

Speech for Andrew Jones MP for the Brake/Direct Line Parliamentary

Reception

Thank you for inviting me today to outline my plans as the new road safety Minister.

I am sorry that due to diary commitments that I can't stay for the whole event. But it's a real pleasure to be here.

The road casualty figures for 2013 showed the lowest number of road deaths since records began - so it was really disappointing that the recent statistics for 2014 showed an increase in fatalities and serious injuries on our roads.

Cutting the number of road crash victims is a major priority for this government, and I will not rule out any measure that could save lives.

We are working on a range of measures to drive up safety.

But we will also be looking at new ways to achieve that goal during this Parliament and beyond.

In particular we want to understand the most effective road safety strategies from other countries to make rural roads safer....

And to achieve the maximum reduction in road accidents per pound spent.

So we've commissioned research to help us develop good practice guidance....

And draw up a model for highway authorities to use.

We want to see if we can learn from the very best safety regimes around the world....

What are the key principles and approaches they use....?

How suitable are they for use here in Britain.....?

Particularly for desk-based guidance.....?

And do they highlight any gaps in our knowledge or strategy?

The road safety industry has to evolve along with changing conditions on our roads.....

And to respond to modern driving habits.

For example, we have made it clear that it is unacceptable to use mobile phones while driving and that motorists who commit this offence should be penalised.

As I am sure you would agree, it is important to have the right balance of penalty measures in place to ensure that enforcement is effective....

And most important of all, to reduce road casualties.

In this regard you may be aware that the Coalition Government commissioned research by the Transport Research Laboratory into mobile phone use across England and Scotland.

The results were released in February 2015 and are available on line.

The Department is currently considering this new evidence, to help shape future decisions on enforcement.

Since the introduction of the new offence we estimate that nearly 4,000 screening tests have been carried out with around 1,700 positives for traces

of cannabis and cocaine. Whilst not all blood analysis for these arrests have been completed at this time, based on the analysis already undertaken we estimate that a little over 1,000 of these blood samples will be over the specified limit and thus will be charged and convicted, with many already successfully going through the courts

Considering only 825 were convicted for the impairment drug driving offence in the whole of 2013 we should see around 3,000 convictions up until March 2016, 12 months after the offence came into force. This is a very encouraging start and I applaud the police's efforts in using the new technology, for embracing the new offence and thus removing these dangerous drug drivers from our roads.

I am considering what further actions the Government should take to build on our strong record on road safety. Effective enforcement will remain a priority.

Once again, I apologise that I have to rush off and I hope the remainder of this reception is successful.