prosecuting—ACPO has a formula to work to, but it deviates slightly around the country—is, frankly, that if they got you into court for doing 75 mph, you would have probably got off with a half-decent lawyer simply because the police did not have the required accuracy, especially in the early days. I hope the public are listening to me, because average speed cameras, especially on managed motorways, are ridiculously accurate. The argument, which will be in the public consultation, is what we enforce over 80 mph. The answer will be that 80 mph will be the speed limit, and not, as we interpret it today, perhaps 90 mph. That is a subtle hint going out there.

Q352 Steve Baker: Have you made an assessment of the positive implications of raising the speed limit to a level that enjoys consent? Would you expect that to reinforce positive attitudes and personal responsibility?
Mike Penning: I have said to the Committee before—if I have not, I apologise—that we have to be honest. At the moment, there is a small degree of dishonesty, if you can have such a thing, between the motorist, the police and us as the people who produce the legislation, because we know and you know that you will not be prosecuted for driving at 75 mph on a motorway. If we keep safety where it is now, the key to the discussion if we were to raise the limit on applicable roads to 80 mph is that it will be fixed at 80 mph and not 90 mph. At the same time, which is probably what you are alluding to, if we say that it is not safe to drive at 80 mph on some motorways and it should stay at 70 mph, then we need to enforce that.

Chair: A couple of Members have indicated that they have questions on this specific matter.

Q353 Julie Hilling: Minister, you said that you would rigorously enforce an 80 mph limit, but is not the issue at the moment the accuracy of speedos in cars and so on, which give 10% or whatever leeway?
How would you be able to enforce an 80 mph limit, and would not the problem remain of people having good lawyers, as you said, and being able to get away with it?
Mike Penning: The issue is always going to be about getting a good lawyer; you are absolutely right. However, technology has dramatically changed since ACPO took advice on how accurate speedos can be. Modern speedos indicate that you are going faster than you are really doing; that is built into the mechanism of the cars, and modern car speedometers are accurate. As I say, average speed camera technology has moved on dramatically, not only on motorways but on other roads. For instance, I hope in a moment to come on to how we can make 20 mph zones work, because that will be done by camera technology.

Q354 Mr Leech: This might be a pretty unfair question, but do you know what proportion of the current motorway network does not have a speed limit of 70 mph?
Mike Penning: No, I do not, but I shall write to the Committee and let you know.¹

Q355 Mr Leech: Do you have any idea of what proportion of the motorway network would require a speed limit lower than 80 mph if the default was 80 mph?
Mike Penning: No, because I want that to be genuinely part of the consultation. When we first looked at this, and I am being very honest about it, we were looking at quite a small part of the motorway network that could not go to 80 mph. I asked my officials to look again, because it was more to do with construction or design on a very small part of the network, around 3% to 5%. I then said, “Let’s look at this a bit better. Would it be right for a dual carriageway?” I have already alluded to that as being one of my concerns. I touched on one of the reasons for that earlier, in answer to Mr Stewart. I think that we need to make much better use of the technology that is available, because it is difficult otherwise to have confidence about what speed you are doing.

Q356 Mr Leech: The M60 ring road around Manchester has a section near Stockport with a 50 mph limit. In my experience, not many motorists stick to 50 mph at that point. As part of the consultation, will the Department also be looking at whether people stick to the limit if it is below the default?
Mike Penning: Yes. One of the things that I touched on earlier is that we have learned an awful lot from our managed motorway networks, hard-shoulder running and new technology. We do not necessarily

¹ See Ev 88
have to use that technology only with these new super four-lane motorways. The cabling spines on the motorway network are there, and, if I was lucky enough to get funding from the Treasury or I can find some money from my existing budgets, we could look at exactly what you describe as a way of managing that piece of motorway. We do that, for instance, on the M25, but in a better way. The 50 mph limit is there for a reason; it is not just for accidents but for flow.

Q357 Chair: Will that be part of the consultation or would that be something else?
Mike Penning: Discussion on that will probably not be part of the consultation, but it will certainly be part of the work around it because enforcement is crucial if we go down that avenue. Even if we do not go down it, the point you raise is crucial. What point is there in having a speed limit for a specific reason and not being able to enforce it accurately?

Q358 Mr Leech: I do not necessarily accept it, but, if there are sections of the motorway where 80 mph is safe, we also have to accept that there will be some areas where it is not safe and, therefore, the limit needs to be lower—perhaps 70 mph or, like the M60, 50 mph. Will it not cost an awful lot simply to change the default speed limit? We would need variable limits on large sections of the motorways. In difficult economic times, do we not have broader priorities?
Mike Penning: I know where you are coming from and I can see the argument that you are making. Whether or not we move the default limit to 80 mph on certain parts of the motorway network, we have to address how we deal with variable and mandatory speed limits on our motorways. The French model is the obvious one to look at, but I cannot physically do that at the moment. Where, for whatever reason, we have gone to lower speed limits on the motorway network, and we do not have managed motorways at the moment, we need to address that. You are absolutely right that at that point on the M60 it is hugely beneficial to keep traffic at 50 mph, because it will flow much better and there will be fewer accidents.

Q359 Julian Sturdy: During our inquiry, we have heard a lot of evidence on the subject of young drivers. Everyone who has given evidence said that the driving test in its current form is not fit for purpose. What further action do you propose taking on the driving test? We have seen some minor changes, but there has been criticism that they did not go far enough.
Mike Penning: I am trying to find some figures on graduated driving licensing. I do not normally refer to my notes; I apologise. We have made a lot more than a few minor changes to the driving test. I think it was me who said earlier on that it was not fit for purpose.

Q360 Julian Sturdy: A number of people in the inquiry have told us that, and you might have said so as well.
Mike Penning: I probably said it on more than one occasion.

Julian Sturdy: I think everyone in the inquiry has said it.
Mike Penning: When I became Minister, I looked carefully at the test. My personal view, having had two teenage girls go through lessons and tests in recent years, is that they were taught to pass the test and not how to drive. That was not good for them, and certainly was not good for everyone else using the highways and byways.

There have been several schemes over the years to promote things post-test and so on. The changes that we have made to the test—we are not fully there yet—are pretty radical. For instance, when my daughter took her test in St Albans she turned out of the gate of the test centre and turned right; she knew the exact route and could almost have done it blindfold, because she had done it hundreds of times before. That has stopped. I shall return to the reason why that is becoming more and more obvious. The minute learners pass their test, they will be out there on their own making mistakes. As part of the test, it is crucial that we do not tell them everything they have to do and that they are asked to take a route from A to B. They will make mistakes, because that is exactly what they will do in their driving experience.

We have also changed the theory test because, believe it or not, they published all the questions. To me, the mathematics was pretty obvious and they would eventually get it right. We are going to consult pretty soon on whether you should take the British driving test in English or Welsh, and not in 27 other translated languages; that is for road safety costs and community cohesion. You are probably aware that I have also proposed that a qualified driving instructor—I stress, a qualified instructor—should be able to take a learner driver in a suitably marked vehicle with dual controls on the motorway network before passing the test, so that we do not have the ludicrous situation of drivers being able to drive on the motorway the minute after passing the test.

Are we there yet? No, but we are a lot further on. We are going to try and get into schools much earlier, and I am working with the Department for Education to address the aspirations of young people who want the freedom to drive, but also to ensure that they understand the risks involved. Of course, we also have quite punitive legislation on the statute book for new drivers who offend early on, who lose their licences much quicker than others.

Q361 Julian Sturdy: There has been a lot of talk about pre-driver training, and we have heard evidence about getting into schools a lot earlier. Some have said that they are not convinced about that, but are we talking about targeting pre-16s and young males specifically in the schools?
Mike Penning: It would be wrong to target just young males, even though when driving they are nine or 10 times more likely to be in a serious incident. I think that we could be targeting people even younger than that in understanding not how to drive a car, but the principles and the dangers involved, and dealing with drink and drugs and natural peer pressure. Of course, we start driving quite late in life in this country; in many other countries it is as low as 15 years old.
There is a balance to make sure that we have the safest roads, as we touched on earlier, but at the same time we are giving people the opportunity and the freedoms that I had when I was 16 and 17. We are talking not only about cars but about two-wheeled vehicles. Motorbikes are a big issue for me and in accidents. I keep being told off for using the word “accidents”—it is the fireman in me—but killed and seriously injured on bikes or two-wheeled vehicles is a big issue for us.

Q362 Julian Sturdy: It would be interesting to know your views on graduated licensing and post-test restrictions, which are in operation in some other countries. Is it something that should be looked at?
Mike Penning: I have looked at it very carefully. I take as a comparison the fact that Canada has a graduated test and their ratio—it is all about ratios and evidence bases—is about 6.27; in New Zealand it is 9.16; and in America it is 8.23. They all have graduated tests. We do not, and our ratio is 3.97. I am not convinced about the evidence on graduated testing.

The other thing that really worries me is that we want to get young people into work. It is a big area, and we are struggling at the moment as a country. We have too many young people who are unemployed. But if you are a trainee nurse am I going to tell you that you cannot do nights because you have a restricted licence? That is what would happen, and that sort of thing would worry me enormously. It is much more about educating people than using the big stick. If the evidence changed around the world I would look at it, but at the moment I am more than happy that we are sitting at 3.97. It is too high, but other countries with graduated licences are higher.

Q363 Julian Sturdy: Are the Government going to focus a lot more on education in schools?
Mike Penning: I am also looking very much at post-test. There can be more out there that can be done post-test, but, frankly, it has not worked. I discussed this when I gave evidence on insurance with my colleague. Insurers must be much more open and transparent about the discounts being given for post-test qualification. For instance, if you have a logbook showing that you did x number of hours of motorway training before passing your test, I would expect the insurance companies to give you a reduction in your premium for that as a young or newly qualified driver. I have told them that.

Q364 Chair: What was their response to that?
Mike Penning: We will wait and see.

Q365 Chair: Is that what they said, or did they say nothing?
Mike Penning: The insurance companies want quite a lot from me at the moment, and as we discussed at a summit at No. 10, we want some things from them as well. Confidence in premiums and some transparency would give many people a better understanding of what is happening out there.

Q366 Chair: So you did not get an assurance that premiums would come down, but you are pursuing that.
Mike Penning: No. However, some of the schemes that are already out there—I think the Co-op and Direct Line are moving to it now; I apologise if I have made an announcement for them—such as telematics have shown a reduction in premiums. To me, that is a trust thing as well. Even though they are monitoring what you are doing, there are no restrictions on you; but if you exceed the speed limit on a regular basis they know what you are doing.

Chair: Two Members want to ask questions on this issue, but I ask them to be brief.
Steve Baker: I wanted to ask about the motorcycle test.
Chair: We shall come to that later.

Q367 Julie Hilling: Minister, you talked of international comparisons on the graduated licence, but what is the evidence on when accidents take place? We know that a huge proportion of new drivers have accidents in their first year of driving. When are they taking place? Are they happening at night, with passengers in the back, and so on?
Mike Penning: That depends on the age profile and the gender of the newly qualified driver, but if we look at males aged 17 to 24 then, yes, at night or the early hours of the morning, but not necessarily exclusively with drink or drugs involvement. Drugs is a separate issue that we want to address, because we do not know how many people it involves. It is often with a friend, so there is peer pressure and a lot of adrenalin.

Q368 Julie Hilling: Is there no evidence to say that a graduated licence here with some restrictions would save lives?
Mike Penning: No, I do not think so. On evidence from elsewhere in the world where it happens, we are already lower than they are. The other thing would be enforcement.

Q369 Julie Hilling: I struggle with this international comparison. We already know that we have good road safety measures, but one thing that we are trying to do is drive down deaths and serious injury on the roads.
Mike Penning: You have to do it on an evidence base. If you are looking at bringing in a graduated licence, which basically is a restriction on newly qualified drivers being able to drive freely whenever they need to, you would have to measure whether it would work. I am sure that you would say that there was evidence that it would drive it down a little. On the other hand, you will be putting a restriction on someone who has just spent an awful lot of money on passing the test, which they have to do through the Government; they cannot do it any other way. You would be saying to them, for instance, that they cannot use their car at certain times of the day. That will be an economic balance as to whether that is fair or not.

Q370 Jim Dobbin: I return to the issue of local government involvement, which I agree with. Local government has to be involved in road safety initiatives. Essentially, the success or failure of this
policy will depend very much on the ability of local authorities—local government—to introduce road safety measures. If that is happening during a difficult financial period, will there be any help or support from central Government for local authorities that want to introduce safety solutions?

**Mike Penning:** Yes, and one of the things that has already started to happen is that we have removed the ring fencing particularly for safety cameras. There were different reactions around the country; some switched them all off straight away and then brought some back, and some never had them to start with. Durham, for instance, does not have any speed cameras and never has had, yet its safety record is round about the national average, which is interesting. They have started to look at other measures on road safety. I am sure that we will come to the 20 mph limit, but there has been a push towards that. I never understood it as fully as I do now, but we now have things like retro-reflective paint. The evidence base says that, if you paint your roads better, particularly the lines on the outside, and especially in rural communities, you will reduce accidents dramatically.

They have all been pushing towards other aspects with engineering solutions, but paint is a lot cheaper than putting in speed cameras or redesigning the road. It has a huge benefit, and we are trying to give the evidence to the local communities and say, “We know that money is tight, but the evidence base shows that this will help.”

The crucial thing is that one size will not fit all. There are many different types of local community; rural communities are very different from urban communities. In my constituency, I have a big urban area, but literally within two minutes you are in the Chilterns, with some of the narrowest roads in the country. A balance has to be made, and local authorities know best. I was slightly disappointed when we published the data on speed cameras that there was not the upsurge of interest that I would have expected in local communities, with people asking, “Why is it there?” or “Why is that one not there?” That will come as the local elections start, and politics will start to be part of the drive.

**Q372 Jim Dobbin:** Some rural areas do not have the problem of motorways, but my constituency has the M60 going right through the middle. Will there be a close working relationship between the Highways Agency and local government on initiatives, with traffic from the motorway coming into the local communities?

**Mike Penning:** Yes. I am not indicating that the Highways Agency will not continue to have its central responsibility for the motorway and national road network, and certainly as a central Government Department we have our responsibilities, but we work much more closely. One of the things that surprised me when I came to the Department is that the Highways Agency is here and the local authorities are there, yet basically we are all doing the same job, which is trying to keep the country moving as safely as possible with the limited funds available in these difficult times.
safely, you should be tested on the roads where you have your driving experience. At the moment we have a two-tier system, as you are aware. You can drive for up to two and a half hours to get to a test centre, which is the furthest that we have, fail the test off-road and then be allowed to drive for two and a half hours back home. That is a ludicrous situation, and we are going to resolve that.

Q376 Steve Baker: In resolving it, are you confident that you will soon have a completely clear and straightforward policy on the motorcycle test?

Mike Penning: Yes. I am absolutely adamant that we will. It is very important.

Q377 Chair: When will that be?

Mike Penning: I have a meeting in around two weeks, where we will announce the pilots. As to where we roll this out, we have to work very closely with the unions involved, to make sure that our employees are safe when they are doing this, but all the evidence shows that we can roll it out. Once we have done the pilots, we will have the evidence base; we can then phase away from the existing system into the new one, which I hope will be finished in this Parliament.

Q378 Chair: When will this Committee get a formal reply?

Mike Penning: Literally as soon as I can. I see no reason why we should not be able to give a formal reply before the recess. If I cannot, I shall write to explain why.

Q379 Julie Hilling: I have three disparate areas that I wish to raise. The first is about fitness to drive. Real concerns have been raised about sleep apnoea and eyesight. What are your plans on those aspects?

Mike Penning: In this particular area, you have sleep apnoea and there is also diabetes, about which people are really concerned because at the moment there is a good chance of losing your licence if you get type 1 or type 2 diabetes. Epileptic fits is another area, and of course there is the traditional eye test. Turning to the last point first, I have looked at the evidence base put before me and I have no intention of changing the rules. I am looking very carefully at those who have been told that their licence has been revoked, we will go back to the court and ask for clarification before we do anything.

Mike Penning: We have looked at it, and we concluded that at the moment we will not be going down that avenue.

Q381 Julie Hilling: Even though there is real concern about people still driving or reaching an age when they should be wearing glasses and are not doing so?

Mike Penning: Yes. As I say, you have to look at the evidence base on what the benefits would be if you went to the new system, and the costing of the benefits. We looked at it but decided that we would not be going down that avenue.

Q382 Julie Hilling: What about sleep apnoea, particularly for lorry drivers?

Mike Penning: That is something that we are looking at very closely. Sleep apnoea in HGV and PSV drivers is much more difficult for me to address, but we are working on it at the moment. I know that outside the Committee you take a close interest in it, and we have answered some of your questions on the subject. Some of it is in my hands and some is not. There are regulations involved, but we are looking very closely at it—along with diabetes and epilepsy.

Q383 Julie Hilling: Will you keep us informed on what is happening?

Mike Penning: Absolutely. If it is okay, Madam Chairman, I shall write to you in the near future on exclusions from driving, which is really important. I want people to have confidence that those are being excluded from driving for the right reasons. At the moment there is real concern, particularly among the diabetic community, that they will be excluded when there is no need to do so.

Q384 Julie Hilling: Another area is points on the driving licence. We know that 10,000 people are driving with more than 12 points on their licence. Losing your licence or having more points is something that makes you obey the speed limits, but it would appear that this incentive to obey the driving rules is disappearing because so many people are driving legally with more than 12 points.

Mike Penning: When I first came into office, I could not believe the figures showing how many people had gone to court, had more than 12 points and had not had their licence removed. The courts have that power. Parliament gave them that power under the legislation. We are working closely with the Ministry of Justice to make sure that the courts have guidance on what Parliament’s will was—in other words, that it was for exceptional circumstances. However, I admit that at the same time there was at times a breakdown of communications between the Court Service and DVLA, where the courts were not supplying the information to DVLA that they had taken the licence away—in other words that the person had gone over the 12 points. We now have a new protocol in place so that if the court informs DVLA that points have been put on a licence that result in a total of 12 points, and they do not say that the licence has been revoked, we will go back to the court and ask for clarification before we do anything.

Q380 Julie Hilling: Particularly when people have to renew their licences, have you considered asking for evidence of driving vision?

Mike Penning: Yes. As I say, you have to look at the evidence base on what the benefits would be if you went to the new system, and the costing of the benefits. We looked at it but decided that we would not be going down that avenue.

Q381 Julie Hilling: Even though there is real concern about people still driving or reaching an age when they should be wearing glasses and are not doing so?

Mike Penning: Yes. I am absolutely adamant that we will. It is very important.

Q377 Chair: When will that be?

Mike Penning: I have a meeting in around two weeks, where we will announce the pilots. As to where we roll this out, we have to work very closely with the unions involved, to make sure that our employees are safe when they are doing this, but all the evidence shows that we can roll it out. Once we have done the pilots, we will have the evidence base; we can then phase away from the existing system into the new one, which I hope will be finished in this Parliament.

Q378 Chair: When will this Committee get a formal reply?

Mike Penning: Literally as soon as I can. I see no reason why we should not be able to give a formal reply before the recess. If I cannot, I shall write to explain why.

Q379 Julie Hilling: I have three disparate areas that I wish to raise. The first is about fitness to drive. Real concerns have been raised about sleep apnoea and eyesight. What are your plans on those aspects?

Mike Penning: In this particular area, you have sleep apnoea and there is also diabetes, about which people are really concerned because at the moment there is a good chance of losing your licence if you get type 1 or type 2 diabetes. Epileptic fits is another area, and of course there is the traditional eye test. Turning to the last point first, I have looked at the evidence base put before me and I have no intention of changing the rules. I am looking very carefully at those who have been told that their licence has been revoked, we will go back to the court and ask for clarification before we do anything.

Mike Penning: We have looked at it, and we concluded that at the moment we will not be going down that avenue.

Q381 Julie Hilling: Even though there is real concern about people still driving or reaching an age when they should be wearing glasses and are not doing so?

Mike Penning: Yes. As I say, you have to look at the evidence base on what the benefits would be if you went to the new system, and the costing of the benefits. We looked at it but decided that we would not be going down that avenue.

Q382 Julie Hilling: What about sleep apnoea, particularly for lorry drivers?

Mike Penning: That is something that we are looking at very closely. Sleep apnoea in HGV and PSV drivers is much more difficult for me to address, but we are working on it at the moment. I know that outside the Committee you take a close interest in it, and we have answered some of your questions on the subject. Some of it is in my hands and some is not. There are regulations involved, but we are looking very closely at it—along with diabetes and epilepsy.

Q383 Julie Hilling: Will you keep us informed on what is happening?

Mike Penning: Absolutely. If it is okay, Madam Chairman, I shall write to you in the near future on exclusions from driving, which is really important. I want people to have confidence that those are being excluded from driving for the right reasons. At the moment there is real concern, particularly among the diabetic community, that they will be excluded when there is no need to do so.

Q384 Julie Hilling: Another area is points on the driving licence. We know that 10,000 people are driving with more than 12 points on their licence. Losing your licence or having more points is something that makes you obey the speed limits, but it would appear that this incentive to obey the driving rules is disappearing because so many people are driving legally with more than 12 points.

Mike Penning: When I first came into office, I could not believe the figures showing how many people had gone to court, had more than 12 points and had not had their licence removed. The courts have that power. Parliament gave them that power under the legislation. We are working closely with the Ministry of Justice to make sure that the courts have guidance on what Parliament’s will was—in other words, that it was for exceptional circumstances. However, I admit that at the same time there was at times a breakdown of communications between the Court Service and DVLA, where the courts were not supplying the information to DVLA that they had taken the licence away—in other words that the person had gone over the 12 points. We now have a new protocol in place so that if the court informs DVLA that points have been put on a licence that result in a total of 12 points, and they do not say that the licence has been revoked, we will go back to the court and ask for clarification before we do anything.

Q380 Julie Hilling: Particularly when people have to renew their licences, have you considered asking for evidence of driving vision?

2 See Ev 88
with the licence at all. The courts have to reconfirm that they have left the person with the licence. They do not have to tell us why because that is a matter for the courts. What was happening was that the courts were, for instance, saying, “Okay, we have taken your licence away”—they had given the three points—but they were not informing DVLA.

Q385 Chair: Is that problem now resolved?
Mike Penning: We have resolved that problem now. We have closed that. You would think that the two computer systems would work with each other, but anything to with the Government and computers does not work quite like that. However, we have resolved the matter, and inside the DVLA the system cannot close that file because it does not have the relevant information, so it automatically goes back.

Q386 Chair: The problem is now resolved.
Mike Penning: Yes.

Q387 Chair: Will you tell us why there is not an indicator about the number of children from deprived areas having accidents and being killed? That is one area of great concern in relation to road safety.
Mike Penning: No. I cannot answer that question as to why. I thought there was because I remember seeing some data on the subject. If I can find it, I will send it to you. I am sure there is.3

Q388 Chair: We would like to see it. That is an area of great concern, despite the general improvement. I wish to clarify what the Government or the Department are going to do to improve road safety, in addition to what local authorities are doing. You have told us that you have been naming and shaming local authorities that you think have a poor record, but what are you doing?
Mike Penning: The strategy is out there; that is the Government’s policy. We were naming and shaming when local authorities were not doing what we would expect.

Q389 Chair: What will the Government be doing that is positive on road and safety?
Mike Penning: Apart from enforcing speed limits and so on? We have not yet talked about 20 mph speed limits. Perhaps I should write to the Committee because there is a good story to be told on that, not least how it would be enforced, because although the police keep saying that it will be difficult to enforce, it can be done. There is also improving the driving test and MOTs, improving road safety, getting into schools for pre-testing, making the driving test more difficult and more relevant to what is going on, and giving people qualifications to drive on the motorways. I could go on but there are an awful lot of things within the strategy that we are doing.

Q390 Chair: If these figures that are not targets are not achieved—you have indicated reductions that you would like to see—who will be responsible? Will it be the Department?
Mike Penning: It will be Government. It is Government policy. It is a strategy document for the Government.

Q391 Chair: It will be the Department who is responsible.
Mike Penning: The Government made the decision not to use the blunt instrument of targets—that is happening in many Departments—but the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. Let us see how we get on there, because I think that most local authorities want to make their roads as safe as possible.

Q392 Chair: But who will be responsible ultimately? Will it be the Department?
Mike Penning: It will be central Government’s responsibility. I am the Minister with responsibility for road safety. It sits with me.
Chair: Thank you very much for answering all our questions. Thank you.

3 See Ev 88
Tuesday 24 April 2012

Members present:

Mrs Louise Ellman (Chair)

Steve Baker  
Mr Tom Harris  
Julie Hilling  
Kwasi Kwarteng  
Mr John Lecch  
Paul Maynard  
Iain Stewart  
Julian Sturdy

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Jon Snow, newscaster and cycling advocate, James Harding, Editor, The Times, and Josie Dew, author and cycling advocate, gave evidence.

Q393 Chair: Good morning to all of you and welcome to the Transport Committee. I would like to start by asking each of you to give your name and organisation to help our records.

Josie Dew: I am Josie Dew. I am Vice-President of CTC, the national cycling organisation, and I cycle around the world. I have been cycling virtually every day since I was 10 and write books about it.

James Harding: I am James Harding. I am the editor of The Times.

Jon Snow: I am Jon Snow. I am President of CTC, but I don’t come here in that capacity. I am a citizen and I anchor “Channel 4 News”.

Q394 Chair: Thank you very much. What do you think is the most important thing that could be done to make roads safer for cyclists?

Josie Dew: The first thing is for motorists to understand what it is like to be a cyclist. One of the important things would be better training for drivers so that they can have a better understanding of what it is like to be on a bike, out in the open, overtaking on blind corners. It could be part of the driving test and included in that. Maybe they could cycle for a bit of it and really see what it is like having cars coming past you.

I have my five-year old daughter here and I have cycled about 10 miles this morning. We had to get up to the station in the rain. There is a blind corner. Please drive slower. I have a one-year old and a five-year old on my bike. We are not surrounded by two tonnes of metal and airbags. She went, “Oh God, a five-year old on my bike. We are not surrounded by two tonnes of metal and airbags.” She went straight on the other side and roared off at high speed—all impatient. You can feel this great impatience of motorists.

The next day I said to Molly, because I was so cross about it, “Tomorrow morning I am going to stop this motorist, and if she doesn’t stop I am going to report her to the police.” The following morning she came flying up behind us. We were a bit further ahead so I pulled across and I started walking down the road towards her. I saw her coming and I stopped her. She didn’t want to undo the window. Finally, I knocked on the side. It is under a railway bridge. You just think, “Don’t overtake, don’t overtake, because you will nearly run us over?” I said, “If I had been on a horse, would you have driven that fast past us?” She didn’t say anything. Anyway, now she passes us very slowly; it’s very good, and we all wave wildly.

Q395 Chair: For you, it is driver behaviour that is the biggest single thing.

Josie Dew: It is driver behaviour, but it is bad driving.

Q396 Chair: Thank you. We will go further into things. I just want to get a general picture at the moment. Mr Harding, I know The Times has produced its manifesto. You have a lot of things. What is the most important thing for you?

James Harding: First, can I say thank you for dedicating and taking the time to address this issue? One of the reasons why feelings run so high around cycle safety is that, for a long time, there have been deadly and lethal accidents on our roads and it feels as though no one is paying attention or trying to do something about it. It means a great deal to a great many people that this Committee is addressing this.

You are right that we have a manifesto. We have a list of things that we think are doable. I would identify the key safety things as improvement in the equipment around lorries, which we think have had a particularly lethal effect in cities, and addressing the really...
dangerous junctions. Those are really practical things that need to be done now.
Over and above that, I would raise two big points. One is that you need to have people at every level of Government who are responsible for the people who cycle in this country. That starts right at the top of Government. You need to have someone who is overseeing that from within Downing street and looking at cross-departmental issues. You need to make sure that there is sufficient money within the Department for Transport—in particular, that when we build new roads, there is someone who is looking out for cycle safety—and that within cities there is a cycle commissioner. That is my first point—there is someone who is responsible for it.
Secondly, I hope that once this Committee has had its deliberations, it will think about not just behavioural changes and small changes to lorries and junctions, but changes to the shape of our cities. At the moment our cities are not fit for cyclists. They are dangerous for cyclists and we need to build new roads and new pathways. We have to rethink our cities in much the same way as a few really wonderful cities in Europe.

Q397 Chair: Do you feel that that leadership is there from Government at the moment?

James Harding: No. I think people feel quite the opposite. We in the newsroom at The Times have been very emotionally affected by this. Many people have. We had a young, incredibly gifted journalist, who made a huge impact on our newsroom. She was a young woman called Mary Bowers. She was cycling into work six months ago. A lorry turned left and she was run over. Six months later, having had many bones in her legs, arms and pelvis broken and having sustained a serious brain injury, she remains in a coma. She made a huge impact on all of us. Feeling so distressed by that has driven the paper to address this issue.

We are by no means alone. We look at the number of people who have been killed or seriously injured and we think that there is not enough concern about this. We feel as though there are not people within the Prime Minister’s Office, the Department for Transport and the offices of the mayors or councils of the big cities in this country taking responsibility for what is happening on the roads.

Joni Snow: I would certainly endorse everything James has said. I would also say that The Times campaign is the most high-profile moment that we have ever had from the portals of the British establishment. There is no question about that. When you ask, “Do you feel the leadership from Government is missing?” there is no leadership in Government in cycling at all. It is a completely neglected area, whatever it says on the paper.

Therefore, I believe the priority is for provision to catch up with use. Use is burgeoning exponentially. In urban areas, in particular, cycling is just going up by the tens of thousands every year. It is hundreds of thousands in the case of London, particularly with the impact of the Boris bikes. But the infrastructure stays static; there is nothing. There is paint on the road, which is not infrastructure. We have conned ourselves into believing that we have responded to the huge growth in cycle usage.

It is rather needless for me to say that cycling is good for the economy. Cycling is good for the environment. Cycling is good for individual health. All that saves the Exchequer money, yet the Exchequer will not spend money. CTC, of which I am president, has put forward a plan that talks of putting in perhaps £300 million a year for infrastructure. It is a diminutive sum of money even in an age of austerity. The fact is that there is no leadership from the state at all on cycling, and there is very little leadership from the private sector.

Q398 Mr Leech: I am really interested to know how you think we can improve driver training to help with the interaction between cyclists and drivers. I am very interested to hear the direct action approach from Ms Dew in relation to her 4x4 driver. I wrote on behalf of a constituent to all the bus companies in Manchester because he was suggesting that they ought to be sent out on a bike as part of their driver training to appreciate the interaction between bikes and motorists, and particularly buses. Would you support that kind of driver training?

Josie Dew: Yes. The best way for someone to understand is to get on a bike themselves. You then understand what it is like. They have been doing that on HGVs in London, with the dustcarts and things like that. A lot of the lorries in the London cycling campaign have reported, “We didn’t really realise what it was like down there for a cyclist.” It is an understanding. It is crucial that motorists understand what it is like because we are out in the open through all weather and on awful road surfaces. That is another thing. The road surface is pretty awful. You get a splat of paint and that’s a cycle path, which is generally pretty awful. It is full of broken glass and potholes.

I had to give a bike talk in Utrecht in the Netherlands last month. I took my two daughters and a reluctant husband across with me. We went cycling 250 miles in 10 days. It is a completely different experience. I used to cycle a lot there before on my own, but suddenly you just relax. They have such an amazing infrastructure. They started that in the ’70s. People are itching to get cycling. When I give bike talks, people say, “I’d love to get cycling but I’m too scared. It’s too frightening, the roads are too dangerous and the drivers are too awful.” Given half a chance they want to.

Molly goes to the village primary school. We cycle 10 miles every day on the school run through all weathers. There are 100 pupils and we are the only ones who cycle. There are a few who do it occasionally just from the local village. One of the mothers is Dutch, and she used to cycle 20 miles a day to school when she was a little girl. She now lives 400 yards from the school and she will get in a big car and drive because she says the roads are too dangerous. This is a country road. She said, “I’d love to cycle. I’d love to do it, but I don’t want to risk it.”

Q399 Chair: We are trying to identify the things that need to be done. Mr Leech has asked about training. Do the other panellists have a view on training? Should there be more training for motorists and lorry
drivers when they are learning to drive, or should there be training for cyclists? Do you have views in those areas?

Jon Snow: There is very good training provided by local authorities, which is free, though not many people avail themselves of it. There is cycle training provision. I would certainly like to see cycling as an element in the driving test, as well as the whole issue of sharing the road with cyclists and, indeed, pedestrians. Pedestrians are better looked after in the driving test. As you are looking at safety, the fact of the matter is that I do not think any amount of training will really position the bicycle and cyclist in any greater place of safety. I am afraid it has to be much more tangible than that. We have to look at the infrastructure that is used by the car, the pedestrian and the cyclist. That is where safety really resides.

There are other measures that have been taken that I think this Committee should endorse and perhaps even think about enshrining in legislation. There is a company called Cemex, which has 1,000 trucks on the road. In 2004, one of the trucks killed a cyclist. They then set about making their trucks safer. These are big six-wheeled trucks—you have seen them—with the turning, churning barrel on the back.

Q400 Chair: In fact I and some of the Members have actually been in one this morning; so we have seen it.

Jon Snow: Well, then, I am telling my grandmother—[ Interruption. ] Not my grandmother but my sister. Cemex is obviously a model company to look at. This is about provision to make cycling safer. Although training can be an ingredient, it is physical infrastructure, political commitment and legislative power that will change the position of the cyclist. As both Josie and James have said, it is dangerous to cycle in cities. Josie has illustrated that it is pretty dangerous in the country. I have two daughters of close to adult age. I would not encourage them to cycle in London. I would be terrified if they took up cycling in London. That is a terrible situation, given that I adore the process. It is my life blood. I have cycled all my life, but I don’t advocate people taking it up. People are taking it up anyway, because the economy dictates, and there is the opportunity with the Boris bikes and so on in London, and we are doing nothing to go beyond that provision.

Q401 Chair: Mr Harding, do you have any different view on that? Do you think something can be done with training?

James Harding: I have a few small points. First, Mr Leech identified something very important—HGV drivers and training for them. That is a really useful thing to focus on. I do think training is really important. It needs to be part of the driving test. Jon mentions that there is training for cyclists. We need to think quite carefully about how you make sure that local authorities provide that and that people are given the opportunity, either through their schools or their companies, to take that up. I would echo this point. The concern I have is that people see what is happening in terms of the tens of thousands of people who signed up to this campaign and think to themselves, “Let’s fix some trucks and let’s fix some junctions.” Actually, what you are going to need to do is really to rethink some of the major roadways throughout the big cities in this country.

I would say something slightly different from Jon in terms of safety and the danger of riding in London. Riding in London is a wonderful thing. It can be beautiful and hugely enjoyable, and then suddenly you will find yourself on a stretch of road where it is anything but. That is the issue in London. It is so changeable. Parts of the city do cater for cyclists. There are segregated cycle ways—

Jon Snow: Too few.

James Harding: Far too few. But then, suddenly, you will find yourself riding along the Embankment with nothing to protect you but the divine power of prayer.

Q402 Mr Leech: I am keen to know whether or not you would like to see compulsory training with cycling. On the point I made about the bus companies, one company wrote back to me and said that it was too dangerous to send their trainee bus drivers out on a bike. Do we need to make it compulsory? Clearly Mr Snow gave the example of one company that is doing it, but there are far too many other companies who are not doing it. Should it be compulsory?

James Harding: My view would be yes.

Josie Dew: Yes; definitely yes.

Jon Snow: There is something that has come to me while I am sitting here. The Government have this tax-incentive scheme for employers to provide bicycles. You can get a break for buying a bicycle through work. It seems to me that one very simple thing in terms of cycle training would be to say that you get the bike cheap because you get the company kickback on it, but before you draw the bicycle from the shop, you have to go for one and a half hours’ training at the local authority cycle training place. That would be a way of training cyclists automatically.

It is no good thinking that the motorist is the only offender in this. In many ways, because cycling is so grotesquely unsafe, you do actually break the law regularly in order to try and cycle more safely. There are moments when it is safer to go across a junction at red, if there is no traffic, than to hang about. One of the reasons why we believe more women are killed in London on bikes is because men are more aggressive. Women hang back, behave themselves and get killed. Men get to the front, thrust out across the road the moment the thing goes to amber or even red and they are away. This is a crazy jungle of a situation. Most drivers are aware of some very bad cycling. We have to take that into account. Cycling will get better only if provision gets better.

Q403 Paul Maynard: It is a truism that, if you want to say anything controversial, the best place to say it is the Floor of the Chamber of the House of Commons because no one notices. The only time anyone has ever commented on anything I have ever said there on TheyWorkForYou.com was when I asked a pro-cycling question during Transport questions—and I was criticised for cyclists for not being pro-cycling enough.
Clearly, this whole issue generates immense antagonism between cyclists and non-cyclists, whether pedestrians or motorists. You see it in the letters page of The Times. Do you think that that degree of antagonism is helping or hindering the development of good quality public policy?

James Harding: Mr Maynard, you are exactly right. It is not a temperamental issue between cyclists and drivers or pedestrians that causes this antagonism. We have an adversarial road system. If you are a cyclist, you often feel cut up or endangered by drivers, and if you are a driver, you often feel cut up and endangered by cyclists. Until we address the structural problem in the road system, you are going to continue to have that antagonism.

We should be absolutely clear that the anxiety in this is not just confined to cyclists. There is also huge anxiety around this issue among drivers. I do not think it is about gangs or groups or lobbies. The problem lies in the road system.

James Harding: Mr Maynard, you are exactly right.

Q404 Paul Maynard: As a follow-up to that, there appear to be two distinct groups of solutions. One group is seeking to change human nature, driving behaviour, cyclist behaviour or pedestrian behaviour in the hope that somehow they can appeal to our better angels and we will all learn to respect one another. That would be a lovely dream, but I do not feel it is always realistic.

The second group—and it was perhaps borne out by what The Times is reporting today about the role of roundabouts in so many of the more serious accidents—is that we can seek to engineer out many of the physical structures that cause cyclists, motorists and pedestrians to contest for very scarce road space that causes the antagonism.

Is it time that we stopped trying to shift human nature and started trying to be more imaginative in how we design—and indeed redesign—our roads? Is that where public policy should focus?

Josie Dew: Yes. I think a lot needs to be completely redesigned, as in the Netherlands. The roundabouts here are like death traps. If you are starting off cycling and you come to a roundabout and are a little bit uncertain, it is just awful. You have to enter a big roundabout, keep up your speed, fly on in—

Q405 Chair: What is done differently in the Netherlands?

Josie Dew: It is fantastic. In the Netherlands, cyclists have priority. I live 20 miles north of Chichester, and there is the Northgate roundabout, which is a big roundabout. It has a cycle lane going all the way round, but every exit is a tiny little thing. You are supposed to stop at every exit. If you have someone who is not used to cycling, they start off in the wrong gear and you cannot stop at each exit because cars are flying off here and there.

Q406 Chair: So it is having priority.

Josie Dew: Yes. In Holland, you get a great fat thing for the whole roundabout. The cyclists just go straight in and all the cars wait for you. They are polite. There is none of this—

Q407 Chair: You see that as a different measure that makes a real difference.

Josie Dew: Yes.

Q408 Chair: Mr Harding, do you want to respond to Mr Maynard?

James Harding: I entirely see Mr Maynard’s point. I am a fan of the old “Yogi” Berra view that if you see a fork in the road, take it. You want to make sure that you deal with some of the behavioural issues on training, lorries and junctions, but the big opportunity and the really important thing—and not just for London, but for Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham—is that we start thinking about investing in separate cycle ways and cycle lanes. It is the kind of systems that you see in Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Berlin. As Jon says, you are going to keep on seeing increasing uptake of cycling, and we are going to have to change the provision of cycle ways. Ultimately, I guess I am with you that the emphasis needs to shift from training and a greater emphasis on the Highway Code, to different ways of building the cities.

Q409 Paul Maynard: But cycle only; not shared with pedestrians.

James Harding: Correct, yes.

Q410 Chair: Mr Snow, do you want to comment on Mr Maynard’s question?

Jon Snow: I would like to change behaviour, I must admit. I still live in hope. I am a driver myself. You get behind the wheel and somehow you are superior to anybody else on the road because you are in a tank; you are in a metal box of power. It is very difficult psychologically to recognise that there is only one of you and there is one of them on a bike. Somehow we have to try and get people to understand some degree of equality. I suspect that if the system accepted that cyclists had rights of provision, rights of law, rights of giving way and so on, we could change behaviour, but I also agree very strongly that we have to change physical provision.

I would just like to mention one country that you would not look to for any road guidance: the United States. In Washington DC, there are a number of traffic light systems where they favour the cyclist by allowing you to turn, in their case, right on red. It has a little sign saying that you can do it, and you do it. That enables all the cyclists that are at the junction to get out before the traffic goes. So filters are something we should think about.

One of the infrastructure problems we deal with in this country—and it is right across Britain—is that the traffic light system was invented in the 1930s and has largely not been updated. There is no excuse for traffic lights after eight o’clock at night. Flashing amber would probably be enough at nearly all our junctions. That is the case in the United States. In New York, Washington and in many parts of urban America traffic lights are switched off and become amber flashing. They also have this filter system. We do nothing to upgrade our traffic light system and we should.
Q411 Kwasi Kwarteng: You said something earlier about leadership and the fact that there was no leadership in this very important public safety issue. I was struck by one thing. What does leadership in this department look like? What would you like to see?

Jon Snow: Leadership looks like joining up Government. There are lots of elements of Government that are interested in cycling. Health is interested in promoting cycling. It is very good for the lungs, the pulmonary system and all the rest of it, and there is obesity, for example. A lot of people want children to cycle, but, as Sustrans and indeed CTC have illustrated, cycling to school is extremely dangerous in many places. They have invented these cycle crocodiles in some places to try and take bunches of children together and sort of elongated cycling bus, but it is very difficult. That should not be happening. It should be a fundamental right of parents to allow their children to cycle to school.

Q412 Kwasi Kwarteng: Forgive me but, practically, what does that mean?

Jon Snow: It means education, health—

Q413 Kwasi Kwarteng: But in terms of the Government. Jon Snow: It means one Minister is charged with the responsibility for liaising with all these Departments, but most principally with infrastructural decisions that are made about road building. Very recently there has been an urban road built in King’s Cross to deal with the new King’s Cross development. Is there a separated cycle way? No; they have not even given a thought to it. There is some paint on the road though. Paint on the road is not a solution. How dare they put paint on a road when they had all those millions to spend on a road system coming through King’s Cross? I don’t know whether it was millions; it may only have been hundreds of thousands, but, nevertheless, if they had built it there and then when they built the pavement and the road, it would have saved them money. They would have had a separated thing. The trouble is that it would have ended nowhere. Where would it have ended? On the Euston road, and it would have come to a grim end.

James Harding: Can I ask a question and I think it is a key question? At the city level we have said in our manifesto that every city should have a cycling commissioner. You can call them what you like, but you want someone in City Hall who is responsible for cycling. As we have seen with our campaign, the best way to fix some of the problems on the roads is to respond to cyclists, and they have no one to call. At the city level, we would like to see every city introduce a cycling commissioner. Inside the Department for Transport I think there is a real issue. When new road systems are signed off and when new construction happens or improvements are put in place, again there is no one in the room whose job is to look out for cyclists. We need that within the Department for Transport. Thirdly, the reason why we would like to see the Prime Minister and Downing street get engaged in this is because, as Jon says, at the moment you see bits and pieces of cycling policy come out across different Departments. You want someone who is working at a cross-departmental level and saying, “We really care about the safety of cyclists and we are going to pull this together.” In terms of Government, that is what we would like to see.

Q414 Kwasi Kwarteng: Would that person sit within the Department for Transport or in the Prime Minister’s Office?

James Harding: Frankly, you would have someone day in, day out, in the Department for Transport. Given the public’s appetite for political action, I think the Prime Minister should engage with this issue. He has been very supportive in terms of what he has said about the cycling campaign, but you actually want to see someone in Downing street making sure that those warm words translate into action.

Kwasi Kwarteng: That is a very comprehensive answer; thank you.

Q415 Chair: The Prime Minister has been supportive in what he has said. Are you aware of anything he has actually done?

James Harding: As you have seen in the paper this morning, we are trying to keep tabs on the progress that is being made. There is progress being made on the manifesto. I think the progress is seriously inadequate. Arguably worse than that, there is a danger that the reason we are not seeing cycling injuries and deaths climbing as quickly as they could be is because too many people are being scared off the roads. One of the things that concerns me—and I know you are seeing the Ministers later this morning—is that to a certain extent it may even suit the Department for Transport to think, “We will keep a certain number of people off the roads because that will manage this problem for us.” The only way to answer it, as I have said before, is to have a different vision for the way our cities work for cyclists.

Q416 Julian Sturdy: So far all the panel has talked about the need for investment in segregation—that is coming out loud and clear—and the fact that our road system is not equipped for segregation, for obvious reasons. In point seven of The Times’ manifesto, you talk about the need for private sector involvement and sponsorship in dedicated cycle lanes, cycle tracks and the success of the Boris bikes. The Times Cycle Way has a nice ring to it. I fully support that and I can see that having great potential in London, but how do you think that would manifest itself into other parts of the country and into northern cities? I am a northern MP. Do you think we can get that outside London and into northern cities, or will there have to be Government incentives—potentially tax breaks, business rate relief and so on—to drive that? Do you think that might be a way the Government could spread it outside London?

Jon Snow: Leadership, as we have talked about here, would be meaningless if they did not have any money to spend. Unfortunately, you do need money to spend. The problem is that we never like looking at the equivalent savings that would be made by investing. If
you go for a modest sum like £300 million dispersed reasonably evenly across the country, there will be some money to spend. If there is leadership with no money, the leadership is completely pointless. There really has to be a new provision.

**Q417 Julian Sturdy:** That is Government money. I am talking about how to get the private sector engaged in sponsorship, as has happened with the Boris bikes.

**Jon Snow:** You have companies sponsoring roundabouts. A lot of companies pay to garden roundabouts. That happens in the north and the south. I have seen many around Manchester and elsewhere. You have companies sponsoring trees. I do not see why you could not have companies sponsoring cycle ways. I do not mind cycling along the Unilever cycle path. Fine; there is no problem at all. What I want to point out is that this is probably the largest body of British citizens for whom there is effectively no one in charge and no real provision at all. We are talking about millions of people. We do more for football supporters than we do for cyclists. We actually try to save football supporters’ lives. We have regulations and all sorts of staff that protects them. We police them and all the rest of it, but not bikes. I have never seen anybody ever prosecuted for driving in a cycle lane—never.

**Josie Dew:** Why can’t cyclists have more money? The Netherlands have £20 to £30 a head per cyclist. We have a paltry £2. I have had a friend killed by a motorist and the driver practically got off with a fine of a few hundred pounds for careless driving. I have had another one left brain damaged. Drivers get off too easily. Why can’t it change and motorists start beginning to fear cyclists so that, if they hit a cyclist, straight away your insurance cops it or something and you have to pay a massive fine? There have to be stricter penalties. Mobile phones are just awful. I am cycling all the time and you see people coming round with one hand on a mobile phone and changing gear. I am in the middle of a roundabout. I just think that too many people get away with mobile phones.

**Q418 Julian Sturdy:** I entirely accept that, but it was the segregation point I wanted to address, as well as sponsorship by the private sector and whether the Government need to offer something back to engage the private sector in it. I am talking especially about outside London to get it going. That might be something on business rates and so on, or something along those lines.

**Chair:** Is it realistic that the private sector could engage in this? Mr Snow is saying yes.

**James Harding:** The answer is absolutely yes. If you speak to Barclays, one of the most effective and rewarding things they have done in terms of marketing in London has been what they would like to refer to as the Barclays bikes. I would say two things about that. One of the really useful things that the Committee can do in this area is to try to think through how you engage the private sector. That there would be a public appetite for that engagement I think is beyond doubt, in that the public response to this campaign has been amazing to us. People feel passionately about cycling. They feel it is an enormous part of their identity and they do not feel cared for or catered to. Rather than in so many other areas of life where people are turning their backs on politicians, this is one of those areas where people are looking to politics and politicians to find an answer. As Jon says, if you look at what has happened with roundabouts—the “adopt a highway” approach—it is entirely possible that you would get both national and local businesses to say, “We want to put our name to segregated cycle ways precisely because it would show that we were in touch with the concerns of our customers.”

**Jon Snow:** It is important that the image of cycling has changed so dramatically. It is now seen as a mainstream activity and as part of the daily work cycle. In the old days, if you were in this place, I can tell you that the MPs who cycled were seen as bonkers. They used to call him the bicycling baronet; now he is Leader of the House. The current list is all in the right direction. The private sector wants to be involved with things that are seen to be a good thing.

**Q419 Chair:** You are looking for leadership and you think the private sector can be part of that.

**James Harding:** Absolutely.

**Jon Snow:** Very much so.

**Q420 Iain Stewart:** I would like to pick up on the urban planning points and cross-departmental points that Mr Harding and Mr Snow alluded to. I represent a Milton Keynes constituency. When Milton Keynes was first designed, there was a conscious decision to segregate cyclists completely from motor cars via a network of what are known as Redways. In the more recent housing estates that have been built, that has not been extended, which is partly because of the pressure to cram in as many new houses as possible. As we are moving into the phase where we are building many more new houses, and we have the Localism agenda where communities have a much greater role in shaping the geography of new developments, what do you see as the process for helping cycle lanes, pathways or whatever it is to be built as an integral part of these designs? Is it a legislative requirement? Is it a campaign for influence when the neighbourhood plans are designed? How is the Government going to engage in this?

**James Harding:** The focus of our campaign has not been on legislation; it has been on action. As I mentioned, one issue within the Department for Transport oversight of any new road building is that there is someone in the room who has responsibility for cycle safety. I think we should be clear that what we are talking about with an eye to investment and changing urban planning and the road structure is going to take many years. It is more about ongoing parliamentary scrutiny and the earmarking of a serious sum. Jon talked about £300 million; we said 2% of the Highway Agency’s budget. There needs to be a commitment from Government at a central and local level on spending. There needs to be scrutiny of how that is spent within the Department for Transport and, I would hope, by Parliament, too. Maybe I am missing something in terms of what could be done through legislation, but the focus we have had so far has been chiefly on what could be done by Government.
**Jon Snow:** I am afraid in terms of urban planning, in particular, that cycling has to join the other issues that have to be considered such as trash collection. There are all sorts of planning regulations that facilitate living in an urban area. I am afraid I do think legal compulsion to make provision for cycles is absolutely essential. That means where people live so that they can cycle from where they live to where they work, and from where they live to where they go to school. That involves compulsory provision as part of the planning system. It must be introduced. I cannot see how a bitty process is going to deliver this. We have seen the effect of bitty processes on painted cycle ways on the road. They suddenly stop because you have either changed boroughs, or moved into another council area. This can be suicidal. It can be absolutely terrifying to be channelled into a thing that eventually just peters out. It is absolutely essential that, if cycle safety is to be developed, there has to be compulsion in the planning system to make provision in every new urban development for the bicycle, and that includes parking bicycles, which is another area we have not touched on.

**Q421 Iain Stewart:** Can I just press you on this a bit more? I think I am correct in saying that when a new housing area is planned at the moment, the fire service has to be consulted on access for their emergency vehicles. You are calling for cyclists also to be involved in that process, but who is involved?

**Jon Snow:** Curiously enough, I am not asking for cyclists to be involved; I am asking for planners to be involved. Just as the planners have to plan a road, they have to plan pedestrian access and cycling access. These should be the three transport commitments. I am not asking for an automatic rail provision, for example, but here you are talking about fundamental citizens’ usage. The citizen uses the bike, the feet and the car. Those three items need to be accommodated in every new plan.

**Q422 Chair:** You say these should be laid down in the routine procedures for planning.

**Jon Snow:** Yes, I am afraid so. I am not a Stalinist.

**Q423 Chair:** What about the 20 mph speed limit suggested for local roads? Would that make a big difference?

**Josie Dew:** Yes, it definitely would. Past Molly’s school there is a 40 mph speed limit, which means I am often overtaken at 50 mph with children on the back. I went to the council last December and said, “Can we get a 20 mph speed limit past the school?” If you hit a cyclist at 40 mph, 90% of children would die. If you hit them at 20 mph, 5% would die. That is a huge difference. They said, “Oh well, we can’t really do that.” There is all this umming and ahing. They just make excuses. You have to get on and do it. They said it has to be petition-led, so I have to go tramping round the whole village. Some people say, “I don’t want to slow my speed because I want to get to work.” Portsmouth has put in 20 mph speed limits.

**Q424 Chair:** If there was a system of a default 20 mph speed limit on local roads, would that be something the other panellists would support?

**James Harding:** In areas where there are not segregated cycle ways. We would argue for a 20 mph speed limit in residential areas where there are not segregated cycle ways. One of the things about that, as Josie says, is that it is not only safer, but it would reinforce the sense that the interests of cyclists and drivers are aligned. Drivers want to go faster, in which case there need to be segregated cycle ways.

**Jon Snow:** I agree with James.

**Q425 Mr Leech:** I am interested to hear why you think that the residential streets where there are segregated cycle ways should not have the 20 mph limit. There is a danger, if you keep it at 30 mph on those streets, that drivers are less inclined to stick to the 20 mph speed limit on the other roads. Is there any reason why you have gone for that particular view?

**James Harding:** As Josie said, the reason is that 20 mph makes it safer. I think that you need to put in place many more segregated cycle ways and you need to incentivise drivers behind that idea too. Being able to free up drivers to drive a little more quickly where there are segregated cycle ways reinforces that point. I should say two things. As I have said, we were prompted into this by the terrible accident that happened to Mary Bowers. We do not think we have it all here in this manifesto. Listening to you, Mr Stewart, we are trying to think through whether there is a capacity for legislation. We have to go away, do some work and think about where that might or might not work—I don’t know. Likewise, on this point about speed limits, the truth is that we have done a lot of consulting with people, but we probably need to speak to more in terms of what the impact would be on drivers if you have that differential 20 mph to 30 mph.

**Jon Snow:** I think we are asking for a lot and we should be pragmatic. I absolutely agree with his approach. If the motorist just thinks the cyclist is being favoured in some totally unfair way, we are not going to make progress. In new building in urban areas, the segregation should permit slightly faster speeds, but where there is no segregation, 20 mph is absolutely plenty.

**Josie Dew:** I do a lot of cycling in the countryside as well as in the cities. The countryside has some of the most dangerous roads now.

**Q426 Chair:** What should be done in the countryside? A lot of our discussions have focused on London and perhaps other cities too. What should be done in the countryside?

**Josie Dew:** Cycling in itself is a safe activity. It is the people around you who make it unsafe. Cycling is fantastic; there is no better way to get around.

**Q427 Chair:** What should be done to deal with the people who cause a problem?

**Josie Dew:** One of the places where cyclists get killed in the countryside is on A roads. You just shouldn’t
Q428 Chair: What should be done?  
Josie Dew: What should be done? Well, you need to have a completely fantastic infrastructure of cycle ways. Take the A272—Petersfield to Midhurst. If you want to cycle down it, you have a white line—

Q429 Chair: So you want to have either cycle ways or—
Josie Dew: You have to have a proper cycle lane—not a foot to cycle in, because people are passing you at 60 mph two inches from your elbow.

Q430 Chair: Are there any other things that should be done in terms of rural areas?  
Josie Dew: Enforcement of speed limits and the education of drivers about overtaking cyclists on that road. There should be a huge advertising campaign, too, on what speed does. It is speed that puts people off and kills people. It is a bit like boy racers. James had something in the motoring section of his magazine about a young lad who got a car. He wanted a Corsair because he could go at 140 mph top speed. All his friends were egging him on to go faster and faster. This is on a country road. This is where I might be cycling.

Q431 Chair: So it is speed.  
Josie Dew: Speed is a huge—

Q432 Chair: We are about to question two Ministers. Is there any one question that you all think we should put to them?

Josie Dew: If you build a good cycle way, they have to be—

Q433 Chair: What is the question to the Minister?  
Josie Dew: Go to Holland. Go cycling around Holland.

Q434 Chair: Is there a question that you would like us to put to the Ministers? We have two Ministers coming.  
Jon Snow: Minister, how do you propose to raise the profile and the power of the direction of cycling in this country? Where is the leadership in government? I do not suppose that everybody in this room—maybe not anybody in this room—could even name the Minister for cycling. Presumably there is somebody, but it is a tacked-on responsibility. It is a very big subject. It is a full-time subject. Minister, and what do you propose to do to raise the profile and attract the funding and the infrastructure for something that is a key dependence of millions of people in this country?

Q435 Chair: Is it agreed that that seems to be the key question?  
James Harding: I have a different question, which is simply: how much money will you commit to building new cycle ways over the next five years?  
Chair: It is the profile and the money. Thank you very much for coming.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Mike Penning MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and Norman Baker MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport, gave evidence.

Q436 Chair: Good morning, Ministers. Welcome to the Transport Committee. As you know, we are focusing on cycling safety this morning. We called for a Twitter campaign about this. We received 775 tweets. The questions that we are asking are focused around the issues that were identified there. In some cases we may ask you the direct questions in the tweets themselves. Perhaps I could start by asking you, who is the Minister for cycling?  
Norman Baker: I am the Minister for cycling and my colleague here—

Mike Penning: I am the Minister for road safety.

Norman Baker: There you are.

Q437 Chair: So who is in charge in terms of safe cycling?  
Mike Penning: Cycling policy is my colleague.  
Norman Baker: And the Secretary of State, of course, is in charge.

Q438 Chair: So neither of you. It is the Secretary of State, but you both have responsibilities.

What plans do you have to raise the profile and leadership in relation to cycling safety? This has been one of the key issues raised with us. I am asking that to both of you. I don’t know which of you feel is the one who should be replying to that.  

Norman Baker: First of all, the profile of cycling generally has been increasing in recent years in a way that is very helpful. It has been increased, for example, through the Barclays bike hire scheme in London, through the provision of cycle superhighways and also by the very welcome Times campaign. The profile of cycling generally is higher than it was. That is something that I have been very keen to encourage. For example, I held an event with TfL just last month at which I invited local authorities from around the country to come and look at good practice and to give them the opportunity to exchange views. That was very well received by local councils.

We have to recognise that the provision of cycling infrastructure and encouragement for cycling is of course partly a role for Government. It has to be delivered on the ground, not by the Department for
Transport but by local councils up and down the country. Therefore, if we are going to make real progress with cycling, which I want to do, we have to make sure that local councils are fully engaged.

Q439 Chair: One of the questions we received was “How is the Government directly supporting the *Times* Cycle Safe campaign manifesto?” Are you engaged in any of the issues in that manifesto? There are eight points there covering quite wide areas.

Norman Baker: We are engaged, and you will have seen the fantastic turnout at the Adjournment debate that Julian Huppert, the Member for Cambridge, called in Westminster Hall. I think 77 MPs in total spoke at that debate, and on that occasion I went through the eight points of the *Times* campaign and indicated what we were doing on each one. As it happened, we had already made quite a lot of progress on some of the points that *The Times* had raised before its campaign began, which I hope indicates to you and the Committee that we were already there. We were not simply responding reactively to what *The Times* had done, although we very much welcome the campaign it initiated. Where there were not points that had been addressed beforehand, we have sought to do so.

My colleague and I wrote on 28 February to the leaders and chief executives of each council across England in response to the campaign. We indicated what we were doing as a Department and what we thought they could help us with as well. For example, as part of the response to *The Times* campaign, I have encouraged each local council to consider whether they should have somebody in the organisation who would take a lead role on cycling—a cycling commissioner or a champion; whatever they want to call it—who could help drive these matters forward at local level. I think on each of the points we have responded.

Mike Penning: As well as many of the points that *The Times* campaign and others on cycling are making, it is fair to say that one of the disincentives for cycling is if the public perception is that cycling is not safe. Cycling is safe. It is a very safe form of transport, but we have to be careful—and it has to be a balance—that we make sure that we address, for example, some of the issues in *The Times* campaign, but at the same time we encourage people not just to continue to cycle, but to take up cycling when they have perhaps not done it before.

Q440 Paul Maynard: One of the questions that you have just been asked to focus on is how the Government have responded to *The Times* cycling campaign. If I try to drill down one level lower, has any budget or money been reallocated as a consequence of the campaign?

Norman Baker: Because of the prudent management of the Department’s finances, we were able to find £50 million recently, £8 million of which I allocated to Sustrans to help to provide off-road infrastructure. It has already got lots of schemes that it has got worked up, and was able to bring those forward and deliver some of those earlier. I have also allocated £7 million extra to the Cycle Rail Working Group, which is designed to help end-to-end journeys and to provide extra cycle provision at railway stations to try to ensure that people access the train station, take the train and have, therefore, an entire sustainable journey rather than taking a car all the way. So that has been provided.

In addition to that, of course, the local sustainable transport fund is ongoing. There is £560 million in that particular fund, as you will know, which is a greater amount than all the various pots that the previous Government had for sustainable transport. There are 39 allocations of money so far from that, totalling £155 million. Of those 39 schemes, 38 have cycling elements. We are in a direct sense not only encouraging cycling through the terms of reference for that particular fund, but we are also seeing councils now responding very helpfully and sensibly to that particular fund and coming up with cycle elements for their local sustainable transport fund bids. They are now being delivered up and down the country.

Q441 Paul Maynard: A number of the Twitter questioners have focused on the practice in France and, I believe, the Netherlands, whereby the motorist is presumed to be at fault in any accident involving a cyclist. Do you know if any study has been conducted by the Department on that model?

Mike Penning: It has been looked at before. I am not saying there is a physical study. The legislation within those two countries you mentioned is different from ours. We have always steered away from presumed guilt in this country. It is something we are looking at, and we have looked at, but it is not something at the moment we are looking to proceed with. That is very much a Justice Department question, with all due respect, rather than a Transport question.

Q442 Paul Maynard: As we have just been hearing from our previous panel, there appear to be two broad philosophical camps in terms of improving the safety of cycling. One is focusing on trying to improve the behaviour of all road users, whether on two legs, two wheels or four wheels. Another is trying to design the danger out of the system. Just this morning we have seen in *The Times* how there is a strong correlation between a particular type of large roundabout dating from the ’60s and very high casualty rates. Do both of you, as Ministers, have any view on whether the emphasis of Government policy should be on trying to change behaviour, or trying to design risk out of the system in the first place?

Mike Penning: I will do the behaviour part because that is very much around my portfolio. I am sure Norman will agree with this. It has to be both. Everybody has the right to use the highway, but we have to make sure we use it safely for them as well as others. The infrastructure is predominantly in Norman’s portfolio and I am sure he will talk about it, but it has to be both. It is an educational process as well, which is vital if we are going to make sure that everybody enjoys the road, whether they are on two wheels—powered humanly, or motorcycles—the trucks that keep the country going and keep our growth going, or the person who just uses their car on
a Sunday or who just cycles on a Sunday. You have to do that across the board to make sure we train them much better.

As for the road infrastructure, and I will pass over to Norman in a second, in the Highways Agency we are conscious—it is one of the things I was quite conscious of—that there is a full connectivity. Even as part of my infrastructure—taking the motorways out of it but on the trunk roads—you have cycle facilities that stop and then do not start again. That is something we were looking at before the Times campaign picked that up. It is something we are working on now to address where they are. I think I have the money within the budgets to address that as well.

Norman Baker: On the infrastructure point, there is a problem going back decades in this country, to be honest with you, where there has not been either an understanding or consideration given to the needs of cyclists by successive county engineers, or whatever they were called, up and down the country in different local authorities. We had a mindset, particularly in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, that roads were designed for motorists and everybody else had to be pushed out of the way. Pedestrians were shoved underneath the road in underpasses. Cyclists were encouraged not to cycle there. You get places like Hyde Park Corner where it is almost impossible to get across the road other than in a motor vehicle. That is the inheritance we have to deal with. Now that we want to get people cycling, we have to deal with those points or encourage local councils in most cases to deal with those points because they are not user-friendly.

Even recent road infrastructure additions have not always considered cycling properly. I have seen traffic calming schemes, including in my own constituency as a matter of fact, where in order to slow the vehicles down, cobbles or pinch points have been created. The cobbles mean that cyclists cannot sensibly cycle over the road surface that has been put in place. The pinch points mean that they are pushed out into the path of the vehicle instead of having a little channel where the cyclists could go down beside the pinch point. Those sorts of design problems have been endemic in the country, to be honest. You cannot suddenly change all that overnight. What we can do, from the Department for Transport’s point of view, is encourage local councils, as we are doing, to take account of the needs of cyclists in the way they design their road infrastructure. When there is a particular problem at the moment in terms of any points where accidents occur on a frequent basis, we can try to look at what can be done to retrofit those particular points to try to make those junctions or roundabouts safer for cyclists.

Q443 Chair: Will that come out in specific guidance to local authorities?

Norman Baker: We have guidance already, but we are certainly happy to look again at what we are saying to local councils in terms of best practice and how they can best design their road infrastructure to take account of cyclists. I am very happy to engage, as I am doing, with local councils to try to make sure that the best knowledge that we have is imparted to them, and indeed that the experience they have is passed back to us.

Q444 Julian Sturdy: A number of tweets came in on infrastructure, which you have already touched on. Mr Baker, and the need to have more engagement with local authorities and new projects, and about why aren’t cyclists taken into consideration when planning new projects. Also, a number of tweets came in on the investment side about segregated cycle lanes, which was talked about a lot in the previous debate. Sweden invested heavily in segregated cycle lanes about eight years ago and that was seen to cut cycle deaths by 50%. Do you both think that the Government should invest more in dedicated, segregated cycle lanes? I know you have talked about £8 million going to Sustrans, but I am talking about much bigger sums than that. To be honest, that is potentially just a drop in the ocean. If the Government should invest more, which is what is coming through on the tweets, obviously that would have to come as a consequence. If you think they should invest more, where would it come from?

Norman Baker: There are a number of different answers to that question. First, I mentioned the historical legacy that we have. That is because councils up and down the country, of whatever persuasion, have not regarded cycling as important, which is why I think that part of the answer is to have somebody quite senior at local level—a cycling commissioner or cycling champion; whatever you want to call them—to ensure that a council or local authority does take these matters properly into account rather than being an add-on. There are plenty of very good cycling officers up and down the country who have no power and are very low in the organisation. They know what they are doing, but they do not have any clout to get things delivered. That needs to be sorted out.

In terms of infrastructure investment, I have mentioned the money we are providing to local councils and otherwise. There is a tension, as you will appreciate, in central Government seeking to intervene and direct too much at a local level. We are not in a position to do that. As a Government, we are trying to get away from that arrangement whereby we micromanage everything from the centre. The local highway authorities are the people who are best placed to ensure that the cycling provision is properly delivered locally. We can give help and guidance, and point them in the right direction, but, ultimately, if there is a particular junction problem in Kettering or Devizes, it is the local council down there that has to sort it out, not us.
Norman Baker: I personally think that we need to get cleverer about securing money for investment in infrastructure generally. The Times campaign referred to the idea of rolling out or encouraging the sort of Barclays bike hire scheme that we have in London. This example in London demonstrates how, with a bit of ingenuity from the local authority, you can attract business to provide some of the infrastructure you want.

Q446 Julian Sturdy: If I can butt in there, Minister, there is a fear, in that that although that works well in London and has been a success, and although that sponsorship of potential dedicated cycle lanes could really work well in London, how do we get that into our northern cities and should they be something given from Government—as I say, perhaps through local government on business rates—to try and incentivise that?

Norman Baker: I do not think that London is necessarily as different from the rest of the country as you think it is. There is a huge population in Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham—in our great cities. As we are moving towards an era where we give more responsibility to these great cities, as I think we should do, I think they will step up to the mark. There are many ways in which you can get extra infrastructure other than directly providing it through the public purse. There is planning gain, of course, as part of any major investment process that takes place on a planning application. Rather than simply saying as planning gain, “We will have a kids’ playground”, which often happens to be the default position of a local planning authority, why don’t they say, “You are creating big employment that we welcome in this particular part of your city. Here is where the employment is likely to be. We will have a dedicated cycle way, please, as part of the planning gain from that particular application.”?

Indeed, if you look at some of the schemes that we are funding from the local sustainable transport fund, they are directly to help to create growth and cut carbon by linking up places of employment with places where people tend to stay. Local councils sometimes need to be a bit smarter than they have been at identifying potential sources of income to help to move this agenda along.

Q447 Mr Leech: Are there any plans to improve driver awareness, attitudes and behaviour around cyclists?

Mike Penning: Yes. As the Committee knows, there is ongoing work with the driving test, which we are changing on a regular basis. We are not only doing it at that level with new drivers, but we are doing a lot of work on the Think! Campaign—the Think! brand works very well. I am looking at what TfL has done in London. Some of its billboard advertising in London is exceptionally good. I do not intend to pay a lot of money for someone else to come up with the same idea; I am going to poach it, and we are going to run some of that out round the country through the Think! campaign.

Q448 Mr Leech: There is a particular issue surrounding the interaction between cyclists and HGVs, or cyclists and buses, for instance. Has any consideration been given to having a compulsory element of large vehicle training, forcing people out on to bikes so that they can appreciate how a cyclist has to interact with the HGV?

Mike Penning: I am not saying that we can force people on to bikes, but I know exactly what you mean. Some of the trade associations are already doing that voluntarily and we are starting to get that through. There are some issues, particularly in London. We have had some terribly sad situations with tipper lorries in London where cyclists have been killed when tipper lorries have turned left. There is an investigation into that at the moment. I intend to extend that round the country into buses because TfL is doing that at the moment. We do not seem to have a problem with buses and cyclists here in London, but we do in other parts of the country.

Q449 Mr Leech: We heard some examples this morning about certain companies taking a very proactive approach to this with their drivers. I have also given the example of my writing to bus companies in Manchester suggesting, at a constituent’s request, that they should send their trainee bus drivers out on the roads so that they appreciate how cyclists feel next to large vehicles. The response was, “It is too dangerous to do that.” Surely, if there is no level of compulsion, a lot of organisations and companies just simply are not going to do it.

Mike Penning: I understand exactly what you mean. Interestingly enough, 18 months ago, there were no drivers going out there on these schemes and the companies were not involved. That will increase as we go forward. If there are bus companies that have written back in such a negative way—and my colleague is the Minister for the bus operators—they have a responsibility as well. We must not take the responsibility away, whether they have been on a cycle or not. As a driver of a PSV or a HGV, you have a responsibility to make sure you drive that safely for all road users. If they are not doing that, they need to make sure that their training incorporates it.

Q450 Mr Leech: Do the Government have the option in the future, though, to have some level of compulsion if companies are not going to apply?

Mike Penning: At the end of the day, the Government can legislate however they want, but we are a deregulation Government. I will be honest—I am always honest to this Committee—that I think it would be very difficult to make it compulsory for all PSV or HGV drivers to go on a pushbike and learn what that is like. I think for some, medically, that would probably not be possible as well. At the end of the day, we must make sure that we do not take the responsibility away from the driver of a vehicle to make sure they drive it safely. Whether you have been on a bike or not, there is no excuse as to whether you drive safely—that is your responsibility.
Q451 Kwasi Kwarteng: I am not getting a very clear idea—this is probably my fault—of your goals for this area. How do you judge your success, in particular with regard to cycling by the end of this Parliament? Do you want more people cycling? What are your targets with regard to cycle safety on the roads? Could you give us some more information about that?

Mike Penning: Very simply, yes, we want more and more people of all ages to cycle. The figures are there to see how successful that is becoming. More and more people are cycling. I measure that against—sadly—numbers of killed and seriously injured per head of population. Earlier, for instance, my colleague was alluding to Sweden. Sweden has 0.22 per 100,000 population killed. At the present time we have 0.17. So, without the scheme that Sweden has, we are not at the top. Anybody who is killed is a loss, but we do very well considering how many people cycle on a regular basis. That figure needs to come down and the other figure needs to go up, but the more people you get to cycle, the more people you will, by logic—

Q452 Kwasi Kwarteng: Have you anything to add on that?

Norman Baker: To reinforce the point Mike was making, the average number of people killed between 1994 and 1998 in terms of cyclists was 186. It is now 111. That is 111 too many, but it is broadly going in the right direction. In terms of the number of people cycling, we do want more people cycling for all sorts of reasons—for health reasons. Some 50,000 people die each year from coronary heart disease, so not cycling is far more dangerous to your health than cycling is. The risk of dying from not cycling and walking is the risk of obesity and all the other health problems that occur. That is one of the reasons why I have been working with Anne Milton from the Department of Health to try and make sure that we are joined up across Departments.

It is also the case that if you get more people cycling—I cannot prove this, but this is anecdotally what I observe, as has happened in London—it modifies the behaviour of car drivers. Car drivers are more tolerant of cyclists when there are more of them around than when they are an oddity on the streets and they don’t see very many of them.

Q453 Kwasi Kwarteng: Just as a follow-up, do you see significant amounts of extra spending as a way of achieving the goals that you have outlined?

Norman Baker: I would be very keen to encourage local councils—not just through the local sustainable transport fund, but through the integrated transport block money they have—to think about cycling. Cycling is good for the environment, it cuts carbon emissions and it is good for public health in terms of the individual’s benefits from it. It is good for the driver of the motor vehicle who is still in his or her car, because there are fewer people in their cars and that eases congestion. In all ways, it is good.

It is also good for the economy. The Department for Transport had some evidence to suggest that people who turn up in a town centre on foot or on bike actually spend more money than those who turn up in cars. I find that quite counter-intuitive, but that is what the figures tend to suggest. Certainly, when I was on holiday last year in Bavaria, the towns that I went to had no cars in them—everyone was on foot or on bicycle. They were packed out. Every single shop was busy. They were selling lots of stuff and the economy was booming in these places, and that was without cars being there. So, there is an economic benefit to cycling as well. For all those reasons, we are very keen as a Government to support cycling, but that ultimately has to be delivered on the ground by local authorities rather than by the DfT. We can give a lead, but we cannot micromanage what happens in town centres.

Mike Penning: There is one extra point. If you are building something from scratch, there is no real extra cost in building into it that you are going to make sure that cyclists and pedestrians are in it. As was alluded to earlier on, it is the adaption from the really old networks that becomes the really difficult thing. We do not have the money to go and rip everything out. I have more people knocking at my door asking for new road programmes—I never knew I had that many friends. We have only a limited amount of money, but when we do adapt, especially within my network, one of the things I am very conscious of is that we must make sure that the connectivity is there. There should not be any extra cost if you start from scratch. A classic example of that, in many ways, is Cambridge. Going back to what Norman was saying, my daughter has just spent the last three years up in Cambridge. As a driver it is a nightmare; she cycles everywhere, and I can assure you that you will not find a busier town centre on a Saturday than in Cambridge.

Q454 Chair: But the strategic framework very consciously does not have targets, so how are you going to be able to tell if you have made cycling safer and if you have done as much as you could have done? If you have no target that you are aiming for, how are you going to judge what you have done?

Mike Penning: We have discussed this in other areas of my portfolio. The Government as a whole are not a fan of targets. As I have explained before, if you have a target, the easier bits get done first and the hard things don’t necessarily get done. The reason we will know is how many people are cycling—whether that increase comes—and whether the figures of killed per head of population continue to drop. You do not need a target to prove that; it will be there.

Q455 Chair: But if you do not have a target that says what would be a reasonable reduction in a given period of time, how will you know if you are making reasonable progress?

Mike Penning: Because any death is a death too many. How can you have a target on how many people you want killed? That is my view.

Norman Baker: Targets are superficially attractive but can produce perverse consequences. For example, any sensible target on the reduction in number of deaths among cyclists would have to take into account the number of cyclists out there and the number of miles that they cycle. That is the relationship that counts. It is the deaths per 100,000 miles or whatever way you want to describe it. That is quite difficult to tie down.
As Mike rightly says, you could end up just getting to that figure and then sit back on your laurels satisfied and not thinking you need to go any further, but actually we want to go as far as we possibly can. It is better in a way to try to do the right thing and not to have a target that you meet, and then stop, but instead to try and continue forward. I want to get more people cycling. I do not want to quantify how many people that is, not because I do not want a target for it that is going to be difficult to meet or something, but just because I think it is an abstract that does not help. I want more people having Bikeability training—more children in particular. I want more children cycling to school.

Q458 Iain Stewart: But specifically on the point that cycling provision should formally be part of the planning process, is that something you have a view on?
Norman Baker: I am not sure we have made that specific point. I will have to check and come back to you. What we have done is to make sure that our CLG colleagues are aware of our commitment to sustainable travel. I think they are aware of it and support it, but we have made them aware of our commitment to sustainable travel. They need to ensure that there is proper provision in the planning regime to take account of that.

Q459 Mr Harris: Do you both cycle?
Norman Baker: Yes. In fact, as a former Transport Minister, you will be pleased to know that when I was offered a ministerial car on day one, I refused it and said I would have a ministerial bike so that I could get to the Commons to vote, because it is 10 minutes’ walk from DfT headquarters and eight minutes for the Division Bell. I now have a departmental Brompton, which I use to get from the Department to the House of Commons. I know Theresa Villiers is a keen cyclist as well, and indeed the Prime Minister is a keen cyclist.

Q460 Mr Harris: I think events have rather changed her mind on that.
Norman Baker: No, she has not changed her mind on that, I am happy to tell you. The Prime Minister and others are keen cyclists as well, so this is a culture change. When I was first elected as a Member of Parliament in 1997, one of the first things I did was to attend a county council establishment for a meeting. I arrived by bike. When I arrived by bike, there was a parking space allocated for me with a bollard in the middle and a sign saying “Member of Parliament”. There was nowhere to put my bike. I wheeled my bike into the reception area because there was nowhere else to put it. The receptionist looked at me in horror and said, “You can’t bring that bike in here. We’re expecting a Member of Parliament.” That demonstrates the mindset that there is about cycling. Cycling is not a second-class activity. It is not something done by people who have no other alternative. Cycling is now a choice that many people of all strands of society now want to embrace and that is very good. You will find plenty of cyclists in the House of Commons and in ministerial teams up and down different Departments, and that is how it should be.

Q461 Mr Harris: Mr Penning.
Mike Penning: I do. Sadly—or not sadly—it is in the garage more often than it is out. I am honest about that. I get nagged to death by my daughters about it. Anybody who has had students at university will tell you that they cycle everywhere because it is cheap and the best way to do it. However, do I get out as much as I would like? No, because I would rather be out on my Triumph very often.
you use a bike rather than a car. There is a very practical reason. When you are cycling in London, Mr Baker, do you go through red lights?

Norman Baker: No. I don’t go through red lights and I think it is very important that cyclists respect the law. We must have traffic rules—which apply to all road users, whether they are car drivers, bus drivers, cyclists or pedestrians—that we all respect. That is the way we should go forward. I condemn people who do not obey traffic signals.

Q463 Mr Harris: But do you accept the arguments that are made by some of the cycling organisations that there may be a safety argument that for some cyclists going through a red light makes them safer from a possible collision from behind?

Norman Baker: No, and I think it may also make pedestrians less safe because many of our traffic light arrangements in London and elsewhere have pedestrian phases. A pedestrian relies on the red light for the traffic to tell them that it is safe to cross the road. If you have a cyclist coming round the corner when pedestrians are crossing, that is not a safe arrangement. What I do think is worth looking at are arrangements where we have cycles placed at the front. We increasingly have that at junctions, where there is a space for cyclists so that they can get ahead of the vehicles and leave first. The vehicles can see them and that is very good.

You can also have a segregated cycle arrangement—I know TfL is looking at this at the Bow roundabout, and Mike might know more about this than I do—whereby cyclists are allowed to go first on a different light. Those sorts of arrangements are safe and recognise potential safety problems for cyclists, but allowing them to compromise a red light would not be the right way forward.

Mike Penning: As the road safety Minister I share that view. We have not discussed this, interestingly enough, but my job is to protect everybody, including pedestrians. A red light is a red light, and, if any colleagues on the Committee go out in front of Carriage Gates at that crossing where you go across to Westminster Abbey, you will see, sadly, people jumping the lights, especially at this time of the year with the sheer amount of pedestrians trying to get across there, even when they should not be doing it. We have a law in this country and it is for a reason: because it is safer if you don’t go through a red light.

Q464 Mr Harris: Our earlier witnesses made the point that since traffic lights were introduced in the 1930s they have not really evolved in any shape or form at all. Are the Government considering any change to traffic lights—for example, allowing cyclists or other drivers to turn left at a red light, as they do in some states in America—or are we beholden to the status quo in terms of how traffic lights work?

Mike Penning: No Minister is going to sit here and say, “We are never going to look at that again.” One of the issues about turning left on a red light for me, frankly, is cyclists. In the Bow flyover incident, sadly, a gentleman died. I have met his widow and they have been brilliant as to how they have complained. That was because a tipper lorry turned left on a red light. I cannot say much more than that because there is a police investigation going on. If we start allowing one, the others will think, “Well, I’ve got the right to do that.” It is very difficult. I accept where we are on this. What we must make sure of is that people sitting at traffic lights are safe. One of the ways to make them safe is to put them in front of the traffic. However, I have also seen a situation where the motorcyclists also like to be at the front of the queue at traffic lights and you have this disparity in speed away and things like that. We will keep an open mind. You are right that traffic lights have not dramatically changed. One of the reasons they have not dramatically changed is because they do what it says on the tin. They actually do their job.

Q465 Mr Harris: Mr Baker, have you done your Bikeability badges?

Norman Baker: I have done my cycling proficiency. I am too old to do Bikeability; I did cycling proficiency.

Q466 Mr Harris: When I was a Minister I did all three Bikeability badges, so you should do it as well.

Norman Baker: I stand chastened. I have been out to participate in Bikeability but I have not done the badges.

Q467 Mr Leech: In our previous session I thought Mr Snow made a fairly unfair comment that the vast majority of people would not know who the cycling Minister was. Most people in this room would recognise that Mr Baker has been a fairly active and prominent cycling Minister, but I think it shows an attitude that most people do not recognise the importance of cycling and who the key players are. How do we raise the profile more so that your position as cycling Minister is very key in people’s minds?

Norman Baker: I think if you ask anybody who the Minister of anything is, you are unlikely to get a response that tells you who they are. Probably some people think Churchill is a dog that sells insurance. I am afraid we have got to that stage. I am not confident that we can ever get to a stage where the cycling Minister, the road safety Minister, the Education Minister or anyone else is known as a public figure.

In a sense that is not important. What is important is that there is a mindset change throughout the country about the value of cycling, and particularly in local authorities about how they approach cycling. That is much more important than concentrating on one individual. We are, for example, promoting the summer of cycling. We have allocated some help towards that from the Department. Obviously, with the Olympics coming up this year, there is a big opportunity to reinforce sport, healthy activities and cycling in particular. We are working with DCMS to try to make sure that happens.

Q468 Mr Leech: You advocated having a local person with a responsibility for cycling within local authorities. How senior should that person be?

Norman Baker: That is up to the local authorities, but personally I think it needs to be someone who has some clout. They are the delivery agents for some of
the infrastructure in this country. There is a bit in the
Highways Agency, but frankly most of it is done at
local authority level. I would like to see someone
reasonably senior in the transport team in each local
authority to be able to do that. It would either be
someone who is a senior officer or a lead member in
their cabinets. I do not think it is for me to specify
that, but it needs to be someone who is able to
command the support of the local authority, and when
they come forward with an idea, they need to be able
to enact it rather than simply having it filed away
somewhere.

**Q469 Chair:** Mr Baker, you say that whoever is
responsible in local authorities should have some
clout. Do you have enough clout to influence things
such as planning policies, regulations for cycle lanes
and the allocation of funding for cycle lanes?

**Norman Baker:** I think I do all right in Government
terms within the Department. It is not difficult in
the Department because I have two colleagues—Mike
here and Theresa—who are supportive of cycling.
Therefore I am pushing at an open door to get stuff
done. As far as local authorities are concerned,
whether there has been a culture of cycling or not,
what has been identified through our prudent financial management
of the Department’s finances, that has been made
available on occasions for cycling. There is no
resistance to that agenda.

As far as cross-Government is concerned, I have
already referred to some of the links with other
Departments. I have also engaged with the Treasury
on the Cycle to Work Scheme, for example, and it
has been helpful on that. I do not detect resistance
particularly, either from inside the Department or from
elsewhere in Government, to promoting the cycling
agenda.

**Q470 Chair:** Has any money been specifically
allocated for cycle lanes?

**Norman Baker:** Michael mentioned whether the
Highways Agency has done that, but in terms of cycle
lanes from local authorities, we would not get into
doing that, in the same way as we do not allocate
money for bollards. We just do not get involved in
allocating at that micro level. We allocate a transport
block to local authorities, which they are able to spend
as they see fit for their transport priorities. I have
supplemented that on occasions through either the
local sustainable transport fund or the specific
allocations to groups like Sustrans, but I do not think
we would not ever get involved in allocating to that
to level. Our job is to try to get the right culture at a
local council level to help that to evolve, rather than
starting to specify to the nth degree in that way.

**Q471 Chair:** Are any changes being considered for
heavy goods vehicles—compulsory sensors, additional mirrors that will allow them to see cyclists in
their blind spots and things of that nature?

**Mike Penning:** Yes. The Trixi mirrors are fixed
mirrors at traffic lights. We have trialled them in
London and they are now available to local
authorities. They do not need permission from central
Government, which they used to have to do. We have
signed the deregulation of the legislation and they can
do that. As I said at the last evidence session, we are
leading in Europe on the mirrors in particular. There
was a meeting at the Commission only last week
where we have moved to the next stage. It is like
watching paint dry, but it is happening. New lorries
have to have much better mirrors. I am still told that
it is probably going to be the end of 2013 or 2014
before that legislation comes through. It is not just
about the UK. We have to do this within Europe; the
sheer amount of overseas lorries on our roads will tell
us that.

Sensors are much more difficult. We are looking at
that. We have asked the Commission as well. We are
going to have some research done. For those who do
not know, the difficulty with sensors is that they are
light-reversing sensors, but on the side of the vehicle.
They will pick up literally anything that is on the side
of the lorry. Yes, if you are a cyclist, it could well
pick you up there. If it is a bollard, a lamp post, post
box or pedestrian, it will pick it up.

As I have said before, what really worries me—and
what I want to emphasise—is that we must not take
the responsibility away from the driver to do what the
driver should be doing, which is observing around his
vehicle. Some companies have looked at this and it
does not work for them, but we will do this through
the European channels as we are doing with mirrors
and come to a consensus on it. There is a degree of
scepticism as to whether it will do what it says on the
tin. In other words, the sensors will go off quite a lot,
which means that the drivers will not look in their
mirrors. That is a negative and then we will have more
problems than we had before.

**Q472 Chair:** Can we learn anything on safe cycling
from countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark?

**Norman Baker:** I am always happy to look for lessons
from elsewhere. We should always be open to that. I
have been over to look at cycling in Holland, which
is very well known for that. Earlier on, my colleague
Mike referred to the rate per 100,000 of the population
in terms of cycle deaths. We actually come above the
Netherlands. We have a better record on that.

**Mike Penning:** We are substantially above.

**Norman Baker:** What can we learn from the
Netherlands, in my view, is probably not on safety
issues particularly, but about how to encourage people
to cycle more, to improve the public infrastructure in
the public realm and to join up different modes of
transport like rail and cycle. That is what we can learn
from the Netherlands rather than safety. I went to the
station in Leiden, which is a medium-sized town. I
think I am right in saying that there are something like
13,000 bicycles parked there every day and no cars—
or hardly any cars. We are never going to get to that
situation, but we can make a lot more progress on it.
They are the lessons that we can learn, rather than
necessarily safety lessons.

**Mike Penning:** That is a classic example. As you
massively increase the amount of people who cycle,
your figures for deaths go up. On the European table
I have here, the Netherlands is fourth from the bottom,
with 0.84 per 100,000 of population, whereas we are
seventh with 0.17. That is not because they do not
care about cycle safety; it is because there are so many
people cycling in the Netherlands, so you will get those ratios going up. I think the Netherlands might want to come and see us to find out how we are making sure that so few people are killed in cycling terms as we increase the numbers of people cycling, because the figures would indicate that we can perhaps do a bit better than them.

Chair: Thank you very much.
Written evidence

Written evidence from Sustrans (RSF 01)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sustrans is the charity that’s enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. Our work makes it possible for people to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.1

1.2 Sustrans acts simultaneously on the delivery of practical projects which help people to choose more active and sustainable modes of transport and to encourage government to improve the conditions for those people who have managed to leave the car behind. As a representative of more vulnerable road users Sustrans is acutely aware of the impact which a road safety framework can have on the actual and perceived levels of safety for all road users. As such we are entirely supportive of the committee’s decision to conduct an inquiry into the government’s new road safety framework.

1.3 In this response we aim to answer two of the questions which the committee will be considering: whether the government was correct not to set road safety targets; and how decentralisation will work in practice. We’ve considered the two issues under a single heading in this response.

1.4 In summary, our response suggests that the government has clearly indicated an understanding of the bigger picture within which road safety exists by providing a focus on rate-based approaches for some vulnerable road users. However, the lack of targets and a wider vacuity around the role which government will play to ensure local delivery of road safety is successful could undermine this. The Road Safety Framework’s absence of targets does not give the impression that Road Safety is a high priority for the Government, which in turn will make it difficult for local authorities to make it a priority at the local level.

2. Was Government right not to set road safety targets and whether its outcomes framework is appropriate and how will the decentralisation to local authorities of funding and the setting of priorities work in practice and contribute towards fulfilling the Government’s vision

2.1 Given the cross government approach on target setting of all kinds, it was no surprise to see that casualty reduction targets were absent from the road safety framework. However, road safety, unlike many other sectors, has benefitted enormously from the use of targets over the last two decades with very few exceptions. We’re pleased to see a rate based approach to some of the more vulnerable road user types but overwhelmingly feel that the lack of targets will undermine progress and prevent more widespread examples of effective road safety delivery at the local level.

2.2 Whilst we support the use of rate based indicators/targets, the cost-effective measurement of levels of cycling and (even harder) walking at the local level are fraught with difficulties. It would be helpful if the Department were to provide guidance for local authorities on how to measure these, so as to provide a degree of consistency between different local authorities that would enable meaningful comparisons to be made between them.

The role of Government

2.3 As could be expected, much of the framework focuses on high level principles which set out the role of a number of stakeholders. Paragraph 3.28 sets out the role of central government in its new context, suggesting the following key strands:

— To provide leadership.
— To set the regulatory framework.
— To negotiate, agree and implement international (including European) standards.
— To manage the strategic road network.
— To set standards for safe and responsible driving.
— To provide public information and educational materials.
— To undertake and share research good practice and data.

2.4 These headlines provide a fine base from which to develop a strategy but its development in the document is insufficient. Most notable is the absence of targets for casualty reduction. As set out in PACTS Taking Stock report and summarised below, the use of a headline target at national government level has often helped local government to focus efforts, secure funding and ensure a coherent approach towards casualty reduction. Within today’s context of localism and restricted budgets, leadership must be a meaningful process which encourages and supports good practice. The provision of national targets would have been a useful part of any road safety framework in Great Britain.
Casualty Reduction Targets

2.5 In 1987 a target was set to reduce road casualties by one-third by 2000 compared with the average for 1981–85. This target was achieved for deaths and serious injuries by 2000, with road deaths having fallen by 39% and serious injuries by 45%. In March 2000, Tomorrow’s Roads—Safer for Everyone set new targets to:

- Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents by 40%.
- Reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured in road accidents by 50%.
- Reduce the slight casualty rate, expressed as the number of people slightly injured per 100 million vehicle kilometres by 10%.

2.6 The Targets were incorporated within the larger strategy document which alongside the Local Transport Plan Process and other target setting documents has helped to further the road safety culture in Great Britain today. Interviews conducted for this report have shown unanimous support for Tomorrow’s Roads, which used the evidence base available to highlight key areas of concern and identify the range of stakeholders and partners responsible for achieving the casualty reduction targets.

2.7 Tomorrow’s Roads had a very useable format. The introduction clarified the strategy, targets, timescales and the partners required to carry it out and then focussed on ten key themes, each of which was expounded with a summary of the strategy, the background information and the action plan. As such, The Tomorrow’s Roads strategy was implemented across Great Britain although the specific direction was separated out into geographical, regional and local areas. By the end of 2008, Great Britain had already reached the 40% target for reducing KSI.

2.8 As such, despite some sectors experiencing a negative outcome as a result of target setting, in road safety this has not been the case and has consistently provided a base from which local government can manage their contribution towards a reduction in collisions and casualties.

The impact of targets in children and young people

2.9 Although the use of targets in road safety has been a useful tool, there are some examples which require a more sophisticated approach. This tends to be the case among the more vulnerable mode users.

2.10 In Tomorrow’s Roads the DfT set a separate target to reduce the number of child KSI by 50% from the 1994–98 baseline. In 2008, Reported Road Casualties showed that child KSI had already fallen by 59% since baseline.

2.11 These statistics indicate very positive road safety benefits to children over the course of the Tomorrow’s Roads strategy. However, these figures fail to account for the exposure rate changes as a result of modal choices made by or for children. Roger Mackett at UCL has spent some time examining the realities surrounding the motivations and barriers to active travel for children. His homepage at UCL states:

2.12 According to the National Travel Survey, between 1985–86 and 1995–97 children aged 16 or less increased the percentage of their trips by car from 35% to 48%. Over the same period the percentage of trips to school by car went up from 16% to 29%. These trends have led to significant decreases in the amounts of walking and cycling by children. Whilst the reasons for these shifts are fairly clear: parental concern about traffic and possible abduction, and changing lifestyles linked to increased decentralisation, it is also clear that they may lead to significant problems. As the 1998 White Paper on Transport says: “Not walking or cycling to school means that children get much less exercise and builds in car dependency at an early age”. Whilst there is an intuitive logic to this statement, it raises a number of important research issues.

2.13 Mackett’s micro site brings up the apparent conflict of interest between active and safe travel, and references a number of other important pieces of research in the area. Despite significant reductions in child KSI, road death continues to feature highly among causes of “accidental” death in children. Road death accounts for 60% of what the DfT terms “accidental” death in children aged 10–14. In this sense accidental can be taken to mean avoidable or non-medical. Unfortunately, the target to reduce child KSI and the associated headlines fail to account for the extremely high levels of road death in young people aged 15–19. 80% of accidental deaths in this age group happen on our roads.

2.14 The high levels of perceived and actual risk for children and young people have tended to lead to a shift in behaviour towards a more sedentary upbringing. This has had a detrimental affect on the quality of life of children and young people. In 1971 80% of seven and eight year olds travelled to school without an adult. In 2009 only 11% Of 7–10 years olds did the same. In 1973 three quarters of children played on the streets around their home. By 2005 this had declined to 15%.

2.15 Over the same period there was a big increase in car ownership and usage. In 1975 car journeys accounted for 33% of the average distance travelled each year. Now they account for 80% of the average distance travelled which is itself 50% further than four decades ago. In the last few decades public space has been swamped by cars.

2.16 Parents are twice as concerned about traffic danger as stranger danger. In the face of this threat, parents have removed children from the streets. The UK’s roads may statistically be safer now than they have ever
been, but evidence suggests that much of this could be because children have, literally, been driven from our streets.

2.17 The result is increased congestion. At 8.35 am in the morning over 1 in 5 cars is taking children to school, with the vast majority returning straight home again. Only 7% are dropping children off on the way to work. Journeys made by car to accompany children to activities, from football to ballet, are buried in the statistics, but ”escort” journeys have, over the last decade, seen a 25% growth in distance travelled when the overall trend is static.

2.18 It is vital that the government’s approach towards child road safety does not result in a wider public health crisis brought about through inactivity. Sustrans calls on the committee to urge the Department for Transport to work with the Department of Health to reinstate an Active Travel Strategy linked with both the road safety framework and the guidelines for physical activity which will incorporate a range of holistic targets aimed at encouraging a safe and active future for our children and young people.

The impact of targets on cyclists

2.19 Cycling, like walking, is being promoted as part of the physical activity guidelines to confront disease related to obesity and overweight.\(^4\) Observed rates of pedal cycling have fluctuated over the last 40 years but it is expected that cycling, as a modal choice, will become more popular.

2.20 The Cycling Demonstration Towns have shown significant increases in cycling, whilst in “Valuing the benefits of cycling” a report for Cycling England, it is suggested that any increases in cyclist casualties are perhaps indicative of a rate-based decrease based on unmeasured increases in exposure. The government’s decision for road safety to be based on the rate per mile travelled, not just on numbers of injuries is therefore a welcome development but one which would have been more effective if seen alongside a range of targets.

The outcomes framework

2.21 Sustrans agrees with PACTS summation that:

\textit{it is hardly surprising that the framework does not include targets for further casualty reduction. At the same time, section 6 entitled “Casualty Forecasts” looks at recent trends in casualty reduction and projects those forward. This leads to the conclusion that we could see reductions in deaths of between 37% and 46% by 2020 based on the 2005–09 average. “This is neither a target nor a definitive forecast” (paragraph 6.11). However, it is a pair of projections against which progress can be measured and the government’s performance can be assessed. The use of 2005–09 as the baseline years is consistent with previous practice in monitoring progress. However, it may easily be rendered meaningless by the recent sharp and sustained decrease in deaths. Assuming that the number of deaths in Great Britain in 2010 turn out to be between 1,900 and 2,000, Table 6.1 indicates further reductions of around 10–20% by 2025 and 15–38% by 2030. Such a low level of ambition is disappointing and does not reflect the more successful approaches to casualty reduction set out in either Vision Zero or Sustainable Safety. British pragmatism seems to have become beset with inertia.}\(^5\)

2.22 The framework also sets out an outcomes framework against which progress can be monitored (see Annex B). This a work in progress since a number of the outcomes are yet to be developed. However, it does bring together a number of sources of previously disparate data from various government departments and includes an indicator relating to perceptions of road safety. As shown above, this is particularly important if people are to be encouraged to walk or cycle when fear of traffic may be a preventing factor.

2.23 Ultimately, the framework offers a great deal of potential in terms of understanding the bigger picture within which road safety fits and showing potential for a more holistic approach to the delivery of road safety. However, this promise is undermined by the absence of targets and the lack of clear information about any leading role which central government can play.

2.24 Road safety is to be delivered in a large part by local authorities who have seen their budgets and capabilities slashed over the last 18 months. Now is the time when government should be stepping up to fill the void and provide leadership, share good practice and provide local authorities with the tools they require.

2.25 Sustrans urges the committee to call on government to use the road safety strategy as a base from which to develop the following further actions:

- Work with local authorities to help them set meaningful local targets for road safety delivery.
- Provide tools which help to share good practice.
- Work with DH to develop an active travel strategy which includes rate-based road safety targets for walking and cycling.
- Work with DH and DfE to develop a strategy for children’s travel which encourages healthy and safe access to active travel for the school journey.

\textit{October 2011}
REFERENCES
1 www.sustrans.org.uk
3 http://www.dtt.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/strategytargetsperformance/tomorrowsroadssafereveryone

Written evidence from the Association of British Drivers (RSF 02)

Summary
— The ABD agrees with the Government’s proposal not to set new road safety targets, as they can lead to distorted priorities.
— Outcomes in terms of casualty reduction are best expressed as rates per distance travelled, so changes in traffic levels are automatically accounted for.
— Non-fatal casualty figures must be used with caution, as there is significant and varying underreporting, especially of serious injuries.
— Giving local authorities more autonomy in their road safety strategies could mean drivers facing greater inconsistency when crossing authority boundaries.
— Speed limits in particular vary considerably between local authorities and they are often set too low, based on misconceptions of their effectiveness.
— The current guidance on local speed limit setting, based on the mean (average) speed should be withdrawn. New instructions, reverting to the 85th percentile speed as its basis, should be made mandatory so that speed limits are consistent and appropriate across the country.
— Speed limits of 20 mph should only be used where the 85th percentile speed is close to this figure, or can be made so by changing the road environment. There must be no reduction in the default urban speed limit of 30 mph.
— The ABD opposes fixed penalty notices for careless driving, which is largely a subjective offence. It could lead to large numbers of FPNs being issued, with drivers intimidated from defending themselves in court due to high costs.
— There should be a ban on any revenue from driver improvement courses being used to fund enforcement activities, as this can create conflicts of interest.
— Serious incidents of careless driving should always be taken to court. Minor errors and misjudgements are best dealt with by advice from a police officer.
— The ABD is concerned about proposals to increase penalties for drivers causing serious injury by dangerous driving. Penalties should reflect the seriousness of the bad driving, not the consequences.
— Enforcement should be used to improve road safety, not generate prosecutions for their own sake or exact retribution. There should be a clear differentiation between persistent, deliberate reckless driving and occasional errors or misjudgements by normally safe drivers.
— The action plan should include the development of a national scheme of pre-driver education, along the lines of that provided by the Under-17 Car Club.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Association of British Drivers (ABD) was formed in 1992 to campaign for a better deal for Britain’s motorists. In particular, its founder members were very concerned about the increasing use of technology to enforce driving laws, which threatened to undermine the traditional “Three Es” approach to road safety (Education, Engineering and Enforcement) that gave Britain the safest roads in the world.

1.2 The ABD is a voluntary organisation funded by subscriptions and donations from its members and supporters. It receives no funds from public bodies or private-sector businesses, so is truly independent. The ABD is a member of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety and the National Council of Voluntary Organisations.

1.3 Many of the ABD’s active members are from professional or managerial backgrounds, and around 40% of national committee members hold advanced driving qualifications. Malcolm Heymer, who is submitting this evidence on behalf of the ABD, holds a master’s degree in Transportation Engineering and has over 30 years’ local government experience in the fields of transportation modelling, highway engineering, transport planning and traffic engineering, including road safety engineering.

1.4 Mr Heymer is willing to give oral evidence to the Transport Committee if requested.
2. Targets and outcomes

2.1 The ABD agrees with the Government that the setting of new road safety targets is unnecessary. Target setting can lead to unintended consequences by encouraging actions aimed solely at meeting a numerical figure rather than addressing the underlying issue. An example would be a target to reduce the killed and seriously injured (KSI) figure, which could lead to pressure being put on police officers attending road accidents to report an injury as slight rather than serious in marginal cases.

2.2 Casualty reduction targets have also led some local authorities to apply blanket measures, such as speed limit reductions, over wide areas in the hope that they will lead to fewer accidents, rather than targeting particular areas or classes of road user. (Studies claiming a relationship between average speeds and accident frequency are statistically flawed).1, 2

2.3 Outcomes in terms of casualty reductions are most informative when expressed as casualty rates per billion vehicle (or pedestrian) miles, so that changes in vehicle or pedestrian flow are automatically accounted for. The strategic framework acknowledges that casualty reductions occur at a faster rate during periods of low economic growth, but this is not due solely to reduced (or negative) traffic growth. The phenomenon is common to all developed countries and Canadian researcher Al Gullon attributes it to psychological changes in road users between good and bad economic times.3 This seems a reasonable proposition, since the majority of accidents are due to the errors or inattention of road users. A more cautious attitude in times of economic downturn could explain the faster rate of casualty reduction.

2.4 Non-fatal casualty figures need to be treated with caution in defining outcomes, due to the divergence of police casualty figures from those of hospital admissions, especially in the case of serious injuries.

3. Decentralisation to Local Authorities

3.1 The ABD’s greatest concern about the strategic framework is the proposal to allow local authorities greater freedom to decide their own road safety strategies. While decentralisation is fine where policies affect only local people, the roads within a local authority area, particularly those forming main traffic routes, are not used solely by residents of that area. There needs to be a consistency of approach so that drivers crossing local authority boundaries are not subject to arbitrary changes in regulations or engineering measures.

3.2 There are already substantial inconsistencies between local authorities in different parts of the country and that situation is likely to worsen under the proposed framework. In particular, speed limit policies vary widely, with roads of similar type having speed limits that may be 10 or 20 mph lower in one county than in another, or even between districts within a county. This situation brings speed limits as a whole into disrepute, leading to widespread non-compliance. As a result, the road safety benefits of correctly set speed limits are lost.

3.3 Substantial worldwide evidence shows that, for speed limits to benefit road safety, they must be set at a level seen as reasonable by the majority of safe, responsible drivers. In practice this means setting them close to the 85th percentile speed, which is the speed that 85% of drivers would not wish to exceed anyway. When set at this level, a speed limit achieves the greatest voluntary compliance, which then applies a degree of peer pressure on others to conform. This results in smoother traffic flow, a lower spread of speeds, fewer conflicts between vehicles and minimum crash risk. Conversely, when set too low, there is a high level of non-compliance, so the pressure on the less responsible to conform is lost. There is thus a greater spread of speeds (including more very high speeds), more conflicts and greater risk of accidents.

3.4 In 2006 the previous Government replaced earlier advice on the setting of local speed limits, based on the 85th percentile principle, with advice that recommends the use of the mean (average) speed. This was a retrograde step, as it meant that speed limits set this way would criminalize many of the safest drivers, if they continued to use their skill and judgement to travel at a safe and appropriate speed. Drivers with the least accident involvement are those who travel in the 80th to 90th percentile speed range, with risk increasing sharply above the 95th percentile, but also at the bottom end of the speed range.

3.5 The 2006 guidance was a response to the widespread practice of many local authorities during the previous 10 years to set speed limits below the 85th percentile level. Since the new guidance was issued, some local authorities have used it to set limits even lower, sometimes below the mean speed, which the guidance specifically warns against. In many cases they have done so against objections from the police, who realise that unrealistically low speed limits cannot be enforced.

3.6 Setting speed limits at the 85th percentile level is counterintuitive to many people, who believe, wrongly, that reduced speed limits lead to lower speeds and fewer accidents. This perception is widespread among local councillors, who are often pressurised by vociferous residents to reduce speed limits. It is imperative, therefore, that not only should the 2006 guidance be withdrawn and replaced with a reversion to the correct 85th percentile principle, but it should be made mandatory. All local authorities should be obliged to review their speed limits and reset them within, say, five years. In measuring the 85th percentile speed, it is vital that only the speeds of vehicles unimpeded by others should be taken into account.

3.7 The ABD supports the Government’s proposal to raise the motorway speed limit to 80 mph, which would align the limit with the 85th percentile speed of cars (79 mph), measured by Department of Transport surveys. This is a first welcome step in bringing speed limits back into line with the optimum level for safety.
It should be followed by ensuring that local authorities follow suit on the roads for which they are responsible. The DfT rightly prescribes the traffic signs that may be used throughout the country, as it would be absurd to allow each local authority to design its own. The same should apply to speed limits. Only then would there be not only consistency across the country, but speed limits would once again command respect and have a positive effect on road safety.

3.8 The need for consistency in speed limits applies to urban as well as rural areas. While the ABD does not object to 20 mph speed limits *per se*, they should be applied only to roads where the 85th percentile speed is already close to that figure, or where measures can be put in place that encourage drivers to reduce their speed without the need for enforcement. Roads suitable for 20 mph limits will mainly be residential or in town centres, and will either be narrow, heavily used by pedestrians or cyclists, or where forward visibility is limited by on-street parking. Roads should be assessed individually, not on an area-wide basis. Any suggestion to reduce the default speed limit in urban areas from 30 to 20 mph should be firmly ruled out.

4. **THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ROAD SAFETY**

4.1 The ABD opposes the introduction of a fixed penalty offence for careless driving. Unlike absolute offences, careless driving cannot be defined precisely so there will always be a measure of subjectivity, especially for incidents posing a relatively low risk. There is a danger, therefore, that fixed penalty notices might be handed out for minor errors or misjudgements, with drivers pressured into paying up rather than face a potentially expensive court appearance. If driver improvement courses were made available as an alternative to a fixed penalty, some police officers might be induced to target such minor infringements, especially if part of the revenue from the courses was ploughed back into more enforcement. This is already occurring in some areas with speed awareness courses, with income from the courses used to finance camera enforcement.

4.2 The ABD would like to see a complete ban on the use of remedial courses to finance enforcement activities, whether for speed limit or other offences. The decision to prosecute or offer a remedial course should be made on the facts of each individual case, based solely on considerations of the best way to improve future driver behaviour. Courses must not be used for revenue generation.

4.3 Incidents of careless driving that are sufficiently serious to warrant prosecution should always be taken to court. Lesser incidents involving a one-off error or misjudgement should generally be dealt with by advice from a police traffic officer. The purpose of enforcement should always be to improve road safety, not generate prosecutions for their own sake.

4.4 The ABD is also concerned about the proposal to increase the maximum prison sentence for drivers who cause serious injury by dangerous driving. Sentencing should be based on the seriousness of the bad driving rather than the result thereof. Someone who indulges in deliberate and persistent reckless driving should face severe penalties, even if, by good fortune, they do not injure anyone. Conversely, a normally safe driver who makes a single mistake or momentary lapse in concentration, resulting in serious injury, should not face a prison sentence. The law should not be used to exact retribution but to prevent accidents where possible. All human beings make mistakes sometimes, and this cannot be legislated against.

5. **SUFFICIENCY OF THE ACTION PLAN**

5.1 Most of the proposals of concern to the ABD have been covered in the previous sections. While the action plan includes some additional educational opportunities, it makes no mention of pre-driver education. The ability to use the roads safely is an essential life skill and should be taught at the earliest possible age. The Under-17 Car Club, which has been providing driver training to pre-driving age children since the 1970s, has a very successful track record. Its members have far fewer accidents and convictions when they take to the road than other young drivers.® If this sort of training were made available more widely, it could have a marked effect on casualty rates, especially among new drivers. The action plan should include development of a national scheme to provide such training.

**REFERENCES**

1. www.abd.org.uk/onemph.htm
2. www.abd.org.uk/trl511.htm

*October 2011*
Executive Summary

1. The Government welcomes this inquiry and the opportunity to outline how its policies on road safety will help to ensure that Great Britain remains a world leader on road safety and maintains the downward trend in road casualties.

2. Great Britain has one of the strongest road safety records in the world and the Government is committed to seeing further reductions in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on our roads. The Government has set out its new strategic framework for road safety, published in May 2011 which sets out its vision and approach to road safety.

3. In line with the Government’s commitment to localism we have promoted local accountability for road safety by giving local authorities the tools they need to tackle problems on their networks, rather than dictating specific solutions to them. We have also encouraged local accountability and transparency through the publication of local road safety data.

4. As the Government’s approach to road safety is set out in the Strategic Framework, this memorandum responds to the five specific issues which the Committee has raised in its call for evidence.

Whether the Government is right not to set road safety targets and whether its outcomes framework is appropriate

Lack of targets

5. The fact that the Government has not set a target does not mean that it does not consider road safety to be a high priority. This Government expects to be judged by its actions and we have set out the measures that we intend to take to continue to reduce casualties. The strategic framework includes forecasts of the casualty numbers that we might expect to see through to 2030 if these measures, and the actions of local authorities, are successful.

6. While we believe that previous road safety targets have been useful we do not consider that over-arching national targets are still necessary for road safety in Great Britain. This is because we do not believe that further persuasion is needed on the importance of road safety. We expect central and local government to continue to prioritise road safety and continue to seek improvements. Instead we need to move to more sophisticated ways to monitor progress which is why we have developed the Road Safety Outcomes Framework.

Outcomes Framework

7. The Outcomes Framework sets out a range of indicators, grouped into categories, that can be used to monitor sub-sections of road safety—such as the enforcement efforts, the learning to drive process and vehicle safety. This will help us, and local authorities, to assess progress.

8. These groups of indicators will show if there are areas where our efforts appear to be particularly successful or if there are areas where a different approach may be needed—this is a much more transparent approach than announcing that progress has been made if the headline figure reduces, as it will be clearer about the trends within that.

9. We recognise that other indicators and information will also be useful in judging success and identifying specific issues and areas for action, and expect to be making more information available on the local comparison website and the Road Safety Observatory Portal for professionals, which are both under development. However we think the key indicators on which central and local government should be monitored are ultimately those covering what is happening to road casualties.

How the decentralisation to local authorities of funding the setting of priorities will work in practice and contribute towards fulfilling the Government’s vision

10. In line with the Government’s wider policy approach to localism in the Big Society we have given local authorities more freedom to assess and act on their own priorities, since they are best placed to assess these.

11. The Strategic Framework recognises that local communities have a central role in making roads as safe as they can be. Examples of localism measures in our Framework include giving local authorities more freedom to assess and act on their own priorities. To aid this we are providing an economic toolkit to help them assess the full costs and benefits of changes to local speed limits so that decisions can be explained and defended to the citizens that they are accountable to.

12. We have provided funding through a new £560 million Local Sustainable Transport Fund which local authorities can use to help address their road safety issues. This has been established to support local authorities in developing sustainable transport packages which help build strengthened local economies and reduce carbon emissions. Guidance for local authorities on the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and how to apply to it was published alongside the White Paper earlier this year.
13. Further funding will now also be available as part of local authorities’ new responsibilities for public health from April 2013. They will have a dedicated public health budget to be spent on the priority public health issues in their area. Improving road safety is one of the public health outcomes which can be included in this funding. The number of casualties killed and seriously injured on English roads has been proposed as an indicator in the public health outcomes framework to monitor this.

14. The Government will report against the indicators in the annual publication of road safety statistics. Separately we will provide information on local authority performance that is easily accessible to citizens in a straightforward format, so that they are able to make their own assessment of performance. We will do this by developing an online road safety comparison tool that would allow local citizens, lobby groups, practitioners and local authority officers to compare local performance information in their area against other areas, whilst comparing improvement rates. This tool will increase transparency and build capability to help citizens and communities solve problems in their area.

Whether the Government is right to argue that, for the most part, the right legislative framework for road safety is in place, and, in particular, whether the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives

15. Great Britain is currently a world leader in road safety. This in large part reflects our legislative framework and enforcement by the police, as well as improvements in vehicles, infrastructure, education and marketing and the efforts of road safety professionals and road users.

16. Overall we do think the system of legislation is broadly fit for purpose. Great Britain has a systematic set of road traffic offences, developed progressively over a long period of time. At the same time this is applied in an evidence-based and appropriate way. So for low level offenders where remedial education is likely to be more effective this will be used, rather than fines or other penalties.

17. We see the 2006 Act as an important addition to the legislative framework that is helping to maintain this. Our aim is to continue to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads and the Act will play an important part in this going forward.

18. Some of the Act that has not yet commenced, such as mandating remedial education courses with assessment for disqualified drivers. Therefore there is more that we intend to use within the 2006 Act that will help fulfil the commitments in the strategic framework.

19. While it is not possible to isolate the effects of the Act from the other improvements that we have seen in recent years, in areas such as car technology, road engineering, changing social attitudes and enforcement, it is likely to be a factor in Great Britain’s continuing casualty reduction.

20. We are still looking at further strengthening and improvements in some areas such as: a fixed penalty notice for careless driving; the new offence of causing serious injury through dangerous driving; strengthening the drink and drug driving legislation and enforcement; and the aim of mandating education courses for disqualified drink drivers with the possibility of extending this and introducing an assessment. These changes will help make enforcement more effective.

21. We are also conducting further research into the links between traffic offences, traffic casualties and other crime, which will inform further developments and interventions.

Whether the measures set out in the action plan are workable and sufficient

22. The proposed actions and approach to continuing to reduce death and injuries on our roads are underpinned by the Government’s key principles. We have endeavoured to act proportionately in striking the appropriate balance between safety and economic and other objectives, such as ways of improving the efficiency of police enforcement. We consider the set of actions is deliverable, though challenging, and these will make a major contribution to improving road safety.

The relationship between the Government’s strategy and EU road safety initiatives

23. The Government supports the European Commission’s goal of reducing casualties by 50% across the EU by 2020 (Commission’s 2010 communication Towards a European road safety area: policy orientations on road safety 2011–2020, 16951/10).

24. While we are happy to support the EU with a 50% target, we (and the EU) are clear that this does not mean that each member state is expected to deliver this reduction. Those countries with a relatively higher casualty levels will find it much easier to deliver large reductions. The Commission acknowledges this and cites the United Kingdom as being one of the highest achievers, whilst citing other Member States who are lower achievers and have a lot more work to do.

25. We are confident that we will make a major contribution to this goal through our strategic framework. However, we do not need a target to deliver this and the EU’s 50% reduction target is not a target for the UK alone.

26. We are keen to continue to work with the EU on best practice, sharing information, and in areas such as vehicle standards and consumer information on safety of vehicle models where an international approach is needed. However it is important that any new regulation is only progressed where it needs to be undertaken at an EU level and there is a very strong economic justification for the measure.

October 2011

Supplementary written evidence from Department for Transport (RSF 04a)

On 6 March, I appeared before your Committee to give evidence for your inquiry into the Government’s Strategic framework for Road Safety. I promised to provide further information on a number of points that were raised during our discussion.

John Leech MP asked what proportion of motorway network does not currently have a 70mph limit (Q354). I can confirm that the percentage of the Highway Agency motorway network which has mandatory sub 70mph speed limits, excluding managed or controlled sections, is approximately 1%.

You asked why child casualties in deprived areas are not included in the set of indicators in the outcomes framework (Q387). The outcomes framework does not include indicators for fatal and serious casualties in disadvantaged areas, but these indicators are still under development and no data have been published yet. We could consider providing data for child casualties as well as all casualties. We expect to include data for these indicators when we publish the next version of outcomes framework in September 2012.

You also asked when the committee would receive a response to your March 2010 report on the motorcycle test (Q378). I will shortly be writing to you to update the Committee on progress with the motorcycle test review.

March 2012

Written evidence from IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) (RSF 08)

The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Transport Select Committee’s Inquiry on the Government’s Strategic Framework for Road Safety. As the UK’s largest independent road safety charity the IAM has an active interest in the delivery of the government’s vision for road safety.

About the IAM

The IAM is dedicated to improving standards and safety in driving, motorcycling and cycling. It has more than 200 local volunteer groups and over 100,000 members in the UK and Ireland. The IAM is best known for the advanced driving test and the advanced driving, motorcycling and cycling courses. The commercial division of the IAM operates through its occupational driver training company IAM Drive & Survive. The IAM’s policy and research division offers advice and expertise on road safety, and publishes original research on road safety issues.

Summary of Main Points

— The IAM welcomes the majority of Government’s Strategic Framework for Road Safety. However, we would like targets to be reinstated on both a regional and national level, with strong input from local authorities.
— The IAM is concerned that by decentralising budgets, removing targets and reducing funding the government is creating a risk that less priority will be given to road safety.
— We have found early indications that local authorities are cutting road safety disproportionately more than other service areas. The IAM does not believe this is justified.
— The IAM is broadly in favour of the outcomes framework but would like assurances that the government will take action on poor performing areas and regions.
— We support the government’s action plan for road safety particularly the development of post-test training.
— The IAM would like to see greater involvement of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in the delivery of road safety.

1. Road Safety Targets and Outcomes Framework

1.1 The IAM welcomes the Government’s Strategic Framework for Road Safety. We are highly supportive of its aims and broadly in favour of its scope and content. The framework builds on the success of previous road safety strategies and the IAM looks forward to the delivery of the new action plan. This submission highlights some policy options which the IAM believe could be added to the framework to make it even more ambitious.
1.2 The IAM has noted that the Government has not set a national target for itself; in the framework it states: “We do not consider that over-arching national targets are now the most appropriate course for road safety. This is partly because further central persuasion should not now be needed to highlight the importance of road safety” (Strategic Framework for Road Safety, paragraph 1.2, page 17)

The IAM does not agree with this statement; the government’s position on “central persuasion” carries a risk that the focus on road safety will diminish. We believe there is still room for an overarching national target on casualty rates which would complement the action plan and illustrate its effectiveness. We also believe the framework could have more of a cross departmental focus, bringing in perspectives from the Department for Health, the Home Office and the Treasury.

1.3 The IAM supports the Road Safety Action Plan, and will use it to better understand the government’s direction and progress, however, the action plan is largely process orientated, whereas a national target on fatality and casualty rates would provide an outcome based objective.

1.4 The IAM is in favour of regional as well as national road safety targets; these should include direct input and activity from local highways authorities. Whilst the aim to decentralise power is appreciated, the IAM believes that highways authorities should be held accountable for the delivery of road safety. We believe that road safety targets are a straightforward way to do this, particularly when targets refer to clear outcomes. Under the previous framework the two national indicators on road casualties were:

- NI 47 People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents.
- NI 48 Children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents.

The IAM believes that the previous targets based on these two road safety indicators were clear, suitably high-level and outcome based.

1.5 Some of the wider criticisms directed at local performance targets do not necessarily apply to road safety. The Strategic Framework for Road Safety describes central targets as “constraining local ambition”; whereas the IAM believes that rather than stifling innovation, targets around casualty numbers created clear objectives, which proved to be achievable. Under the previous framework highways authorities were still able to implement their own ideas and innovative ways of working to achieve safer roads.

1.6 Targets at a regional rather than a local level may be more appropriate as some local accident rates can be greatly skewed by one or more serious accident.

1.7 There are disparities in road safety between regions; table 1.1 illustrates how significant these can be. A simple suggested target for government could be to ensure all regions are in line with the North East.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>England Region</th>
<th>Road deaths per 100,000 people in 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>South East</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Yorks &amp; Humberside</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>South West</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*London</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Because of its unique geography and density, the IAM league tables of road safety exclude London.

Calculated from Department for Transport: Reported Road Casualties Great Britain (2009)

2. ROAD SAFETY OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

2.1 The IAM welcomes the indicators in the Road Safety Outcomes Framework. The majority of these indicators are based on information which has been collected for a number of years and continuing these indicators enables consistent measurement.

2.2 We welcome the inclusion of the “rate of pedal cyclists’ deaths per billion vehicle miles” as one of the six national outcome indicators. The increase in the number of cyclists’ deaths in 2010 is concerning, and as rates of cycling are set to go up it is important that pedal cyclists are included in national outcome indicators.
2.3 Similarly the IAM welcomes the inclusion of the “Number of deaths resulting from collisions involving drivers under 25” as a key national indicator. Casualties amongst younger drivers are a key concern for the IAM. In 2010 30% of car occupant fatalities were drivers aged 17–24, or passengers of a driver aged 17–24. The IAM believes that this indicator should also be measured as a proportion of all fatal accidents.

2.4 As well as the six national indicators on fatalities the IAM believes that serious injury rates should also be included, serious injury rates often show slightly different trends over time to the rate of deaths.

2.5 The IAM also welcomes the proposals to develop new indicators to better understand some specific issues and trends in road safety. The indicators on post test training, seatbelts and age of cars are particularly welcome.

2.6 We believe that additional indicators could be added to the framework; the IAM would like to see indicators on the rate of improvement of highways authorities and regions. We would also like to see the inclusion of EuroRAP data which illustrates the accident rate for specific roads. EuroRAP’s annual review of the safety of main roads shows that by focusing on routes and sections of routes, casualties can be driven down.

2.7 The IAM would like the Department for Transport to carry out some analysis of accident rates looking at times of day, seasonality, reasons for travel and model of vehicles. This could help to ascertain the extent winter clock change, travelling for work and vehicle type impacts on the likelihood and severity of accidents.

2.8 It is important that as much data as possible is available at local and regional levels, as this will allow for some important comparisons. It is also important that these indicators are consistently collected so that trends over time can be measured.

2.9 The IAM would also like road maintenance to be included in the Road Safety Outcomes Framework. The previous government’s national indicator set contained two indicators on road maintenance:

— NI 168: Principal roads where maintenance should be considered.
— NI 169: Non-principal classified roads where maintenance should be considered.

These are significant indicators of the state of the highways asset and were previously collected under the Best Value Performance Indicator framework. Road maintenance is an important factor in road safety and impacts on road users’ experience more generally. Road maintenance is also becoming a more pertinent issue due to the recent increase in snow and ice which can cause potholes. The government should respond to findings from the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme Review on potholes, and consider how future indicators can adopt a whole life approach. These should be included in the road safety framework.

2.10 There is a lack of clarity on how the outcomes framework will work in practice. The Strategic Framework for Road Safety highlights the fact that the improvement rates in road casualties vary dramatically between highways authorities. It is not clear how the government plans to identify and assist poor performing areas.

3. The Decentralisation of Funding and the Setting of Priorities

3.1 The IAM is concerned that by decentralising budgets, removing targets and reducing funding the government is creating a risk that less priority will be given to road safety.

3.2 The IAM appreciates that local authorities have a need to reduce expenditure across all sectors. However, we are concerned that some authorities are cutting road safety by a disproportionate amount.

3.3 There are some early indications that this is happening; local authorities provide Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) with budget estimates which give a very approximate view of expenditure for different service areas, Table 1.2 summarises the data for road safety, winter service, other traffic management and the total estimated local authority spend for all service areas.

3.4 It indicates that spending on road safety education and safe routes is reducing by an estimated −15.8% across England; this is much more than the overall reduction of −9.5% for all local authority spend. The IAM anticipates that there will be further reductions in road safety spend in 2012–13.
Table 1.2
LOCAL AUTHORITY SPEND INCLUDING ROAD SAFETY AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT (ALL OF ENGLAND)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of spend</th>
<th>General Fund Revenue Account Outturn</th>
<th>General Fund Revenue Account Outturn</th>
<th>Revenue Account Budget (RA)— estimated expenditure</th>
<th>Revenue Account Budget (RA)— estimated expenditure</th>
<th>Percentage change (2010–11 to 2011–12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road safety education and safe routes (including school crossing patrols)</td>
<td>£102,324,000</td>
<td>£123,315,000</td>
<td>£147,520,000</td>
<td>£124,178,000</td>
<td>−15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter service</td>
<td>£193,821,000</td>
<td>£227,064,000</td>
<td>£161,556,000</td>
<td>£155,755,000</td>
<td>−3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other traffic management</td>
<td>£408,133,000</td>
<td>£548,089,000</td>
<td>£313,498,000</td>
<td>£327,876,000</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total local authority expenditure all service areas (thousands)</td>
<td>£111,241,812</td>
<td>107,965,011</td>
<td>115,281,545</td>
<td>104,320,387</td>
<td>−9.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government—Revenue Account Outturn data showing actual spend, and Revenue Account Budget data showing estimated spend.

3.5 The −3.6% reduction in winter service expenditure is also worrying given the possibility of severe weather this winter. The apparent increase in “other traffic management” spending does not represent an increase in real terms once inflation has been considered.

3.6 The information for individual local authorities shows significantly different approaches; some authorities are reducing their spending on road safety by even more than these headline figures. According to DCLG Revenue Account Budget data on individual local authorities 76 councils plan to decrease spending on “road safety” by more than 9%, and 31 have indicated that they will reduce spending on road safety by 40% or more. The IAM is concerned that this represents a serious level of cuts.

3.7 It is possible that some local authorities are refocusing their spending on schemes which fall under “other traffic management” rather than “road safety education and safe routes”. However, a comparison of the DCLG tables on Revenue Account Budget for 2010–11 and 2011–12 indicates that several local authorities plan to cut spending in both “road safety” and “other traffic management”.

3.8 It is important to note that this is a complex funding area as some authorities are able to achieve an income from traffic management activities. More research needs to be done to assess the extent local authorities are reducing their investment in road safety, and what impact this is having. The IAM plans to look into this in detail over the coming months.

4. THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF LOCALISM ON ROAD SAFETY

4.1 The IAM understands the desire to give local authorities greater flexibility in budgeting, however, decentralising budgets at a time of spending reductions is likely to mean that some authorities choose to allocate money to other services which may not be justifiable.

4.2 We are concerned that the nature of road safety investment and education puts it at risk of funding reductions because the direct impact of individual activities can be hard to measure. Highlighting the demonstrable impact of road safety initiatives will become even more important under the new framework.

4.3 We believe that the majority of authorities will continue to be or become very active in improving road safety. However, there is a concern that some authorities will reduce their activity due to competing pressures from other service areas. The IAM believes that examples of good practice should be shared widely and that the government should facilitate this.

4.4 We would like the government to consider what steps it will take if road safety deteriorates, or fails to improve in certain local areas. The Strategic Framework for Road Safety does not address what will happen if some authorities fail to address issues within their areas.

4.5 In some sectors central government is incentivising local authorities to tackle problems, for example the proposed Homes Bonus will reward councils for building affordable homes. A similar scheme for road safety could be considered, particularly as the cost benefits of reducing road accidents are so well known.
4.6 In summary the IAM anticipates that localism has the potential to increase the differences in road safety outcomes throughout the country. However, it is not yet possible to anticipate the shape and extent of this change.

5. THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ROAD SAFETY

5.1 The IAM agrees that the right legislative framework is generally in place. However, we believe that more focus should be given to improving the skills of drivers who commit serious errors or disobey the Highway Code.

5.2 The IAM investigated driver behaviour in our research report *Licensed to skill: contributory factors in road accidents: Great Britain 2005–2009*. We found that driver and rider errors, particularly failure to look properly and failure to judge the path or speed of other road users correctly continue to be significant contributory factors in road accidents.

5.3 These human factors are attributed to drivers of all ages, although some factors are more frequently assigned to young drivers and others to older drivers. The findings point to the value of tailored post-test driver training to improve the quality of driving and road safety.

5.4 The IAM believes that a focus on improving skills will have a more long-term impact on drivers’ behaviour than penalties and licence points.

6. THE MEASURES SET OUT ON THE ACTION PLAN

6.1 The IAM supports the government’s action plan for road safety; particularly the development of a post-test driving qualification.

6.2 The IAM has a track record of delivering advanced driving courses and currently has over 100,000 full and associate subscribing members in the UK and overseas. With over 400,000 successful test passes achieved since inception, it is conservatively estimated that some 200,000 drivers and riders are currently on the UK’s roads having achieved an advanced test pass. We would welcome the opportunity to work with government to develop a post-test qualification, and believe there is an economic and practical case for its delivery to be led by the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE).

6.3 The Strategic Framework for Road Safety touches upon the role of the VCSE sector in delivering road safety initiatives. However, these are not picked up in the action plan. The IAM delivers its charity operation through more than 200 local volunteer groups and 5,000 volunteers. These volunteers have vast expertise and significant knowledge of local road safety which is invaluable.

6.4 The IAM believes the government should be maximising its use of the VCSE sector, and that this should be a key feature part of the action plan. This could help the Framework complement other government initiatives around the Big Society, and provide excellent value for money.

6.5 The IAM agrees with the majority of the other proposals in the action plan. We strongly support the proposal for a new website for the comparison of local performance information; this could become a useful resource for individuals, community groups and charities. The proposed website should include local spending information, trends over time and EuroRAP data on the safety of specific roads. The VCSE sector should be included in the development of the website.

6.6 The IAM believes that the government should be very careful about implementing its proposal for the forfeiture of vehicles. This can have a significant impact on people’s ability to access work, education and health care. Whilst we believe forfeiture can be justified in some cases, we would prefer the use of driver education, penalties and licence points.

6.7 We believe the action plan should include measures to tackle uninsured drivers. In the framework the government states that “we are aware that we do not yet have a comprehensive solution” on the issue of uninsured drivers. The IAM believes that developing a comprehensive solution in partnership with others should be an action for government.

6.8 The IAM welcomes the proposal for a new portal for road safety professionals. We believe that this should complement the information already available and be developed with input from across the sector.

6.9 We support the proposal to add safety messages to theory tests. However, this should be done as part of a wider review of theory tests which should meet some of the gaps left by the practical exams. For example it should focus on where young and learner drivers are most at risk, with attention on rural roads.

7. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT’S STRATEGY AND EU ROAD SAFETY INITIATIVES

7.1 The UK is amongst the best performing nations in Europe for road safety. The IAM believes that this is through the policies and investment of successive governments. Much of this activity has encouraged agencies, authorities and the voluntary sector to work together to achieve an overall objective. The IAM would like to see a continuing focus on joint work with a clear goal. Reinstating targets would put the UK in line with the rest of the EU.
7.2 The IAM believes that as a world leader the UK should be heavily involved in EU road safety initiatives. We also believe that there is a key role for the UK in the UN’s Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011–2020). Despite our strong position in road safety rankings the UK can still learn from other countries, particularly around approaches to pedal cyclists and pedestrians.

7.3 The IAM is concerned that the government is moving towards a more a “hands off” approach to road safety which could put our position as a world leader at risk.

REFERENCES

1 DCLG Revenue Account line 54 “Road Safety” expenditure includes: Publicity, training and other initiatives to improve road safety; Contributions to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents; Cycling and motorcycle proficiency; Schools liaison; Road safety literature; Rehabilitation courses for motor offenders, Safe route schemes (to school, to work, etc); and School crossing patrols.

2 DCLG Revenue Account line 258 “Winter Service” expenditure includes: Keeping roads free from snow and ice, including salting, urea treatment, snowploughing; snow fencing, and standby arrangements; Weather forecasting costs; Maintenance and energy for under-road heating; and Maintenance and operation of ice detecting equipment.

3 DCLG Revenue Account line 58 “Other traffic management” expenditure includes: Planning and scheme design (eg: urban safety management schemes, home zones, new pedestrian crossings and traffic calming measures); Street naming; Traffic monitoring, including CCTV cameras; Area traffic control centres; and Administration and enforcement of lorry ban schemes.

October 2011

Written evidence from South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership (RSF 09)

INTRODUCTION

The South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership is a broad, multi-agency partnership of those organisations with a direct interest in, and responsibility for, road safety and safer communities across the metropolitan area. It works within the auspices of the SY Integrated Transport Authority (SYITA) and SY Local Transport Plan Partnership and is chaired by South Yorkshire Police with representatives from the Fire and Rescue Service, Health Sector, Academia, Passenger Transport Executive, Highways Agency, Peak District National Park and the four local highway authorities.

At a national level, the Partnership is represented on the Core Cities Safer Roads Group (CCSRSG) which was reconvened following consultation on “A Safer Way”. Concerns were expressed that the new Road Safety Delivery Board was not receiving comprehensive input and advice from metropolitan areas. CCSRSG has continued to offer valuable contributions about the issues as they are affected by, and as they affect urban areas and conurbations.

This document is submitted by the Chair on behalf of the SY Safer Roads Partnership and responds to the Call for Evidence issued by the House of Commons Transport Select Committee on 13th September 2011 for their inquiry into the DfT’s Strategic Framework for Road Safety (SFRS). It is disappointing that this Call, as far as we can ascertain, was not made directly to the CCSRSG, Safer Roads or Road Safety Partnerships, metropolitan councils or the Integrated Transport Authorities and that we only picked it up indirectly in early October.

DETAILED RESPONSE

We respond to the issues as annotated in the Select Committee announcement.

Whether the Government is right not to set road safety targets and whether its outcomes framework is appropriate

The SFRS acknowledges the need to bring a more systems-based approach to road safety, combining this with that which has been applied relatively successfully in the public health domain.

We strongly support this methodology but cannot see why this should not include, and be improved by, targets. The rationale given in paragraph 1.21 of SFRS for not setting targets includes:

(a) Further central persuasion should not be needed to highlight the importance of road safety.
(b) It is not easy to determine a decade or more in advance the levels of intervention needed to meet a target.

We are not persuaded by this. The SFRS sets out clear aims, and indeed projections/forecasts with numbers attached, to both 2020 and 2030 and we have extensive, historical experience of assessing and implementing interventions that produce longer term future benefits. Indeed, the absence of national targets could be
interpretation as the Government wishing to distance itself from setting target reductions (and hence responsibility), in favour of holding local highway authorities to account.

We firmly believe, and have evidence to support the view, that targets focus and prioritise investment and activity and are essential to help measure progress. They allow us to gain support from other agencies, representative bodies and individuals that benefit from safer communities. We generally set them within our Local Transport Plans and, in South Yorkshire, the Police and Fire and Rescue Service have targets based on Killed and Seriously Injured casualties within their own operational plans.

This belief is supported by a recent past example. The “50% Child KSI” target, set in 2000 in “Tomorrow’s Roads—Safer for Everyone”, was seen as challenging but, because it set a priority and focus, it enabled all to concentrate on activity aimed at achieving it, which was done without undue detriment elsewhere. The “further central persuasion…” argument was not needed then and is felt to be irrelevant now. Much remains to be done however and the absence, in particular, of a “Children and Young People”’s target in SFRS is a serious omission that will have particular impact on areas like ours and their deprived communities.

The Outcomes Framework (OF) is useful in setting an agenda or menu and the approach is welcome. However we consider that the key issues have been overlooked because local conditions and circumstances that lead to road crashes and injury are not recognised. Our view is that the OF should be an indicator that measures progress and identifies areas (geographic or social or demographic) where Government and local authorities need to work more closely, to address together particular issues such as inequality, deprivation and safer communities. Given the stated importance of local accountability, we feel that the Government should give consideration to “resident risk” among the measures of “performance”.

This weakness in the OF is highlighted by statements in paragraph 1.27 “to reduce death and serious injury on our roads” and in B1 “decreasing the number of fatalities and seriously injured casualties”. It cannot be denied that reducing KSIs is very important but road safety and safer roads is much more than this. We should all be working to lower risk and danger, reducing all injuries and distress and making our communities safer. The SFRS undermines this by its over-emphasis on KSI.

Fundamentally, the casualty forecasts in SFRS are based on the continuing performance of local authorities. Indeed, information about ‘performance’ is to be published to “help citizens challenge their local area on road safety” (see paragraph 3.6). Whilst we are not concerned or shy away from comparisons or challenges, we have consistently made the point that ‘performance’ at a local level is a function of both Government and local authorities (and many other stakeholders and people in local communities). There are significant factors outside the control of local authorities. For example, many areas of deprivation have seen increases in unemployment in the last 12 months or so well above national or regional trends thus adding to inequality and road safety risk. Government needs to recognise the areas with the greatest challenges and to provide the leadership, resources and support where necessary.

In the spirit of true partnership working, it would be better if we could report, together, the progress we are making to achieve our joint aims.

How the decentralisation to local authorities of funding and the setting of priorities will work in practice and contribute towards fulfilling the Government’s vision

We welcome the principle of decentralisation of funding and recognise the constraints and challenges set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review 2010. However, loss of the capital elements of the Road Safety Grant and the sub-summation of the revenue element into the Local Government Formula Grant settlement via the Department of Communities and Local Government has impacted severely on resources available in the road safety field, given the funding challenges faced by other services delivered by local authorities. There are also difficult decisions to be made where the strategic needs for transport have to be considered against local needs for safer roads and how we approach the provisions of the Localism Bill/Act.

It is undeniable that the quantum of funding and other resources available has been much reduced and it is irresponsible to pretend that this will not impact on priorities or the Government’s vision for road safety. It is not clear how Britain will remain “a world leader on road safety” (see paragraph 15, Executive Summary) if adequate resources are not sustained in this field. We look to the Government to play its part in assisting delivery of this “Governmental priority” (See paragraph 1.2). Power can be decentralised but overall responsibility cannot be abdicated.

Whether the Government is right to argue that, for the most part, the right legislative framework for road safety is in place, and, in particular, whether the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives (see Post-Legislative Assessment of the Road Safety Act 2006, Cm 8141, published by the DfT, July 2011)

We support the provisions of the Road Safety Act 2006 and consider that the promotion of road safety should remain a statutory duty on local highway authorities. The provisions in Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 set out that local authorities must carry out accident studies and take measures to prevent such accidents, including the dissemination of information and advice, practical training to road users and “engineering” type activity. We believe this would be helped by strengthening links with legislation relating to
duty of care and with public and community health. We also consider that the importance of road traffic law enforcement should be given greater emphasis.

There are other areas of legislation that directly relate to road traffic behaviour and road safety that have yet to be fully enacted. The enforcement of moving traffic offences for local authorities outside of London, as contained in Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 but not yet enacted, is considered essential to improve driver behaviour, reduce risk and danger and encourage overall compliance with regulations that benefit society overall.

Funding inevitably is, and will remain, an issue. The SFRS champions the importance of delivery and performance at the local level. With both these in mind, it is our view that penalties from the majority of road traffic offences should accrue to the local administration in order that local authorities, the Police and Safer Roads Partnerships can adequately identify and deal with the prevailing local problems of lawlessness. Also, local partnerships need to be encouraged to keep funds from penalties ring-fenced for spending on safer roads activity.

We welcome the intention to improve initial training for learner drivers and riders, develop a new post-test vocational training course and include safety messages in the theory test. We are unsure however whether some or all of these will require changes in legislation. We particularly support the provisions for driver re-training courses as a positive way to engage with offenders.

**Whether the measures set out in the action plan are workable and sufficient**

We understand and appreciate the Government’s ‘hands off’, non-prescriptive approach but the SFRS Action Plan is scant when compared to previous national strategies. It does not acknowledge the scale of the efforts that will be needed to be made and coordinated nationally and locally to continue to reduce road crashes and injuries, which, in turn, will regenerate our communities. There is an opportunity to review the Action Plan in consultation with partners and stakeholders.

We would like to continue to emphasise the point we have made previously and via the CCSRSG that the provision of local information and “performance” via the website perpetuates a focus on “location” rather than “cause” of collisions which could be particularly misleading.

**The relationship between the Government’s strategy and EU road safety initiatives**

The European Commission (and indeed the World Health Organisation’s “Decade for Action on Road Safety” launched this year) has recommended a coherent and integrated approach to road safety that takes into account synergies with other policy goals.

Government consultation on road safety matters was relatively narrowly based and did not have full regard to the wider policy objectives that sustain and improve communities and contribute to a better future for all our citizens. We do not clearly see how SFRS is integrated nationally or at local levels.

It remains a DfT document, carrying the DfT logo, despite comments at the aforementioned consultation seminar(s) that it could be “badged” as a Government strategy. The Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Department of Health, Department for Education, Department for Environment and Climate Change and Department for Communities and Local Government all have ties to road safety that enable common issues such as inequality and deprivation to be tackled collectively.

**Summary**

SFRS is a start but could be considerably improved to form the basis for partnership working and engagement involving national and local government, associated agencies and local communities. It tends to give the impression that it is transferring responsibility and accountability from Government to local authorities without acknowledging the necessary support for local authorities to meet those responsibilities. As such in its current form it could generate conflict rather than fostering partnerships that would give significant local and national benefits for road safety and society overall.

With its emphasis on KSI s, the location of casualties rather than the causes of crashes and “performance” rather than “progress”, it misses an opportunity to support the need to change towards a systematic identification of the specific causes and high risks and to resource actions that are most likely to address these, thereby preventing injuries in the years ahead.

It is with regret that we feel the SFRS is in many ways a retrograde step particularly for local authorities who have made a very considerable contribution to the reductions in road deaths and injuries we have seen in the last decade or so.

*October 2011*
Written evidence from the Chief Fire Officers Association (RSF 13)

About the Chief Fire Officers Association

The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) is a professional membership association and a registered charity. CFOA members are drawn from all UK Fire & Rescue Services (FRSs) representing the senior executives and managers of the Service. Through the work of its members the Association supports the Fire and Rescue Services of the UK in its aspiration to protect the communities they serve and to continue to improve the overall performance of the fire sector. CFOA provides professional and technical advice to inform national fire policy.

Introduction

1. The Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) are an integral part of reducing road casualties across the country. Prior to, and strengthened by, the independent review of the Fire Service (The Bain Report. 2002) and the passing of the Fire Service Act 2004, the FRS has been fully committed to driving down the numbers of people killed and seriously injured in road traffic collisions.

2. The FRS already invest in road traffic collision (RTC) reduction activity and have a successful record in delivering Community Safety behaviour change across a broad range of the population, including two of the key risk groups identified in the Strategic Framework for Road Safety (SFRS); Young people and Children in deprived areas. Reference has been made in the SFRS, section: 3.22 Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service: however much educational activity in all areas of RTC reduction is being progressed pan Country on a daily basis by the FRS.

3. The FRS are integrated at national, regional and local level with partner agencies delivering social change and have been used to supporting the wider determinates of the public health agenda. Reference is made in the SFRS, section: 3.12; the three emergency services are influential in improving road safety.

4. For the reasons above CFOA feel it is an omission not to have made specific reference to the Fire and Rescue Service in the strategic framework, as this would further strengthen our position “around the table.”

Highlights of The Fire Futures Reports, 2010

5. Role of the Fire and Rescue Service—this review looked at the additional powers and responsibilities required to overcome barriers faced by the FRS in delivering service and options for closer working with other emergency services. The report identified some of the excellent work the FRS are already doing within the area of road safety, and the message from the report was “Get On & Do It”. Therefore, the FRS would wish to see barriers removed where they exist and local authorities, particularly councils, encouraged to work with FRS to tackle road death.

6. Localism and Accountability—This review outlined a series of proposals to extend localism, transparency and accountability by offering communities a greater role in determining and monitoring local services. The report stated that Local Authorities (LA) are best placed to deal with local issues through partnership and collaboration of which FRS are an integral part of this local structure.

1. Whether the Government is right not to set road safety targets and whether its outcomes framework is appropriate

Targets

7. The FRS has a proven record in delivering against identifiable targets. Fire Statistics UK, published in 2010 identified 451 fire related deaths in 2008, this being lowest level of fire deaths since the late 1950s.

8. Figures published by the Department for Transport comparing road deaths between 2006 and 2010 indicate a 67% reduction in child deaths, whilst the lowest reduction is 24% for pedal cyclists. The UK has the lowest level of road deaths in Europe at just under 40 per million population.

9. Total figures published in the SFRS, 2011 for all road collision deaths in 2009 compared with the 1994/98 average in the UK, identify deaths at 2,222 a reduction of 38%. Combined killed and seriously injured (KSI) of 26,912, identifying a further reduction of 44%, with a child KSI reduction of 2,671, 61%.

10. The reductions above have been achieved against clear identifiable Public Service Agreement targets that supported and, to an extent, drove collaboration and partnership work.

11. With the economic cost of road collisions estimated at £16 billion with £12 billion in insurance costs (SFRS. 2011) it is identified that substantial savings could still be made by maintaining clear direction and targets.

12. Targets will always give a foundation to any strategy and must be meaningful. Reporting clearly from a FRS point of view regarding the achievements through Local Transport Plans (LTP) could be a fundamental start whilst supporting localism.
13. For these reasons CFOA would support the Government to consider including reduction targets for killed and seriously injured.

Suitability of outcome framework

14. Notwithstanding the position above regarding targets, CFOA is broadly in agreement of the suitability of the outcome framework in Annex B. We would hope that the data supplied from discrete areas would be formatted and applied in a “one stop” consolidated report.

15. We would recommend, for comparison purposes, that the six key indicators in B.3 be able to be represented at a county, metropolitan and unitary level.

16. We would recommend that the reporting indicators at a local level in B.4 are further separated out to present those killed as one cohort and those seriously injured as another.

17. We would strongly recommend that the key indicators be able to be represented by road type and classification. This we see as vital for directing community safety education and for the population to plan journeys with a mindset on the safest route. The speed limit should be identified for the accident and, if possible, estimations (from STAT19s) displayed identifying how much the limit was exceeded by in these reports. Information can then be supplied to support behaviour change similar to exceeding 20–30 ph in built up areas.

18. We support the existing and developing indicators in Table 6.2.

19. We would strongly recommend that a provision/structure is supported for the collection and identification of evidence based research and in particular the evaluation of community safety applications. The evaluations should be developed and promoted at a national level to support the delivery of effective and efficient campaigns.

2. How the decentralisation to local authorities of funding and the setting of priorities will work in practice and contribute towards fulfilling the Government’s vision

20. CFOA identify that FRSs are not directly funded to deliver education in respect to road safety and that Local Authorities are reducing the resources available to road safety, therefore it would be questionable to look to the emergency services (Fire) to supplement this void. The FRS cannot support the total cost that road safety delivery brings, therefore finance must be made available or redirected to our Service if we are to move forward with this agenda. It is noted and welcomed that reference is made to a Public Health Grant however we exercise caution that this might not be the panacea for all funding shortfalls in Local Authority areas for partners working within the wider determinates of health.

3. Whether the Government is right to argue that, for the most part, the right legislative framework for road safety is in place, and, in particular, whether the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives (see Post-Legislative Assessment of the Road Safety Act 2006, Cm 8141, published by the DfT, July 2011)

21. This area impacts on individual FRSs where either Local or Police Authorities deliver speed awareness, motorway improvement or red light instructional courses. Money produced from these courses is re-directed back to LA to enhance road safety delivery. In this arena FRS can have a greater say in the delivery of activity. The caveat to this is that the FRS has to be sitting at the table to bid for financial support that may be available.

22. In item 30 of the document named above in 3: relating to Section 41: Post-Legislative Assessment of the Road Safety Act 2006, it is worth noting that those FRSs who deliver driver improvement, attitudinal behavioural changing and road safety courses, could seek to deliver these courses for a fee on behalf of Driving Standards Agency and Department for Transport.

23. Item 55 of the same document also relates.

4. Whether the measures set out in the action plan are workable and sufficient

24. If this Government’s desire is to engage partners to deliver the “Strategic Framework for Road Safety” which has strong links to both the European Road Safety Charter: 25,000 lives to save and the United Nations: Decade of Action for Road Safety, it should spell out a direct role for them including the FRS. The SFRS does not support a strong commitment that the FRS should be involved. Discussions have taken place with Members of Parliament and the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) regarding this issue and specifically, in relation to the “Strategic Framework” they all appear to agree to a FRS role but it appears difficult to articulate this or put this into action.

25. CFOA support the strong lobbying of Government and specifically the Department for Transport to include FRS as a named deliver of this strategy, instead of the generic term used “the role for the emergency services” P30, SFRS: 2011.

26. There is a strong role for FRS in delivery at LA level which discussed in 3 above, has the potential to generate budget if FRS are embedded at LA level with regard to road safety.
27. CFOA would welcome a more specific proposal outlining agencies that should collaborate in the area of RTC education, thus ensuring that effective and coordinated campaigns are delivered.

28. We would also welcome the support of the framework to encourage collaboration between the Educational sector and the Fire and Rescue Services.

5. The relationship between the Government’s strategy and EU road safety initiatives

29. CFOA lobbied for all FRS to support the Coalition Government’s request to be part of the United Nations launch of the “Decade of Action for Road Safety” while CFOA delivered its first “National Road Safety Day” with 40 FRS taking part. These two events show our potential and strength as a frontline deliverer of the Strategic Framework for Road safety.

30. FRS should have a role to play in implementation of, not only the Government’s strategic framework but also the European Road Safety Charter and the United Nations—Decade of Action for Road Safety.

31. With the UK having the safest roads in Europe, (2009 figures) the view of CFOA is to ensure that we can share and distribute best practice when or where required. The UK FRS has an active involvement in road traffic collision work in Europe and Worldwide, having taken many first place positions in vehicle extrication championships in recent years. This work has brought many skills back to the UK and for this reason the UK should continue to be outward focused learning lessons from Europe where applicable.

October 2011

Written evidence from the Motor Cycle Industry Association (MCI) (RSF 17)

1. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 The Motor Cycle Industry Association (MCI) welcomes the opportunity to submit a response to the Transport Select Committee scrutiny into the Government’s Strategic Framework for Road Safety.

1.2 This response represents the views of the UK motorcycle industry as represented by the MCI. The MCI represents over 90% of the supply side of the UK motorcycle industry. In 2010, the industry was worth over £7billion and employed over 62,000 people in over 6,000 businesses. www.mcia.co.uk.

1.3 Our “sister” Association, the Motor Cycle Industry Trainers Association (MCITA) has also submitted evidence to the Committee’s enquiry.

1.4 The motorcycle industry calls for:
   — Government to continue the emphasis on education and training, rather than focusing on regulation.
   — Government to focus on encouraging and supporting best practice in motorcycle safety, such as Bikesafe, IAM, RoSPA and ERS, rather than funding standalone local safety programmes which merely “reinvent the wheel”.
   — Government to push ahead with a return to a single-event, on road motorcycle test and to give full consideration to how training and testing should be delivered in the longer term.
   — Government to prioritise motorcycling within overall transport policy and strategy, as this will reduce rider vulnerability (as has been the case with support for cycling).
   — Government, working with the private sector, to develop a new strategic framework for motorcycling, focusing on safety, mobility, accessibility and security.
   — Government to provide guidance to local authorities, outlining the importance of motorcycling to local transport projects/plans, as part of local road safety strategies.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 MCI has general support for the framework overall and appreciate the recognition that road safety is still a priority for everyone. Better road users for all modes will help reduce motorcycle accidents which are often caused by lack of care from other road users. However industry is concerned about the lack of specific focus on proactive initiatives to support motorcycle safety as part of a broader recognition of the motorcycle as a mode of transport.

2.2 MCI are also pleased to see Government support for a crackdown on antisocial and dangerous driving.

2.3 MCI believes that more emphasis on education and training rather than legislation/regulation is the right way to go, but seek reassurance about the maintenance of standards nationwide.

2.4 The industry response will include remarks on “localism” as Government policies in relation to this, though interesting, could result in a number of unintended consequences.
3. Background: The Case for Better Motorcycle Safety Policy

This section summarises the key points which lie at the background of motorcycle safety in the UK.

Is Motorcycling Getting Safer?

3.1 In 2010, motorcycle user casualties were at their lowest levels since 1998. According to Department for Transport (DfT) statistics and compared to the 1994–98 baseline average:

- There has been a 22% reduction in the number of motorcycle casualties.
- The number seriously injured has reduced by 20%.
- The number of riders killed reduced by 15% between 2009 and 2010.
- The number of miles travelled by motorcyclists has risen each year and the figure is now 33% higher than it was in 1998, showing that motorcycling is getting safer mile by mile.
- The rate of KSI’s has fallen by 34% over the baseline and the overall casualty rate has declined by 36%.
- The number of riders and passengers killed has fallen by 14% compared to the 1994–98 baseline average.

3.2 Motorcycling continues to get safer year on year and the risk of having an accident continues to fall for riders, but the faster improvement in casualty records among other road users means that motorcycle users now represent a worrying 21% of all road user fatalities.

What are the causes of accidents?

3.3 Two of the main causes of accidents by both riders and drivers are:

- Not paying attention.
- Not having enough time and space to react in a way that avoids a crash.

3.4 Research has found that there are different circumstances that lead to accidents. These include:

- Driver error at junctions—caused when a driver “looked but failed to see”.
- Rider error on bends.
- During overtakes caused by speed or inexperience.
- Group riding.

3.5 People are more likely to be involved in an accident at the weekend. An accident is more likely to happen on a Sunday than a Saturday. Accidents are more likely to occur in the winter than the summer.

3.6 Where are accidents most likely to happen?

- **Junctions**—urban and rural areas. In urban areas there are many obstructions and distractions and a car driver pulls out of a side-turn while the rider has right-of-way. On rural roads where higher speeds are allowed there is less time to see another vehicle approach.
- **Bends**—The most common crash-site when no other road user is involved, either because of a slippery surface or going into a bend to quickly.
- **Overtakes**—Either when filtering in heavy urban traffic or when getting past a line of slow-moving traffic on the open road.

Improving Safety

3.7 People in their first year of riding are more at risk, but there is plenty a beginner can do to improve their skills and become more proficient out on the road. All riders can develop their skills and learn new techniques that will make them safer on the roads.

What about Post-Test Training?

3.8 Post-test training can help any rider develop their skills, which will enhance their riding pleasure as well as improve safety. According to RoSPA advanced riders are 20% less likely to have an accident. People who take an advanced certificate can also benefit from other advantages such as lower insurance premiums. There are courses for road-riding, off-road riding and race circuits also hold training sessions where you can practice different skills such as cornering without worry about other traffic and hazards.

What can Government do?

Transport Policy

3.9 The OECD have prioritised the integration of motorcycling in overall transport policy as a key factor in tackling motorcycle casualties. This is because road safety campaigns and other activities aimed only at the rider can only go so far in solving the overall casualty problem.
3.10 Government policy needs to properly “mainstream” motorcycling as part of their overall transport policy. This would allow the proper development of measures which would reduce rider vulnerability in addition to providing support for riders. This would also provide a positive impetus to safety investment, particularly in local authority areas. This has been done for cyclists to great effect, with measures to encourage cycling also tackling cyclists vulnerability.

3.11 Ignoring motorcycling in transport policy merely helps to perpetuate rider vulnerability, in addition to losing the other policy opportunities that come from this low Co2 and zero congesting mode of transport.

Training and Testing

3.12 The 2009 implementation of new motorcycle test exercises under the Second European Driving Licence Directive created enormous problems for the training industry, resulting in fewer test centres, fewer tests and huge costs to the public purse for no real result in casualty reduction terms.

3.13 Industry and riders have been pleased to participate in the Government’s review of the test and look forward to the review resulting in a return to a single event, on road, test.

3.14 In the longer term, policy in relation to European Directives needs to be determined in a far more open manner, with appropriate stakeholders involved in a process which needs to be controlled and directed by senior figures in the DfT in Westminster.

3.15 There also needs to be a consideration of the most appropriate and cost effective means to deliver training and testing in the longer term.

Bikesafe

3.16 Bikesafe is one of the most positive post-test rider assessment initiatives to emerge in recent years. However, industry believes that more needs to be done to encourage riders to take a Bikesafe course. Industry is concerned that despite often expressed concerns about rider safety, Ministers have yet to offer the political and institutional support which would allow Bikesafe to extend its message to wider audiences who are at the highest risk of having an accident.

3.17 Government should consider what support can be given both directly and indirectly to ensure that police forces can continue to develop the scheme during times of austerity.

3.18 Key Government Policies indicated:

- Policies to integrate motorcycling to be included in mainstream transport policy, alongside the walking, cycling and public transport options.
- Working with the private sector, the development of a new strategic framework for motorcycling, focusing on safety, mobility, accessibility and security.
- Political support for Bikesafe.
- Consideration of the how training and testing should be delivered in the longer term.
- Guidance to local authorities, outlining the importance of motorcycling to local transport projects/plans.

4. **Motorcycle Safety**

4.1 Motorcycle safety is a highly specialised field, with the needs and types of riders as well as locations varying greatly. MCI are concerned that a localised approach to safety may cause the mode to suffer more than other more mainstream transport modes. Whilst there are several excellent local Motorcycle Officers, very few Local Authorities have Road Safety Officers (RSO’s) or Road Engineers with the specialist knowledge and expertise required to deal with motorcycle issues.

4.2 We believe that Government has a necessary and vital role to provide strong encouragement on how scarce Central Government resources should be spent. The DfT should assist those RSO’s with little knowledge, and be able to discourage “re-inventing the wheel” which has been prevalent in the past (see 4.3). While the industry sees potential opportunities from “the Big Society” and “localism”, such polices should be not be used as an excuse by Government to merely abandon many of its key roles in road safety.

4.3 Whilst local knowledge is of course very valuable, many rural areas share the same issues and problems, as do large cities and small towns for example. The danger is that we will see a plethora of well intentioned interventions, many of them addressing identical or very similar issues, with similar criteria and syllabi being produced at high cost. This was indeed noted as being an unfortunate result of the 2009 road safety grants, which were awarded to a number of individual projects, few of which did much more than “reinvent the wheel” under various banners, when instead the grants should have gone to support existing best practices such as Bikesafe. The result was inefficient, confusing and wasteful of public funds.
4.4 The localism and big society agenda should in an idea world offer impetus to a number of innovative safety developments in the longer term. However, MCI has concerns relating to the experience of local schemes and also how the current economic situation is impacting on safety policy at a local level.

**Local Action—should this conducted in isolation?**

Experience reveals that if local authorities merely “get on with it”, we will see a fragmentation of safety policy, as different areas evolve entirely different approaches to safety. There is of course a need for local safety programmes to take account of local circumstances, but as the industry notes elsewhere in this document, such actions which do not take account of established “best practice” or is not “joined up” to developments and thinking in a national level, will result in the fragmentation of safety policy. The serious unintended consequence of this could mean confusion among target audiences and the lack of key focal points on which to direct support from industry and other businesses, such as insurance companies.

**The economic factor**

Despite local authorities gaining the freedom to set their own agendas and priorities, the severe economic downturn means the reality of local road safety units being starved of funds, with initiatives cancelled and staff laid off. Government still has a role to play here, whether it likes it or not. Unless local authorities are directed to prioritise road safety as part of block grant awards, then safety will largely fall by the wayside in many areas of the country. This is a matter of great concern to the motorcycle industry.

4.5 MCI is aware that the DfT is working with Road Safety GB to further develop a resource bank. This is a welcome development, and if used correctly will go a long way to alleviate duplication, but without at least strong encouragement to steer away from wheel reinvention, many local RSO’s will continue the common practice of developing numerous schemes all doing the same or similar things.

4.6 Even when this knowledge bank is used by RSO’s a lack of understanding may well lead to poor choice of initiatives in some areas, leaving the problems largely unaddressed.

4.7 Despite our strong concerns outlined and reinforced above, we are reassured that there will still be some level of central government intervention and hope that the widely recognised THINK! Brand will be maintained and budget allocated. Again MCI is concerned that widespread creation of many different motorcycle initiatives and the brand names associated with them may dilute the THINK! Brand and its messages within the motorcycle community.

4.8 It is good to see Government recognising that it is a good idea to harness creativity but evidence to date shows that local RSO’s do not appear keen to use the ideas of others and strive to create their own schemes and brand identities. MCI is concerned that in some cases scarce resources are wasted on such “vanity” thinking, when simply investing in local BikeSafe (for example) would offer a more sustainable result.

4.9 MCI would point to the example of the DSA’s Enhanced Rider Scheme (ERS) which is promoted by THINK! along with BikeSafe which drives riders towards ERS. The ERS scheme is flexible to suit the needs of an individual rider in an individual locality, so for all riders who have already passed their test, this scheme should meet their needs. How it is promoted may need to vary locally, but the name or brand and basic product should be the same. At present there are many post test schemes developed by local RSO’s and Partnerships, some which come to mind are Be a Better Biker, Bike wise, Bikecraft, Ride it Right and Take Control. Some of these use ERS qualified and registered instructors and closely follow the ERS guidelines, others do not. How is the average rider to know which schemes are the best?

4.10 It is widely recognised that more needs to be done to encourage riders to take training after they have passed the test. Anything that is likely to make the post test training market more confusing is a step backwards. MCI would like to see the promotion of recognised national accredited schemes as the way forward—currently BikeSafe, IAM, ROSPA and ERS meet this need.

4.11 This national approach is essential if Government wishes to work with the wider motorcycle industry to offer incentives to riders to take further training. The insurance industry for example is happy working with national schemes to provide discounts for example, but find themselves deluged by RSO’s and others asking for benefits for numerous individually branded initiatives. There is little incentive for a large manufacturer to offer prizes for riders if a scheme attracts only 200 riders a year. If a national scheme attracts thousands of riders, incentives are much easier to secure and industry becomes more willing to engage. Regardless of motive, more riders taking post test training must be a goal to strive for.

4.12 Again a national approach to post test training helps organisations such as MCI, MCITA, MAG and BMF who can provide help and expert advice in this field. It is difficult to offer excellent service to hundreds of enquirers, but working with a national project makes this much more efficient.

4.13 When it comes to dealing with minor offenders, using re-education/training schemes instead of endorsement, MCI believes that having a national accredited standard is even more important, of course we recognise that there will need to be local variations but the standard of instruction/tuition must be the same to ensure standards are met and best practice is observed. MCI would also stress that we are concerned that some local authorities might, in an effort to save money, mix car drivers with motorcyclists on diversionary schemes...
or not offer any diversionary courses for motorcyclists. This is particularly likely in areas where there is no specific motorcycle expertise.

4.14 When motorcycle accidents are looked at locally, the very small numbers involved will mean that any change in motorcycle related casualties, whether in rates or number, will make a big difference to any percentage measurement. Therefore whilst we are reassured that a sophisticated method of monitoring progress is being developed we are concerned that motorcycles may be viewed as either a very high or low priority dependent upon a very small shift in numbers.

4.15 Motorcycles can offer solutions to traffic congestion and have many environmental benefits over cars, it is clear that Government needs to recognise this if it is serious about reducing CO2 and traffic congestion— as well as improving road safety. Motorcycles also play a positive role in creating new efficiencies in the movement of people and goods. Fundamental to this will be an explicit recognition that positive safety and transport policy integration policies are fundamental to maximising the potential of the Powered Two Wheeler as a mode of transport, with positive action encouraged at both local and national level. The result will be safer motorcycling and a more flexible and responsive transport system.

October 2011

Written evidence from the Association of Chief Police Officers (RSF 18)

1. Whether the Government is right not to set road safety targets and whether its outcomes framework is appropriate?

1.1 Targets are a very subjective matter and the removal can be considered a somewhat risky strategy. A strong argument can be made that the significant reduction achieved in deaths and serious injuries on British roads over the past ten years has been attributable in part at least to the direct accountability that the previous “2010” KSI/Child KSI/Slight injury targets provided. These targets resulted in the focusing of partnership working to achieve common goals.

1.2 Indeed, international experience has been overwhelming in that the existence of such performance indicators ensures that a strong focus and momentum is maintained, even if in some cases the incentive is as crude as “naming and shaming” those who fail to make the required reductions. To remove such a clear means of measuring success or failure may be risky, particularly at the start of the UN’s Decade of Action on Road Safety, which sets clear targets and to which the government has signed up. To suggest as the framework does that “… further central persuasion should not now be needed to highlight the importance of road safety” seems wishful and over-optimistic. Realistically, central government needs to continue to play a leading role to ensure that progress is maintained and casualty reduction remains a national priority.

1.3 The Outcomes Framework appears to be an effective way of monitoring trends: however further information needs to be added in relation to vulnerable groups such as motorcyclists. Where targets have been implemented in parallel there has also been a process of assessment and support to achieve the relevant outcomes. If targets are abandoned what processes will be used to gauge the success or otherwise of any given campaign?

1.4 From a police perspective, there is a strong emphasis in the framework upon enforcement and a similar concern exists that, with the reduction of dedicated roads policing officers across England and Wales, in the absence of formal targets some Chief Constables may be encouraged to provide even less of an emphasis upon this aspect of local policing.

2. How the decentralisation to local authorities of funding and the setting of priorities will work in practice and contribute towards fulfilling the Government’s vision?

2.1 The concept of placing the responsibility for funding and priorities to local authorities is supported. However, it is vital that the responsibility for making decisions around the identification of local collision problems and which are the most appropriate remedial interventions must remain in the hands of appropriately qualified and experienced practitioners and include continued engagement and consultation with key stakeholders such as the police.

2.2 The cessation of capital funding and significant reduction of the road safety grant to local authorities has negatively affected local road safety circles. It has resulted in the collapse of a number of successful partnerships which will be very difficult to re-establish in the future. This is particularly unfortunate as these established partnerships were well placed to deliver the “localism” agenda and government priorities. The “localism” agenda does assist Authorities to fine-tune their approach to specific areas of concern, which are confined to a particular parish or ward such as increased KSI’s in areas of deprivation, or high incidences of pedal cyclist KSI’s in urban environments. This complements the national priorities, but should not be allowed to supersede them unless a particular priority is not applicable in that area.
2.3 In Wales, in part, this is already achieved through the four Welsh Transport Consortia. The work of the consortia is coming under scrutiny from the Welsh Government to establish that funding is being used correctly. With regards to how it will all work in practise, it is the empowerment of local authorities to address the issues within their areas which will be the key to fulfilling the government’s vision. What needs to be considered is what “business model” will be used in order to determine what outcomes are to be achieved and how will this be measured. Will those unitary authorities who prove to be successful be discriminated against when it comes to the allocation of funds?

2.4 What about the possibility of ring fenced funding for key areas such as hard to reach vulnerable groups? If this hybrid was considered it would give the local authority an ability to address issues unique to its area or region.

3. Whether the Government is right to argue that, for the most part, the right legislative framework for road safety is in place, and, in particular; whether the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives (see Post-Legislative Assessment of the Road Safety Act 2006, Cm 8141, published by the DfT, July 2011).

3.1 There is little doubt that the Act has made a positive contribution to the continuing casualty reduction record on British roads, though it would be difficult to quantify to what extent this has taken place. Certainly, the new offences of Causing Death by Careless or Inconsiderate Driving (section 20) and Causing Death by Driving whilst Unlicensed, Disqualified, or Uninsured (section 21) have been well received and enabled sentencing to better meet public expectation.

3.2 Similarly the introduction of remedial retraining courses to offenders convicted of speeding and careless driving has been viewed as a success and consequently is likely and should be extended further for additional offences.

3.3 However, when considering whether the right legislative framework for road safety is in place it has to be said that the failure to grasp the nettle and initiate some really ground-breaking (for the UK at least) changes in two key areas which both impact highly in terms of contributory factors to RTCs—i.e in respect of drink/driving (lowering the alcohol threshold and allowing random testing) and novice driving (introducing graduated licensing) is disappointing.

3.4 The North Report made clear recommendations in respect of drink driving limits and testing powers and these have not been progressed despite the wide-ranging evidence upon which the recommendations were based. Now that Northern Ireland and Scotland have announced their intention to lower their limits it must be time for our government to revisit their decision. We are becoming increasingly isolated with our higher limit and we risk damaging our reputation as one of the foremost road safety nations.

3.5 We believe that the argument of damage to the rural economy and licensed trade outweighing the road safety benefits is fundamentally flawed.

3.6 Had the government really grasped the nettle then greater in-roads could have been made in key areas listed above. Consideration should now however be given to revising some of the existing legislation to dangerous, reckless, careless and inconsiderate driving, so as to distinguish between the differing levels of seriousness of the driving actions and therefore culpability rather than the resultant death; this change would assist sentencing guidelines.

3.7 Some other provisions included in the Act were either not introduced following consultation and/or further consideration or are yet to be enacted. The Government has high hopes that the Continuous Insurance Enforcement scheme will have a big impact upon the uninsured driver problem but as this was established only three months ago it is too early as yet to assess its worth.

3.8 In terms of the “post-legislative reviews” section of the Post Legislative Assessment of the Road Safety Act 2006, as stated in this document the Transport Select Committee has conducted various inquiries on road safety matters since the Road Safety Act 2006 was published. Some of these matters were and still are very relevant given continuing casualty and offending rates, eg motorcyclists, novice drivers, drink and drug driving law and the cost of insurance, however these studies have unfortunately led to little in the way of legislative change or other positive action in these particular areas.

4. Whether the measures set out in the action plan are workable and sufficient

4.1 They should be workable, but are not sufficient in two respects:

4.1.1 Drink/driving: as stated above, the need for lowering the alcohol threshold level and power to allow random testing appeared to have been accepted (and of course the Police Service played a leading role in moving these practical requirements firmly onto the agenda); it is disappointing to therefore see that both these necessary measures to reduce the problem and offending rate have been jettisoned, particularly when Northern Ireland is proposing dropping the blood alcohol thresholds from the UK’s existing 80mg/100ml to just 50mg (with 20mg/100ml for young or inexperienced drivers) and Scotland is considering doing the same north of the border. Such a move would provide parity with many other European countries, including France, Germany and Italy.
4.1.2 The fact that there was a rise of 8% in positive tests during this summer’s national campaign compared to last year indicates that the problem may well be on the increase here. There is also evidence to suggest that young drivers are more likely to drink and drive so the time is right for legislative changes and further investment in education.

4.2 New drug offence

4.2.1 If we are to move the current legislation and procedure, from one relying on a driver being unfit to drive and officers requiring evidence of impairment before a station procedure to collect a sample and identify drug presence, then it is imperative that we have a new offence. It is accepted that drink driving has an offence and procedure, roadside screening, that enables the police to effectively enforce against those prepared to risk others’ safety while impaired, the same cannot be said with regard to illicit and prescription drug impaired driving.

4.2.2 To implement any kind of drug screening at the roadside the police must have a new offence as relying on impairment as currently legislated for does not bring any benefit from a roadside screen, only additional cost and training to the police service.

4.2.3 It is extremely important that the Government does not push forward with screening devices when the law provided is totally focussed on impairment and not the impairing substance present at the roadside.

4.3 Forfeiture of vehicles

4.3.1 This is an area we would like to see this extended and used appropriately by the courts to include those with significant alcohol in their system when driving as per the Scottish model for repeat offenders. We appreciate that there are practical difficulties around the implementation of forfeiture unless the police seize the vehicle at the time of the offence, pending a court decision.

4.4 Portable breath testing equipment

4.4.1 There are real advantages in not tying an evidential device to the station, worse still to a particular location where any movement has to be carried out by a trained engineer. Mobile devices will enable transport to the most ideal location in a police station and even to a police station near an event or situation where there isn’t a device already.

4.4.2 Hospital evidential breath testing is permitted in law but not possible with current devices. Portable devices will give officers the benefit of a quick and non-intrusive breath sample rather than the calling of a doctor and blood test currently necessary.

4.4.3 It is a significant step forward to get an accurate reading at the time closest to when the person is driving. This is one area where offenders have escaped justice from the time of offence at the roadside to the time taken to process them on evidential breath test machines at police stations. This cannot have been Parliament’s intention when the piece of legislation was enabled and needs to be addressed at the earliest opportunity. There are some legislative/practical issues to resolve around roadside evidential breath testing, particularly in relation to the process of getting the driver from the roadside to court. At present it is not possible to bail someone to court unless they have been taken into custody, something that does need addressing.

4.4.4 The police have been requesting portable breath testing equipment for some time now, even carrying out a field trial of available technology in 2005 to try to move the type approval process on quicker than it seemed to be happening at that time. Since then the specification for type approval appears to have stalled and to make matters worse it has been scheduled behind drug screeners, a decision which does not seem to have taken police operational benefit and overall benefit to road safety into account. There are major benefits to the process and operationally time savings from the roadside evidential testing device, whereas without a new drug offence the drug screener has a small benefit in the station but no real operational benefit.

4.4.5 In conjunction with removal of the statutory option this will really assist the enforcement of drink driving legislation.

4.5 Drug screening devices

4.5.1 We restate our opinion that within existing legislation there is no place for roadside drug screening devices.

4.5.2 We do, however, see the value of drug screening devices for use in the police station environment. Forensic Medical Examiners having to confirm a condition due to a drug prior to samples being obtained has always been a contentious issue and no doubt people have escaped prosecution by this method. A device which enables a positive result to move to evidential blood sample without the need for a doctor to confirm a condition due to a drug will assist with this and would be a massive leap forward in an area of particular concern at the moment.
4.5.3 Evidence from Australia, and in a minor way supported from our field trials, highlights a possible 25% false positive and negative result from the current technology which is after all new technology and developing. To submit a motorist to this “early days” technology at the roadside as part of the impairment evidence gathering process doesn’t appear to the police to be of any advantage. In the station this is a controlled environment where our process can move a false or true negative to the doctor to confirm a condition due to a drug, leaving a true or false positive to be confirmed by laboratory blood analysis.

4.5.4 It appears to the police that there is a concerted push by the government to approve roadside screeners for drugs which, without the legislative support, is unhelpful. The police will simply not buy the devices as they are unnecessary and of little benefit and as a result will receive pressure from the industry and press due to an unrealistic perception that the devices will identify drug impaired driving. It is our opinion that only devices for the station should be approved at this time and roadside devices should wait for the offence to be introduced.

4.6 Safety messages in driving tests

4.6.1 We are not in a position to comment on this.

4.7 Increased education

4.7.1 Diverisonary schemes need to be pitched at the correct level of driver behaviour. We believe the development of further courses to address errant driver behaviour will benefit road safety overall. The police scheme is currently completing two additional courses to cover all endorseable offending and later next year a seatbelt course over the internet to help persuade the last hard-core offenders to use a belt and protect their lives.

4.7.2 Initial evaluation of the courses currently on offer show that they are more effective in changing driver behaviour than is punishment by way of a fine and penalty points. The introduction of the fixed penalty notice for due care offences will simplify the process of getting such drivers into education, reducing the administrative burden on police officers and exposing more offenders to education. It is these offenders the two new courses will address, as well as mobile phones and traffic light offenders.

4.7.3 There are concerns about courses being offered instead of disqualification. One of the biggest barriers to prolific offending is the possibility of disqualification; if that barrier is removed that could increase the number of drivers prepared to risk being caught knowing an educational course was the sanction.

4.7.4 Given that disqualifications are generally only imposed for the more serious offences any dilution of this penalty would increase the risk of a serious RTC occurring. Research has shown that in fatal RTCs a significant number of those who could be said to be blameworthy have a record of some sort of criminality, including several points on their licences.

4.7.5 There are a large number of “totting” offenders where the courts are persuaded to suspend the disqualification due to the mitigating circumstances. Maybe it is here that they should be permitted to direct the driver who is not disqualified to the training. This would have the benefit of training and the driver remaining at 12 or more points so encouraging compliance if they wish to keep their licence.

4.8 Post test qualification

4.8.1 Any replacement to Pass Plus would be welcomed; however, there should be some incentive to going on the course such as lower insurance premiums. We have to find a way to ensure those attending such a course fit the demographics of those at risk.

4.9 New portal

4.9.1 This is a good idea, the IPCC have a “learning the lessons” portal which reviews incidents and outlines the learning from this. A good idea shared can become a great idea. There is much research available to help operational police officers decide on what to target, when and how, the trouble is it needs summarising into a short idea-provoking style from where an interested person can delve further into the evidence when introducing an initiative. The portal should provide this and if it does it will be very useful to officers who are trying to achieve the same with reduced budgets and resources.

4.10 Graduated Driver Licensing

4.10.1 Young drivers continue to be overrepresented in road casualty statistics and research has shown the circumstances in which the collisions are most likely to occur; during the hours of darkness and with young passengers in the vehicle. Graduated licensing will allow these specific issues to be addressed to reduce casualties among this most vulnerable road user group.
4.10.2 To do this effectively the police need the ability to interrogate the DVLA driver database and most importantly see the driver’s photo-card picture. Only if we can identify the driver at the time to the driver record they purport to be can the officer confirm the restriction/graduation and enforce offences. There is work to remove the counterpart and rely on the electronic record as well as put photographs on PNC, both imperative if we continue without compulsory carriage of a driving licence (something most other European countries have) and wish to use graduation of licences.

4.10.3 Again, it is interesting that Northern Ireland has announced a consultation exercise on introducing a Graduated Driver Licensing scheme, showing they are taking a far more proactive approach to tackling road safety than our government.

4.10.4 Where such schemes have been introduced elsewhere in the EU, North America and New Zealand huge reductions in casualties have been achieved. It is disappointing therefore that the action plan doesn’t go beyond introducing a new post-test qualification to improve the skills of inexperienced drivers.

5. The relationship between the Government's strategy and EU road safety initiatives

5.1 To meet or better the EU 2020 road death 50% reduction target would be more readily achievable if our own performance was accountable to formal indicators as has previously been the case, ie with the “2010” targets that concluded last year as mentioned at Q1 above.

5.2 Devolving responsibility for much of the delivery of this framework from central to local government as intended may also encourage regions/Transport Consortia/unitary authorities and police forces to “do their own thing” locally at the expense of participation in TISPOL enforcement and education activities, which essentially rely on the joined-up, collective approach of EU countries.

5.3 A consistent European approach that deals effectively with cross-border enforcement and safety issues—including drivers on international journeys, or foreign registered, but UK operated vehicles is supported. This should include recognition for TISPOL campaigns and initiatives which provide for coordinated policing activity.

5.4 In Wales the Welsh Government, the police and the transport consortia have a very good relationship as they are all represented at various meetings. This model could easily be adapted to the new proposals as set out in this document.

October 2011

Written evidence from West Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership (RSF 21)

1.0 OVERVIEW

1.1 West Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership has made representations to DfT and to the Transport Select Committee on various safer roads issues in the past and, relevant to this enquiry, has provided detailed responses to the DfT consultation on “A Safer Way” and has, representing Core Cities Safer Roads, taken part in the Stakeholder meetings that advised the Strategic Road Safety Framework. Whilst there are a number of positive developments in the outlined approach to road safety, the overall view is that the Strategic Framework for Road Safety in its current form is a missed opportunity to forge stronger partnerships between Government, Local Authorities and local communities to deal with the safer roads issues that most affect local people going about their daily lives and to continue the reductions that have been made in road deaths and injuries.

2.0 CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Whether the Government is right not to set road safety targets and whether its outcomes framework is appropriate

2.2 The view of the West Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership is that the Strategic Framework for Road Safety should include road safety target reductions with appropriate milestones. Target reductions were the foundation of previous national strategies and previous achievements in reducing road crashes and injury. We feel that they are essential to measure progress and to gain support from other agencies, representative bodies and individuals that would benefit from a safer community. Local road safety target reductions are set within our West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan and we aspire to better the predictions outlined in the Strategic Framework for Road Safety. The setting of national target reductions would confirm government commitment and bind together national and local interests in seeking to achieve benefits for society overall.

2.3 The outcomes framework is in some way arbitrary and whilst the headline casualty figures are included, the key issue is how indicative is the outcomes framework of local conditions and the circumstances that lead to road crashes and injury? Our view is that the outcomes framework should be an indicator that identifies geographical areas where Government and Local Authorities need to work more closely together to address those local issues and to jointly contribute to making further progress in reducing road crashes and injury.
2.4 The basis of the casualty forecasts in the Strategic Framework for Road Safety is the “performance” of local authorities. Whilst appropriate measures of progress in local areas are important, we have made the point that progress “at Local Authority level” is a function of Government performance by way of funding, setting policy, and identifying and responding to needs. Local Authority performance, through local application and engagement with local stakeholders and communities, and the performance of many other representative bodies and, lastly, of those people in communities who are most at risk. There are many factors that are outside of the control of Local Authorities, particularly in areas of deprivation which have seen increases in the rates of unemployment in the last 12 months far above national trends adding to the levels of disadvantage and adding to the road safety risk. The performance of Local Authorities is not seen as an appropriate indicator of accountability in relation to road deaths and injuries.

2.5 The Strategic Framework should seek to identify areas that need additional funding and support. That has been forthcoming in the past through the Neighbourhood Road Safety Initiative, for example, which has demonstrated the progress that could be made with government and local authorities working closely together.

How the decentralisation to local authorities of funding and the setting of priorities will work in practice and contribute towards fulfilling the Government’s vision

2.6 Funding for Local Authorities has been cut significantly and both staffing resources and infrastructure improvements that can be committed to safer roads will be curtailed in the coming years. DfT revenue funding has been transferred to DCLG which has put road safety funding at considerable risk given the funding needs for other services delivered by Local Authorities. There are also difficult decisions to be made in Metropolitan Areas where the strategic needs for transport have to be considered against local needs for safer roads improvements. The previous road safety grant funding addressed local priorities including funding support for partner activities. Whilst we are working to increase our engagement with local communities the loss of funding is a deterrent to effective delivery of Safer Roads activities including local enforcement priorities. The loss of funding for safety cameras is an issue and whilst an alternative funding mechanism has been put in place there must be concerns over the long term sustainability of safety camera operations given the requirements for digitalisation, renewal and replacement.

Whether the Government is right to argue that, for the most part, the right legislative framework for road safety is in place, and, in particular, whether the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives (see Post-Legislative Assessment of the Road Safety Act 2006, Cm 8141, published by the DfT, July 2011)

2.7 Whilst the West Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership would support the provisions of the Road Safety Act 2006 there are other areas of legislation that directly relate to road traffic behaviour and road safety that have not been sufficiently enacted. We consider that the enforcement of moving traffic offences for Local Authorities outside of London as contained in the Traffic Management Act 2004 is essential to improve driving behaviour, reduce risk and to encourage overall compliance with regulations that are set to benefit society overall.

2.8 It is our view that all penalties from Road Traffic Offences including speed and red light violation should be retained in local administration in order that the Local Authorities including the Police can adequately deal with the prevailing local problems of lawlessness.

2.9 The West Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership particularly supports the provisions for driver retraining courses as a positive way to engage with offenders.

Whether the measures set out in the action plan are workable and sufficient

2.10 Compared to previous national road safety strategies the road safety action plan suggests a reduction in government activities concentrating on monitoring progress in local areas as an alternative to direct involvement. The West Yorkshire Safer Roads partnership would welcome more discussion with government on the safer roads requirements of our communities and on the various initiatives that need to be coordinated nationally and locally to continue to reduce road crashes and injuries and to contribute to the regeneration of our communities. We would wish to see greater engagement with government on a more comprehensive action plan that would bring together government and local safer roads initiatives.

2.11 A website providing local information on road crashes and injury concentrates on location not cause and could be particularly misleading without the full circumstances of the road crashes.

The relationship between the Government’s strategy and EU road safety initiatives

2.12 The European Commission has recommended a coherent and integrated approach to road safety that takes into account synergies with other policy goals. We feel that the Strategic Framework for Road Safety has not taken the opportunity to engage with the wider policy objectives that sustain and improve communities and contribute to better future for all our citizens.
3.0 SUMMARY

3.1 The Strategic Framework for Road Safety has been developed and delivered within a significantly changing economic and social environment and as such we feel that it should be an evolving document that supports the aims of government alongside the local needs of citizens within our communities.

3.2 The West Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership would be pleased to see a review process put in place that would engage fully with stakeholders and that would develop the Strategic Framework for Road Safety to become a guiding document providing an approach to road safety that could be utilised and promoted at all levels of government, in local authorities, with stakeholders, partner agencies and with people in communities.

October 2011

Joint written evidence from organisations within the road safety community (RSF 23)

INTRODUCTION

1. This memorandum is submitted on behalf of 15 organisations, whose names are listed at the end of the submission. Taken together, these organisations represent the key deliverers of road safety at national and local level, the professional bodies representing highway engineers and planners and representatives from the transport research sector. We have chosen to make a joint submission, in addition to specific points raised in individual representations, because we believe that improvement in road safety is a collective responsibility, the achievement of which is attained most successfully through joint partnership working. The importance of the partnership approach has been acknowledged in a report from the Department entitled Delivery of Local Road Safety, Road Safety Research Report 124, published in September 2011.

Is the Government right not to set road safety targets and is the outcomes framework appropriate?

2. It is important for the Committee to remember that Great Britain has a long tradition in road safety delivery dating back to the publication of Road Safety: the Next Steps in 1987. This publication set the first target for casualty reduction: the achievement of a reduction of one-third in all casualties by 2000 taking the years 1981–85 as the baseline years against which progress should be measured. At the time, the adoption of a target was a radical move. However, it was developed with professional support and adopted by those active in the field. In our view, road safety is a policy area that has benefited from targets which have supported rather than distorted policy initiatives.

3. In 2000, the government, having consulted widely, adopted a second round of targets although these were of a more differentiated kind. In Tomorrow’s Roads—safer for everyone, three targets were proposed:
   - To cut death and serious injury (KSI) by 40% by 2010.
   - To cut child KSI by 50% by 2010.
   - To reduce slight injuries by 10% by rate by 2010.

4. Progress towards the achievement of these targets was to be measured against the years 1994–98. It is also important to note here that these reductions were based on a rigorous analysis of casualty trends, policy options and potential changes in traffic mix. This underlying analysis can be found in TRL report 382, The Numerical Context for Setting National Casualty Reduction Targets (Broughton, Allsop, Lynam and McMahon). The 2000 targets were not figures plucked out of the air by a government but were based on achievable ambitions. As the 2010 casualty figures show, deaths fell by 48% over the decade 2000–10 and KSI by 49% although we accept that the serious injury figures should be treated with some caution as there are issues of data reliability when comparing police and hospital casualty figures.

5. Target setting has therefore been a positive policy development in Great Britain over the last two decades. In addition, international analysis published in the journal Safety Science in 2010 (Wong and Sze, Safety Science, 2010, pp 1182–88) has estimated that having in place a national target increases the annual average percentage reduction in road deaths by typically 4% during the target period compared with similar countries without targets.

6. In 2009, the previous government consulted over the option of a third round of casualty reduction in A Safer Way (DfT, 2009). In this document, the government also suggested that Great Britain should adopt a vision for road safety to guide policy over the next decade: to make Britain’s roads the safest in the world.

   The proposed targets were a further reduction of at least one third in KSI by 2020 and of 50% in child KSI over the same period. This approach was again supported by professionals in road safety, demonstrating the joint commitment to improving safety. Our concerns about the approach proposed focussed on whether the targets proposed were sufficiently ambitious and whether we should aim for the safest road users rather than the safest roads.

7. It is therefore deeply disappointing to note that the new government has turned its back on the history of successful road safety in Great Britain, preferring to talk of forecasts rather than specific targets. While we recognise that in other areas of policy, targets can be interpreted as having distorted policy, this is not the case...
in road safety. We would urge the Committee to recommend to the government a re-think on the issue of target-setting given the overwhelming evidence that targets work in this area. Should the government not recognise the continuing relevance of a target-led approach and prefer to continue with its current approach, we would urge the Committee to recommend that a more robust approach to both performance and measurement of progress needs to be adopted as we set out below.

8. In terms of the outcomes framework, we agree that it is important to have a measurement system in place to assess whether the policy objective is being achieved. In terms of assessing progress, Towards Zero (OECD, 2008) rightly draws the distinction between final outcome data and performance data. The former focuses on deaths and injuries, the latter on how the network is performing and on changes in behaviours exhibited by road users. We believe that it is vital to measure a combination of these in order to be sure that safety is improving and that the risk profile for road users is not changing in any negative way.

9. In terms of the proposed Outcomes Framework, we believe that the 14 valuable indicators based on injury figures should be complemented by a wider range of indicators based on network performance than the eight that are so far proposed. Over the last decade, it is, for example, notable that the percentage of drivers complying with the 30 mph speed limit in free-flowing traffic has risen from 30% to 51%. This behavioural change suggests that the urban network is becoming a safer environment. We believe that a wider set of performance measures should be adopted, including, for example, the percentage of vehicles with 5 Star EuroNCAP ratings, the percentage of the road network assessed as adequate by EuroRAP, the amount invested in traffic calming measures and the percentage of car occupants wearing seat-belts. Much of this data is already collected but published in different places. The role of the Outcomes Framework should be to bring it all together as a comprehensive data source.

10. We would, however, urge two further changes to the Framework. We believe that the indicator of deaths at national level may lead to a focus on what are increasingly rare events. We would prefer the indicator to be based on deaths and serious injuries as is the case for local authorities. We also believe that the data must be published in a consolidated format. We are concerned that the decision to cease publication of Reported Road Casualties Great Britain in a printed format and to make it available as a series of tables on-line has led to difficulties for the profession in accessing and interpreting data. If RRCGB is no longer to be printed, it must at least be available in a consolidated format comparable to previous years.

How will the decentralisation of funding to local authorities work in practice and contribute towards the fulfilling of the Government’s vision?

11. This is obviously a key question for the Committee. However, the honest answer is that it is very difficult to know at the present time. The combination of reductions in local authority funding and the end of ring-fencing has led to significant reorganisations in local authority structures and personnel. Many authorities have seen experienced staff accept voluntary severance or early retirement packages. As a result, expertise has been reduced. However, it is not possible to quantify the effect of this at present. In addition, according to data provided to the Daily Telegraph via a Freedom of Information request, the numbers of dedicated roads policing officers has fallen overall by 4% in the year between May 2010 and May 2011.

12. Finally, the decision to end the capital funding of safety cameras in June 2010 and to reduce the grant paid to local authorities for road safety partnership work has led to a reduction in partnership working. In Northamptonshire, for example, decisions about safety cameras have been returned to the police force rather than remaining within the established partnership, resulting in an end to enforcement at fixed camera sites and the reduced presence of mobile units. In Wiltshire and in Avon and Somerset, fixed cameras have been switched off altogether without a thoroughgoing analysis of the potential impact on casualties. Where police forces are now required to meet the costs of enforcement entirely through funds hypothecated from speed awareness courses, such as in Thames Valley, the deployment strategy is now less focussed on high casualty rates than was previously the case.

We would urge the Committee to recommend that the Department undertake and publish its own analysis of the impact of the recent changes. Such an analysis ought to include a survey of local authority and police staff to assess the scale of job losses and internal reorganisation.

13. Local authorities and police forces have always had a key role in the implementation and achievement of casualty reduction in Great Britain over the last two decades. We endorse the view that decisions about local roads are best taken at the local level. Our concern, however, is that an emphasis on decentralisation with no commitment from central government to monitor progress may lead to inconsistency around the country with some authorities continuing to focus on road safety and others concentrating on different local priorities. As the DfT itself has admitted in the Strategic Framework, performance in casualty reduction around the country is varied. Decentralisation is likely to exacerbate that position. It is vital to monitor independently performance across local authorities and the different administrations and to share good practice across the profession. The Strategic Framework fails to do this.
Is the Government right to argue that the right legislative framework is in place and that the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives?

14. For local authorities, a key part of the legislative framework lies in the Road Traffic Act 1988. Section 39 of this Act places statutory duties on local authorities with regard to road safety. These are:
   — to prepare and carry out programmes of measures designed to promote road safety;
   — to carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles on roads within their area; and
   — to take such measures as appear to be appropriate to prevent such accidents.

15. This part of the Act has worked well in ensuring the continuing commitment of local authorities to casualty reduction work. It reflected the adoption of targets for casualty reduction in 1987 and ensured that local authorities had a level of accountability for achieving them.

16. We accept that both the Strategic Framework as a whole and the Outcomes Framework within it create a new structure and context for the operation of road safety. We believe that this needs to be reflected in a new legislative framework for road safety. We would urge the committee to recommend that new duties to ensure the safe operation of the road network and the improvement of the safety of road users should be placed on both the Secretary of State for Transport and highway authorities. This should be accompanied by a duty on the Secretary of State to publish and update annually a detailed action plan covering road user, vehicle and highway safety that will show how future reductions will be achieved. Such an approach was adopted in Sweden with the law enshrining Vision Zero being passed by Parliament.

17. Finally, in terms of the current legislative framework, while we acknowledge that the earlier report from the Committee on drink and drug driving did not support an immediate lowering of the Blood Alcohol Content for drivers from 80mg to 50mg, we would urge the government to revisit this issue. Both the Northern Ireland Executive and Scottish Government have indicated their intention to lower the legal limit. We believe that it is time for the government in Westminster to do the same.

18. At the same time, it is also disingenuous of the Government to suggest that the current framework is adequate when there are two further changes to it being proposed in the extension of fixed penalty notices (FPN) to include careless driving and the new offence of causing serious injury through dangerous driving. The latter was added during Committee Stage to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill. We accept that both of these will help the police service in better enforcement of road traffic law and give greater flexibility to the courts to take into account injury as well as death when considering an appropriate level of sentence. We would, however, urge the Committee to recommend a thorough evaluation of these when they are implemented. In particular, it will be important to know whether the FPN option for police officers results in additional enforcement or merely reduces police bureaucracy.

19. In response to whether the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives, while we welcome the publication of the Post Legislative Assessment of the Act (TSO, 2011), we would also note that some of the Sections of the Act have yet to be implemented. The Sections governing the driving instruction industry are still being put in place and further changes to the driving test are likely to occur following the completion of a research project currently under way.

20. In addition, Section 35 of the Act which aims to put in place a course intended for drivers who might otherwise lose their licences is listed as an action to be completed in 2013. Such a course could be particularly important given the recent media focus on the number of drivers who have retained their licences through pleas of personal hardship when faced with loss of licence through “totting up” of penalty points. Earlier remedial interventions might help to prevent further offending or to ensure that drivers lose their licences as the law intends rather than being allowed to abuse the system.

21. Finally, we would urge a note of caution with regard to the new offence of causing death by careless driving. While the Assessment reports that since August 2008 there have been 155 convictions for this new offence, it is important to note that the number of prosecutions for causing death by dangerous driving has fallen from 312 in 2009 to 221 in 2010. We do not wish to suggest that there has been a move to lower the level of the charges brought against drivers. What we would urge is an in-depth research report into the overall impact of the new charge of causing death by careless driving to ensure that it is achieving its objective of increasing enforcement of road traffic law.

Are the measures set out in the Action Plan workable and sufficient?

22. In principle, the measures set out in the Action Plan are workable but are hardly sufficient. There are two significant qualifications that need to be placed upon them. First, they are primarily short-term actions with nothing considered beyond the period of the current Parliament.
23. Secondly, they are unambitious and do not fully reflect the challenges facing road safety. There is nothing in them about continuing investment in road engineering measures or about engagement with Europe. While the emphasis on educational alternatives for offenders is laudable, there has been little research into the effectiveness of such courses. It will be vital to ensure that any interventions are based on a robust research base and are evaluated rigorously to ensure that they achieve long-term behavioural change. Equally, while the emphasis on remedial education is appropriate, it overlooks the need to educate road users at an earlier age, thereby helping to prevent offences in the first place.

24. We are also disappointed that there is no reference in the Action Plan to maintaining the country’s research base to inform policy development. As the number of deaths on the roads falls, it becomes increasingly important to know a number of key pieces of information about the contributory factors underlying the crash, the environmental factors and the contribution that vehicle design could make to occupant protection or impact mitigation. Consideration should also be given to the effectiveness of accident damage repairs to maintain the integrity and safety efficiency of the original vehicle design. Reliance on data provided by STATS19 will not give as full a picture as is required to inform future policy.

25. Over the last decade, the DfT has contributed financially to two in-depth crash studies (the Co-operative Crash Injury Study and the On the Spot Study or OTS) which have helped to further the understanding of why crashes occur and what improvements to vehicle design could be implemented. Funding for a renewed OTS study was ended in May 2010. As a result there is likely to be a drastically weakened understanding of accident and injury causation on a significant statistical basis. We would urge the Committee to recommend the resumption of this important analytical resource. We would also urge the continuance of research to understand the nature of fatalities among different road user groups as was undertaken in the monitoring of the progress towards the 2010 targets.

26. Another missing action is any reference to the ISO standard for road safety management. This is currently being developed at international level and has strong support from a number of our European partners. We would urge its adoption throughout the road safety community to improve the overall management and understanding of road safety.

The relationship between the Government’s strategy and EU road safety initiatives

27. The main EU road safety initiatives are set out in the Policy Orientations proposed by the European Commission in July 2010. A key point to note here is that the Commission has proposed a further reduction of 50% in deaths on European roads to be achieved by 2020. Given the reluctance of the British government to adopt a target-led approach, this places an immediate gap between Great Britain and the European Commission and Parliament. In both the Commission proposals and the report on road safety adopted by the European Parliament, there has been strong support for both a target and a long-term commitment to Vision Zero. These are both absent from the DfT publication.

28. We would therefore urge the Committee to recommend to the government that the framework is revised to reflect the approach adopted by the EU which corresponds more closely with international best practice. We also believe that Great Britain needs to take an active role in policy development at a European level, especially in the areas of the design of vehicles and vehicle-based systems and of pan-European research projects.

29. In a joint letter to the Times in July 2011, our organisations committed themselves to halving deaths on Britain’s roads by 2020. We believe that this is an achievable goal given political leadership and continuing government commitment. We would urge the committee to set out a similar vision for road safety for the coming decade.

CONCLUSION

30. Reductions in deaths and injuries on our roads bring both economic and public health benefits, reducing demands on the health service and creating an environment in which more people are likely to walk and cycle. The recent substantial reductions in deaths are clearly welcome but may well be related to the overall economic situation. There is therefore no guarantee that the downward trend will continue. We believe that far more can and should be done to prevent the cumulative, individual tragedies on our roads, thereby ending the “Scandal of Complacency” identified by the committee in an earlier report.

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY

Association of Industrial Road Safety Officers
Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation
European Transport Safety Council
Greensafe Foundation
Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds
Institute of Road Safety Officer
Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety
RAC Foundation
Road Safety Analysis

Transport Committee: Evidence  Ev 111
Written evidence from the Association of British Insurers (RSF 24)

1. The ABI is the voice of insurance, representing the general insurance, protection, investment and long-term savings industry. It was formed in 1985 to represent the whole of the industry and today has over 300 members, accounting for some 90% of premiums in the UK.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 The ABI believes that road safety targets are important for measuring progress and is concerned that the Government’s Strategic Framework for Road Safety only provides an outcomes framework which lacks detail. The Framework provides a high level approach to improving road safety, with a focus on both education and enforcement. Under the Government’s Localism and Big Society agendas the Government is seeking to devolve responsibility to local authorities, including spending priorities. The ABI has concerns that some local authorities may not have either the funding, resources or expertise required to effectively tackle road safety issues.

2.2 It is disappointing to see that the Framework does not take a robust approach to young driver road safety which is a key factor in relatively high motor premiums for young people. We have called for reforms for a number of years on the way that young people learn to drive. It is doubtful that the initiatives in the Framework will have the necessary impact to improve the poor safety record of young drivers.

2.3 We will continue to engage with the Government to help both implement the Framework and also highlight areas where the Framework needs further development, such as tackling young driver road safety.

3. The importance of road safety targets for measuring progress

3.1 The Framework has “removed targets and performance frameworks to create more room for local flexibility and innovation”. However, the casualty forecast addresses recent trends in casualty reductions, using them to make projections for the future. The Framework identifies a potential reduction in deaths of between 37% and 46% by 2020 based on the 2005–09 average (Table 6.1).

3.2 The ABI appreciates the Government’s desire to allow greater flexibility. However, we believe it is important that performance targets are in place to allow substantive progress to be measured. Annex B of the Framework sets out an outcomes framework against which progress can be monitored. However, a number of outcomes still need to be developed and as such it is still a work in progress. It will be important that the right outcomes are identified to ensure effective monitoring where possible and we would encourage the Government to consult with all interested stakeholders before determining what these outcomes should be.

4. Concerns that some local authorities may not have either the funding, resources or expertise required to effectively tackle road safety issues

4.1 Much of the Framework focuses on high level principles and, as such, is light on specific detail. The Framework lays out the Government’s role as follows:

— to provide leadership;
— to set the regulatory framework;
— to negotiate, agree and implement international (including European) standards;
— to manage the strategic road network;
— to set standards for safe and responsible driving;
— to provide public information and educational materials; and
— to undertake and share research, good practice and data.

4.2 As part of the localism and Big Society agendas, the Framework sets out the Government’s plan to decentralise funding and devolve decisions on road safety issues to local authorities. Local authorities will be allowed to determine their own solutions, with greater transparency and accountability to local communities. However, the Framework provides that the overarching priority must be “to restore the public finances”, which implies that local authorities will have the discretion to cut funding for road safety initiatives in the context of competing funding priorities.
4.3 One potential area that could suffer is road engineering. There are few references to the need for continued investment in road engineering in the Framework, with priority given to education and enforcement. It is therefore likely that the responsibility for investment in engineering improvements will be continued by local authorities, who will often have other spending priorities.

4.4 It is too early to tell what this will mean in the long term for road safety. There are concerns that some local authorities may not have the funding, resources or expertise required to effectively tackle road safety issues, particularly when there are competing budgets and priorities. Furthermore, it could be challenging for stakeholders to encourage underperforming authorities to improve their performance without the necessary central government support and monitoring of performance.

5. Reduced resources means better police enforcement could prove challenging in practice

5.1 The Framework proposes extending the use of fixed penalty notices to include careless driving. This was originally proposed in the consultation on Road Safety Compliance in 2008. The argument for extending fixed penalties is that it will reduce police bureaucracy and will increase levels of enforcement. The ABI fully supports better enforcement. However, given that spending cuts mean that police forces are likely to see a reduction in numbers, this could prove challenging to enforce.

5.2 There is a close correlation between uninsured driving and road traffic accidents. As such, we wish to see continued efforts by the police to use the tools, particularly Continuous Insurance Enforcement, at their disposal to seize uninsured vehicles and take tough action against perpetrators. We applaud the work done by the police, and DVLA to help reduce this costly menace.

6. The insurance industry is playing an active role in improving road safety outcomes

6.1 The Framework identifies the insurance industry’s role in improving road safety through motor insurance premiums:

“the insurance industry can offer premiums that encourage safer driving through incentivising post-test training and financially penalising drivers for motor offences, as well as rewarding responsible behaviour through no claims discounts” (para 3.18)

6.2 Insurers already reward responsible driving through no claims discounts, while penalising drivers for motor offences through higher premiums. A number of insurers are now also bringing forward telematics based products which monitor drivers’ performance, thereby encouraging more responsible and safer driving through reduced premiums.

6.3 However, we have seen no objective evidence that post-test qualifications, such as Pass Plus, are effective in improving road safety outcomes. As such, while some insurers will provide discounts for post-test qualifications, others will not. Careful consideration will need to be given to what post-test training will look like, ensuring that reforms are aimed at providing the necessary skills and experience to novice drivers to help them safer drivers. The most effective way for young drivers to get lower premiums is through tougher pre qualifications.

7. The Framework lacks a specific focus on improving the safety record of young drivers

7.1 The main gap in the Framework is the lack of specific focus on improving the safety record of young drivers. The Framework offers little in way on how the Government intends to tackle the problem of young driver road safety. The Framework focuses on education, enforcement and developing a post-test qualification. However, this is unlikely to lead to a significant improvement in young driver road safety alone as it will not tackle the problem of lack of experience for young drivers.

7.2 The problem of young driver road safety is a significant one facing society. One in five will crash in the first six months after passing their test,² while more than 3,300 young drivers and passengers aged 17–24 are killed or suffer a serious injury every year.³

7.3 Furthermore:

— 17–20 year-old male drivers are almost ten times more likely to be killed or seriously injured than more experienced drivers.

— Almost one in four passengers who has been seriously injured was travelling with a young driver at the time.

— While young drivers aged between 17–24 accounts for 12% of licence holders, they are involved in one in four road deaths and serious injuries.⁴

⁴ Reported road accidents involving young car drivers: Great Britain 2009, DfT, 2011.
7.4 There are a number of factors behind young drivers’ poor safety record:

— **Road experience**—because of their lack of driving experience, many young drivers have a poor appreciation of road conditions and are unable to adapt their driving style where necessary. Inexperience leads to accidents: in particular when driving at night, negotiating bends, driving at high speeds and driving on wet roads.

— **Driver attitudes**—many 17–20 year olds associate driving with personal status and are more inclined than older people to drive for personal pleasure or thrills. Sometimes, even when young drivers have a good knowledge of how to drive safely, they do not do so. This can be seen in their willingness to break the rules of the road. Young drivers, and particularly males, commit the highest number of Highway Code violations. Poor attitudes can lead to anti-social driving behaviour and driving irresponsibly as a result of peer, carrying three passengers nearly triples the change of a crash.

7.5 More needs to be done to ensure that young drivers are ready for the challenges they face on the roads once they pass their practical test. To do this we must reform the way young people learn to drive so that we have a driver testing regime that is fit for purpose and ensures that young drivers actually learn how to drive rather than learn to pass the driving test. The ABI has argued that fundamental reform is needed to improve young driver safety, including:

— A **minimum learning period for all new drivers**: every year 50,000 17 year olds pass their driving test with less than six months driving experience. This means that many have not experienced driving in adverse conditions, such as at night or in wet weather. A one-year learning period would encourage drivers to undertake supervised practice in a variety of driving conditions. A similar scheme in Sweden led to a 40% reduction in young driver casualties.

— **Restrictions on carrying passengers and night time driving**: the crash risk of young drivers is significantly increased when carrying passengers and when driving at night. If young drivers could be encouraged to carry fewer passengers, casualty rates would fall. Similar restrictions in California have led to a 20% fall in young driver accidents. Furthermore, 50% of accidents involving young male drivers that result in death or serious injury occur at night, compared with 35% for older drivers.

— **Education to change attitudes to driving amongst young people**: Many young people associate driving with personal status and they are more inclined to drive for pleasure or thrills. Peer pressure leads to anti-social driving, such as competitive driving and other forms of irresponsible driving behaviour. More needs to be done to educate young people and their parents about the need to drive responsibly.

7.6 To date, successive governments have failed to act to address the issue of young driver road safety and we do not believe this Framework sets out significant proposals to effectively tackle this issue.

October 2011

---

Written evidence from Jim Punter, Chairman, MOT Trade Forum (RSF 25)

1. The MOT Trade Forum is an informal grouping of all the trade bodies in the motor trade, together with other interested parties (for example Kwik-fit, National Tyres, Halfords Autocentres) who meet regularly to discuss the MOT Scheme and determine agree strategic policies with respect to the MOT Testing Scheme for presentation to both the Department for Transport and the Vehicle Operator Services Agency.

The Trade Body members are:

- The Retail Motor Industry Federation, the National Tyre Distributors Association, the Garage Equipment Association, the Scottish Motor Trade Association, the MOT Club, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, and the Independent Automotive Aftermarket Federation.

Views agreed within Forum meetings, therefore, represent the collective and agreed policies of all trade bodies representing the interests of MOT Testing Stations, or who have a direct interest/involvement in the MOT Testing Scheme.

**SUMMARY OF EFFECT OF REDUCED MOTs ON ROAD SAFETY**

2. Any reduction in the frequency of MOT Testing from the current regime of the first MOT when a vehicle is three years old, and annually thereafter (3–1–1) will endanger road safety. *Ref: DfT 2008 report MOT Evidence Base, and TRL report 2010 into the effect of reduced MOT Testing.*

3. The road safety impact of such a reduction of MOT Testing would be considerable both as regards additional road deaths, and serious injuries. In 2008 the Department for Transport estimated that an additional 408 deaths would result should the first MOT occur when a vehicle is four years old, and only biennially thereafter (4–2–2) instead of the current 3–1–1 regimen. Extrapolating that result onto the currently lower overall annual road death figures, would still result in an estimated additional 250+ road deaths arising from vehicle defects undetected due to reduced MOT Testing causing road traffic accidents.
4. Whilst a more recent Transport Research Laboratory report projects lower death and serious injury estimates, its estimates were based only on a projected higher MOT failure rate from reduced MOT frequency. It took no account of the inevitable fact that each failed vehicle will carry, on average, more safety related defects after a two year interval since its last MOT inspection than in the current annual MOT Scheme. The report’s author has publicly conceded that the figures, “most likely underestimate the accident outcomes” (See MOT Testing Magazine issue 70, August–October 2011).

5. The Government claim that as cars are more reliable and having safety systems like traction control, the MOT frequency could safely be reduced. This is irrational. Increased reliability has no effect on the wear on items like braking systems, tyres, road springs, suspension joints and so on. In fact the opposite is true. As the vehicle is more reliable, the driver is likely to think that routine maintenance is no longer necessary, and so components become degraded without the driver realising the danger.

6. Whilst safety systems like traction control, guard against driver error, they will have no effect whatsoever on the increased braking distance from excessively worn tyres, or loss of control due to excessively worn steering or suspension joints, brake failure or other catastrophic mechanical failure of a safety related component.

7. Over 26 million cars are MOT tested every year, of which four out of 10 fail the MOT Test. Of these over 800,000 are noted as being “dangerous to drive” by MOT Testers, that’s over 2,200 every day. With reduced MOTs, these vehicles would continue to be driven on the roads in a dangerous condition until catastrophic failure, and/or an accident occurs.

8. Even if all motorists were conscientious and decided every year, even without an MOT to all have their vehicle fully serviced, there would still be safety systems which would not be comprehensively examined and checked to MOT standard during a “normal” service. The steering and suspension joints are not examined, the road springs are not checked, nor are the seat belts, or the vehicle’s structure for potentially dangerous corrosion resulting in the failure of a safety related component.

9. It should be noted that the current failure rate for larger light commercial vehicles (Class VII) is at 50%, with a high proportion of those failures concerning the vehicles braking system. It should also be noted that light commercial vehicles (currently lumped in with cars, in Class IV) also do high mileage. It is the Forum’s suggested policy to the Department for Transport that these vehicles should be MOT Tested every year from the date they are first registered. The MOT Trade Forum have recommended that to Mike Penning the Minister responsible for MOT Testing.

The above provides a brief synopsis of just some of the adverse road safety consequences of reducing MOT frequency, or extending the period before a new vehicle needs an MOT examination. It is difficult to see how the Government can expect to meet its road safety targets after reducing MOT Testing, when the country’s historical “best in the world” road safety record was achieved within the context of an annual MOT inspection, with the first MOT when a vehicle is three years old—ensuring that road accidents arising from vehicle defects are kept to a minimum level.

October 2011

Written evidence from Brake (RSF 27)

About Brake

Brake is an independent road safety charity, dedicated to stopping death and injury on UK roads and caring for people bereaved and seriously injured in crashes. Brake carries out research into road users’ attitudes on road safety issues, engages schools and communities to spread road safety education, runs public awareness campaigns, and supports communities campaigning for road safety. It also provides news, guidance, and conferences for road safety and fleet professionals, disseminating international research and information on effective policies and best practice.

Introduction

0.1 In the past 25 years, road deaths and injuries in Britain have dramatically declined. Work to improve road safety through our previous two strategies has undoubtedly achieved much success.

0.2 Yet it remains that road crashes end the lives of five people each day in Britain, deeply traumatising family and friends, and cause serious injury, many life-changing and permanently debilitating, to 62 more. 5 Many people are afraid to walk or cycle, or let their children do so, because of dangers in their community. 6 And aspects of our road safety record, such as our child pedestrian death rate, lag well behind other countries. 7 Deaths and injuries on roads cause horrendous suffering to families, as documented through Brake’s support services. These casualties are particularly traumatic for those affected, since they are violent and sudden, and

5 Road Casualties Great Britain 2010, Department for Transport 2011.
7 Road Casualties Great Britain 2010, Department for Transport 2011.
often affect the young, unlike most other common causes of death. They are also hugely costly to society: the annual estimated cost of road casualties in Britain is £33bn.8

0.3 For these reasons, Brake argues we need a national road safety strategy that:

- includes challenging, time-based casualty reduction targets and a long-term vision to reduce these preventable tragedies to zero, to drive forward progress;
- ensures continuation and/or expansion of existing measures evidenced to contribute to road safety; and
- incorporates the implementation of new (or more developed) national policies that are evidenced to make further contribution to casualty reductions.

0.4 This is the humane, responsible and economic approach. It is also achievable given the large base of academic and case-study based evidence showing us which measures are effective, or most likely to be effective, in reducing casualties and reducing risk, and given that many road safety measures are low-cost, cost neutral or deliver a cost saving over time through preventing costly crashes and casualties.

0.5 Brake does not believe the government’s Strategic Framework for Road Safety to 2020 delivers effectively on any of these points. Brake argues it offers little by way of leadership, ambition or bold action to drive down numbers of people killed or seriously injured on roads as rapidly as possible. The “vision” it contains is merely about maintaining the status quo (of Britain as a world leader in road safety), and it does not include casualty reduction targets, which are internationally evidenced as useful in driving down casualties.9

0.6 Brake is concerned the framework includes little in terms of national policies to deal with the major causes of death and serious injury on roads (discussed in section 4), despite a range of academic evidence indicating that a number of policy changes would be highly beneficial in tackling the major causes of death and injury on our roads. Brake also believes that devolution of responsibility for road safety decision-making and progress to a local level is problematic and inefficient as an approach, as well as being highly flawed in its delivery, particularly given the abolition of road safety grants for local authorities.

0.7 As well as having serious concerns about the Framework’s lack of ambition and substance, Brake was frustrated by the lack of a formal consultation. The DfT held a consultative seminar in January 2011 to discuss the Framework, to which a select range of road safety organisations and practitioners were invited (plus some who promote anti-road safety policies). This was entirely inadequate. No draft Framework was presented for consideration. The seminar was divided into groups, with feedback from each group provided verbally (via ROSPA for Brake’s group) and feedback across all groups compiled by PACTS. This meant Brake’s views were filtered via two other organisations who take varying policy stances to Brake before being submitted to the DfT. The DfT stated they would consider responses to the previous government’s A Safer Way consultation. However, this was conducted more than a year before, and asked for comment on an entirely different proposed strategy. Brake submitted a report to the DfT prior to the Framework’s publication, making recommendations on its content, which can be read here.10

1. Whether the Government is right not to set road safety targets and whether its outcomes framework is appropriate

1.1 Road deaths and serious injuries are devastating to families and communities, and a major social and economic burden. Yet they are preventable and therefore, Brake believes, unacceptable. For this reason, we should be working towards a long term vision of reducing them to zero, with challenging targets set for specific time periods to drive us in progressing towards this vision as effectively as possible.

1.2 Brake believes it was a detrimental backwards step to fail to include casualty reduction targets in the Framework, given evidence showing the setting of targets in itself accelerates and aids casualty reduction.11 The UN recognised the importance of targets as a key measure in its Decade of Action for Road Safety Plan, which includes monitoring how many countries have casualty targets, and states “a national plan or strategy with measurable targets are crucial components of a sustainable response to road safety”.12

1.3 The strategy’s “outcomes framework” is not a substitute for targets. It is a set of data that will be monitored, most of which is already published in the Department for Transport’s annual Reported Road Casualties Great Britain. While it is crucial to monitor and publically report on casualty numbers to ensure areas of concern are highlighted and can be targeted, the collection and publication of this data is not new.

---

8 Road Casualties Great Britain 2010, Department for Transport 2011.
9 Road Safety Target in Sight: Making up for lost time, ETSC 2010.
10 Road safety strategic framework—consultation seminar, Brake response, prepared by Julie Townsend, campaigns director, January 2011.
1.4 The framework states the outcomes framework is designed to help monitor and aid transparency around road safety progress. Brake argues the monitoring of data should be used alongside targets, a baseline and a vision, to drive progress and aid transparency, without this the significance of progress is obscured. For example, data may show that casualties among certain road users have fallen during a certain period. However, the rate of decline may be significantly lower than in the previous period, and not on a par with what we hoped to achieve given work in that area. Appropriate targets help show whether progress achieved is as we would hope. Targets also help lead and drive those in the sector to achieve more, rather than settling for the status quo; this is even more important where decision making is decentralised.

1.5 Given evidence on the importance of targets, our status as global leaders in road safety, and the value to society of driving down casualties, it is highly remiss to fail to set targets for the coming decade. For more detailed views on setting appropriate casualty targets, see our response to the A Safer Way consultation.

2.1 There are two key problems with devolving power and responsibility for road safety to local authorities. Firstly, although there are some regional and local differences in methods needed to reduce casualties due to geographical variations, in the UK these are relatively marginal, and broadly speaking there is international academic consensus on what is effective in improving road safety, which can be applied across the country. Making our roads safer, and eliminating costly, tragic casualties, is a challenge that should therefore be tackled primarily at national level—the approach likely to be most effective and efficient—albeit ensuring the continuing contribution of local practitioners through clear and determined leadership.

2.2 Secondly, while devolving power to local authorities aims to give local people more power, this can only work if local authorities are also given appropriate leadership and resources to tackle the problems communities face. Many communities are concerned by dangerous traffic but their voices are often ignored despite the government’s localism agenda. Brake is frequently contacted by communities campaigning for important (often basic) road safety measures, who are told they can’t have them due to insufficient funding, priorities being elsewhere, or red tape (such as their demands being out of sync with government guidance). Local authorities should be encouraged to listen to local concerns, but be provided with appropriate leadership, funding and guidance (ie through appropriate national policy) on responding in line with latest evidence and best practice in making roads safer.

2.3 As stated above, Brake believes the Framework lacks the bold leadership to drive progress at local level, particularly in the lack of targets and an ambitious vision. It is also concerned that key guidance for local authorities (such as on setting local speed limits) remains prohibitive rather than encouraging in implementing evidenced road safety measures.

2.4 Of even greater concern is the lack of funding available to local authorities to improve road safety. In June 2010, the government announced an immediate cut of £17.2 million from the specific road safety capital grant (100%) and a £20.6 million cut (27%) in the road safety component of revenue area based grant. Brake conducted a survey of the likely impact. We found many local authorities that had allocated funds for road safety work were left without funds to pay for it. Many reported Road Safety Partnerships were under threat and speed cameras were to be cut back. Many were left in limbo with regards to planned work. A few months on, road safety grants were discontinued altogether. A year later, many areas have seen some or all speed cameras turned off, road safety partnerships closed down, skilled road safety practitioners let go, and school crossing patrols and road safety education scaled back.

2.5 The government defended its move by stating it is up to local authorities to decide priorities, and find funding from other areas if road safety is a priority. However, this puts local authorities in a difficult position since many other funding streams are ring-fenced. Brake believes road safety funding should be protected along with other key areas of public health, given that road crashes account for such a large proportion of hospital admissions, and improving road safety in communities is important in promoting healthy lifestyles.

2.6 In some areas new approaches have been adopted to secure funding for road safety operations such as speed camera maintenance being aided by fees from speed awareness courses. However, road safety delivery, capacity and skills in local authorities and other agencies, has no doubt been significantly affected. While investing in effective road safety measures delivers many benefits to the community and authorities, these benefits are often felt indirectly, over time. It’s not always easy and immediately possible to correlate local benefits with spending on particular road safety measures. For this reason, impetus for investment in road safety, particularly in economically challenging times, must come from central Government.

3.1 Although there has been much progress in reducing road deaths and injuries in the UK, including through legislative change, there are still aspects of our legislative framework that could be significantly improved, in Brake’s response to the Department for Transport consultation “A Safer Way: consultation on making Britain’s roads the safest in the world” July 2009.
light of international and UK-based evidence on what is most effective in preventing casualties and lowering risk on roads. In particular, Brake urges legislative action on points 4.3–4.7 below. See also Brake’s website for recommendations for other legislative change that would benefit road safety.

3.2 The Road Safety Act 2006 made several important provisions for amendments to legislation, including for continuous insurance enforcement. However, some provisions that could improve road safety lay dormant because the government has delayed or chosen not to act on the powers created within the Act.

3.3 In particular, although the Act created provisions to introduce conditional licences in section 38, the government has not seen fit to use this power by reforming the system of learning to drive, which is evidenced to significantly reduce road casualties (see point 4.6 below).

3.4 The government has also not yet acted upon provisions in the Act to: prohibit use of jamming devices that prevent detection of speeding drivers by cameras; create roadside rest areas on trunk roads, to stem tiredness crashes; or set up training and assessment for disqualified drivers for their return to the road (although this is included in the Framework action plan).

4. Whether the measures set out in the action plan are workable and sufficient

4.1 Brake argues the action plan is inadequate in many ways. Brake welcomes the introduction of driving for disqualified drivers, roadside drug screening devices and a new fixed penalty offence for careless driving in cases where it is currently unenforced, but is concerned by the weakness of several goals in the plan and a lack of policies to tackle some major contributors to road casualties.

4.2 Brake is also concerned about the focus on high margin offenders. Although Brake agrees with a tough approach for the worst offenders, we should also encourage wider respect for the law by not letting lower margin offenders off the hook. The Framework also fails to deal with the reality that roads policing is being severely cut in many areas, meaning catching the worst offenders will become more difficult.

Drug driving

4.3 Brake welcomes that the government has pledged to get tough on drug drivers, and included the introduction of drugalyser in the action plan. However it also states no decision has been made whether to create a new offence for driving with illegal drugs in the body, and that the earliest a new offence would be introduced is 2015. Brake argues this new offence is vital in tackling drug-driving: proving impairment by drugs is problematic, and it should not be needed to prosecute. Given evidence that drug driving is a widespread and deadly menace, and given that an offence for driving on illegal drugs and roadside testing has been introduced successfully in other countries, Brake believes the government should be moving far more swiftly on this issue. See Brake’s campaign on drug driving.

Drink driving

4.4 While Brake welcomes the provision for evidential roadside testing for alcohol to help streamline police work to catch drink drivers, the Framework does not address fundamental issues that contribute to drink driving remaining one of the biggest killers on UK roads.

4.41 The action plan does not contain measures to increase the number of drivers breath tested each year, through increasing police powers to enable random breath testing. Brake surveys indicate that drivers perceive there to be a low threat of being caught if they were to drink and drive. International evidence shows that random testing, and upping numbers of breath-tests, has a significant impact on drink drive casualties.

4.42 The action plans also fails to address the fact that drivers who have consumed alcohol but are under the limit still pose a threat to safety. There is strong evidence that someone’s ability to drive safely is affected by very small amounts of alcohol. Drivers with 20–50mg alcohol/100ml blood have at least three times greater risk of dying in a road crash than sober drivers, while drivers with 50–80mg alcohol have at least a six times greater risk. With a limit of 80mg alcohol/100ml blood, Britain has the highest drink drive limit in Europe

19 Review of effectiveness of laws limiting blood alcohol concentration levels to reduce alcohol-related road injuries and deaths, Centre for Public Health Excellence NICE, 2010.
alongside Malta. The EU recommends a maximum limit of 50mg alcohol/100ml blood, while some European countries have lower limits of 20mg/100ml. The implementation of lower limits has been shown to result in a drop in drink drive casualties.

4.43 Brake advocates a zero tolerance approach to drink driving: a limit of 20mg alcohol/100ml blood, and increased enforcement through random breath testing powers, and increased levels of traffic policing. See Brake’s campaign on drink driving.

4.5 Speed

4.5.1 Excessive or inappropriate speed is recorded by police as a contributory factor in one in four fatal crashes (24%). But whatever the root cause of a crash, speed plays a part in every death and injury, since all could be lessened in severity or prevented through slower speeds. The direct relationship between speed and crash frequency and severity is well documented in academic research: reducing average speeds means fewer crashes and less serious crashes. There is also extensive evidence on the positive impact of implementing lower limits. Slowing traffic speed in communities is particularly beneficial in reducing risks faced by pedestrians and cyclists, crucial in encouraging reduced car dependency and healthier lifestyles. Policies on managing and reducing speeds are therefore vital in cutting casualties and reducing risk, and can help deliver on other priority issues.

4.5.2 Brake’s stance on speed limits is that our default urban and rural limits should be lowered to 20 mph and 50 mph respectively (with lower limits on rural roads where there are particular risks). Until this happens, central government should produce guidance and provide funding to encourage and enable local authorities to implement lower limits as extensively as possible. It should also monitor and publicise the extent of these lower limits and their impact on safety.

4.5.3 The government should also work to ensure limits are enforced as widely as possible, particularly by ensuring the ongoing (and wider) use of speed cameras, which are proven to be highly effective and have a positive cost-benefit ratio. Brake particularly supports the wider use of average cameras (which can now be used in urban areas as well as on trunk roads). However, the action plan contains nothing on maintaining use of this evidenced technology, while statements made publically by government have criticised and questioned their use.

See Brake’s campaign for 20 mph limits and Brake’s campaign for lower limits on rural roads.

Young drivers

4.6 Brake was highly disappointed about the lack of decisive action on tackling young driver crashes in the plan. The action plan includes incorporating more safety messages into the theory test and redeveloping PassPlus. Brake believes this will make little difference to casualties. The new PassPlus will remain voluntary, meaning higher risk drivers will be less likely to take part. Evidence suggests that PassPlus makes only marginal difference to the crash risk, which may be statistically insignificant given the selection bias of participants who must choose to voluntarily attend the course.

4.6.1 Young people age 15–24 are more likely to die in a preventable road crash than from any other cause. Young drivers are also responsible for a disproportionately high number of crashes that kill and injure road users of all ages. While young drivers aged 17–24 account for one in eight (12%) licence holders, they are involved in one in four (24%) road deaths and serious injuries.

References:

21 Most EU countries have a drink-drive limit of 50mg/100ml blood. Some countries (such as Sweden, Poland and Estonia), have limits of 20mg/100ml blood, while others have limits of zero (Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary).
22 When Sweden lowered its drink-drive limit from 50mg to 20mg per 100ml of blood, drink-drive deaths fell by 10%. The Globe 2003 issue 2, Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2003.
23 Reported Road Casualties Great Britain annual reports 2010, Department for Transport 2011.
26 Effect of 20 mph traffic speed zones on road injuries in London, 1986–2006: controlled interrupted time series analysis, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2009, and Casualty crash reductions from reducing various levels of speeding, Centre for Automotive Safety Research, 2011.
27 Four year national evaluation of speed camera effectiveness, Department for Transport, 2005.
29 Death registrations in England and Wales: Table 2 Deaths by age, sex and underlying cause, 2010 registrations, Office National Statistics, 2011.
To tackle this problem, research indicates we need a more robust process for acquiring a licence. Brake’s calls for graduated driver licensing, to allow drivers to build their driving skills and experience gradually, while exposure to higher risk situations is restricted. These calls are backed by international evidence and research from the UK, which found that graduated driver licensing would save 200 lives annually and 14,000 casualties. It would also save the UK economy £890 million through preventing costly casualties. Read more about Brake’s Too young to die campaign, and the research basis.

Fixed penalty fines

4.7 While Brake welcomes the planned rise in fixed penalty fines, but argues the increase is far from adequate. Given that driving offences like speeding and mobile phone use pose a direct threat to human life, we should have a much more significant deterrent in place than £80–100, especially given that non-life threatening offences like littering or smoking on a bus can be met with fines of £1,000.

5. The relationship between the Government’s strategy and EU road safety initiatives

5.1 Brake is concerned the government’s decision to omit casualty targets is discordant with initiatives at international level. The European Commission recently set targets to halve road deaths by 2020 and the UN and World Health Organisation has set targets to cut projected road deaths globally by 50% by 2020 as part of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety, which this government helped to launch in the UK.

5.2 The UK is also lagging behind, and in discord with international recommendations and best practice, in other areas including:

— The drink drive limit—The European Commission recommends a maximum drink drive limit of 50mg alcohol/100ml blood. The GB limit of 80mg alcohol/100ml blood is the highest in Europe alongside Malta. Northern Ireland recently announced its drink drive limit would be reduced to 50mg/100ml and 20mg/100ml for novice and at-work drivers.

— Eyesight—The European Directives on Driving Licences contain new eyesight standards that drivers must meet to be fit to drive. Brake argues that the UK’s distance number plate test is not an accurate way of checking drivers meet these requirements as it does not test for peripheral vision. The government has rejected calls to introduce a requirement for eye tests to be carried out by qualified optometrists or medical practitioners using a scientifically-recognised method. It has also issued a consultation proposing that current regulation on driver eyesight standards be further weakened by lessening the distance of the numberplate test.

— Cross-border enforcement—The UK has declined to opt-in to a Directive which would help to provide security from dangerous and illegal foreign drivers in the UK and would also help to ensure that UK based drivers receive appropriate punishment from law breaking in other European countries.

October 2011

Written evidence from the West Midlands Road Safety Partnership (RSF 28)

INTRODUCTION

1. This submission is made on behalf of the West Midlands Road Safety Partnership. The West Midlands Road Safety Partnership is formed of the seven local authorities that make up the West Midlands Metropolitan Area (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton), West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service, Highways Agency, Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service, Department of Health West Midlands.

2. The Partnership is directed by a Board made up of local councillors from the representative local authorities, fire and rescue authority and police authority. This fulfils a local democratic mandate and ensures accountability for the Partnerships planning and delivery.


32 Restricting young drivers, Jones, S, The University of Cardiff, 2010.

33 Towards a European road safety area: policy orientations on road safety 2011–20, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.


37 Eye Health Alliance, 2011.

38 See this parliamentary debate led by Meg Munn MP, 15 June 2011.
3. As a Partnership we believe that our success in reducing road traffic casualties have been achieved through joint partnership working and we remain committed to adopting a collective responsibility to achieving continuous improvements in road safety within the Metropolitan Area. This co-ownership of common values and objectives is reaffirmed as best practice in the recent DfT Road Safety Research Report 124: Delivering Local Road Safety.

4. Summary of our Partnerships Submission:

- We would welcome national targets for casualty reduction as a means of setting out where we want to be, what we are hoping to achieve and how we are doing when compared with other areas.
- There is a need for greater clarity in identifying funding intended for road safety in the Local Government Formula Grant settlements. When road safety funding is competing with other demands on resources, the value of prevention of accidents is not perceived as a direct benefit to local authorities as they do not necessarily bear the cost of lost output, medical services, police time etc.
- The lack of capital funding means we cannot “spend to save” for example in replacing aging wet film safety cameras with more efficient digital systems.
- The allocation of revenue funding through the Local Government Formula Grant to individual local authorities is not an effective way of encouraging co-ownership and greater partnership working.
- The annual award through the Formula Grant also creates uncertainty and does not allow longer term planning.
- Whilst we welcome the opportunities for offender re-education through Speed Awareness and Driver Alertness Courses, we are concerned that enforcement strategies will increasingly be developed around the need to generate income, rather than on road safety grounds. This could attract the same criticism directed at safety cameras. that these courses are just money making schemes.
- These courses are in the main delivered by private contractors and this is funding lost to public authorities, with an additional loss of accountability. The contractors are not obliged to make any contribution to the operational costs or maintenance of the safety camera equipment.
- The lack of national conformity in the levels that different police forces enforce speed at safety cameras causes confusion amongst motorists.
- The decision not to adopt Sir Peter North’s recommendation to reduce the drink drive limit to 50 mg/100 ml creates a gap between the UK and the majority of European countries. This is further compounded by the intention of some parts of the UK to reduce the drink drive limit which would leave only England and Wales with the higher 80 mg/100 ml limit.

5. As a Partnership we believe that adopting targets in the previous national road safety strategy Tomorrows Roads: safer for everyone focussed efforts towards a common set of goals.

6. Adopting the national targets we were able to establish where we wanted to be and actually exceeded the national target of a 40% reduction in Killed and Seriously Injured from the 1994–98 average by 2010. In the West Midlands KSI s were reduced by 55.9% from the 1994–98 baseline. Similar success was achieved with Child KSI s in the Metropolitan Area which were reduced by 58.3% from the 1994–98 average, compared with the national target of 50%.

7. The OECD Report Towards Zero, published in 2008, says that “Countries with targets performed better over the time period 1981–99 with the percentage reduction in fatalities ranging from 4.5% in Norway to 21.9% in the Netherlands... Overall, countries with targets had 17% fewer fatalities than those countries without targets”.

8. We would urge the Government therefore to reconsider its position, as we believe that having target sets out where we want to be and what we are aiming to achieve and national targets enable us to compare our progress with the progress of others.

9. Over recent years our Partnership has benefited from a specific Road Safety Grant being paid directly to the Partnership as a means to encourage collaborative working, achieve best value for the funds available and make a considerable impact on reducing road casualties. The termination of a specific Road Safety Grant in March 2011 caused great concern.

10. It should be made clear that the Partnership recognises that in the present economic situation no service area can be exempt from reductions in funding, although reductions of nearly 60% in road safety revenue.
funding and 100% cut in capital funding are severe, and provide significant challenges if we are to maintain the excellent progress to date in reducing death and serious injury on our roads.

11. The decision by the Department for Communities and Local Government to wrap road safety funding up with two other transport grants, De-Trunking Grant and Rural Bus Subsidy, within the formula grant settlement, along with the way CLG presented the information in the various tables and data sets it put out, caused particular difficulty in identifying what funds were intended for road safety. Local Councils need greater clarity in being able to identify what funds are intended for a particular purpose if decision making about priorities is to be transparent and members are to be able to defend those decisions to their electorate.

12. In the present climate there is huge competition for the resources of local authorities and their partners, and decisions are made on the basis of providing the maximum benefit for the communities served. However, whilst the value of prevention of a single fatal accident is estimated to be £1.8 million this is not a direct benefit to local authorities, as they do not necessarily bear the cost of lost output, medical services, police time, damage to property etc. As a consequence it is difficult to factor in the case for road safety spending when balancing the books against the many competing demands for resources.

13. The severity and rapidity of the cuts during the later part of 2010 caused considerable organisational re-focussing across all local authority service areas. Road safety was no exception. All Councils in the West Midlands have seen reductions in road safety personnel, with some facing deeper cuts than others. As a consequence many experienced and knowledgeable staff have left the service. In addition there is a reduced capacity to maintain the range of interventions previously delivered.

14. In addition the lack of capital resource makes it difficult to set in place any “spend to save” strategies to replace for example aging wet film safety cameras with more efficient digital technology. The requirement by Government to publish site specific data for safety camera sites enables those intent on criminal damage to target the most effective safety cameras, thus creating a further burden in terms of the cost of repair. Having to leave damaged sites on the highway as there is no means of repairing or removing them sends out a poor message in respect of law and order.

15. We believe the Partnership is an effective means of identifying common priorities, developing solutions involving multi-agency working, pooling resource, and delivering maximum impact on road casualties. However, allocating road safety funding to the seven local authorities in our Metropolitan Area has expended a great deal of officer and member time, in making submissions to various committees, in order to set aside funding to support joint initiatives by the Partnership. In our view it is not an efficient way of working and creates levels of bureaucracy that are unwelcome and unnecessary, at a time when resource is very tight.

16. In addition Road Safety Grant was awarded over a four year period allowing a degree of certainty for more effective planning. The current approach of annual awards through the formula grant settlement creates uncertainty and does not allow longer term planning.

Is the Government right to to argue that the right legislative framework is in place and that the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives?

17. As a Partnership we welcome the measures enacted in the Road Safety Act 2006 and support the conclusions of the Post Legislative Assessment that the Act has made a useful contribution to improving road safety.

18. Uninsured drivers are a particular concern in some parts of our conurbation and we have, over recent years, provided support to West Midlands Police in carrying out roads policing activities to tackle this and other issues. We hope that Continuous Insurance Enforcement introduced in June this year will provide the necessary means of reducing this problem that places a financial burden through insurance premiums on all law abiding drivers. We look forward to an early assessment of the effectiveness of CIE by DfT.

19. We note that the Act made provision for any surplus from safety camera operations to be retained for road safety purposes and it is the conclusion of the Post Legislative Assessment that this provision has been overtaken by events, in that from 2007 fines income from speed enforcement has been paid to general central Government funds. There is no mention that a substantial number of speed offenders are now offered Speed Awareness driver retraining courses as an alternative to a fine and penalty points. As a result the fee paid by the offender is lost to general central Government funds. Any surplus generated from the course delivery is retained by the course provider, who is under no obligation to declare how much surplus exists, or to consult with anyone how the surplus is spent.

Are the measures set out in the Action Plan workable and sufficient?

20. The lack of targets within the Strategic Framework makes it difficult to assess fully whether the measures set out in The Action Plan are sufficient to achieve the aim of continuing to reduce death and injury on our roads. In addition The Action Plan is short term and only covers the period of the current Parliament.

21. We would be concerned if the proposed increased educational offerings to offenders shifted the focus away from road safety to income generation. Prior to 2007 the hypothication or “netting off” scheme which allowed fines, paid offenders caught by safety cameras, to be returned to safety camera partnerships to fund
capital and revenue expenditure, created a perception amongst some that the purpose of safety cameras was simply to raise money for the authorities.

22. Under the current arrangements part of the fee paid by offenders for Speed Awareness Courses is returned to the Police. As a consequence Speed Awareness Courses are a primary source of income to fund safety camera operations for many police forces and road safety partnerships. There is a concern that future safety camera enforcement strategies will be built around raising the required income to keep the safety cameras operating, rather than the purpose of reducing speed and reducing casualties. This will further compound the perception that safety cameras are an income generator and not a valuable road safety measure.

23. The new Driver Alertness Courses being rolled out for those committing minor traffic offences could be seen as a means of supplementing the costs of roads policing activities, and again runs the danger of being perceived as just money making scheme.

24. In the West Midlands courses are delivered by a private company that is under no obligation to contribute towards the maintenance or repair of the safety camera network, or contribute to the operational costs, from any surplus they make. While the company involved purports to be “not for profit” and pledges to support road safety initiatives, the company is not obliged to publish any financial information about income and expenditure of the West Midlands scheme and as a private company is exempt from Freedom of Information enquiries. The Partnership as a result has no influence over how any surplus funds might be targeted, leaving the possibility of duplication and lack of public accountability.

25. Furthermore police forces set their own thresholds for safety camera enforcement. Some forces enforce at the lowest level of 10%+2 (ie 35 mph in a 30 mph limit) others enforce at a slightly higher level. The upper level at which a referral for prosecution rather than the offer of a Speed Awareness Course is made can also vary from force to force. In the West Midlands the lower threshold (the speed at which a safety camera is triggered) is slightly higher than neighbouring forces. This lack of national conformity leads to further confusion amongst motorists and has the potential to further bring safety camera operation into disrepute. We would recommend nationally set enforcement bands so that everyone can be clear what the situation is and what the consequence would be. This is constant with the Governments aim to “make it easier for people to do the right thing”.

26. As a Partnership we welcome the opportunities offered to offenders for driver retraining rather than penalties. However we find the disposal of surpluses over which we have no influence problematic.

27. Notwithstanding the issues above, it is also unfortunate that the introduction of opportunities to offer driver re-training courses comes at a time of severe pressure on roads policing teams. In the West Midlands the number of traffic officers is to be considerably reduced. While West Midlands Police are committed to intelligence led roads policing to manage key offenders, the opportunity to intercept those who whose driving skills and behaviour is poor could be reduced.

The relationship between the Government's strategy and the EU road safety initiatives

28. The Policy Orientations proposed by the European Commission in July 2010 sets out the main road safety direction for the EU. It should be noted that the Commission proposes a further reduction of 50% in deaths on European roads by 2020. The strong support from the European Commission for a target-led approach creates a gap between the British government and EU.

29. In addition the decision not to adopt the recommendations made by Sir Peter North in his Review of Drink and Drug Driving Law to reduce the drink drive limit from 80 mg/100ml to 50 mg/ml creates a further gap between the parts of the UK and EU.

30. Most countries of Europe have a 50 mg/100ml limit, some notably Norway, Sweden, and Poland have a limit of 20 mg/100ml and in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary the limit is 0 mg/100ml. The position is further complication by the intention of the Northern Ireland Assembly to introduce a 50 mg/100 ml limit and the consideration by the Scotland and Irish Republic to follow Northern Ireland. This could lead to different drink drive limits in different parts of the UK and confusion for the motorist.

October 2011

Written evidence from the Road Haulage Association (RSF 29)

Summary of Main Points

— We take the view that targets are useful, but may not be essential.
— Any new approach to road safety must promote a strong ethos of continuous improvement related to road safety.
— We want to see VOSA and the police resources maintained, specifically so that issues of heavy goods vehicle (HGV) safety and inspection can be addressed.
— We support efforts to inform and educate drivers and non-drivers of the causes of road accidents.
— We want to see a greater focus on informing the general motorist, and cyclists about issues specifically related to HGV safety.
— We want to see resources directed towards the proper signage and maintenance of the whole road network in order support road safety.
— We want to see steps taken to encourage manufacturers to continue the good work already underway to improve the safety of trucks and other motor vehicles.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Road Haulage Association (RHA) is the trade and employers organisation for the hire-or-reward sector of the road haulage industry. The RHA represents some 7,500 companies throughout the UK, with around 100,000 HGVs and with fleet size and driver numbers varying from one through to thousands. Generally, RHA members are entrepreneurs, including many family-owned businesses as well as some plcs. Without the activities of RHA members the UK would come to a halt both socially and economically.

KEY ISSUE

2. The Department for Transport (DfT) has set out its “strategic framework” for road safety in a document raising some important issues for commercial vehicle operators. It reflects strongly the two tier approach to our roads; those run by the Highways Agency and those run by the devolved authorities and local government.

3. We have some concerns that localism will lead to significant variations in the standard of road maintenance and type of road signage, particularly regarding classification and proliferation of weight limits.

4. We have strong concerns that the goal of pushing road death and injury numbers down further, will be much more difficult to achieve at a time of budget and staffing cuts in police forces and at the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA).

5. Given that the government seeks to work in a way that goes with the grain of human behaviour we suggest that it is essential that the general motorist and haulage operators believe that there is a chance that they will be apprehended if they break the rules. If the enforcement authorities are known to have become depleted then we would suggest that it is much less likely that motorists will choose to comply with the law and as a result, road safety will suffer. In our view technical solutions are no substitute for good roads policing.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

6. The Transport Select Committee has called for views on the government’s vision for road safety based on its strategic framework for road safety. Here we address the issues raised in the order set out by the Committee.

Whether the Government is right not to set road safety targets and whether its outcomes framework is appropriate

7. The RHA adopts a neutral position in relation to the setting of road safety targets. Nonetheless we are aware that there has been a dramatic drop in road deaths and road casualties up until 2010, when the last targets programme expired. We are also aware that the “Towards Zero” report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development suggests that nations that set targets have better safety records than those that do not.

8. However we are open to the proposition that it may be possible to maintain high standards of road safety without targets, if there is a firm commitment to promoting a policy of continuous improvement.

9. If the absence of targets means that central or local government and police resources are no longer allocated to any adequate extent towards safety initiatives, this would be a matter of some concern to us. We would like clarity on how resources and funding will be allocated.

How the decentralisation to local authorities of funding and the setting of priorities will work in practice and contribute towards fulfilling the government’s vision

10. We are concerned that a two-tier set of standards may develop, with the coming of localism, with the Highways Agency network maintained to a safe and high standard, but with other roads subject to the vagaries of local government political priorities and budget setting.

11. We are particularly keen to see resources directed towards the proper signage and maintenance of the whole road network. We would like to see the Primary Route Network kept intact. We fear that drivers will become confused if signs vary from area to area as local authorities adopt differing policies, and such confusion may become a safety issue in our view. Truck drivers who use the network nationwide, need consistent signage. For example speed limit signage needs to be clear and as obvious as possible. We would also like to see improved signage from the motorway network directing drivers to truck parks.

12. We are concerned that as a result of financial pressures some local authorities are making temporary repairs to pot-holes, rather than arranging thorough repairs. In our view such an approach is short-sighted, and
in the long run we predict there will be adverse cost and safety consequences as roads deteriorate again more quickly than would be the case if proper repairs had been undertaken in the first place.

Whether the government is right to argue that, for the most part, the right legislative framework for road safety is in place, and, in particular; whether the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives (see Post—Legislative Assessment of the Road Safety Act 2006, Cm 8141, published by DfT, July 2011)

13. Some of the objectives of the 2006 Act appear to have been achieved. Department for Transport statistics show that road casualty particularly amongst children, and in terms of those killed or seriously injured have gone down. However we do not have sufficient information to comment on what progress there has been towards achieving the objectives of the Act overall.

Whether the measures set out in the action plan are workable and sufficient

14. In our view the action plan should address additional matters.

15. We wonder how some of the points in the action plan such as the introduction of fixed penalty notices for careless driving, or the introduction of new drug driving offences can be implemented effectively at a time when police numbers are being cut.

16. We support efforts to inform and educate drivers, including new drivers, and non-drivers of the causes of road accidents. However we want to see a greater focus informing the general motorist, and cyclists about safety issues specifically related to HGVs. We would like to see a specific section related to trucks, aimed at other road users, contained in the Highway Code.

The relationship between the government’s strategy and EU road safety initiatives

17. We support the promotion of road safety internationally given that many RHA members operate abroad.

Other Issues Related to Road Safety

18. We note that the Department for Transport (DfT) wants to see fixed penalties introduced for tail-gating. We support this initiative as an industry particularly where commercial vehicles are involved and car drivers or other road users are subjected to aggressive and intimidatory driving by trucks.

19. We note that on-the-spot fines of at least £80 are likely to be introduced in 2012 for careless driving offences in England, Scotland and Wales. While we welcome this development, we wonder how enforcement will be possible with reduced numbers in police forces across the country. Not only has there been a reduction in the total number of professional involved in road safety, particularly in relation to the police, it is the most experienced people who have left. We regret this reduction in expertise.

20. The DfT has asserted that safety gains have been made through the HGV manufacturing process from front-end design changes, improved spray suppression, and active steer on rear axles. We would like to see measures introduced to further encourage manufacturers to pursue continuous safety innovation improvements. We would also like to see efforts continuing to improve roads surfacing technology, since the construction and maintenance of high quality roads contributes to reducing road deaths and injury.

21. We note that Liberal Democrat Sir Alan Beith MP Ten Minute Rule Bill procedure calling for all lorries to be fitted with cameras and sensors. The Bill will have its second reading on 25 November 2011. While we are aware that there is an issue linked to cyclists safety in relation to HGVs, we are concerned that the fitting of too many devices to trucks may lead to the driver becoming overloaded with information. This, in itself, may pose a safety risk to other road users.

22. We wish to emphasise that the modern distribution and logistics industry is built around the drivers being away from base overnight. The paucity of well sited and affordable truck parks is illustrated by the number of HGVs that stop in lay-bys on most nights. The shortage of truck stops is inhibiting the efficient carriage of goods and increasing the risk of drivers being involved in accidents, and loads being vulnerable to criminality.

Conclusion

23. We want to see the government continue to lead the promotion of road safety. We also want to see the road safety framework define the roles of the various agencies involved clearly.

24. Road safety is never off the agenda and is likely to stay high profile, so it is important that measures are adopted that will help maintain the UK’s position as a world leader in cutting road deaths and injuries.

25. While local authorities are well placed to judge needs in their areas, it is crucial for all road users, and for the economy to have a consistent level in standards countrywide.
26. While the RHA is open to the concept of a programme of initiatives that is not driven by targets, we would urge close monitoring of accident and casualty statistics. If an upward trend in injuries becomes apparent we would ask for flexibility in the implementation of policy so that steps can be taken to reverse the trend.

October 2011

Written evidence from Professor Oliver Carsten (RSF 30)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 I have been carrying out research on road safety for over 30 years and have been Professor of Transport Safety at the University of Leeds since 2003. Most of my research focuses on road user interaction with new technologies and on how new technologies can deliver added safety to the road traffic system. I began research on Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA), the technology that delivers speed management into the vehicle, in 1995. I have led several major research projects on ISA. I coordinated the External Vehicle Speed Control project, funded by DETR from 1997 to 2000, the Intelligent Speed Adaptation project funded by DfT from 2001 to 2008, and a project funded by CIfIT and the Motorists’ Forum on the wider benefits of ISA from 2007 to 2008. Currently I am leading the evaluation of the large-scale trials with advisory ISA in the Lancashire ISA project which has been part-funded by DfT through a Road Safety Partnership grant. I was an advisor to DfT in the preparation of the post-2010 road safety strategy, particularly with respect to the potential safety impact of new vehicle-based systems.

2. SPEED MANAGEMENT

2.1 Speed, along with alcohol and the non-wearing of seatbelts is one of the major risk factors in road safety. Based on a large body of real-world data, Finch et al. (1994) concluded that a 1 mph change in the mean speed of traffic on a road is associated with a 5% change in the number of injury accidents on that road. Crashes at high speed are not surprisingly associated with a higher risk of serious or fatal injury. This leads to the so-called “power model”, also based on a large body of real-world data. The relationships in the power model are that injury accidents change approximately with the square of proportional changes in speed, serious injury accidents change with speed cubed and fatal accidents change with speed to the fourth power (Elvik et al., 2004). Kloedan et al. (2002) used a methodology to compare the speed of vehicles involved in serious injury crashes on urban roads in Adelaide, South Australia, as calculated through accident investigation, with the speed of non-involved traffic. They found that vehicles travelling at 10 km/h over the speed limit had approximately four times the risk of involvement compared with vehicles travelling at the limit. On the basis, of these and other models derived from real-world observations for specific road categories, we concluded in the CIfIT ISA project that, if all vehicles in Great Britain complied with current speed limits, there would be a 29% reduction in injury accidents and a 50% reduction in fatal crashes (Carsten et al., 2008b). The shows the overwhelming role of speed compliance in determining the safety of our roads.

2.2 In preparing the previous road safety strategy, the Government realised the vital contribution that speed management could make to delivery of the 2010 targets. It issued a special report New Directions in Speed Management: A Review of Policy to accompany the main strategy document, Tomorrow’s Roads. The report on speed policy stated (page 5): “Vehicles speed is perhaps the most important contributor to road casualties so we need to tackle this issue if we are to achieve our targets.” The document laid out an action plan to develop a national framework for determining appropriate speed limits, to publicise the risks associated with speed, to carry out research on new policies to address problems and to ensure that policies took account of environmental, social and economic effects (page 31).

2.3 It is worth noting that the Strategic Framework for Road Safety does not address speed management in any systematic or coordinated way.

3. INTELLIGENT SPEED ADAPTATION

3.1 New Directions recognised the potential of ISA to deliver a real contribution to the delivery of improve safety: “It is possible to keep speeds to the speed limit in force on any given road, rather than just the maximum speed possible. The technology is already available to detect speed limits using a digital map kept in the vehicle. The global positioning system (GPS) identifies the vehicle’s location by satellites. These systems can be used to inform drivers of the limit, or they can link into an adaptive speed control system. But their general use, even if adopted, is some years away.” (page 20)

3.2 As regards future deployment of ISA, New Directions stated (page 35):

“The UK is in the forefront of developing technology for adaptive speed limiters. We recommend participating in European discussions to maintain our position and to influence the development of policy. We should look to develop a standard with our European partners. We should also aim to refine the system with a view to introducing it in the longer term. We will need to study the legal and administrative barriers to be overcome.”

3.3 In The First Three Year Review of Tomorrow’s Roads—Safer for Everyone (2004), the government pencilled in implementation of “intelligent speed limiters” for the period 2006–10 (page 122).
3.4 ISA generally works by identifying the current speed limit from an enhanced digital road map, although alternative systems using in-vehicle cameras to recognise speed signs are also feasible. The information on speed limit can be used to warn the driver when he or she is exceeding the limit (advisory ISA) and can also be linked to the vehicle drivetrain to provide an overridable system (voluntary ISA) or a non-overridable system (mandatory ISA). Both voluntary and mandatory ISA can be installed as retrofits but they are far cheaper and probably better in operational terms when installed as original equipment. Advisory ISA can be a feature in normal satellite navigation software whether in a specific satnav device or in an application on a smartphone.

3.5 We began the Intelligent Speed Adaptation project, which received around £2 million of DfT funding, in 2001. In that project we equipped 20 vehicles with a voluntary ISA system and the vehicles were then used by 80 drivers for their everyday driving over a period of six months each (four months with ISA enabled). Altogether we accumulated 255,000 miles on roads with a known speed limit in this fleet of vehicles, of which 219,000 was during the four months when ISA was provided.

3.6 The results were highly positive (Carsten et al, 2008a). All groups of drivers, younger and older, male and female, speed intenders (those who like to speed) and speed non-intenders had their speeding curtailed when driving with ISA. The predicted impacts on road safety, calculated by applying standard models which in turn drew on empirical data, were large: a 12% reduction in the risk of an being involved in an injury accident for those equipped with a voluntary ISA and a 29% reduction based on observed speeds when ISA was actually enabled (this is the 29% reduction for 100% compliance mentioned in paragraph 2.1). Acceptance was generally high with the scores tending to become more positive over time. And the predicted benefit-to-cost ratios were very large—13.6:1 for our “authority driven” scenario in which government did little more than provide the information required by ISA technology in the form of the speed limit map. There were also predicted environmental benefits from fuel and hence CO2 savings. The calculated fuel savings in our trials with the 80 ISA fitment and 6.3:1 for our “market driven” scenario in which government actively pushed ISA fitment and 6.3:1 for our “market driven” scenario in which government did little more than provide the information required by ISA technology in the form of the speed limit map. There were also predicted environmental benefits from fuel and hence CO2 savings. The calculated fuel savings in our trials with the 80 participants were 0.4% on 30 mph roads, 1.2% on 40 mph roads and 3.4% on 70 mph roads. Full compliance would increase the savings on 70 mph roads to 5.8%.

3.7 We also found considerable public support for the introduction of voluntary ISA. As part of the project for CfIT and the Motorists’ Forum, we carried out a national survey of licensed drivers. Overall we found one-third to be positive about the fitment and use of ISA, one-third to be neutral and one-third to be negative. Our interpretation was that these results were pretty positive for a system with which most respondents were unfamiliar, given the well-known tendency for people to be opposed to unfamiliar technical systems.

3.8 Our recent trial in Lancashire with 450 vehicles equipped with a purely advisory ISA based around a standard satnav is indicating very positive results. Just having a system that beeped when the speed limit was exceeded significantly improved compliance with the limits. Here we have a system that costs the users virtually nothing if they already have a satnav, and which could potentially be implemented on almost any smartphone as a downloadable app.

4. ENABLING ISA DEPLOYMENT

4.1 An up-to-date publicly funded and accurate digital road map to provide speed limit information is an essential underpinning to ISA take-up.

4.2 In its report of 2002 on Road Traffic Speed, the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee of the House of Commons stated:

“In the long run Intelligent Speed Adaption offers the opportunity to put an end to illegal and inappropriate speed. The Government should strongly support this technology by:

— continuing to fund research, including the projected trials from 2002 to 2006;
— encouraging voluntary adoption by fleet managers and providing tax incentives to those who do;
— establishing a Europe-wide requirement that all new vehicles sold from 2013 should have an ISA capability; and
— fund the development of a digital road map to ensure that the information needed to make ISA successful is easily available.”

4.3 In its formal response to that report, the government indicated that it had no intention of stopping the research, that it supported voluntary as opposed to compulsory fitment and that discussion of incentives was premature. It did not make a formal response on the map.

4.4 However, in The Second Three-Year Review of Tomorrow’s Roads—Safer for Everyone (2007), the government recognised the need to provide a map. It stated:

“The use of ISA will only be possible with the development of a national speed limit database. We will take a leading role in developing a national speed limit database. To start this process we will:

— canvass local authorities to identify current mapping processes and run a pilot speed limit updating process with representative local authority areas;
— monitor the trial by Transport for London and Ordnance Survey (OS); and
— investigate a Highways Agency trunk road pilot."

4.5 To date maps of London, Lancashire and Greater Manchester have been completed with the cooperation of the local highway authorities. At this rate it will take decades to complete a national map. This is painfully slow progress in view of (1) the demonstrated need for the map and (2) the rather low cost of developing the map (in the range of £10–£20 million for the whole of Great Britain). It is understood that, following the establishment of the of the coalition government in 2010, funding for further development of the speed limit map ceased. It is not even clear whether the map for the parts of the country that have been covered so far will be maintained. There is reason to believe, for example, that the London map is not being kept up-to-date.

5. THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COMMISSION FOR INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AND THE MOTORISTS’ FORUM

5.1 In their cover note of November 2008 to the report that we provided, CfIT and the Motorists’ Forum made the following recommendations:
— Immediate submission of this report and cover paper to the Secretary of State for Transport.
— The Department for Transport should work with the relevant European authorities, vehicle manufacturers, local authorities, insurance companies, representative bodies and others to consider what steps should be taken to support the future availability of the technology and to promote its take up.
— A public debate on the future of ISA. The potential benefits and opportunities of ISA should be widely disseminated to companies that can provide effective incentives for its adoption to encourage the establishment of market driven solutions.
— Government should engage with employers to ensure they are aware of the overall benefits of ISA and consider the fitment and use of this technology within their duty of care and work related road safety policies, when it is available
— The Department for Transport should move immediately to put in place the infrastructure necessary to provide the digital maps required to operate an ISA system.
— The Department for Transport should look at opportunities to equip its own fleet with ISA and act as a champion with other Government Departments and public bodies. Its role as a champion should focus on engaging Government Departmental support for the concept and encouraging Departments and Agencies with large workplace driving activity to implement ISA in their vehicle fleets.
— Fleet operators and vehicle rental companies should be appraised of the benefits of ISA and encouraged to introduce ISA into their own fleets.
— Government should examine whether ISA in any form has a role to play in supporting drivers convicted of dangerous driving where speed is a factor or as a benefit to supporting vehicle access for younger drivers.

6. THE CURRENT SITUATION

6.1 In the Strategic Framework for Road Safety the current government acknowledges the major role of excess and inappropriate speed in contributing to road accidents. In terms of vehicle technology, the government states (page 39): “We take particular interest in systems which detect or protect vulnerable road users.” By encouraging compliance with urban speed limits, ISA clearly meets the criterion of delivery on road vulnerable road user safety.

6.2 One of the key themes of the Framework (page 7) is “making it easier for road users to do the right thing and going with the grain of human behaviour.” On page 18 the Framework states: “Policies should be focused on making it easy for road users to do the right thing.”

6.3 Surely supporting the creation of the speed limit map as a tool to promote software applications in satnavs and other devices to encourage road users to “do the right thing” is entirely in line with the stated government policy of using encouragement and adopting “nudge” techniques.

6.4 And yet, as already indicated, the government has stopped its assistance to and promotion of the creation of a national speed limit map.

6.5 The government has also decided that the UK should not be a participant in the current Euro-NCAP working group looking at a scoring scheme for awarding points to vehicles fitted with ISA as part of the “EuroNCAP Advanced” initiative on promoting effective in-vehicle systems that can prevent crashes. Again this decision does not appear to be in line with the statements in the Framework about participating in EuroNCAP “to set challenging safety objectives and encourage manufacturers to achieve high star ratings” (page 40).

6.6 There is therefore reason to doubt that the government has any real intention of living up to even the very restricted vision that it set out for its own responsibilities in the Framework.
6.7 Perhaps the strongest evidence that the government is totally disdainful about the potential of ISA as a tool for encouraging speed compliance is its attitude to the results of the Lancashire ISA project on which £800,000 of government money has been spent. In July 2011, well before it received the final report on the project results, DfT had already prepared a response to press inquiries about the project findings. Below are some statements from the prepared answers to the press:

*Is it the Department’s intention to create a nationwide database of speed limits?*

No. This project has established a standard format (a data schema) for a speed limit database that other authorities, or their partners, can use if they wish.

*The project shows that ISA has a positive impact on driver behaviour. Why are you not encouraging its use elsewhere?*

As with other demonstration projects joint funded by the Department, such as Mixed Priority Routes and the Inner City Demonstration project, the Department seeks to establish effective techniques in road safety. Once established it is for local authorities to decide if these systems are appropriate for their local circumstances. It is not for central Government to dictate national solutions that may not be suitable for all situations.

6.8 In other words, it is the Department’s intention to do absolutely nothing to promote ISA as a tool for encouraging compliance with speed limits. It also the Department’s intention to ignore any encouraging results from a project which received a large amount of public funding, even though those results are fully in accord with DfT’s stated policies. The proposal that implementation of ISA should be left to local authorities is ludicrous. How much can a local authority do to encourage system providers to offer ISA? And why would motorists want to use a system that did not support them on all or nearly all of all their journeys?

6.9 It is time for the government to get serious about road safety, including in the area of speed management. There are responsibilities at the national level as well as at the local level, and many of those national responsibilities are currently being ignored. It can be argued that the government is already failing to live up to the very limited commitments it made in the Framework.

References


**Professor Oliver Carsten**

Professor of Transport Safety, Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds

*October 2011*

Written evidence from the Automobile Association (RSF 33)

**Summary**

The AA believes that a new road safety target should have been set. Although the current Strategic Framework and Outcomes Framework goes some way to achieving what is needed, an overall target is a key part of the leadership needed from government. Decentralisation can be argued as a reason for a target, as the target will ensure that all authorities pull together, and must explain any failures to achieve the target.

Road safety needs funding, and all the indications are that at present there is not enough. There are strong indications that the resources local authorities and police forces are putting into road safety are in sharp decline. It is important that road safety is not driven by whether measures cost or make money, but by whether they work.

The AA believes there is great scope for using education as a replacement for penalties, although there is a need to be aware of the links between criminality and some breaches of traffic law. Similarly it is important
that the undoubted safety benefits of technology are not confounded by technology that creates distraction, or tempts drivers to be distracted.

Generally the legislative framework is close to being fit for purpose, although a change to the drink drive limit would have been popular with most people, and changes to the MOT test intervals may not be good for safety.

Public support for road safety is hard to quantify. For many years safety issues were the top concern of our members, now they fall behind the state of the roads and the cost of motoring.

There is room for both localism and "The Big Society" in road safety, but it needs to be ensured that these concepts function properly and continue to be focussed on cutting casualties.

The weather at both ends of 2010, coupled with the economic downturn, may have produced an exceptionally low road casualty figure for 2010. Road safety in the UK may have to be prepared for a rise in casualties in 2011 and rising public concern will rapidly follow.

INTRODUCTION

The last two years have seen massive reductions in road deaths. It is difficult to tell how much of these reductions can be attributed to safer road use or better road safety measures, and how much is due to the economic downturn and the winter conditions which have immobilised the country for several weeks in both years.

New challenges are emerging, particularly with cycling, which is increasing in popularity and attracting many "returnee" cyclists who may lack the skills needed, particularly in traffic, and many drivers seem unsure how to safety manoeuvre when cyclists are present. At the same time there seem to be issues between drivers and cyclists, most often involving the more extreme end of both types of road users.

Cutbacks in resources available to highway engineers, to local authority road safety educators and to the police service have yet to show their impact, although the moving annual total of road deaths is showing a rise at the end of March 2011. There are also signs that public acceptance of the need for road safety measures is reducing.

SPECIFIC ISSUES RAISED BY THE COMMITTEE

Whether the Government is right not to set road safety targets and whether its outcomes framework is appropriate

The AA was disappointed that the strategic framework did not include hard and fast targets. We felt that targets have played a major role in the reductions in the road death and injury toll since they were introduced and could have had a major role to play in pushing casualties down further.

We would argue that the need for targets is more, not less, important with greater decentralisation to local authorities, and the era of austerity. The government acknowledges that one of its roles is to provide leadership. It is vital that this is given and a clear target is a logical way of doing this. Those at local level need to know the reductions that they should be achieving. Without such a target there is a real risk that resources that could be used for road safety are used for other purposes, not least improving the quality of life in already safe places, rather than in tackling real road safety issues. Failing to achieve a target may stimulate a local authority to spend more money on safety, but without a target there will be no indicator of when their performance is falling below expected standards.

Some may argue that the strategic framework contains targets by another name. But on the other hand the outcomes framework measures so many outcomes that most authorities will be able to show progress in many of them. Meanwhile the range of outcomes available from the casualty reduction forecasts is considerable.

It is one thing to talk of the roles of local citizens, communities, public services, industry and business, and the voluntary sector as well as central government in road safety. But it is another to ensure that they actually act, especially without a common target. We hear much of transparency, and local authorities should be able to show how well they are doing against a headline target when cost and inconvenience is being imposed on road users by the measures that they take.

The AA was in favour of sub-targets that could also have been used to tackle some specific areas of concern in road safety. An example would be older drivers, where increasing numbers of older people, coupled with an increase in the number holding licences, are almost certain to mean that casualty reduction may not keep pace with those being achieved in other areas of road safety. The output indicators could achieve this, less important, role but they do not perform the over arching role of a national road safety target.

The recent decline in road deaths and injuries has undoubtedly complicated target setting. There are signs that the current low figures owe much to two exceptional winters mixed with the economic situation and the price of fuel. It may be that a return to more normal winters will be reflected in a rise in casualties, and the same could be the case when the economy improves.
How the decentralisation to local authorities of funding and the setting of priorities will work in practice and contribute towards fulfilling the Government’s vision

The AA is unsure how this will work. For many years the strength of British road safety has been that we have dealt with real problems, not perceived problems or “accidents waiting to happen”. This approach has meant that we have generally achieved value for money in road safety, and all activity has been measured against the accident reduction potential. When the approach has failed, long term problems have often been created. It is more than likely that public and media antipathy towards speed cameras has much to do with early cameras being erected where there was a local political pressure for a camera, rather than where there was an accident problem which could be remedied by a camera.

It remains to be seen whether how more local decision making will work. The residents of a town may prefer to see what they see as their money spent on making the town roads appear safer, as opposed to, say, treating a danger-spot on the by-pass which they rarely use. But the biggest casualty reduction may come from treating the by-pass problem which could involve more casualties and be easier to cure. Similarly there may be difficulties if the “better off” areas of an authority see themselves as subsidising road safety improvements in its more deprived areas as resources reduce.

Funding is crucial to the delivery of the plan, and no indication is given as to the levels of funding that should be made available for road safety by local authorities. Although much is made of the use of educational initiatives for those who drive badly, this needs the police to be adequately resourced to identify those who need training. At the moment cuts to the police service do not suggest that any more resources will be available. Again it seems there is a possibility that the enforcement methods needed will be driven by cost against income considerations, not road safety benefit. In the past, once the public has seen money as the goal, support for measures has declined.

There is also a risk at a time when highway authorities and police forces are suffering cuts in funding that measures could be introduced based on whether they cost or bring income, rather than because they are the best way to prevent collisions. While the AA sees huge benefits in the re-education of drivers, we would hope that education—at the drivers expense—would not be preferred to road engineering—at the highway authority’s expense—in road situations where engineering would have the best returns in cutting casualties. EuroRAP—the European Road Assessment Programme regularly shows the huge returns that can be made from road improvements. Cost pressures must not mean that key tasks—like training police officers to carry out the field impairment test for drug driving—stop.

Funding is not only a local issue. Britain’s road safety policies have long been based on good research. It is important that central government continues to conduct research and collect data, both to show the efficacy of changes and to provide a check that research funded by business or other bodies is not overly influenced by their business needs.

Whether the Government is right to argue that, for the most part, the right legislative framework for road safety is in place, and, in particular, whether the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives (see Post-Legislative Assessment of the Road Safety Act 2006, Cm 8141, published by the DfT, July 2011)

The AA would be much happier with this argument if there had been a reduction in the drink drive limit and a decision not to consider changing the MOT frequency. We would also hope that if a change is made to the motorway speed limit it is confined to the changes needed to legitimise current motorway speeds, rather than just to allow drivers to travel 10 or so miles per hour faster than they do at present.

Roadside evidential testing for drinking is a key measure. By making more of limited police resources (drivers will not have to be taken back to the police station and evidentially tested in a time consuming process that effectively removes a police officer from the road) and by effectively cutting the drink drive limit this measure has huge potential. “Immediate” evidential tests could save up to an hour of time, time in which the offender is eliminating alcohol from the system.

New legislation and new equipment and procedures to deal with drug driving are needed. While the impact of drug driving is hard to quantify it is notable that the decline in drink driving recorded as a contributory factor in fatal accidents (from 196 to 131 between 2009 and 2010) has not been matched by a similar decline in drug driving (46 to 42). While some of this may be due to better identification of drug drivers, it shows that the problem is not really being countered. Type approval and acquisition of new drug testing equipment must be driven forward.

The AA is not in favour of “blanket” and default speed limits, at either end of the speed spectrum. It is much better that limits are aligned with the characteristics and record of the road in question. Twenty mph limits are interesting—attracting considerable support from the AA Populus Panel when applied near schools, but support diminishes as their use is suggested on more major roads. For the time being 20mph limits should be applied on a residential street by residential street basis, although as more people live in 20 mph limits it is likely that they will be more likely to comply with them where other people live. It is likely that in the long run drivers opinions on, and compliance with these limits will change.

Retraining initiatives, be they in lieu of court punishment (speed awareness, driver awareness) or additional to punishments are key to the government’s strategy. These are currently popular with drivers (79% of AA
Populus respondents feel they are a good thing, 89% would go on a course if they had the choice of a course or prosecution). Care has to be taken that this remains so. If the popularity of these schemes decline and drivers start opting to take the conventional penalty, the government will have to decide whether to mandate courses as a punishment or a make a further increase in fines to make them more economic to those who offend. The need to understand the links between road safety and criminal activity is important—training courses may not be the correct remedy for people who can be shown to have scant regard for the law.

Retraining is not only a solution for those who offend. It can also be taken voluntarily. The AA takes it a step further and through the AA Charitable Trust for Road Safety and Environment provides Drive Smart and Drive Confident courses free of charge to those who need them. Drive Smart is a course aimed at young drivers at risk and Drive Confident at those who have particular mental blocks in driving (ie motorways) or who have not been driving for some time.

Ensuring the safety of goods vehicles, be they British or foreign and driven by a British or foreign driver is important, especially because their size means that they are more likely to kill or injure in collisions.

The role of technology in reducing the road casualty toll is important, and the potential of Intelligent Speed Adaptation introduced voluntarily and “softly” in the future must not be underestimated. Meanwhile, technologies that distract drivers must be kept in check. There is also a need to consider whether those technologies that make driving “easier” will have the desired effect of allowing drivers to concentrate more, rather than giving them a degree of leeway to do other things while driving.

Young drivers remain a key area. While changes to the law are difficult to design and enforce, there is much scope for improving instruction, by persuading drivers to learn to drive, not just to pass the test, and by introducing wider educational initiatives. Schemes like the BTEC in driving science can have a major role to play in making younger drivers safer drivers.

We have concerns about how drivers see the need for road safety measures. Back in 2009 the AA Populus Panel tried to establish the level of public support for a new road safety target. Faced by the statement “The government is proposing to take action to reduce Britain’s 3,000 road deaths per year to 2000 by 2020” (a goal which was reasonable at the time), 25% considered it over ambitious, 21% under ambitious and 38% about right. Sixteen per cent did not answer.

At the same time we also asked how prepared respondents would be to see tighter regulations in order to achieve the government’s road safety target. Fifty eight per cent would have been happy, 17% neither happy nor unhappy, and 24% unhappy. Although this was showed a majority to be happy with more regulation, it was notable that among men this was not so, only 49% being happy with a change. Now the road death total is still lower, and freedoms are higher up the agenda, it is most likely that support for tighter controls is even lower. Similarly there are many who see increased motorway speed limits and decreased frequency MOT on the way. Whether this means the public is now questioning the need for road safety measures remains to be seen.

For a few years now, road safety news has often been good news. By and large there have not been terrible, high profile multi death accidents. And because the measures introduced tend to focus more on more reasonable drivers they have often come in for criticism. Road safety is not as high up the agenda as it has been, and the AA Populus Poll shows that road safety now ranks below road conditions and the cost of motoring as a motoring concern in the view of the public.

The public are concerned about road maintenance, with 81% (92% in Scotland) feeling conditions on their local roads are declining. Many drivers have learned the hard way that poor road maintenance can cost them when their vehicle is damaged. There have to be safety concerns not only about the damage done by the potholes and by drivers trying to avoid them, but also about the need for drivers on the worst affected roads to have to look for yet another hazard.

Cycling seems to be the main area of difficulty in road safety at the moment, with casualties rising at a time when those for almost all other classes of road users are falling. It is important that funding remains for cycle training—particularly the Bikeability scheme.

*Whether the measures set out in the action plan are workable and sufficient*

This has to be looked at from two directions, the measures themselves and the resources that are available to implement the measures.

As already stated, the AA would rather have seen tightening of the drink driving law and would rather not see the MOT frequencies reduced, or changes to the motorway speed limit that will allow the fastest traffic to travel faster. In many ways these decisions will have little effect on the responsible driver, who does not drink and drive, who drives within speed limit norms and who keeps his car serviced. They may however be looked upon as additional licence to take risks by those road users more prone to do so.

Declining traffic police numbers will obviously affect the workability of many changes—there needs to be a high perceived risk of apprehension, but drivers who could benefit from training need to be identified. If drivers do not feel they may be caught the law may fall into disrepute, as some would say the hand held mobile
phone rule has done. Some of the decline can be offset by the better use of technology by the police, in recording what they do, in checking records and in processing offences. Roadside evidential breath testers are a case in point here.

The relationship between the Government's strategy and EU road safety initiatives

The relationship between British road safety initiatives and targets and those in the EU has always been difficult to understand. Sometimes our patterns of land use and climate have meant that we have different problems. At other times our presence in the upper reaches of any safety league table has meant that we have to ask whether EU initiatives are right here. The EU’s need for harmonisation often threatens Britain with needing to introduce road safety initiatives that really are not needed, and where effort and money could well be diverted elsewhere. Sometimes EU proposals can seem wholly unnecessary here, quite often are not implemented here but the debate about them can create yet more drivers who feel that safety measures as a whole are unnecessary. With only the Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland land border (which many from Great Britain forget) many struggle to see any need for harmonisation when a tunnel trip or sea crossing makes it quite clear the border has been crossed, and when reaching the other side requires driving on the right anyway.

There are a large number of laws in force in the EU that would, if introduced here, have little or no effect, other than to complicate the rules and either go unenforced or dilute our already thinly spread enforcement effort.

It is unfortunate that, in spite of its high position in any world road safety league table, Britain is often castigated for its performance. At the time of writing there appears to be a risk that road deaths will be higher in 2011 than 2010, possibly because 2011 contains less extreme bad weather, and this could mean that Britain is one of the few countries to see a decline in safety.

More information about AA Populus panels and their findings are attached as an appendix.

October 2011

APPENDIX

THE AA POPULUS PANEL AND ROAD SAFETY

Some 170,000 AA members have now signed up to the AA/Populus Panel. These drivers are approached monthly for their views on a wide range of motoring issues, and in the region of 10 to 20,000 respond each month.

The information below reflects the views of AA members. It is gathered from panel questions asked over the last few years. In most cases some categories of answer have been aggregated—for example we may have asked whether members strongly agreed, agreed, neither agreed or disagreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed or didn’t know. Below these are grouped as “agreed” or “disagreed”. The remainder would either have been “don’t know” or “neither agree or disagree”.

**Speed Limits**

**Motorways**

The motorway speed limit should be raised to 80mph

63% of respondents agree.
33% of respondents think the limit should stay at 70mph.
3% think it should be reduced.

Within the 63% who favour an increase divide into 24% think it should be strictly enforced, and 39% think it should be enforced as the 70mph limit is now.

**Country Roads**

The most appropriate national speed limit for a single carriageway “A” road in a rural area is (accepting that in particular places on this road, such as villages, a different (lower) limit may be set).

40 mph—17%.
50 mph—30%.
60 mph—45%.
70 mph—6%.

**20mph limits**

Introduction of 20mph limits and zones on residential streets

62% support.
36% oppose.
However, within the 62% who support, only 6% feel this should be on all residential streets, even main roads while the other 56% feel this should only be on purely residential streets.

**Penalties**

Drivers who commit certain minor offences (such as speeding) should be offered a driver improvement course, at their own expense, as an alternative to prosecution?

Agree—79%.
Disagree—12%.

If you were to be offered the option to pay to take a driver improvement course instead of being given a fine and penalty points how likely would you be to accept it?

Likely—89%.
Unlikely—6%.

**Camera Enforcement**

It is now common for the police to use speed cameras at the side of the road to identify vehicles involved in speeding offences. How acceptable do you think this is?

Acceptable—70%.
Unacceptable—28%.

**Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA)**

Cars should be compulsorily fitted with devices which will stop them exceeding the speed limit at any time

Agree—43%.
Disagree—39%.

Various AA surveys have shown that support for “fitting” is higher than support for “use”, suggesting that any devices introduced should be voluntary.

**Drink Driving**

The drink drive legal limit

49% support some form of reduction in the drink drive limit.
43% of respondents feel that there should be no change to the current drink driving limit of 80mg/100ml blood.

An earlier poll suggested a reduction in the limit:

66%—in favour.
20%—opposed.

The police should be allowed to breathalyse a driver at any time.

79%—in favour.
16%—opposed.

**Drug Driving**

A driver should be prosecuted for drug driving if:

there are traces of illegal drugs in his/her body but is not visibly or practically impaired by the drug.

Yes—72%.

there are traces of illegal drugs in his/her body and is visibly and practically impaired by the drug.

Yes—100%.

**Mobile Phones**

Using a mobile phone while driving is more serious, as serious or less serious than:

Speeding

More serious—32%.
As serious—60%.
Less serious—6%.

Drink or drug driving
More serious—6%.
As serious—52%.
Less serious—31%.

Poor Parking
More serious—68%.
As serious—9%.
Less serious—23%.

October 2011

Written evidence from the Local Government Technical Advisors Group (TAG) (RSF 34)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 We thank the House of Commons Transport committee for the opportunity to submit evidence on this important subject. The Local Government Technical Advisors Group (TAG) represents chief and senior technical officers in a large number of local authorities. These include those with highway and transport responsibilities, such as Transport for London, most London Boroughs, Metropolitan, County and Unitary Authorities. TAG has provided evidence to the committee on several occasions; our membership encompasses significant experience and expertise across a wide range of professional technical spheres.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The Government’s vision for road safety is to ensure that Britain remains a world leader on road safety. TAG fully support this vision as road safety plays a key role in the health and well being of the nation. However the vision is weak and lacks substance.

2.2 Other key points from this response:

- Overall the SFRS lacks adequate leadership, clarity and focus—the government must take a strong strategic lead in the deliver of a robust road safety strategy.
- The portal for signposting key information for road safety professionals is welcomed.
- The lack of meaningful targets is a significant weakness in the framework.
- A stronger performance framework is required.
- The framework states that restoring public finances and tackling the deficit is the overarching priority and not road safety.
- Commitment to adequate funding and prioritisation is essential if recent successes in casualty reduction is to be maintained in the longer term.
- Education and training is essential for all road users, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, if attitude and behavioural change is to be embedded.

3. GENERAL COMMENT RELATING TO THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ROAD SAFETY

3.1 Overall we have to express our disappointment with the framework as it fails to provide any high level leadership, generally lacks clarity and focus for road safety professionals.

3.2 The long term vision to ensure that Britain remains a world leader on road safety is laudable (p 20, paragraph 1.28) and supported. Nevertheless it is weak, vague and lacks substance. Also the vision’s longer term reliance on improved technology and better driving is short sighted without a clear delivery strategy, which the framework fails to provide.

3.3 The SFRS fails to adequately acknowledge the excellent work carried out by local government organisations in reducing killed and seriously injured on Britain’s roads.

3.4 The SFRS refers to the need for road safety interventions to be evidence-led and properly evaluated. This approach is supported by road safety professionals, however it is likely that localism is likely to lead to a plethora of ill-conceived, unstructured, knee jerk road safety interventions that will achieve little in terms of tackling road danger, changing attitude and behaviour and unlikely to provide value for money.

3.5 The overarching priority for the SFRS would appear not be to road safety but rather to restore the public finances and to tackle the deficit (p 7).

4. WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT IS RIGHT NOT TO SET ROAD SAFETY TARGETS AND WHETHER ITS OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK IS APPROPRIATE

4.1 The outcome framework is unclear on the outcomes to be achieved from monitoring the indicators included.
4.2 Organisations need targets. Previous target framework for reducing road traffic casualties was clearly understood by road safety professionals and provided a mechanism to measure success. In the absence of relevant and realistic targets how is success to be measured?

4.3 How will government compare performance of public sector organisations? How will underperforming organisations be encouraged to improve in the absence of a performance framework?

4.4 Tomorrow’s Roads Safer for Everyone set casualty reduction targets that were met through partnership working and coordination of resources. This set clear direction of local government and a framework to deliver. The SFRS does neither.

4.5. Local authorities already publish significant data on casualty rates and safety cameras. The SFRS fails to acknowledge this.

4.6 Paragraph 17 of the SFRS executive summary states that fatalities could fall by around 37% by 2020. However the document states that this is neither a target nor a hard forecast. Therefore what is it? And why state it?

4.7 The outcomes framework places no ownership for the indicators.

5. How the decentralisation to local authorities of funding and the setting of priorities will work in practice and contribute towards fulfilling the Government’s vision

5.1 The government’s approach to funding reforms for road safety last year was unhelpful, whilst acknowledging the difficult decisions required by government in managing the country’s deficit. It created uncertainty within the road safety sector, for example, direct funding to safety camera partnerships left many local authorities and their partners’ significant issues in terms of acquiring alternative funding sources, maintaining stability and retaining public confidence.

5.2 The reduction in road safety budgets and specific grant funding has seen deterioration in road safety functions across the country. Values on road accidents and casualties would suggest that investment in road safety interventions delivers high rates of return for the economy and society as a whole.

5.3 Reference to Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) is relevant, recognizing the symbiotic relationship between sustainable transport, particularly walking and cycling, and road safety. However LSTF is time limited and is a bidding process therefore it is unlikely that all local authority areas will benefit.

5.4. Local authorities already have the ability to prioritise capital resources for road safety through their local transport plan.

6. Whether the Government is right to argue that, for the most part, the right legislative framework for road safety is in place, and, in particular, whether the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives (see Post-Legislative Assessment of the Road Safety Act 2006, Cm 8141, published by the DfT, July 2011)

6.1 The Act makes a useful contribution to improving road safety.

7. Whether the measures set out in the action plan are workable and sufficient

7.1 The proposed portal for road safety professionals is to be welcomed. A central depository for networking, guidance and sharing good practice will be a valuable tool in continuing the excellent work in improving road safety.

7.2 The emphasis on education and enforcement fails to acknowledge the effectiveness of engineering solutions. With the changing traffic management and road user relationships emerging from new philosophies such as Manual for Streets then highway engineering solutions will continue to be an important tool in reducing road traffic accidents and casualties.

7.3 Education is focused on adults, which although important in changing/influencing attitudinal behaviour, does not address the needs of the more vulnerable user groups, particularly children who are generally more open to the road safety message and more likely to respond to the sustainability agenda. Retraining offenders as an alternative to punitive fines is a positive move, however more needs to be done to improve attitude and behaviour of all road users of all ages. This is lacking in the SFRS.

7.4 No mention of overarching governance.

7.5 No direct responsibilities identified for local government.

7.6 Commitment to resources required. Action plan places greater emphasis on police for delivery.

7.7. The focus on adult offenders referred to in the main document is not adequately reflected in the action plan. Tougher enforcement for persistent offenders also needs to be addressed to avoid undermining of public confidence in traffic enforcement.
7.8 Fails to recognize the different approaches required in tackling road safety on the trunk road network to that on the local highway network, c.f. the relationship between casualty reduction and perception of safety on local roads.

7.9 The action plan does not reflect the bullet points on vehicle technology referred to in paragraph 3.29 (page 38).

8. The relationship between the Government’s strategy and EU road safety initiatives

8.1 The SFRS makes little reference to European road safety context.

October 2011

Written evidence from PRO-MOTE (RSF 36)

PRO-MOTE has been established in response to the Government’s plan to consider reducing the frequency of MOT testing. We are supported by a range of road safety groups, motoring organisations and industry bodies all opposed to what are dangerous, expensive and unwanted plans.

In response to your inquiry into the Government’s strategic framework for road safety, I would like to draw your attention to what we believe is a significant omission in the DfT’s document regarding the importance of the existing vehicle testing regime’s contribution to road safety.

According to the DfT’s study of MOT frequency in 2008, “vehicle defects are responsible for causing a minimum of between 2% and 3% of accidents, and a maximum of around 10%” (MOT scheme Evidence-base, December 2008). It said that a reasonable estimate was a mid-range value of 6.5% which—based on the latest DfT road casualty figures—would suggest that vehicle defects accounted for about 120 deaths and more than 1,400 serious injuries in 2010.

These are casualties caused despite the current requirement for MOT testing—and despite the requirement for vehicle owners to keep their cars roadworthy at all times.

Under this current 3–1–1 system, under which cars and vans are tested at three years and annually thereafter, four out of ten vehicles fail the MOT with lights, suspension and brake defects the major factors. The failure rate for new cars and vans is two in ten. And recent VOSA figures appear to show that the number of defective and unsafe cars on the road is increasing. The MOT failure rate has risen from 33.5% in 2005 to 40.1% in 2009–10 with one possible explanation being that some vehicle owners are putting off necessary repairs to save money.

VOSA statistics show that more than 800,000 of the cars that fail their MOT in a year are described as “dangerous to drive”—that’s 15,000 dangerous cars spotted every week or more than 2,200 every day.

All the evidence available shows that reducing MOT frequency would increase the number of road casualties further. Extrapolating the methodology used by the DIT’s 2008 study, we predict that moving from the existing 3–1–1 MOT system to 4–2–2 risks increasing road deaths by more than 250 a year and serious injuries by more than 2,200. Even moving to 4–1–1 would risk increasing the number of deaths by 35 a year.

As the Transport Research Laboratory report on MOT frequency earlier this year found: “The larger the time gap between MOT Testing intervals, the larger the predicted number of additional accidents and casualties which may be attributed to vehicle defect contributory factors.” (Effect of vehicle defects in road accidents, TRL, 2011).

Given the clear evidence of the link between defective vehicles and road casualties, it is disappointing that the Government’s strategic framework does not mention the MOT or the wider importance of vehicle owners keeping their cars roadworthy at all times. PRO-MOTE urges the Committee to recommend that it should do so and, in addition, we hope the Committee use the opportunity to press the Government to drop plans to look again at reducing MOT frequency too.

October 2011

Supplementary written evidence from PRO-MOTE (RSF 36d)

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to your committee today with respect to MOT testing and its beneficial impact on road safety in the UK and why it should be considered within the Road Safety Framework.

I agreed to send you a number of pieces of information to assist the committee in its deliberations. I therefore attach the following:

(i) A presentation produced by the RMIF (of which we are members and attended the presentation) and The MOT Trade Forum and presented to the Transport Minister in February 2011 setting out proposals to improve the existing MOT test with some new thinking and some new ideas, all of which the Minister said he would consider but nothing has emerged yet.
Ev 138  Transport Committee: Evidence

(ii) A copy of Pro-MOTe’s report—“A cost too far”—setting out the financial impact on the individual motorist and to the UK as a whole of ending annual MOT testing.

(iii) Data from VOSA detailing overall MOT failure rates and specific defect failure rates.

You also asked for further information about the implications for jobs and apprenticeships of ending annual testing.

There is a section on the jobs issue on page 12 of our report, “Dangerous, Expensive and Unwanted”, that we submitted to you as part of our original written evidence in October. You will see that it refers to work by the Retail Motor Industry Federation estimating that 40,000 jobs could be at risk with many of the 10,000 or so apprenticeships the MOT industry employs every year particularly vulnerable.

We are putting together some further information on jobs and apprenticeships and plan to get that to you next week.

Finally, Julie Hilling MP asked me after today’s hearing for information about the potential effect on emissions of reducing MOT frequency, and we plan to get this to you next week too.

Please do let me know if there is any more information you require.

Bill Duffy
Chairman of the Pro-MOTe campaign
Chief Executive of Halfords Autocentres
January 2012

Supplementary written evidence from PRO-MOTE (RSF 36a)

Further to my letter of 17 January, I attach additional information to your committee regarding its inquiry into the Government’s strategic framework for Road Safety.

The first attachment is a report entitled “Promoting an MOT system that works” which shows the impact a reduction in frequency would have on jobs and businesses in the MOT industry, in particular, the impact on apprenticeships.

This report finds that:

— Almost 150,000 people are employed in the UK as a direct result of MOT testing with 105,000 jobs in 21,000 testing stations and a further 42,000 in tyre and parts businesses.

— The retail motor industry employs a higher proportion of skilled workers (38%) compared to the UK as a whole (11%), and a higher proportion of 17 to 24 year-olds with more than 14,000 apprenticeships starting in 2009–10.

— A reduction of trade in such a labour-intensive industry would put between 25,000 and 40,000 MOT tester jobs at risk with a further 8,000 jobs in related activity vulnerable too.

I also attach a briefing paper on the emissions test carried out as part of the MOT regime and the likely effect of reducing MOT frequency.

Bill Duffy
Co-ordinator of the Pro-MOTe campaign
Chief Executive of Halfords Autocentres
January 2012

Supplementary written evidence from PRO-MOTE (RSF 36b)

MOT AND EMISSIONS

INTRODUCTION

The current MOT Test checks for a vehicle’s emissions is in accordance with the requirement of the current EU Directive on periodic ‘in-service’ vehicle testing. Different emissions checks apply depending on whether the vehicle has a diesel or petrol fuelled engine.

DIESEL ENGINED (COMPRESSION IGNITION) VEHICLES

For diesel engines, broadly there are three criteria regarding emissions testing. For vehicles first used before 1 August 1979:

1. The exhaust emits dense blue or clearly visible black smoke for a period of five seconds at idle.

http://www.pro-mote.org.uk/assets/files/wpnxV/Promoting_an_MOT_system_that_works_Jan_2011.pdf

See Ev 138.
2. The exhaust emits dense blue or clearly visible black smoke during acceleration which would obscure the view of other road users.

For vehicles first used on or after 1 August 1979, the tailpipe emissions are checked for the presence of excessive particulate matter by specialised equipment specified by the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency. Different levels of particulate material would result in a failure depending on the vehicle’s age. Younger vehicles are subjected to a more stringent (reduced particulates) check.

**PETROL ENGINED (SPARK IGNITION) VEHICLES**

For the vast majority of these vehicles two different types of checks apply.

1. For vehicles first used before 31 July 1992 the presence of the gasses Carbon monoxide (CO), and hydrocarbon (HC) are measured and if they exceed the proscribed limits specified for that vehicle’s age, an MOT failure applies.

2. For later vehicles, broadly those equipped with a catalytic converter, both CO and HC are still checked (to a lower limit) which could result in an MOT failure, and a further technical measurement called ‘Lambda’ is also checked, and must be between 0.97 and 1.03, otherwise an MOT failure applies.

**MOT FAILURE RATES**

The Vehicle and Operator and Services Agency do not publish annual data showing MOT failure rates for emissions as a “stand alone” figure. Emissions failures are within a section entitled “Fuel and exhaust” which includes petrol leaks, and/or defective exhaust systems. For the latest published results for cars and light commercial vehicles (2010–11), this represented 5.5% of MOT tests. There is, however, further data available to Testing Stations on a monthly basis, which suggests for emissions alone the failure rate is about 4.9%. This seems reasonable set against the 5.5% overall figure, and represents 1.3 million vehicles each year having unacceptable levels of emissions at the time of MOT Test.

**TWO YEARLY MOT TESTING**

There would be an inevitable increase in vehicle emissions should the MOT be changed to the EU testing regimen of the first test when a vehicle is four years and biennially thereafter, as compared to Britain’s current first test at three years old and annually thereafter. The effects would be:

- **Increased dangerous emissions:** Vehicles which would have failed the MOT emissions test in an annual regimen, would be ‘in service’ causing pollution for a further year. It is reasonable to suggest that increased respiratory illnesses would result, and most likely, an increase in fatalities from those illnesses.

- **Increased fuel consumption:** These vehicles would also inevitably consume more fuel throughout the “non-MOT year”, and hence cost those motorists more money, to an extent obviating any benefit from not paying for one MOT every two years in a biennial MOT regimen. There would also be unnecessary consumption of a scarce resource (petrol and diesel fuel).

(See ProMOTe data on increased costs.)

In a global situation of increased awareness of growing carbon and other dangerous emissions and the deleterious affect both on health and the planetary environment, it is perverse that the British Government are considering reducing the frequency of MOT Testing in Britain, which would inevitably result in increased emissions throughout the country from motor vehicles’ exhausts.

*January 2012*

**Written evidence from CTC, the national cyclists’ organisation (RSF 38)**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. CTC, the national cyclists’ organisation, was founded in 1878. CTC has 70,000 members and supporters, provides a range of information and legal services to cyclists, organises cycling events, and represents the interests of cyclists and cycling on issues of public policy.

**SUMMARY**

2. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this inquiry. The fact that a “Strategic Framework for Road Safety” exists at all may be considered a minor triumph given the present Government’s initial reluctance to produce such a document. Unfortunately much of the document remains vague and undeveloped. Like much of previous road safety policy, it rests on developments in vehicle technology, which are little influenced by Government policy, their development mainly being pursued at an international level by manufacturers.

3. CTC welcome the introduction of new indicators in the outcome framework which measure changes in both the actual and perceived risks of cycling. CTC has long called for these, to overcome the problems created
by simplistic targets which merely aimed to reduce casualty numbers. These created perverse incentives to reduce use as a way of reducing cyclist casualties. This of course was entirely contrary to the aims of encouraging more as well as safer cycling, with all its associated health, environmental and other benefits, including safety benefits (there is good evidence that cycling gets safer the more cyclists there are). We therefore feel that the absence of simple casualty reduction targets may actually be beneficial. However we believe the outcomes framework could go further in removing the indicators relating to simple casualty reduction numbers and casualties per head of population, to avoid perpetuating the flawed thinking of past decades.

4. CTC does not believe the legislative framework is right and feels that the Road Safety Act 2006 has created a situation that will lead to public frustration with the legal system and will fail to convey an appropriate level of deterrence to bad driving which is a major function of the criminal justice system. Whilst we believe the proposed new offence of “causing serious injury by dangerous driving” is a step in the right direction, we also believe that action should be taken to clarify the distinction between “careless” and “dangerous” driving, and to make greater use of driving bans. We also call for changes to the laws on drivers’ insurance schemes, in line with those which prevail across most of western Europe, so that it becomes easier for pedestrians and cyclists to obtain compensation for injuries from drivers who hit them.

5. Specific areas of action that have been missed out or receive scant attention in the document include action to tackle the specific threat from lorries; the hazards posed by major roads and junctions, the lack of adequate resourcing of roads policing; and limited national leadership on 20 mph speed limits.

Whether the Government is right not to set road safety targets and whether its outcomes framework is appropriate

6. CTC is content with the Government’s decision to abandon simple casualty reduction targets. Whilst previous targets may well have increased the attention paid to road safety, the blunt nature of some of those targets led to a distorted perception that cycle casualty numbers are a problem. In CTC’s recent “Safety in Numbers” campaign, we argued that the focus must be shifted towards reducing risk to vulnerable road users.

7. We are therefore pleased that the outcomes framework adopts CTC’s proposal to measure cycle safety in terms of casualty rates (eg fatalities per billion miles cycled), with an additional indicator to measure whether public perceptions of the safety of cycling are improving. In the past, simple casualty reduction targets created a perverse incentive for local authorities to discourage cycle use. The new indicators will focus local authorities’ attention instead on reducing the actual and perceived deterrents to cycle use, in order to achieve more as well as safer cycling. CTC’s “Safety in Numbers” report sets out the evidence that these aims are entirely complementary, with cycle safety improving as cycle use increases. This approach also has the benefit of integrating road safety policy with wider public health and other objectives. The health, environmental and other benefits of cycling are briefly outlined in CTC’s leaflet “New Vision for Cycling”.

8. However these welcome developments risk being in conflict with the parallel indicators for the “number of fatalities”, “number of serious injuries” and “fatality rate per million population” indicators, all of which will sometimes suggest that the risk of cycling is worsening, when the more accurate indicator of “risk per mile” shows that it is in fact improving. This mutual contradiction amongst indicators should be avoided as it risks perpetuating the perverse incentives of the previous targets framework.

9. The importance of measuring perceptions of cycle safety cannot be underestimated, as the belief that cycling is “dangerous” is a major barrier to maximising its health and other benefits—74% of adults agree with the statement that “the idea of cycling on busy roads frightens me”. We therefore recommend splitting the indicators for perceived safety into separate indicators for walking and cycling respectively. Similar data are already collected for local authorities taking part in the NHT Survey. If collected centrally (perhaps with strong incentives for local authorities to take part), this survey could provide data on changes in public attitudes not only on this but also on a whole range of other issues relating to a range of road safety and accessibility.

10. Cycle safety has performed relatively poorly since 1950 compared with that of other road users, as Figure 1 shows. Over the past 60 years the risk of cycling has climbed from 32 deaths per billion kms in 1952 to a height of 95 deaths per billion kms cycled in 1971, falling from there to a low of 22 deaths per billion kms in 2009. Over the same period the risk for motor vehicle occupants has consistently fallen from around 32 deaths per billion kms cycled in 1952 to just under 95 deaths per billion kms in 2009. Over the same period the risk for motor vehicle occupants has consistently fallen from around the same risk to as cyclists down to around three deaths per billion kms today. While the strategy document may boast of “impressive improvements” and “world leadership”, the reality when seen from cyclists’ perspective is very different indeed.

41 Booklet and full report both downloadable from www.ctc.org.uk/safetyinnumbers
42 www.ctc.org.uk/newvision
44 Question 14.06 of NHT Network Public Satisfaction Survey 2011
http://nhtsurvey.econtrack.co.uk
11. Although the document does in part acknowledge the need to improve the safety of cyclists, it gives startlingly little indication as to how this is to be achieved, other than through vehicle technology and driver behaviour. Very little of the former will benefit vulnerable road users, and those measures which do are unlikely to be pursued voluntarily by manufacturers as they offer only marginal benefits to their customers. As for the proposed actions driver behaviour, they may well prove counter-productive, as the emphasis seems to be on lowering the severity of punishment for driving infringements and reducing the use of driving bans, in favour of “educational offerings”.

12. In the following sections of this submission, we outline a number of areas where we believe the framework will need to be strengthened in order to maximise the wider benefits of increased cycle use and improved cycle safety, thereby integrating it better with public health, environmental and other objectives.

How the decentralisation to local authorities of funding and the setting of priorities will work in practice and contribute towards fulfilling the Government’s vision

13. There is little evidence that the actions of local authorities have significantly enhanced cycle safety in past decades. We understand that forthcoming research by consultants TRL (on behalf of DfT) will show that the only infrastructure measure with good evidence of benefits for cycle safety is 20 mph schemes. Meanwhile local authorities’ road safety education campaigns have focused on “dangerising” walking and cycling, thereby deterring people from enjoying the benefits of active travel or (in the case of parents) allowing their children to do so. Whilst this may have helped meet cycle casualty reduction targets by deterring people from cycling, we know of no evidence that such measures have improved safety for those cyclists who remained. Indeed such activities may well have been counter-productive, not only to public health (by deterring cycle use) but also to cycle safety (by undermining the “safety in numbers” benefits of encouraging more people to cycle).

14. Whilst we welcome the Government’s recent initiatives to make it easier for local authorities to introduce 20 mph schemes, we believe that stronger national leadership is needed to ensure the widespread uptake of the one measure which is proven to be effective in improving cycle safety.45 There is a perception, fostered by parts of the media, that 20 mph schemes are “unpopular”, when this is not the case—studies consistently show support for 20 mph at around the 75% mark.46 Government should promote awareness campaigns to bolster this support for 20 mph, whilst encouraging local authorities not to be deterred by the minorities who oppose such measures.

15. Other “cycle friendly infrastructure” measures are generally delivered to very poor standards, which rarely comply with the Department’s Local Transport Note 2/08 (Cycle Infrastructure Design), let alone with continental best practice. On-carriageway cycle lanes are generally too narrow, causing drivers to leave inadequate space when overtaking cyclists.47 Off-carriageway cycle tracks are often even worse.48 they are often introduced inappropriately and regularly consist of nothing more than a white line on a bumpy pavement, forcing cyclists into conflict with pedestrians and worsening their safety at junctions (which is where c70% of

---

45 For evidence, see www.20splentyforus.org.uk/fact_sheets.htm and www.pacts.org.uk/docs/pdf-bank/LeechMP-20mphBriefing.pdf
46 British Social Attitudes Survey 2005, conducted by the National Centre for Social Research.
48 See the Warrington Cycling Campaign’s “Cycle Facility of the Month” website http://homepage.ntlworld.com/pete.meg/wcc/facility-of-the-month/
cycle casualties occur). The result causes dissatisfaction both to cyclists and to other members of the public, who regularly complain of cyclists not using these “facilities” provided at public expense, without appreciating that they are often worse than useless. The Department must take stronger action to ensure that its standards are adhered to by local authorities when making provision for cycling, to ensure this represents a worthwhile investment in boosting cycle safety and cycle use.

16. By contrast, we are pleased to see that dedicated funding has been retained for delivering Bikeability cycle training, an initiative which builds confidence, skills and safety. This funding might arguably be contrary to the spirit of "localism", yet it has been strongly welcomed by local authorities, and will undoubtedly contribute to encouraging more and safer cycling.

Whether the Government is right to argue that, for the most part, the right legislative framework for road safety is in place, and, in particular, whether the Road Safety Act 2006 has fulfilled its objectives

17. CTC does not agree that we have the right legislative framework in place. Indeed, concern over the shortcomings of the legal framework are at the heart of CTC’s “Stop Smidsy” campaign. Specifically we are concerned that the new offence of “causing death by careless driving” (CDCD) offence introduced by the RSA 2006, appears to have contributed to a huge decrease in the proportion of drivers who have been sentenced to immediate custody and a shift from the use of the “causing death by dangerous driving” (CDDD) to the lesser CDCD offence.

18. As figure 2 shows, the proportion of offenders sentenced to immediate custody for some serious non-motoring crimes (sexual offences or violence against the person) has remained the same over the last 10 years. By contrast amongst those drivers convicted of motoring offences that cause death or bodily harm the proportion being immediately sentenced to custody has fallen from 92% in 2006 to just 51% in 2010.

19. The implementation of the CDCD offence means that more people who kill on the roads are being convicted when death has occurred. However, CTC is concerned that since more of these are now being prosecuted for CDCD rather than CDDD, the result has been unsatisfactory for victims. This creates the impression that taking a life through bad driving is a minor offence which a short driving ban, fine and community punishment are adequate response.

20. The change has led to considerable press coverage of cases where drivers who have killed have pleaded guilty to CDCD and received minimal punishment, many of which are documented on CTC’s Stop Smidsy website.

21. The one proposed change to the legislative framework Government is the introduction of a new offence of "causing serious injury by careless driving". CTC believes this is a step in the right direction, however we feel that there are many other aspects of road traffic law that also need a fundamental overhaul to regain the respect of victims and ensure that they present an adequate deterrent to bad driving.

---

49 www.stop-smidsy.org.uk. (N.B. “Smidsy” stands for “Sorry mate, I didn’t see you”, the excuse all-too-commonly given for bad driving).
50 www.stop-smidsy.org.uk/case-studies
22. In particular, the distinction in law between “dangerous” and “careless” driving needs to be clarified, to prevent the new offence causing yet more of a drift towards convictions for mere “careless” offences where the driving caused obvious danger—bearing in mind that “careless” offences which cause serious injury rather than death will still carry no prison sentence. Ways of doing this are set out in CTC’s briefing on driving offences.51

23. Whichever option is chosen, CTC believes the sentencing framework needs to be amended to encourage the courts to make much greater use of driving bans. Our wish to clarify the distinction between “dangerous” and “careless” driving is not because we want to see more drivers sent to prison (although we do want this option to be available in a greater range of circumstances). Our key concern is that driving which causes obvious danger (whether intentionally, recklessly or through moments of simple inattention) is too often dismissed as mere “carelessness”, and the perpetrators are often allowed to continue driving after trifling punishments—or in some cases none at all—without any action taken to protect the public against the risk they present. As previously noted, the Strategy’s proposed move towards educational interventions may exacerbate this problem further still.

24. The reluctance of the courts to employ driving bans is highlighted by a recent news report suggesting that over 10,000 drivers are on the roads despite having over 12 points on their licenses—with some having over 30 points.52 A more drastic recent example of the problem was the case of a lorry driver who was involved in the death of a cyclist in February 2009 had his licence revoked for poor eyesight, recovered his licence a few months later and has subsequently been reportedly involved in the death of a pedestrian.53 In this case the failing of the courts to take appropriate action may have contributed to the death of yet another person on the roads.

25. CTC suggests that the current framework of civil liability is unfair, placing undue responsibility on the victim—who is often incapacitated or whose memory of the crash is missing—to establish the negligence of others in order to secure compensation for their injuries. We believe that strengthening the systems of civil liability, either through a change of law or the Highway Code (which is often relied upon for establishing negligence in civil cases) may create a stronger incentive for road users to take greater care on the roads. The case for “stricter liability” laws is explained more fully in a briefing from RoadPeace.54

26. Finally, the Government’s strategic framework places strong emphasis on improving driver behaviour, suggesting that improved enforcement of drink driving and uninsured driving will help. However it is hard to know how this will be delivered, given the huge funding cuts which police forces are facing. Road traffic policing has long been depicted as being an unglamorous, dead-end aspect of policing and therefore may well be cut disproportionately. The subject of police force strength is entirely absent from the document—this needs to be remedied as a very high priority.

**Whether the measures set out in the action plan are workable and sufficient**

27. In previous sections we have already set out the case for stronger action on 20mph, cycle-friendly design, traffic law and its enforcement. In this section we highlight two further areas of concern: lorries and major roads.

28. CTC is particularly concerned is the absence of action to tackle the specific threat from lorries. Despite making up just 5% of road traffic, these vehicles are typically involved in around one in five deaths of cyclists. The Government response to this is limited: they are considering introducing an “HGV section” into the driving test to increase awareness of the dangers posed by HGVs (paragraph 4.11) and they are prepared to “make proposals in the UN-ECE in Geneva to amend the mirror standards, extending the required field of view for HGVs”.

29. Meanwhile, since publication of this document, the Government has embarked on a trial of longer semi-trailers, despite advice that acknowledges the increased risk posed in low speed manoeuvring.55 It is these low speed turning crashes that are involved in the deaths of third of all the cyclists killed in incidents with lorries. CTC opposes the trial, and is concerned that the Department has failed to provide evidence to back up a Ministerial answer to the House that “We considered carefully whether longer semi-trailers posed a risk to cyclists in particular, and the risk is not there”.56 We are also concerned that steps have not been taken to mitigate the anticipated risks.

30. More generally, we wish to see action on a number of to reduce cycle/lorry conflict. These include aspects of the design and fitting of lorries themselves (eg sensors, cameras, and increasing the window area of...
lorry side-doors); training and awareness of both lorry drivers and cyclists, lorry restrictions, and fleet management. Further information is in CTC’s briefing on goods vehicles.57

31. In large part the elevated risk of death amongst cyclists occurs on the major road network, especially rural “A” roads. Table 1 shows that the risk of death in 2010 for cyclists was 313 deaths per billion kilometres on rural “A” roads, 15 times higher than the equivalent on all urban roads (21 deaths/bn kms).58

32. This increase in risk on rural “A” road network is not limited cyclists, yet it is among that group that the difference in risk between rural “A” roads and urban roads is greatest—for motorcyclists and car drivers the risk on rural “A” roads is only around 5 times higher than in urban conditions, and the difference between the two is largely down to the greater number of single vehicle crashes amongst these road users on rural roads.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban A roads</th>
<th>Urban minor</th>
<th>All urban</th>
<th>Rural A roads</th>
<th>Rural minor</th>
<th>All rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyclists</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor cyclists</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car drivers</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33. The Highways Agency should be specifically tasked by Ministers with a responsibility to improve access and safety for non-motorised road users throughout its network, liaising with local authorities as appropriate. Specifically we call for the reinstatement of the HA’s Non-Motorised User Crossings programme.

34. As for the measures included in the Strategy, we welcome the long overdue increase in penalty fines. This long been needed: fine levels are at an almost nominal amount and have failed to keep up with inflation. As for the proposal to create a website giving information on road safety performance distributed locally may in some senses be useful, but risks focusing attention once more on numbers rather than “risk” of different activities. Without adequate exposure data on a local level for walking and cycling, increases in these healthy active modes may result in lowered risk but increased numbers of casualties. This in turn may trigger erroneous concerns about cyclist or pedestrian safety when better quality data may reveal an improvement in overall safety. Steps that better integrate public health outcomes with road safety policy can help undermine these concerns.

CTC, the national cyclists’ organisation

October 2011

Supplementary evidence from the CTC, the national cyclists’ organisation (RSF 38a)

INTRODUCTION

1. I was grateful for the opportunity to give evidence on behalf of CTC, the national cyclists’ organisation, to the above inquiry. This supplementary note has five purposes:

   — It updates on some evidence on the relationship between road infrastructure and cyclists’ safety, which I referred to in my oral evidence—this was published since our original written evidence was submitted. It notes the particular importance of speed reduction measures at major junctions, and notes with concern the remarks of the Road Safety Minister expressing the hope there are no cyclists using the roads for which he is responsible.

   — It references what we believe to have been misleading statements given to the House by the Road Safety Minister, prior to his decision to implement a trial of longer lorries on UK’s roads. CTC urges the Committee to question him about this—he should at least be asked to put the Hansard record straight.

   — It addresses the question of improving road safety in deprived areas. I confess I failed to hear correctly that Q52 on this point referenced the previous question, and that I therefore answered a much wider question—although most of the points I made could quite legitimately have been linked to the issue of cyclists’ safety in deprived areas.

   — It provides an answer to a question raised in oral evidence about cuts to roads policing.

   — Finally, it also references the evidence I mentioned on the proportion of cyclists’ fatal and serious injuries which involve red-light jumping or disobedience of junction controls by cyclists and drivers respectively.

58 DfT, Reported Road Casualties Great Britain 2010, table RAS30018.
2. I would reiterate that the four key issues which need to be addressed in order to improve cyclists’ safety are:

- Speed and speeding (see our written evidence paragraphs 13–14 and response to Q50 in our oral evidence).
- Road traffic law and enforcement (see paragraphs 17–23).
- Cycle-friendly planning and design, particularly in relation to major roads and junctions (see paragraphs 15 and 31–33).
- Lorries (see paragraphs 28–30 and responses to Q52 and Q55–57).

CTC is concerned that, despite the strategic framework’s aims to incentivise more as well as safer cycling (through the adoption of rate-based and perception-based indicators, which we support), it is weak on all four issues.

3. As noted in our written and oral evidence, CTC strongly supports the provision of cycle training to the Bikeability national standard, whose development we initiated. We are pleased that the Government’s strategic framework for road safety reiterates a commitment to provide dedicated funding for child cycle training. We nonetheless believe that the provision of cycle training for teenagers (when they are beginning to travel further and use busier roads) and for adults (who wish either to discover or rediscover cycling later in life) has an enormous potential role in promoting more and safer cycling, thereby contributing not only to road safety but also to the Government’s wider health, environmental and other objectives.

The Links between Road Design and Cycle Safety, Particularly at Major Junctions

4. In answer to Q50 in the oral evidence session, I mentioned a Government-commissioned report on the relationship between road infrastructure and cyclists’ safety,58 which was published since our written evidence was submitted. In essence, it finds that the measures with the strongest evidence of safety benefits for cyclists are those which involve reducing traffic speeds. There is good evidence of benefits from 20mph schemes—not just for cyclists but for other road users too—and also from a variety of measures to reduce speeds at junctions. These include speed tables at more minor junctions, raised pavements across side-road entry-points, signalising roundabouts and other major junctions, or redesigning them to reduce the maximum potential speed through the junction (eg by requiring drivers to perform a turn as they enter the junction, rather than being able to take a “racing line” through it).

5. Cyclists’ fatalities at major junctions have attracted significant news coverage lately,60 61 with prominent campaigns for junction redesigns at Bow Roundabout and Kings Cross, following recent cyclist fatalities at those locations.62 75% of reported cyclist collisions occur at or near junctions,63 and this proportion is higher on built-up than non-built up roads (eg it is 79% in London).64 It is therefore essential to focus on junction safety, particularly on more major roads. We note incidentally that, whilst Transport for London’s proposed redesign of Bow roundabout is still far from perfect, at least it now has the potential to be developed into what could become a model solution for other major roundabouts around the UK.

6. CTC was concerned at a parliamentary answer given during transport questions by Road Safety Minister Mike Penning MP. Asked about the provision of infrastructure for cyclists, he said: “Most of the roads I am responsible for are part of the national road infrastructure, and I hope there are no cyclists on that part of the infrastructure.”65 CTC notes that, whilst cyclists are banned from motorways, they are generally entitled to use trunk roads—indeed there are some cases where the nearest alternative route involves a detour of several miles. In any case they will often need to cross both these road networks at junctions, including in urban settings eg parts of the West Midlands and Greater Manchester. Our written submission included figures showing that cyclists are 28 times more at risk per mile cycled on non-built-up A roads than on minor urban roads, a discrepancy which is far greater than for other road user groups. It has also been reported that 49 cyclists were killed or seriously injured on the Highways Agency network in 2010.66 The hazards and barriers to movement caused by trunk road and motorways (including their junctions) are often very difficult to avoid, for pedestrians and cyclists alike. There is a huge need to address the severance they cause.

58 S Adams and S Reid. Infrastructure and cyclist safety. Transport Research Laboratory report PPR580, 2011 (see www.trl.co.uk/online_store/reports_publications/trl_reports/cat_road_user_safety/report_infrastructure_and_cyclist_safety.html).
60 Second fatal collision at cycle route roundabout. Evening Standard, 14.11.11 (see www.thisislondon.co.uk/article-24009578-second-fatal-collision-at-cycle-route-roundabout.do).
64 House of Commons Debates, 12 January 2012, c309 (see www.theyworkforyou.com/debate/?id=2012-01-12b.309.4).
7. We therefore call for the reinstatement of the Highways Agency’s Non-Motorised Users Crossings Programme, whose funding was axed in 2004. We also hope the Department for Transport and Highways Agency will also take note of developments at Bow roundabout, as they may well be of wider application.

**MISLEADING STATEMENTS TO THE HOUSE ON LONGER LORRIES AND CYCLISTS’ SAFETY**

8. As noted in my answer to Q52 of the oral evidence session, lorries are implicated in around a fifth of cyclists’ fatalities on Britain’s roads, and over a half of those in London. It is therefore of great importance to devote serious attention to this specific issue. A range of measures needs to be deployed (are summarised in paragraph 30 of our original evidence, or more fully in CTC’s briefing on cycling and goods vehicles), with the Government playing an active role in monitoring their effectiveness and spreading good practice.

9. My oral evidence also highlighted what CTC believes to have been two misleading statements given to the Commons by Road Safety Minister Mike Penning MP, before giving the go-ahead to a trial to permit longer lorries in UK roads. On 15 September he said:

“because the turning wheels of longer semi-trailers are at the back, their turning circles are much tighter than those of existing lorries. I know that because I used to drive heavy goods vehicles myself”.

… and shortly afterwards …

“We considered carefully whether longer semi-trailers posed a risk to cyclists in particular, and the risk is not there.”

10. CTC wrote to the Minister asking him to provide evidence for the above statements. Alternatively we requested that he amend the Hansard record if the two statements above could not be substantiated. Regarding turning circles, the Minister’s response was that “The comment that I made, about the benefits of steering axles, reflected my own experience when I had the opportunity to see a prototype of a longer semi-trailer a little while ago.” His letter provided no evidence of any specific consideration having been given to cyclists’ safety. However a Parliamentary Question was later tabled asking whether the Department had assessed the safety implications for cyclists of the longer lorries trial. The Minister simply replied that “The revised Impact Assessment published with the Government’s Report on the Consultation into longer semi-trailers does not disaggregate the safety risk between different categories of road user.” There has been no correction to the Hansard record.

11. CTC is extremely concerned that the trial has been given the go-ahead without consideration of cyclists’ safety, let alone any measures to mitigate the obvious potential risks to the lives of cyclists and other road users. The trial could have been an opportunity to persuade operators to adopt the fitting of cameras and sensors, and the provision of cycle training for participating drivers. These are already best practice solutions which probably deserve to become mainstream lorry safety features over time regardless of the success or otherwise of the trial. However these have been left as optional. The criteria for determining the success or otherwise of the trial have not been discussed, hence no steps have been taken to ensure that participating lorry operators have the equipment or processes in place to gather the data required.

12. CTC urges the Committee to question the Minister about the longer lorries trial. He should be invited either to provide evidence for the statements above or to set the Hansard record straight, and to consider what requirements should be made of lorry operators to mitigate the potential risks of the trial, and the means by which it will be assessed.

**CYCLISTS’ SAFETY IN DEPRIVED AREAS: THE ROLE OF 20 MPH AND CYCLE TRAINING**

13. We are not aware of specific research comparing cyclists’ safety in deprived and well-off areas. None was identified in a Government-commissioned literature review, although it found that child pedestrians were three to five times more at risk in the most deprived areas than the most affluent ones (a subsequent NAO report placed the figure at four times). We suspect the picture for cyclists is likely to be similar, with the same causal factors as those identified in the literature review.

14. CTC supports the calls which have been made (eg in the NAO report) for a particular focus on delivering 20 mph schemes in more deprived areas. However it is also important to focus on major roads and junctions in deprived areas, as these have a bigger impact on the lives and journey patterns of people living in these areas.

---

68 House of Commons debates, 15 September 2011, c 1163 (see www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2011–09–15b.1162.9#g1163.1).
69 His letter provided no evidence of any specific consideration having been given to cyclists’ safety.
70 There has been no correction to the Hansard record.
72 House of Commons debates, 22 November 2011, c259W (see www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2011–11–22h.81709.h).
73 CTC urges the Committee to question the Minister about the longer lorries trial. He should be invited either to provide evidence for the statements above or to set the Hansard record straight, and to consider what requirements should be made of lorry operators to mitigate the potential risks of the trial, and the means by which it will be assessed.
74 We suspect the picture for cyclists is likely to be similar, with the same causal factors as those identified in the literature review.
75 CTC is extremely concerned that the trial has been given the go-ahead without consideration of cyclists’ safety, let alone any measures to mitigate the obvious potential risks to the lives of cyclists and other road users. The trial could have been an opportunity to persuade operators to adopt the fitting of cameras and sensors, and the provision of cycle training for participating drivers. These are already best practice solutions which probably deserve to become mainstream lorry safety features over time regardless of the success or otherwise of the trial. However these have been left as optional. The criteria for determining the success or otherwise of the trial have not been discussed, hence no steps have been taken to ensure that participating lorry operators have the equipment or processes in place to gather the data required.

---

75 CTC urges the Committee to question the Minister about the longer lorries trial. He should be invited either to provide evidence for the statements above or to set the Hansard record straight, and to consider what requirements should be made of lorry operators to mitigate the potential risks of the trial, and the means by which it will be assessed.

---

76 We suspect the picture for cyclists is likely to be similar, with the same causal factors as those identified in the literature review.
areas. Our original evidence shows that cyclists are over 5 times more at risk on urban A roads than urban minor roads.

15. During our oral evidence session, it was suggested that education may be of limited value for addressing the deprivation issue, as the children who need to be reached may not be particularly engaged through schools. CTC would point to evidence that driver education has little or no impact on drivers’ safety, except where it focuses on developing hazard perception skills.75 76 This evidence also indicates that driving experience gained after obtaining one’s licence has a much greater safety benefit, and that this supports the case for graduated licencing.

16. Cycle training may nonetheless play an important role in developing road safety awareness, and may also be a way to engage young people who are otherwise hard to reach. Our Bike Club initiative,77 delivered in partnership with two charities specialising in supporting Youth Clubs (UK Youth) and extended education (ContiYou), offers young people a range of activities, including cycle training, cycle maintenance classes, led rides and expeditions. It reaches these groups through youth clubs and other community settings outside of conventional education. Many Bike Club projects are located in deprived areas. They often focus particularly on young people at risk of exclusion, those with physical or learning disabilities, and those suffering from being overweight or obese (conditions also associated both with deprivation and with a range of emotional, mental health and behavioural problems).

17. The experience of Bike Club is that cycling is a highly effective way to engage young people who may be hard to reach in other ways. They get to participate in a non-competitive physical and sociable activity, they learn to support one another, they gain practical skills (eg through learning cycle maintenance), and develop their roadcraft skills.

18. CTC suspects that cycle training for teenagers may be good not just for their safety as cyclists, but also for their safety and competence when they learn to drive. This possibility (and the need to research it) has been flagged up in a Government-commissioned evidence-review.76 If confirmed, this would indicate that cycle training could play a valuable role in pre-driver training, not only by developing road awareness but also by helping to form attitudes based on an appreciation of the perspective of non-motorised road users. It may also support teenagers in continuing to cycle as they enter early adulthood, thereby providing health and other benefits.

19. Providing cycle training, particularly in a non-school setting, may also be an effective way to tackle “anti-social” cycling behaviour. Teenagers struggle to understand why adults first tell them not to cycle on the roads, then later condemn them for riding on pavements. Being young and agile, they also have little understanding of what it is like to be old and fragile, and hence how frightened pedestrians can be when a cyclist rides past at speed. Nor are they likely to be receptive to being lectured about their behaviour by “authority figures” (eg teachers, police officers or public authorities). However they typically regard cycle trainers as people who are offering them something they really value, be it enjoyment, skills, or simply the “rite of passage” of completing their level 3 Bikeability training, with the additional independence they can gain as a result. Cycle trainers are therefore more likely to be listened to when they explain the importance of respecting other road users’ safety, especially that of pedestrians.

ROAD TRAFFIC POLICING AND SENTENCING OF OFFENDERS

20. During oral evidence, a question was asked about any evidence of recent cuts to roads policing. CTC’s briefing on road traffic policing77 does in fact note that the number of traffic police officers in England and Wales fell by 19% between 1998–99 and 2007–08, even though the police force as a whole grew by 12%. We do not know of more recent evidence on policing numbers. However there is evidence that funding cuts to road safety partnerships—combined with ministerial statements about “ending the war on the motorist”—have also prompted cuts to safety camera funding.78 A decision to switch off cameras in Oxfordshire had to be reversed due to a clear and rapid increase in casualities.79

21. CTC’s written evidence also noted a sharp reduction in the proportion of drivers convicted of causing death or bodily harm through driving who received immediate custodial sentences—this fell from 92% in 2006 to just 51% in 2010.

73 S Helman et al How can we produce safer new drivers? TRL report INS005, 2010 (see www.trl.co.uk/online_store/reports_publications/trl_reports/cat_paper_insight_reports/report_how_can_we_produce_safer_new_drivers.htm).
78 www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-12928747
22. CTC is not averse to the use of non-custodial sentences in cases where a driver with a good record and of good character causes serious injury or even death, if it is clear that this was simply due to a “momentary lapse of attention”. However this comes with two caveats:

— The offence itself should be described as “dangerous”, in accordance with the definition of “dangerous” driving in section 2A(1)(b) of the Road Traffic Act 1991. This definition relates solely to the manner in which the vehicle was driven, and not the driver’s state of mind. Offences which cause danger that would be obvious to a careful and competent driver should not be dismissed as merely being “careless”, as this is both legally incorrect, and belittles the seriousness of endangering other road users’ safety. Such lax attitudes are not accepted in any other area of safety legislation.

— There should be much greater use of driving bans in such cases. Drivers who have dangerous lapses of attention can justifiably be deemed unfit to drive, and prevented from doing so, on public safety grounds alone (as we do for those with defective eyesight etc).

Further information about CTC’s views on the framework of bad driving offences and sentencing are in a CTC briefing on bad driving.\(^{80}\)

**Cyclists’ Offences**

23. I noted in oral evidence that CTC has recently seen figures from Transport for London, showing that, in the last three years for which TfL has data, cyclists jumping red lights or disobeying junction controls accounted for 5% of cyclists’ fatal and serious injuries, whereas 15% involved red light jumping or disobedience of junction controls by drivers.\(^{81}\) CTC’s briefing on Cyclists’ behaviour and the law\(^{82}\) provides further data on the relative risk which cyclists and drivers respectively—and law-breaking cyclists and drivers specifically—impose on themselves and on other road users.

24. CTC is strongly supportive of increases in roads traffic policing, and fully acknowledges the responsibilities of cyclists, as well as drivers, to behave with respect for the rules of the road and of other road users. However with the finite resources now available for roads policing, it is vital to target those offences which cause the greatest risk.

CTC, the national cyclists’ organisation

January 2012

---

**Written evidence from the Police Federation of England and Wales (RSF 46)**

**About Us**

The Police Federation of England and Wales is the representative body and the voice of over 138,000 members of the police service below the rank of superintendent.

Established by statute, we have a dual responsibility: firstly, for the welfare of officers; and secondly, for the provision of an efficient police service. It is in this capacity that we are submitting our recommendations.

**Executive Summary**

The Police Federation of England and Wales welcomes the opportunity to provide written evidence to this inquiry into the Government’s strategic framework for road safety. As a key partner, the police service of England and Wales plays an important part in the business of saving lives and preventing injury to the road users in the UK. Through enforcement activity of current legislation, education of road users and monitoring of driver behaviour, proactive targeting to deny criminal use of the road network and via investigation of collisions involving death and serious injury, the police officers of England and Wales are at the forefront of road safety and should remain so. The recent decline in deaths and collisions resulting in serious injury are encouraging and are in no small part to the activity of police officers up and down the country. We fear that the current decline in police officer numbers could undermine this trend.

We welcome a number of the initiatives within the framework which we believe will continue to build on these reductions if they are sufficiently resourced and coordinated as part of a nationally set agenda. However, the Federation is concerned that the advent of Police and Crime Commissioners coupled with the continuing decentralisation of funding and setting of spending priorities could undermine some of the aims within the framework. In the current absence of further details of the role and function of PCCs it is difficult to envisage how the road safety priorities of individual PCCs will integrate nationally unless they are coordinated and led by central government.

---


\(^{81}\) Evidence table attached. Compare lines 12, 14 and 19 (207 cyclist KSIs = 15% of the total) with lines 17, 30 and 32 (73 cyclist KSI’s = 5% of the total).

\(^{82}\) CTC. Cyclists’ behaviour and the law ([www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Briefings/Cyclists-behaviour-and-law_brf_.pdf](http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Briefings/Cyclists-behaviour-and-law_brf_.pdf)).
**Specific Comment**

Our specific view on some of the detail is set out below with reference to the page from the document.

**Page 8**

“Remedial education for those who make mistakes and low level offences…”

*Comment*—We support the current ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) initiative in this area and this provides an opportunity to build on this.

“Tougher enforcement for the small minority of road users who chose to drive dangerously”.

*Comment*—As budgets continue to be tightened, chief officers have been making difficult decisions in relation to protecting service provision with the result that specialist roads policing departments are being dismantled to supplement response policing teams. Without the expertise of highly skilled and trained roads policing officers it will be much more difficult to bring successful prosecutions to even the simplest of road traffic offences. The huge quantity of case law on road traffic matters cannot be ignored and having the right officers with the right skills will be vital in making this effective.

“Extend this approach to cover all dangerous and careless offences not just speeding”.

*Comment*—In our view it is unlikely that this measure will succeed without additional resources.

“...more local and community decision making from decentralisation…”

*Comment*—The advent of Police and Crime Commissioners will bring a local focus; however, there should be a central strategy for the national motorway network which all policing areas are committed to. The current ACPO influence to chief officers rarely produces tangible responses if it requires more or diverted resources. This situation may only get worse with greater localism.

**Page 9 third bullet point**

“Supporting the development of better tools for road safety professionals by providing better signposting of key facts and evidence, synthesising and making more accessible and working with road safety groups on identifying best practice resources. This will also help international road safety by making our expertise readily available to other countries”.

*Comment*—Whilst we would support better access to analysis and road safety data the key is the use of this data to produce results. Without the ability to enforce and take action it will be a hollow investment

**Page 10—Targeted Enforcement sanctions**

Careless driving FPN (Fixed Penalty Notices) and other changes to legislation including drink-driving and drug driving.

*Comment*—We would like to see more detail about the plans for the enforcement of these proposals. In some areas of the country, dedicated patrolling of the road network is now minimal. On the national motorways most of this activity has been replaced Highways Agency Traffic Officers. Faced with similar budget restraints activity from all but essential patrolling in response to an incident has almost entirely ceased. If there are no traffic officers or police officers on the roads enforcement activity will just not happen. It is difficult to imagine how chief officers will be made to respond to strategic priorities given the pressures being driven by their local agenda.

**Page 21 para 2.3**

25% fall in road deaths 2007–09

… This could be attributed to the record number of police officers in conjunction with other public spending on the road network and infrastructure. Motorway information signs etc.

*Comment*—Over the past decade there has been significant investment in terms of highway infrastructure and information to drivers combined with record police officer numbers. There can be little doubt that this activity has contributed greatly to the 25% fall in road deaths between 2007 and 2009. It would be easy to become complacent. 26,912 people killed or seriously injured is far too many at both a personal and economic level. The focus should be on building further on the excellent work achieved thus far.

**Page 33 para 3.17**

Road Safety portal for professionals...

*Comment*—The Federation fully supports this initiative and would like to be actively engaged in its development. It is our members that would benefit greatly from this kind of product.
Role of the Voluntary Sector

Comment—Whilst the voluntary sector can and do play an important part and there are many varied and valuable interest groups engaged in road safety issues. The safety and protection of its citizens should lie at the heart of the government’s responsibility. This area of work is too important to be left to the voluntary sector alone.

Page 38 para 3.29

Vehicle Technology

Comment—The role of government in incentivising investment in vehicle technology would be sound and should be encouraged. There is a vast level of expertise and knowledge within the police service that should be utilised in this area.

Page 60 para 5.13

“We have concluded that improving enforcement is likely to have more impact on the most dangerous drink drivers than lowering the prescribed alcohol limit.”

Comment—We agree that enforcement of all road traffic legislation is key to producing safer roads. The members of the Police Federation of England and Wales can provide this enforcement as far as local, national and strategic guidance and investment will allow us. Prevention is better than cure.

November 2011

Written evidence from Quentin Willson (RSF 50)

Police Road Traffic Presence

The numbers of traffic police on UK roads has declined significantly in the last decade due to high cost and the previous government’s safety camera strategy. While KSI have reached encouragingly low levels this can’t be solely attributed to speed cameras. In my opinion the decline in injuries and fatalities can be attributed to much improved active and passive safety in modern vehicles which has percolated down to the most vulnerable social groups. Airbags, side impact beams and ABS brakes are now present on the vast majority of cars on UK roads. Improved vehicle technology has been the greatest single factor in reducing injuries and fatalities within the vehicle cabin.

However, to maintain the welcome fall in KSI we need a greater police traffic presence on UK roads. Marked police cars are mobile, visible and a currency that everyone understands. Their deterrent effect significantly reduces speeds for longer periods and is much greater than that of safety cameras, which slow vehicles down only at camera sites. The public also perceives marked traffic police as a much fairer road safety strategy without the negative charges of revenue raising and local council iniquity. Public engagement is therefore greater. I would argue that unmarked cars don’t offer the same visible deterrent effect and that greater numbers of highly visible traffic units should be deployed, particularly on motorways where some average speeds can be as high as 90 mph.

Other obvious benefits of a greater traffic police presence include the ability to find and stop uninsured, unlicensed and dangerous drivers—an immensely important resource in lowering the hugely dangerous motoring underclass which, given the growing financial distress of low income and low demographic group drivers, is likely to grow further. I believe that traffic units must become a central bulwark in the defence against the one million plus miscreant drivers currently on UK roads. And without more traffic police the ANPR and MIB insurance data base can’t function properly. It’s all very well getting a hit on an ANPR camera, but if there’s no traffic unit to take immediate action, the opportunity of capture is quickly lost.

Cost is a huge issue here, but the social benefits of a greater traffic police presence are considerable in reducing overall speeds, deterring dangerous driving, protecting law-abiding motorists from the uninsured and unlicensed and instilling a respect for road safety laws into the UK driving population. Traffic cops really are the ultimate deterrent.

Driving Test

I believe the current driving test to be unfit for purpose. Its absurd that we don’t teach new drivers how to drive at night, in bad weather, on motorways or even, more critically, how to overtake. The DSA should have done much more to improve the test and levels of tuition. Changing driving behaviour begins with the driving test and the vast majority of drivers never undergo any further training or tuition in their entire driving careers. We will never know how many lives (particularly young drivers) have been lost through inadequate driving tuition but I believe this number would be measured in hundreds every year. Its absolutely critical that the current driving test is overhauled and that we examine graduated licences, re-testing, motorway tuition and
create a new high seriousness into the craft of driving. Reducing injuries and fatalities on UK roads begins with driver education. Nothing is more certain.

Re-testing

For an advanced society to permit drivers to undergo a few short months of basic tuition and then cheerfully allow them to drive for fifty more years without any further education whatsoever is insane. The vast majority of drivers, would I believe, submit to a five-yearly re-testing programme if they were offered a fiscal incentive to do so. The insurance industry could do much to encourage a cultural shift towards higher driving standards through re-testing rewarded by significantly lower premiums. Rolled out as a voluntary system initially (government legislation at this stage would appear heavy-handed) this self-selection process would carry social kudos and could soon become the basis of a wide-ranging behavioural change. I’d recommend a pilot programme with the insurance industry with the long term view of making re-testing mandatory within a decade. Socially, this is a very easy initiative to argue.

Cause of Accidents

The driving public knows very little about the causes of road traffic accidents. Far too little detail is made available and as a society we need to be aware of why we cause or are involved in accidents. Data should be analysed and broken down into the major causes of RTAs and made freely available to press and public. The educative effect of knowing the most common cause of crashes would have a preventative effect. Drivers often aren’t aware of what constitutes a dangerous situation before its too late. Identifying and highlighting the often formulaic pattern of accidents on UK roads should be a core of driver education. This data is available and should be marshalled to include most common causes, social groups, type of vehicle, road type, area, time, speed etc. Knowing exactly the reasons how and when we hurt ourselves and others will help change mindsets. This information should be made much more accessible and transparent and be a key part of future road safety strategy.

Signage and Road Planning

Poor road engineering and inadequate signage causes accidents. Growing dependency on sat-navs has deskilled many UK drivers and accidents are all too often caused by navigational or directional confusion. Priority should be given to re-engineering junctions and road systems with a high accident frequency. Signage, particularly in major cities needs drastic improvement and every effort should be made to prevent building-in of the opportunity for error. Sadly, the UK skill levels of drivers is declining and it’s vital to predict and identify road situations and signage that contributes to or compounds error. The previous government’s tendency to site safety cameras at accident black spots is just reactive. What should be done is to establish why the particular road system, junction or signage is causing drivers to make dangerous errors. We should be engineering out the possibility for mistakes.

The hugely expensive illuminated motorway signage system is a national scandal. The information displayed is often repetitive, too simple and contributes very little to road safety or improving journey times. More seriously drivers don’t trust the information displayed because its often wrong or inaccurate. Such a massive investment is being routinely wasted and much could be done to make this system far more informative. Time and resources should be put into re-establishing overhead motorway signs as a trusted and reliable informational portal that functions in real-time is not solely operated automatically and also contains educational safety information.

Young Drivers

The only group where KSIs aren’t declining is young drivers. I’m seriously concerned that as a society we fail new drivers and just expect them to survive in an ever increasingly complicated and demanding road environment. The majority are startlingly unprepared for the rigours of UK roads. That’s why so many die every year.

I passionately believe that we don’t teach young drivers to actually drive, only to pass a test, and one that’s woefully inadequate. One of the most important things this Committee could do is to consider a revolutionary new young driver programme where driving is part of the school syllabus, much like citizenship. Teaching kids to drive at 17 is at their least receptive age. Their mindsets are already corrupted and corroded by video games like Grand Theft Auto and the worst excesses of Top Gear. Raging testosterone doesn’t help either and even the most powerful road safety messages get lost in the teenage red mist. Teach them when they’re 14, when mindsets are much purer, and any road safety messages will be far better received and engagement will be greater.

I’ve submitted the results of a Swedish government programme where pre-licence age drivers were given early tuition and then compared to their peer group who learnt to drive normally. The decline in accidents in the sample group was 41%—one of the highest improvements in any road safety programme globally.

Currently the UK has a commercial Young Driver tuition facility with 14 sites around the country (www.youngdriver.eu). I’ve watched with great interest and seen an evangelical zeal among young drivers to
treat driving as a craft and a responsible social skill. The change in mindset is simply astonishing. Children as young as 11 use duel controlled cars with ADI instructors on private land and learn the real bedrock of car control and safety. They’re hugely receptive, anxious to learn and have mastered the all-important below-the-dashboard techniques before they start learning on public roads. They are therefore much more able to use the limited time available in the official test process to learn road craft and how not to hurt themselves or others. Expecting new drivers to learn safety judgements while wrestling with clutch and gears on a public road for the first time, is patently ridiculous.

I earnestly urge the Committee to look carefully at this concept as it could save 200 lives a year and change the mind set of an entire generation of drivers. 25,000 pre-licence drivers have already gone through the Young Driver programme so there’s ample data to argue a strong empirical case. I’m currently in discussions with Mike Penning on this subject and am enormously keen to push this forward.

Of all the things this Committee discusses, a change in young driver training could have the greatest road safety benefit of all.

January 2012

Written evidence from PACTS (RSF 55)

BACKGROUND

The following graph illustrates that while levels of cycle traffic have mostly increased over the past 16 years, the number of people killed has fluctuated.

---

In 2010 cyclist deaths rose from 104 to 111. The number of serious injuries continued to rise for the third year, from 2428 in 2007 to 2660 in 2010.

In 2011, for which data is only available for the first three quarters, the steady rise in cyclist casualties continued. Comparing the year Oct 2010–Sept 2011 to Oct 2009–Sept 2010, the number of cyclists killed and seriously injured rose by 8%.

A measure of cyclist casualties per 100,000 population in England showed that the cyclist casualty rate for the 10% most deprived areas is greater than for the 10% least deprived areas. Additionally, these least deprived areas make up the greatest proportion of pedal cycle trips.

In 2010, in 86% of collisions involving a cyclist and another vehicle, the other vehicle was a car. HGVs account for 4% of collisions with cyclists where the cyclist was seriously injured, but 20% where the cyclist was killed. Similarly, Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs) account for nearly twice as many deaths as they do serious injuries.

---

83 General overview and trends in reported casualties, Road Casualties in Great Britain: 2010 Annual Report, Department for Transport (DfT).
84 Road casualties and deprivation, Road Casualties in Great Britain: 2007 Annual Report, DfT. Page 57.
Campaigns for cycle safety often focus on fatalities which occur in collisions with HGVs in cities, but it is important to consider all collisions and all casualties in all locations. A slight or serious injury could have been a fatal if the circumstances had been slightly different. A full analysis of collisions involving cyclists has been carried out by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) “Collisions involving pedal cyclists on Britain's roads: establishing the causes.”

HOW TO IMPROVE CYCLE SAFETY

Shared responsibility

In the safe systems approach to road safety the aim is to design a road system where inevitable human errors of judgement do not result in death or serious injury. Responsibility for keeping users safe even when they make mistakes is shared amongst the designers, builders and providers of the system. It is also shared between users of the system. A balance in responsibility for keeping cyclists safe needs to be found between cyclists themselves and the vehicles who pose the risk to cyclists.

Design

A literature review commissioned by the Department for Transport (DfT) and written by TRL found that the greatest benefits of all interventions to increase cycle safety come from reducing motor vehicle speeds. Such an intervention has wider benefits for other road users as well as greatly reducing risk imposed on cyclists. Lower speeds are particularly beneficial at junctions where most cycle injuries in multi-vehicle collisions take place. Therefore 20mph zones in urban areas and design features to slow vehicles such as raised side road entry treatments are desirable. However, careful consideration should be given to traffic calming measures which may increase risk to cyclists, such as road narrowing.

As reducing motor speeds is the intervention which is most beneficial to cycle safety, the government should complete a national digital database of speed limits, with the view of advancing towards the universal fitment of ISA. Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA) is a driver assistance system aimed at increasing compliance with speed limits.

Kerbed, segregated cycle lanes are not wide-spread in the UK, and the TRL literature review found no evidence in Europe regarding the safety performance of kerbed cycle lanes. Other design features not widely used in the UK include cycle lane markings continued across junctions, cycle pre-signals and Trixi mirrors (mounted at traffic lights, giving drivers of heavy vehicles a view of any cyclists to their left), the latter of which are now being trialled in London. Further trials and evidence gathering for these features should be carried out in this country.

Although evidence showing the effectiveness of cycle lanes is limited in the UK, it has been found that many people find cycling a bad experience using existing roads, are put off cycling by having to negotiate barriers cyclists respond with any of the following four basic approaches. 

- Complete avoidance of traffic.
- Keeping out of the way and guarded.

Attitudes

The concept of a shared responsibility may not yet be fully present in road user attitudes. Qualitative research carried out on behalf of the Department for Transport found that the most important barriers to road cycling are related to other road users: the behaviour of other road users; and the volume and speed of traffic. In reaction to these barriers cyclists respond with any of the following four basic approaches:

85 Transport Research Laboratory, 2009. “Collisions involving pedal cyclists on Britain’s roads: establishing the causes” All statistics on Page 2 are from DfT data series Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain.


87 http://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/items/17bb3ed2-1209-b3e9-5357-614f329a72e1/1/Understanding_Walking&_Cycling_Report_WEB.pdf

Interactions between road users can go wrong due to acts of aggression, failures of attitude, failures of competence/understanding, and failures of expectation.

These failures of attitudes can be addressed through education, enforcement, and marketing. Training for cyclists should be widely available for both children and adults. While cycle training in all schools will capture the cycling (and driving) population of the future, those adults who missed out on cycle training at school should be encouraged to take training as they take up or start cycling again. The UK needs to re-find its “lost generation” of cyclists: cycling should be seen as an enjoyable means to independence. The DfT Think! campaign for motorcycles “Perfect Day” captured this feeling, combined with a strong safety message.

A campaign focus such as the one given to motorcycle safety over recent years would be welcome. The current “Named Rider” motorcycle safety campaign not only increased awareness of the vulnerability of the motorcycle rider, but also gave an alternative to the shock tactic sometimes favoured by safety campaigns, which may have an undesired effect of discouraging riding. Targeted safety campaigns for both drivers and riders, in both urban and rural environments, as well as promotional campaigns capturing the independence and health benefits that cycling brings, would help the aim of making the UK cycle friendly.

Drawing the attention of drivers of cars, LGVs and HGVs, to the risks in interactions between cyclists and motorised vehicles should happen at a professional level as well as campaigning. Driving for Better Business, and schemes such as the Freight Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS), a membership scheme that aims to improve freight delivery in London, should be encouraged and financially supported by the government.

**Summary**

Cycling has health, environmental and societal benefits, and therefore should be promoted. While halting the rise in cyclist casualties needs to be a priority, safety campaigns which may discourage cycling would be detrimental to transport safety (through the “safety in numbers” trend). Moves to reduce cycling risks should be based on evidence and evaluation. This applies particularly to infrastructure improvements which need to be well-planned and designed.

It is possible to boost cycling levels while reducing cyclist casualties, as other European countries have demonstrated. This should be the UK’s goal.

*April 2012*

---
