

UK Road Safety

SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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PACTS is grateful to the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund and to the Road Safety Trust for their financial support for this project.

UK Road Safety – Seizing the Opportunities

Executive Summary and Introduction

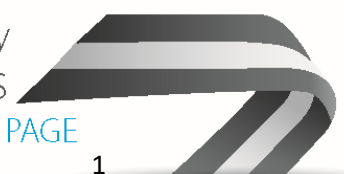
- Safer Road Users
 - Safer Roads
 - Safer Vehicles
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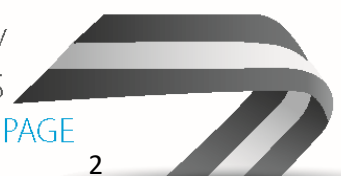
Three papers for PACTS

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Executive Summary and Introduction

UK Road Safety – Seizing the Opportunities attempts to answer some important and fundamental road safety questions. What are the key causes of road casualties, what policies are likely to work, and are they being pursued?

General elections

When this project was conceived and researched, a June 2017 UK General Election was not anticipated. However, an election is an opportunity to examine policies and to affirm priorities. PACTS is therefore pleased to seize this opportunity.

So much has happened in politics in the past two years. The General Election of May 2015, which returned a majority Conservative government, now seems almost a distant memory. It was the first of three major upsets for the pollsters.

British Road Safety Statement

In the event, road safety minister Andrew Jones MP remained at his desk and set about implementing the Conservative Party's election manifesto pledge (now a Government commitment) "to reduce the number of cyclists and other road users killed and injured on the road every year." A new plan was required as the actions in the 2011 *Strategic Framework for Road Safety* had all been implemented or dropped. Following informal consultations by the Department for Transport – involving PACTS and others – the Government moved quickly to publish *Working Together to Build a Safer Road System – British Road Safety Statement*¹.

PACTS was pleased that producing a new road safety policy was a priority for the Department. It was also encouraging that the Department endorsed the Safe System approach to road safety. The Statement set out an ambitious range of areas for action, described by officials as hooks on which details would later be hung. The Annex contained the Department's High Level Delivery Timetable with 47 actions arranged under the five Safe System pillars and divided into the short, medium and long term.

The Statement was not everything that the road safety community wanted. Details for local authorities were thin, continuing the government's devolution approach of leaving local authorities to decide their own priorities and policies. Graduated licensing for young drivers and a lower drink-drive limit in England and Wales were explicitly ruled out. As before, there were no national casualty reduction targets. Whereas the Framework had included a broad set of indicators to assess progress, the Statement had none. Some questioned whether this conformed to the performance management tenet of Safe System. Regardless of any omissions, PACTS wants to see the actions in the Statement implemented as fully and effectively as possible.

Three papers

In the spirit of "Working together" and as a critical friend, PACTS commissioned three papers with funding from the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund and Road Safety Trust. Whilst they are presented as

¹ Department for Transport, *Working Together to Build a Safer Road System: British Road Safety Statement*, CM9175, London, December 2015

separate papers, PACTS fully recognises the interplay between interventions for users, roads and vehicles and integrating them into a single Safe System approach. The papers are published here:

- *Safer Road Users* by Tanya Fosdick, Dan Campsall and Richard Owen at Road Safety Analysis Ltd who have extensive experience of research, analysis and implementation of behaviour change, enforcement interventions;
- *Safer Roads* by Tony Ciaburro and John Spencer, who have many years of senior experience of managing and designing local roads and road safety measures;
- *Safer Vehicles* by Paul Fay, now an independent vehicle safety design expert following many years as Vehicle Safety Manager at Ford Motor Company.

As the authors point out, casualty reduction in Britain has slowed or even stopped in the past five years. This is likely to be partly due to growth in the economy and traffic and cheaper fuel, following the recession when road deaths fell rapidly. It points to the need for renewed and effective road safety policies.

Safer Road Users

Safer Road Users provides an analysis of casualty groups and contributory factors. It shows there are various ways in which, for safety purposes, priority road user groups can be identified. Vulnerable road users are a clear priority as casualties among these groups have not been falling as fast as they have for car occupants and now account for over 50% of killed and seriously injured casualties (KSIs). However, this should not divert attention from drivers and their passengers which are still the largest casualty group. In addition, cars are also the vehicle type most involved in collisions with vulnerable road users.

The police reports show the driver behaviours contributing most to KSIs are

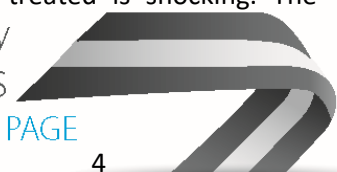
- Inattention, carelessness and failure to look
- Excessive or inappropriate speed
- Alcohol.

More detailed studies suggest that fatigue, mobile phone and drug use are also significant. Though not behaviours in themselves, ill-health and inexperience contribute substantially to problem behaviours and driving for work is a significant contextual factor.

The *Safer Road Users* paper summarises how education and enforcement should be used within a systematic approach to reduce these behaviours. Mitigating the consequences of collisions through road and vehicle safety measures are addressed in the two other papers. There is support for many of the safer road user actions in the Government's Statement which relate to the behaviours identified. More detail of the actions would be needed to assess the extent to which they will deliver significant casualty reductions. Despite its broad scope, the Statement says little about levels of police enforcement, which are reducing. There are also some gaps, notably measures to address drink driving and indicators to assess progress.

Safer Roads

Safer Roads presents a local authority's view on the current context (priorities, funding, information and options) for engineering and managing for safety on local roads. It is a challenging and not entirely rosy picture. The relatively low priority with which road deaths are treated is shocking. The



weaknesses of current collision reporting (STATS19) are highlighted. Cluster sites have largely been treated, sign-only 20mph limits are no panacea, and additional funding will be needed to implement high-quality cycle networks or tackle the higher speed roads. The shift to a Safe System approach, which designs around human frailty and focuses on preventative rather than reactive measures, will require practical interpretation and a new performance management framework. The paper places great store on the road safety management capacity review, to be commissioned shortly by the Department for Transport. It also suggests a sub-regional local government model of safety delivery.

The Strategic Road Network, the responsibility of Highways England, was excluded from the paper as the situation is very different. Highways England has been given challenging casualty reduction targets and substantial funding by the Government. It has adopted a long-term vision of zero harm and is seeking to implement the Safe System approach. Transport Focus has shown that the users of the network identify safety as a key performance priority.² PACTS is very encouraged by this. Nonetheless, the 2020 target remains challenging and Highways England will need to deploy the full range of Safe System measures to achieve it.

Safer Vehicles

Safer Vehicles shows that innovation by industry, regulation and Euro NCAP³ have had very positive impacts on vehicle safety standards and contributed to casualty reductions. Benefits have been greater for vehicle occupants and a stronger focus is now needed on safety for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.

Some improvement will continue without Government action: as newer, safer vehicles penetrate the fleet, these should spread the safety benefits. The Statement says that the Government wants to accelerate this process by increasing consumer awareness of the NCAP star rating system and improving the safety of the public sector fleet. This is very welcome and more details of the mechanisms would be helpful.

The amendments to the General Safety and Pedestrian Protection Regulations proposed by the European Commission should be highly beneficial for safety. The Government is urged to fully support them, particularly those relating to safety for vulnerable road users, which may not be supported so strongly by the private sector.

Brexit gives rise to many new vehicle safety issues not anticipated in the Statement. Whilst there is no immediate cause to panic, the author identifies a number of questions that will need to be addressed. In essence, it is crucial that vehicle safety standards are maintained and updated, and not diminished in international trade deals. If the UK is to continue to play an active part in developing safer vehicles, as the UK automotive industry wishes, there is a vital role for the Government, with the EU as well as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

There are substantial potential safety benefits of autonomous and semi-autonomous vehicles and the Government is playing an active role in enabling their development. Safety risks remain, however, particularly from a mix of manual and autonomous vehicles. Promoting the adoption of key safety

² Transport Focus *Measuring performance of England's strategic roads: what users want*, March 2017

³ The European New Car Assessment Programme which awards safety ratings to new cars.

technologies, such as Autonomous Emergency Braking and Intelligent Speed Assistance, is recommended.

Common themes

Two common themes can be seen in all the papers:

- The need for better information, particularly more in-depth investigations of a greater number of collisions, with the results widely shared. PACTS believes this makes a good case for a Road Collision Investigation Branch. The forthcoming review of the STATS19 casualty reporting system is also an opportunity to move forward.
- The need for a performance management framework, at national and local level, which should address Safe System priorities.

Conclusions

The *Road Safety Statement* includes many important and potentially valuable actions. Success will depend on the degree to which these are followed through, not only by DfT but also by its agencies, other government departments and others “working together”. And whilst initiatives are valuable, the safety importance of doing the “day job” well (maintenance, licensing, intelligence gathering, insurance, etc.) should not be underestimated.

If a Conservative Government is returned, it may continue with its Road Safety Statement or pause to review it. If another party forms the Government, it will almost certainly wish to revisit the plan. In either case, we hope these papers will inform their thinking and encourage even greater ambition.

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PACTS is pleased to publish these papers. PACTS wishes to thank the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund and the Road Safety Trust for funding this project; the authors for their work; and all those who assisted them. The information and conclusions in the papers are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of PACTS, the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund, the Road Safety Trust or those consulted.



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