

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET – 21st July 2009

NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF MOBILITY & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report outlines the Council's response to the Government consultation on 'A Safer Way' the next national road safety strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Cabinet approve the consultation response contained in Appendix 1.**

3.0 SUMMARY

- 3.1 The Department of Transport is seeking views on the proposed vision, targets and measures for improving road safety in Great Britain for the period beyond 2010.
- 3.2 This report will consider the response of the Council to the consultation

4.0 PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 4.1 none

5.0 INFORMATION

5.1 Background

- 5.1.1 The current national road safety strategy runs from 2000 to the end of 2010. Nationally and locally we have made good progress in reducing road casualties over the last decade. Locally we are on course to exceed 40 per cent target reduction in people killed and seriously injured and the 50 per cent reduction in children killed and seriously injured by 2010.
- 5.1.2 The proposed new national road safety strategy includes the first national vision for road safety. The consultation seeks views on this vision as well as proposals linking to driver behaviour, vehicle safety, roads and local authorities, a new performance framework and proposed new targets.

The Department of Transport has identified the following as the key elements of the new national road safety strategy proposals:

Headlines

- Our current (2000) strategy has improved road safety significantly, reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries by 37% over the last decade.
- But 8 deaths a day is still intolerable and we want to make our roads safer still. Our vision is to have the safest roads in the world.
- Our targets are to reduce both deaths and serious injuries by 33% by 2020.

Overall approach

- Human beings make mistakes, on the roads as elsewhere. We need to make sure that those mistakes don't lead to death or serious injury, by improving our roads, our vehicles and our behaviour on the roads.
- We propose do this through smarter working with local partners to improve delivery, not through creating large numbers of new offences & regulation.
- We need to target those roads, people and behaviours most associated with death and serious injury on our roads.

Roads

- To improve safety on rural roads, where 60% of all British road deaths happen, we propose:
 - to publish maps annually highlighting the main roads with the poorest safety records, encouraging local agencies to rapidly improve safety standards.
 - to encourage local authorities to reduce speed limits on the more dangerous rural roads from the current 60 mph. The 90% chance of a driver dying in a 60 mph head-on collision is reduced to 65% at 50 mph.
- To improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, we propose that local highway authorities, over time, introduce 20 mph limits into all streets which are primarily residential.

Vehicles

- Improved vehicle safety will continue to be crucial in reducing road casualties. We will support these improvements through regulation, where appropriate, but also through consumer information and raising awareness.
- We expect further improvements in vehicles' crash protection to be targeted around particular problems or accident types. We believe that advanced vehicle safety systems, helping drivers and riders to avoid accidents, have the potential to deliver increasing improvements in safety.

Behaviours

- We will support responsible road use by improving driver training and testing, the highly successful *THINK!* campaign and developing a seamless suite of educational materials from pre-school to pre-driver, launched later this week.
- To crack down on irresponsible behaviour, we are analysing the responses to our recent consultation on road safety compliance, and we will set out our conclusions in the final version of the new road safety strategy. Our proposals in that consultation included higher penalty points for gross speeding, and tackling drug- and drink-driving.

5.2 Proposed Consultation Response

5.2.1 This is contained in Appendix 1

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1 Age, ethnicity and deprivation can have an impact on an individual's potential involvement in a road collision. This is not referred to within the strategy proposals.
- 6.2 The Department for Transport has not carried out an Equalities Impact Assessment on the proposals. The Council's response includes a request for this to be included in the final strategy document when it is produced.

7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.1 Specific proposals such as reducing rural speed limits and introducing more 20mph zones in residential areas and outside schools would have a positive environmental impact by reducing vehicle noise
- 7.2 There are specific proposals to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists and to measure road casualties in these groups based on distance travelled. This is an incentive for promoting sustainable modes of travel.

8.0 LEGAL COMMENT

- 8.2 Specific elements within the strategy will require changes to national regulations and guidance but there are no legal implications within the consultation proposals.

9.0 LINKS WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 9.1 This report supports the Council's corporate priorities of:
- Transforming Telford & Wrekin
 - Improving the accessibility of the Borough by road
 - Giving children & young people the best possible start in their lives
 - Ensuring children and young people grow up in safety and security;
 - Maintaining a high quality, attractive and sustainable environment
 - Improving access, mobility and public transport within the Borough;
 - Creating a safe, strong and cohesive community
 - Promoting healthy communities and improving the quality of life of vulnerable and older people

10.0 OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

- 10.1 The proposed strategy is not linked to the provision of any financial resources. This has been highlighted in the Council's response

11.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Road Safety is currently delivered locally through a combination of the Road Safety Grant and the Local Transport Plan Capital Allocation. Both of which are funded through the Department for Transport. The consultation document does not make a direct link between funding and delivering the proposals.

- 11.2 There are no financial implications in the consultation response. However the final national strategy may have implications for the future Local Transport Plan capital programme and activity that is currently funded through the road safety grant.

12.0 WARD IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 This report has Borough-wide implications.

13.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World (DfT).

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/roadsafetyconsultation/roadsafetyconsultation.pdf>

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APPENDIX 1

A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World.

Response on behalf of Telford & Wrekin Council.

The response is limited to those questions where we have an area of expertise and can make a useful contribution.

Vision and targets (Chapters 3 and 8)

Do you agree that our vision for road safety should be to have the safest roads in the world? (Chapter 3)

Yes. However, we would expect the final version of this vision to refer to safe road users rather than simply concentrating on the roads themselves.

Do you agree that we should define a strategy running over twenty years to 2030, but with review points after five and ten years? (Chapter 3)

Yes.

3. Do you agree that our targets should be to reduce:

- ***road deaths by at least 33 per cent by 2020 compared to the baseline of the 2004–08 average number of road deaths;***
- ***the annual total of serious injuries on our roads by 2020 by at least 33 per cent;***
- ***the annual total of road deaths and serious injuries to children and young people (aged 0–17) by at least 50 per cent against a baseline of the 2004–08 average by 2020;***
- ***by at least 50 per cent by 2020 the rate¹ of KSI per km travelled by pedestrians and cyclists, compared with the 2004–08 average? (Chapter 8)***

We agree that there should be a national target for a 33% reduction in road deaths, but think that the target for serious injuries (which is disappointingly low) should be replaced with a combined national target to reduce deaths and serious injuries by 40%. This target could then be replicated at a local level.

We do not support the extended age group from 'children' to 'children and young people'. It would be preferable to retain the current 'children' category and introduce a new 'young people' target. Young drivers are a target group for most local authorities because they are over represented in road collisions. A national target for this group would focus resources and measures.

We support the proposed target of the rate of KSI per distance travelled by pedestrians and cyclists. This is better than just counting casualties which gives a perverse incentive to discourage cycling and walking.

This target could not be applied locally unless and until reliable data is available on distances travelled in each local area.

¹ Expressed as a three-year rolling average

We are proposing a set of indicators in order to help us to monitor performance (Appendix A). Do you believe these cover the right areas? (Chapter 8)

We would like some clarification of the role of these indicators. If they are intended for national level only this should be clearly stated in the final strategy document and any guidance to local authorities and the safer roads partnerships to which they belong.

Context (Chapters 2, 3 and 4)

We have identified a number of factors that may affect our ability to deliver road safety improvements in the future world we are planning for. Do you think we have taken account of the key risks and opportunities? (Chapter 3)

Yes

We think that the key challenge for road safety from 2010 is better and more systematic delivery, rather than major policy changes. Do you agree?

Yes.

This consultation document sets out the current evidence on the key road safety challenges. Do you agree with our analysis?

Yes

Would you highlight any others? (Chapter 2)

The holistic approach to road safety (which we support) is not matched by a holistic approach to road safety funding. This must be addressed to enable long term planning if the twenty-year strategy is to be fully embraced at a local level.

New performance framework (Chapters 4 and 8)

We are proposing a number of measures to support the effectiveness of the road safety profession. Do you think they will be effective?

Yes

What else might need to be done? (Chapter 4)

We welcome this aspect of the strategy and would urge DfT to give road safety officers engaged in school-based education a very clear framework regarding what should be delivered and how. Currently there is a huge disparity between the ETP work of individual authorities depending on how high road safety appears on the list of priorities for revenue funding

As well as championing the profession, DfT would perform a great service to the profession if it championed a specific range of recognised qualifications for road safety professionals. The consultation document states an intention to 'support the work of local authorities by helping them to develop the local road safety expertise they require to deliver the best results'. We fully support this aim for all fields of the road safety profession, not just for those engaging in ETP activity

We would encourage DfT to consult more closely with local authorities (through Road Safety GB and other channels) on the details of road safety educational and publicity initiatives which it hopes will be implemented at local level.

Do you agree that an independent annual report on road safety performance, created on an annual basis, would be a worthwhile innovation? (Chapter 4)

Yes. An annual report would be a worthwhile innovation, but if it makes comparisons between local highway authority areas, it must compare like with like, possibly showing casualties per 100k population

Do you agree that the Road Safety Delivery Board should be tasked with holding Government and other stakeholders to account on the implementation of a new national road safety plan? (Chapter 8)

Yes

Roads and local authorities (Chapter 5)

Do you agree that highway authorities reviewing and, where appropriate, reducing speed limits on single carriageway roads will be an effective way of addressing the casualty problem on rural roads?

Yes. We strongly support this approach.

There is a general confusion around the term 'rural roads' with local politicians, lay people and many RSOs using the term for roads in the rural area. The technical definition is any road with a speed limit in excess of 40mph. When published, the final strategy document would do well to clarify exactly what the DfT mean by rural roads.

Reviewing and reducing speed limits is one way of reducing casualties on rural roads. However many rural roads already limit speeds by their layout and width. It should not be seen as necessary to spend a huge amount of resources on addressing these particular rural roads. Where speed limits are reduced RSOs should be provided with a DfT toolkit to assist with promotion in the local community.

Are there other ways in which the safety of rural roads can be improved?

Any policy on speed limits must be integrated with a policy on enforcement. As we approach 2011 we are concerned that the Government has given no indication on the future of Specific Road Safety Grant (now part of Area Based Grant).

How can we most effectively promote the implementation of 20 mph zone schemes in residential areas? What other measures should we be encouraging to reduce pedestrian and cyclist casualties in towns? (Chapter 5).

We support 20mph zones in principle. Many residents want 20mph limits but do not want traffic calming measures because of the visual and physical intrusion on their streets.. Not all residential streets can or should be retro-fitted with traffic calming, yet all should be given the opportunity to have a 20mph limit where there is no through traffic. Local authorities need guidance from the DfT regarding how to specifically address this issue and therefore we support the proposal (para 5.22) to reexamine the issue of un engineered zones

We would like to see the role of road safety in regeneration projects included in the strategy, not simply in the context of retro-fitted 20mph zones, but as a holistic approach.

To reduce cycling casualties, drivers need to be aware that through bikeability cyclists are now taught to cycle assertively. Their road position is different and drivers may not understand this. National publicity is required through the THINK! Campaign. This should also be taught through driving instructors and the theory test.

Safer Routes to School schemes should continue to be supported as they contribute towards providing infrastructure to make cycling and walking safer

Funding should continue to be provided to enable local authorities to provide all year 6 pupils with free cycle training. This should be extended to include free Bikeability training at level 3. In addition funding should be made available for free child pedestrian training to be delivered to younger pupils.

How can we provide better support to highway authorities in progressing economically worthwhile road safety engineering schemes? (Chapter 5)

Para 5.2 expresses concern that road safety schemes are rarely appraised on the same basis as other transport schemes. It would be useful for DfT to establish a standard national method for carrying out such appraisals.

Behaviours (Chapter 7)

We have highlighted what we believe to be the most dangerous driving behaviours. Do you agree with our assessment?

Yes

What more can be done to persuade the motoring public that illegal and inappropriate speeds are not acceptable behaviours?

Community involvement in setting local speed limits and requesting camera or other enforcement will assist to persuade the public that inappropriate speed is not acceptable. This is another area in which the DfT could provide a Tool Kit to enable RSOs to support the work of other professionals

Safe and responsible driving requires an attitude that needs to be developed long before it is actually required. A structured national programme of road safety education would go some way to meeting this need.

Additional Comments

Equalities

There ought to be an Equalities Impact Assessment in the consultation document. We would expect to see this in the final strategy document.

Enforcement

The consultation document states that there are no plans for new road safety legislation. However, the new strategy should take into account the need for better enforcement of existing road traffic laws, including speed limits. There should be a clear indication of how enforcement will work alongside education and engineering to tackle poor driving behaviour.