

Beyond 2010 - a holistic approach to road safety in Great Britain

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Parliamentary Advisory Council
for Transport Safety



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Foreword

Over 20 years ago, Great Britain recognised the importance of a co-ordinated approach to reducing casualties on our roads. Successive governments have reaffirmed their commitment to research-based and evidence-led policies to make our roads safer. We welcome this resolve that has led us to being one of the leaders in casualty reduction in Europe.

Recent trends suggest that our performance is "flatlining". Deaths have not fallen as sharply as serious injuries. In particular, deaths involving drinking and driving, failure to wear a seat-belt or driving too fast (whether for the conditions or the speed limit) have failed to fall at all.

Now is the time to consider what further work we need to do beyond 2010 and what policy approaches we need to adopt as we near the end of the current round of casualty reduction. We also must place road casualty reduction and policy priorities in a wider context of changes in society.

This report offers the opportunity to see road safety and casualty reduction in a wider perspective. It is the result of considerable consultation within and beyond the road safety community. We welcome its publication and urge the government and Parliament to take seriously its recommendations.

Peter Bottomley MP

Louise Ellman MP

Parliamentary Co-Chairs

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Contents

3	Acknowledgements
4	Introduction
4	Methodology
5	Executive Summary
8	Recommendations
8	Visions and Targets
8	Achieving the Vision
8	The Sustainability Agenda: linking road safety, obesity and climate change
9	The Deprivation Effect
9	Ageing Population
9	Young Drivers
9	Economy and Employment
10	Offending and Policing
10	The Changing Vehicle
11	Visions and Targets
11	Road safety: the next steps
12	Tomorrow's Roads: safer for everyone
12	Critiques of targets
14	A vision for road safety
16	Creating road safety advocates
17	Vision Zero
17	Sustainable Safety
18	A Pragmatic Approach
19	Holistic Road Safety
21	Achieving the Vision
21	Leadership
21	Public opinion
23	Car culture
24	Scandal of tolerance
25	Co-ordinating the campaigners
26	Co-ordinating the machinery of government
29	The Sustainability Agenda: linking road safety, obesity and climate change
29	Sedentary lifestyles
29	Concern about traffic
30	The size of the problem
31	Climate change: the world's biggest challenge
32	Speed management
34	Street design as traffic calming
35	Building critical mass
37	Infrastructure and information

39	The Deprivation Effect
39	Neighbourhood Road Safety Initiative
40	Mainstreaming a co-ordinated approach
<hr/>	
43	Ageing Population
43	The nature of the shift
44	The nature of the risk
45	Vehicle design
46	Medical licensing, advice and information
48	Public transport
<hr/>	
51	Young Drivers
51	The scale of the problem
52	Learning and licensing
54	A question of attitude
56	An integrated approach to road user education
57	Parental involvement
58	Road safety and youth culture
59	Peer to peer
60	Sex and drugs
<hr/>	
61	Economy and Employment
61	Congestion
63	Driving at work
65	Role of the Health and Safety Executive
66	Powers of the Coroner
67	Recruitment and retention
<hr/>	
69	Offending and Policing
70	Tackling terrorism
70	Neighbourhoods policing
71	Technology
72	Drink and drug-driving
<hr/>	
75	The Changing Vehicle
75	Technology
77	Advanced Driver Assistance Systems
78	Ergonomics
80	The changing vehicle fleet
<hr/>	
82	Conclusion
<hr/>	
83	References
<hr/>	
86	Appendix 1
<hr/>	

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Introduction

As we approach 2010 and the expiry of the current road safety strategy and casualty reduction targets, it is appropriate to consider how best to continue working towards reducing death and injury on the roads. More than a narrow analysis of casualty statistics outlining who, what, where and how people are being killed and seriously injured, this report aims to position road safety in a broader context. Transport is a means to an end not an end in itself. Similarly casualties are not abstract events divorced from the causes of road use nor from the trends influencing who uses the road and how they interact with it. This report examines trends occurring across society and considers their impact on future road use and consequent potential implications for casualties.

Methodology

The research for this project began with a comprehensive programme of reading and a literature review. For such a wide ranging report, this took in government, Parliamentary and non-government reports and detailed research papers as well as press and professional journal coverage of topical issues. The process of research through literature review continued throughout the life of the project.

Central to gaining a deeper understanding of the issues road safety policy must address in the next round of casualty reduction was the stakeholder consultation. Thirty people were interviewed in summer 2006. Consultees' backgrounds ranged across vehicle design, policy, engineering, local government, driving instruction, cycling, urban design, motorcycling and risk assessment. A list of those interviewed is provided at Appendix 1. The semi-structured questionnaire asked about the factors that have contributed to the UK's strong history of casualty reduction, the role of targets and the impediments to further progress. It also aimed to gauge perceptions about the nature of the UK's overarching approach to road safety and the role of a vision in other countries.

An online survey was also used to gain insights into road safety priorities for the coming decade. This asked respondents to include their profession and interest in road issues and to rate the most likely causes of road crashes and their preferred solutions. The final part of the questionnaire asked for comments on four priority casualty groups: children, motorcyclists, driving at work and deprived areas. More than 600 people responded and many gave significant commentary. The notes from interviews and the online questionnaire were analysed using grounded theory methodology to discover themes and sub-themes in comments.

As the project developed and took shape, the advisory group gave feedback on process, content, structure and potential recommendations.

The UK has long been a leader in road safety and an important element of this success has been its pioneering use of targets to motivate government and non-government organisations to take action, encourage activity focused on priority casualty reduction areas and accurately monitor progress. Although national targets have been criticised in recent years as their use has expanded across all facets of public policy, the casualty reduction targets are strongly supported by those with responsibility for achieving them. Nonetheless, with the increasing need to involve a broader range of government agencies and non-government groups in efforts to reduce casualties, as well as the persistently high levels of deaths, there is scope to augment targets as the predominant impetus for activity and develop a wider vision for safety within road transport.

In considering the adoption of a vision for road safety, we have the example of those used in other jurisdictions. Sweden's approach is called Vision Zero whilst the Netherlands' is Sustainable Safety. An additional option is the pragmatic vision, based on reducing risk on the roads to within a range similar to that of other everyday activity.

The majority of road safety professionals interviewed for this project admired the aspirational nature of the Swedish Vision Zero and the commitment of the Swedish Government to achieving it. However, many believed that, at a philosophical level, road use contains inherent risk, that an aspiration to remove all risk of death and serious injury was not helpful and that it would not fit the 'British psyche'. In contrast, a combination of Sustainable Safety and the "pragmatic approach" presents a more viable alternative model. The vision for the post-2010 road casualty reduction strategy should be based on a holistic approach, with the ultimate goal of reducing risk on the roads to not more than twice that experienced elsewhere in everyday life.

In order for the vision to be adopted and for a programme of action to be implemented to achieve it, a high level of political leadership is required. Part of the difficulty in generating political leadership is the conflict between the public's expressed concern about safety on the roads and their ambivalence about some of the actions necessary to reduce casualties, particularly on the issue of speed management. To continue to achieve casualty reductions in the UK in future years, focused, co-operative and co-ordinated campaigns by a range of non-government organisations will be needed to build public support for the implementation of necessary interventions.

As road use is a highly regulated activity, it is also important that government departments work together to support casualty reduction policies and programmes. A frequent criticism in the project consultation interviews was that, while road safety policy has been effective in reducing casualties, it has been quite insular. Expanding on the core three 'E's, road safety also needs to move out of its silo and actively establish partnerships with other public and non-government agencies for whom improved road safety is not the prime focus, but where improvements support the achievement of their own objectives.

Tackling the health implications of the rapid rise in overweight and obesity and the consequences of climate change will be two of the Government's most challenging tasks in coming years. Improving road safety has a key role to play in these efforts, as establishing a road environment that is conducive to active travel has both health and environmental benefits. Within the traditional remit of road safety, speed management will be central to this, but the profession will also need to push the boundaries of its role, particularly in terms of supporting the liveable neighbourhoods agenda.

It is unfortunately the case that, although tackling poverty has been a focus for the current Government, deprivation levels in Britain are still high¹. This is of concern from a road safety perspective because deprivation has been found to be a risk factor for casualty involvement, particularly for child pedestrians. Over the past decade the connection between deprivation and casualties has been examined and received significant attention – indeed, as outlined in the opening chapter, an additional target for a faster rate of improvement in deprived areas was included in the **Tomorrow's Roads** strategy. This was achieved in 2005, with casualties in neighbourhood renewal areas falling 4% more than the whole of England². Despite this welcome achievement, casualties in deprived areas remain disproportionately high and require ongoing attention.

The UK population is ageing and likely to keep driving further, in larger numbers and for longer than previous generations. To improve safety while maintaining mobility will require a multi-faceted approach, encompassing vehicle design, vehicle safety technology and the provision of more comfortable, reliable public transport as an attractive alternative. Underpinning these changes will be the provision of engaging and clear information about ageing and driving. With their increased frailty and potentially declining capabilities, an older population poses a significant challenge to the road safety profession and the early implementation of a co-ordinated strategy is important to address these issues.

In developing future casualty reduction strategies, it is important to be alert to trends in the economy and employment as these have a direct impact on road use. Ensuring that transport supports continued economic growth will be a feature of future transport policy and with moves to encourage road pricing as a mechanism towards this, consideration of road pricing's potential safety consequences will be important. At the same time, new emphasis must be placed on safe driving at work, with the 'white van man' phenomenon and the strong service sector character of the UK's employment profile seeing a rise in employees out on the roads. This requires a more systematic approach to improving work-related road safety through a more regulatory oversight of driving at work.

As one of the three 'E's of road safety, enforcement underpins efforts to achieve compliance with traffic law and support safe road use. Despite this important role, there has been a real and perceived decline in traffic law enforcement activity other than by cameras. In part, the shifting of attention away from roads policing is due to other pressures on the Police. At national and local level, initiatives have been developed to tackle anti-social behaviour, street crime and, in the larger cities, gang-related gun and knife crime. At a global level, people-trafficking and terrorism have been a major public and governmental concern. At the other end of the scale, neighbourhoods policing has

¹ See Joseph Rowntree Foundation, <http://www.jrf.org.uk/child-poverty/>

² DfT (2007), *Tomorrow's Road – safer for everyone: the second three year review*, DfT, p18

become prominent in recent years as an important element of tackling crime in the context of its impact on quality of life. While there is some evidence of renewed interest in roads policing, the need to tackle terrorism, in particular, will continue to place demands on police resources. Articulating the benefits of increased roads policing within the framework of neighbourhoods policing and the Respect agenda and in terms of responding to community concerns offers additional support for increased activity.

The reduction in casualty levels seen in recent years has not been uniform and there is still an unacceptably – and disproportionately – high number of young people who kill and injure themselves and other road users each year. A significantly different approach to learning and licensing is needed as an early intervention to improve young people's safety on the road. A substantial body of research indicates that the attitudes young people hold towards driving are a significant contributory factor to their high casualty rate and that their attitudes are formed at an early age. Tackling young people's attitudes to driving will be a key element in reducing casualties in the longer term. Safe road use as a pedestrian, cyclist or motorist is a life skill and it is of concern that a co-ordinated approach, with each year's learning building on the last, is not applied nationally. Parental involvement is also an important factor in shaping attitudes towards road use. Programmes to support accompanying drivers should be evaluated for wider application. However, it is a defining characteristic for teenagers to rebel against authority figures and risky road behaviour may well be not only understood, but also actively sought out. Because the origins of the behaviour relate to the peer group's codes of acceptable and desirable behaviour and the need for peer approval, road safety messages need to tap into the social norms prevalent amongst young people. A twin track strategy is needed: changes to the learning and licensing regime to reduce casualty risk in the immediate future coupled with consistent persistent work to achieve generational change in attitudes.

No discussion of future road casualty reduction strategies would be complete without considering the role of technology, both in creating road risk and in mitigating it. The increasing popularity of nomadic devices and the introduction of driver hazard alert systems raise the issues of human-machine interface and distraction while driving. In considering how best to respond to the road safety implications of these, devising a reliable assessment procedure and providing accurate and accessible information to drivers will be important. Developing an integrated plan to manage the safe and effective introduction of technology-based safety interventions is necessary to maximise the benefits.

Visions and targets

That the next stage of road casualty reduction include an ambitious target (or targets) as an integral element.

That a target for reducing deaths is set, in addition to a target for reducing combined deaths and serious injuries.

That the United Kingdom adopt a vision to guide future road safety policy.

That an engagement plan to involve organisations and policy fields that have not traditionally worked in road safety is developed as part of a future strategy.

That the next stage of road casualty reduction is based on a holistic approach towards the ultimate achievement of risk on the roads being not more than twice that experienced elsewhere in everyday life.

Achieving the Vision

That members of the Delivery Board are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, some of whom have championed and led partnerships.

That indicators for safer roads within local areas are established via the Local Area Agreement process. This could include vehicle speeds, number of people/ children walking and cycling, opinion surveys.

The Sustainability Agenda: linking road safety, obesity and climate change

That the Department for Transport (DfT) undertake to provide KSI per hour and per trip.

That a default speed limit of 20mph in all built up areas is implemented in ways that achieve high levels of compliance.

That priority is given to early type approval of time over distance cameras for use at speeds below 30 mph.

That, in the next round of Local Transport Plans, advice should be given to local authorities to look at extending application of Manual for Streets.

That, in advance of the development of mixed use street design guidance, the DfT should commission a series of events to disseminate best practice findings from the urban mixed priority routes project.

That trips made on the national cycling network are included in the national travel survey.

That all new residential developments are subject to a 'pint of milk test' (can a resident reach a shop for a pint of milk in under ten minutes without using a vehicle).

That a programme is developed to disseminate the findings of the cycling demonstration and sustainable travel towns.

That cycle-share schemes are supported in the same manner as car-share schemes.

The Deprivation Effect

That the Road Safety Delivery Board prioritise the dissemination of the evaluation of the Neighbourhood Road Safety Initiative.

Ageing Population

That the next road safety strategy includes a comprehensive sub-strategy dedicated to reducing the rate of KSI experienced by older (60+) people per km travelled.

That funding is made available to implement older driver assessment and support programmes, including personalised travel planning.

That the design of bus interiors is reviewed to ensure maximum levels of safety and comfort for older people.

That Passenger Transport Authorities and PTEs, in co-operation with bus companies and with local and non-government bodies, implement education and awareness sessions for bus drivers and bus company managers regarding the needs of older passengers and people with mobility difficulties.

Young Drivers

That programmes to support accompanying drivers, such as The Perfect Partner Pre-Pass Support Scheme piloted in Lancashire County Council, are evaluated for wider application.

That peer-to-peer schemes are investigated for their potential applicability to safe road use education.

Economy and Employment

That all road pricing proposals must include a specific risk analysis of potential traffic dispersal.

That the publicity strategy for road pricing zones includes the dangers of driving tired, with a particular emphasis on driving while at work.

That a high profile cyclist and motorcyclist awareness campaign aimed at car and HGV drivers is launched in the road pricing zones to limit the increased risk of any modal shift.

That a set amount of revenue from pricing is dedicated to safety improvement schemes for pedestrians, cyclists and users of Powered Two Wheelers.

That central and local government agencies develop partnerships with non-government bodies to continue their publicity campaigns highlighting road risk to LGV drivers.

That the DfT works in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council to introduce road safety and eco-driving to relevant formal training and apprenticeship schemes.

That Intelligent Speed Adaptation is introduced into all fleet cars.

That the HSE establish and resource a road deaths investigation unit.

That Coroners in England and Wales are given powers to investigate fatal collisions where they have involved a person driving in the course of employment.

That the DfT and local authorities work with professional bodies (IHT, IHIE, ICE etc) to promote highways engineering as a discipline, building on the findings of the skills shortage survey.

Offending and policing

That perceptions and experiences of road risks are included in all consultation and opinion surveys undertaken towards setting neighbourhoods policing priorities.

That all forces have hand held computers available for efficient checking of driving licences and of vehicle licence, roadworthiness and insurance records.

That guidance on best practice implementation of ANPR is developed and circulated by the National Police Improvement Agency to all Chief Constables.

That evidential roadside breath testing devices are approved as a priority.

The Changing Vehicle

That the primary New-Car Assessment Programme ratings include HMI aspects of the driver assistance systems individually and in combination with other in-vehicle information systems.

That an audit of use of vehicle performance/safety features be undertaken, to assess the extent to which they work, and are understood and used by drivers.

That an integrated plan be developed to guide the introduction of information, driver assistance and primary safety technologies.



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