

ROAD SAFETY PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT GOVERNMENT

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INTRODUCTION

It's great to be here at the UK's road safety summit.

I have been asked to speak about a future Government's "road safety priorities".

Well - assuming all goes to plan! – a future Labour Government there is only really one road safety priority.

That's to make our streets, roads and communities safer, healthier and more sustainable places to be.

How will we do that? Firstly we have to review the current landscape.

- We all know that the UK now has some of the safest roads in the world.
- Huge reductions in the number of people killed or seriously injured on roads have been made in recent decades.
- The number of deaths from road crashes is less than half what it was 30 years ago (5000-1700).

But there can be no room for complacency.

There are still 25,000 deaths and serious injuries on our roads every year.

And as the PACTS report today shows, if we carry on as we are, a third of a million people will be killed or seriously injured on the roads between now and 2030.

That's about the **same number of people currently living in Cardiff**.

- Each of those crashes is a personal tragedy.
- All are avoidable in some way.
- And together they cost our economy around 2% of GDP - in sectors from health to employment and insurance.

So what is the right policy response to these tragedies?

AXING TARGETS

I'm sure everyone in this room is well aware of the current Government's decision to axe targets for road safety. But I'm afraid I can't just brush over it.

Targets and goals have helped drive progress across a host of public health issues in recent years:

- That's why it's right the UN Decade of Action on Road Safety is guiding a global goal to save 5 million lives by 2020;
- And why the EU has a bold target to halve deaths and serious injuries in the same timeframe;
- I'm pleased that we are joined by European colleagues here today – and looking forward to hearing your views on the progress towards these goals.

Ministers may say targets don't do anything and if they are just box ticking exercises that would be true.

- Targets can focus minds and attention on results, and hold governments accountable for action.

- By 2010 the number of deaths and serious injuries had been cut by 44% from the mid 1990s.

Important thing is to link targets to action, not to scrap targets

LOCAL AUTHORITY CUTS

The Government's **Strategic Road Safety Framework** has shifted accountability for road safety to the local level.

- Now of course it's right that local councils have the power to make decisions on road safety - because they know what will work on their streets and in their communities.
- Indeed, Labour wants to devolve a lot more responsibility and resources for transport to the local level.
- We have set out our vision to devolve decision making on transport in our policy review. I very much encourage you to read and comment on these proposals on the 'Your Britain' website.
- Our position is clear – we want to empower communities and individuals to shape transport provision, setting out clear powers and responsibilities through which they will do so.

But I'm afraid I don't quite understand this Government's brand of localism.

Ministers say that they want to give local authorities freedom to make decisions on road safety.

But according to their Strategic Framework for Road Safety the "*overreaching priority*" of their road safety plan is "*restore the public finances and the return the economy*" to growth.

A worthy sentiment, even if I would disagree with how they are going about it.

But I'm sorry, it's not localism and, more significantly in this context, it's not a safety objective at all.

But it is one It's that has led to unprecedented cuts in local authority spending on road safety during this parliament:

- Road safety grants were axed by over a third (from 95 - 57 million) from 2010-2011;
- And ring fencing for remaining grants was scrapped – leaving cash strapped councils to use road safety money to spend on other priorities.

When I spoke at PACTS' Annual Lecture in December, I told you that I was increasingly concerned about the impact of these cuts.

Since then I have been looking at what's happening at a local level. I've found that:

- **Nine out of ten local authorities have cut their road safety budget.**
- Of these, the average budget reduction **has been a shocking 42% since 2010.**
- And despite the governments' claims that they have doubled spending on cycling this parliament, nearly half of all 133 local authorities have cut budgets for walking and cycling.

- **And finally, two thirds of local authorities have had to lay off staff** working on road safety - from officers and engineers, to school crossing patrols.

The figures speak for themselves. **Road safety budgets and staff are being haemorrhaged.**

LOLLIPOP PEOPLE

Let me give you an example of what this means for a local community.

- For over half a century parents, children and teachers have relied on lollipop people (school crossing patrols) for making the journey to school safe.
- But the government's attack on local road safety budgets mean that families just can't rely on this security anymore.
- **Two thirds of local authorities (66%) have cut their number of lollipop people since David Cameron became Prime Minister.**

Like many parents, schools, campaigners and other MPs I am very concerned about the impact of this on children's safety.

The number of children killed and seriously injured while walking to and from school has risen from 594 in 2011 to 637 in 2012.

I know that many councils are trying their very hardest to retain staff working on road safety – through some creative accounting, shared workloads and job sharing.

But it's not easy. And my point is that the approach of this government makes it more difficult

AND AT NATIONAL LEVEL...

it leads to a lack of focus across a wide range of transport policies:

- **Some are unfair** – new measures in the Deregulation Bill to end the obligation to conduct a full inquiry after new evidence is found on a shipwreck, and reform private hire vehicle regulation without proper consultation with unions and industry.
- **Some the baffling** - new “trials” for longer HGV’s that are actually ten years long and have no clear monitoring or evaluation structure in place.
- **Some are cursory:** Safety is mentioned in the £21billion Action for Roads strategy – but unfortunately it is just that – a mention.
- **Some are complacent** – major reform of the managed motorway design and safety standards before proper safety trials and assessments have been made.
- **And some are just glacial:** You see look at the fiasco around young driver safety
 - 16-24 year olds only drive around 5% of miles, but are involved in 22% of all crashes.
 - But the government’s ‘young driver green paper’ that was initially proposed for the ‘spring’, was kicked into the long grass throughout last year and postponed again at Christmas.
 - This simply for a Green Paper to discuss options

But while we can’t get a green paper on Young driver safety because Govt says they don’t have enough information, later on today I’ll be debating some DfT’s recent proposals on local

authority parking – to ban the use of **CCTV** for enforcement around places such as schools:

- **It has no evidence base** and could have some very serious consequences for road safety.

LABOUR’S APPROACH TO ROAD SAFETY

So what would a Labour Government’s do differently?

Labour will commit to restoring safety at the heart of our transport policy.

We are particularly concerned about vulnerable road users:

- The rate of reduction in KSIs for pedestrians and cyclists is slowing,
- And of course – after the spate of cyclist deaths last winter – we saw an overall increase in the number of vulnerable road users users killed and injured in the capital in 2013.
- When we are aiming to get more people walking and cycling to deliver huge economic and environmental benefits, this is really worrying.

It is why in our support for Ultra Low emission vehicles, we have pushed for clear action to ensure that quieter vehicles do not pose new hazards for **blind, partially sighted and other vulnerable road users**

That’s why, as well as commitments to new targets for participation and long term budgets for cycling infrastructure, we:

- Have launched an **HGV Safety Charter** to ensure that the vehicles involved in a third of cycling fatalities are as safe as possible;
- And why we want to see more information about the **roadworthiness records** of haulage firms made public.

But it's also why we want to see improvements for the industry, and the safety and standards of HGV drivers too:

- We are looking into measures that will benefit safety and haulage firms - such as relaxing **night time delivery restrictions** for HGVs as is the case in New York.
- And we are also considering proposals for **a new national networks of truck stops**:
 - It's not right that a driver's workplace isn't treated as one at the moment.
 - There is often no provision for their basic needs as employees.
 - Drivers are being forced to park up in unsafe and impractical roadside spaces just to rest, or use the bathroom.
 - Truck stops will provide the facilities drivers need to rest properly – not only benefitting them, but making our roads safer too.

And as we scrutinise the government's reforms – including the proposed transformation of the **Highways Agency** in May – the Shadow Transport Team will be pressing Ministers about where safety fits into the agenda.

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How will their proposed reform promote cross-departmental collaboration and **high level leadership within** Government, shared responsibility for results, and a relentless focus on delivery in the DfT and Highways Agency – or whatever it is called?

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SAFE SYSTEMS APPROACH

Many in the road safety community are telling me that DfT must start learning from international examples and approaches. That the **UK's transport policy is too insular.**

We need a new vision for road safety in the UK. That's why I am looking very closely at international best practice – such as the Swedish 'Vision Zero' long term goal of eliminating deaths and serious injury, which is backed up with clear targets and a 'system wide' approach to prevent and respond to road crashes.

The Safe System approach is:

- Recommended by pretty much every international body leading on road safety – the OECD, World Bank, WHO and International Road Federation.
- It has had positive results in countries from New Zealand to Holland.
- And Safe Systems are being increasingly adopted in low and middle income countries too – such as Argentina, China and India.
- This is particularly important as the international community defines a new development agenda after the current Millennium Development Goals expire in 2015.

Why hasn't the UK adopted what is becoming an international norm?

We believe the UK can be a world leader in road safety but that means being will to learn from others as well

Conclusion

The PACTS Report today shows us what the cost of complacency will be
Everybody is a road user.

So the priority must be to to ensure that the needs of all road users - from pedestrian and cyclist to motorist, motorcyclist, bus driver and lorry driver - are met.

That requires us to develop solutions to make roads a safe and shared space for all.

I look forward to working with you to make that happen

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