



Government Roads Policing Review Call for Evidence

PACTS response.

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PACTS strongly welcomes the government's *Roads Policing Review Call for Evidence*, published today (13 July 2020). This is the culmination of a joint review by the Department for Transport, Home Office and the National Police Chiefs' Council over the past year.

The call, introduced by roads minister Baroness Vere of Norbiton, states that since 2010 the number of people killed or seriously injured on UK roads has "plateaued", ending a long-term downward trend. The Government acknowledges "public disquiet about levels of enforcement". It seeks views on existing practices and resources, evidence of effectiveness in reducing casualties, and invites "new thinking".

The call anticipates the imminent publication of an inspection report into roads policing by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS). This is expected to be highly critical of the cutbacks in roads policing activity and its too-often unfocused nature, failing to match the level of public harm caused by road traffic offences.

David Davies, Executive Director of PACTS, said

"We are very pleased to see this call for evidence and the extensive technical work that is being undertaken in parallel through the joint review. The Department for Transport has responsibility for road safety but the Home Office calls the shots on policing. This split in accountability and delivery has too often held back road safety. Considering that vehicles have become safer and investment in roads has continued, there is widespread suspicion that cuts in enforcement by the police have been a major factor in the UK's slide in international road safety ranking.¹

"A review of roads policing is long overdue. The number of roads police officers has declined considerably, particularly over the past decade. Those officers remaining often undertaken multiple roles and public safety has lost out. Roads policing is vital, not only to save lives but also to disrupt other criminality. There is a strong overlap in these offences and it is remarkable that successive ministers have seemed not to recognise this.

"It is sometimes said that road traffic offences are not 'real crime'. This is factually incorrect and overlooks the fact that many deaths and injury on the roads are the result of serious offending, including drink driving, drug driving, speeding and use of mobile phones. Not only are these serious offences but also the harm that

¹In 2019, the UK slipped from 3rd to 5th position in the list of 32 countries monitored by ETSC, measured by deaths per 1 million inhabitants: [14th Road Safety Performance Index Report](#), June 2020. The UK was one of only three countries to show an increase in the number of deaths since 2010. (UK 2019 data provisional.)

they cause is by far the largest resulting from any criminal activity, with the exception of drugs. The 1,800 deaths on the UK roads each year are more than twice the number of deaths from homicide and terrorism combined.

“Safe roads, safe vehicles and safe road users are all crucial. Roads policing is not something to turn to when engineering and education fail. These interventions only work when delivered together. Seat belts are an excellent example of vehicle safety engineering and media campaigns have helped to persuade the vast majority of drivers and passengers to comply with the law. However, some 31% of people who died in vehicles in the UK in 2018 were not wearing a seat belt.² The paltry penalty and sharp cuts in enforcement have almost certainly contributed. Drivers recognise and respond to changes in levels of enforcement.

“During the coronavirus lockdown, we have seen quieter roads and increases in vehicle speeds, particularly in extreme speeding. As a result, although the total number of casualties went down during this period, deaths and most serious injuries decreased by much less. Only roads policing was able to tackle this danger and prevent the situation getting completely out of control.”

PACTS report

In June PACTS published [Roads policing and its implications for road safety](#). This was independent of the government’s review but it will contribute to many of the questions asked in the call for evidence. The PACTS report identified robust academic evidence that well-deigned enforcement action improves compliance with road traffic laws and reduces casualties. It also examined UK trends in enforcement, compliance and casualties since 2010. Sharp reductions in fines issued for failing to wear a seat belt coincided with increased deaths when a seat belt was not worn – 31% of all vehicle occupant deaths in 2019. By contrast, increased automated enforcement of speed limits coincided with improved compliance and fewer speed-related deaths. There were big cutbacks in drink drive enforcement. While the number of drink drive deaths did not increase a reduction might have been expected as a result of vehicle safety improvements. Illegal mobile phone use remains a significant problem. The new drug drive legislation and testing devices are revealing substantial offending, often by drivers involved in other types of criminal activity.

PACTS has written the Home Secretary with the following recommendations:

1. Roads policing should be included in the Strategic Policing Requirement.
2. Police and Crime Commissioners should prioritise roads policing and road safety within Police and Crime Plans.
3. Chief constables should take advantage of PM’s promise of 20,000 new officers to increase the number of roads policing officers.
4. NPCC roads policing strategy and speed enforcement guidelines should be revised.
5. HMICFRS should include roads policing in its annual assessment.
6. Collaboration and partnerships should be widened.
7. Intelligence should be enhanced and more widely shared.
8. Greater use should be made of technology.
9. The support and participation of the public should be encouraged, particularly the use of dashcams to report dangerous driving.
10. Safe system indicators should be used to monitor road safety and all police forces should adopt the CRASH reporting system.
11. Research and evaluation should be enhanced.

PACTS will contribute its research findings and recommendations to the call for evidence and work with government, parliamentarians, partners and stakeholders to see them implemented.

² [Seat belts: time for action, PACTS in association with Direct Line Group, March 2020](#)

Further information:

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Annex: Department for Transport, *Roads Policing Review Call for Evidence*, July 2020

Extracts and summary by PACTS

Scope

“This call for evidence seeks to open the door to new thinking as well as a better understanding and utilisation of established options. In this context we are seeking to identify how the use of existing enforcement capabilities, and any enhancement of these, will deliver the biggest impact for road user safety primarily but also congestion management and the environment.

This call for evidence sets out some of the current challenges facing our road network and the people and businesses using it. It seeks evidence of the impact of enforcement on road user behaviour, what that enforcement should look like and whether the current legislative framework is fit for purpose.

Crucially, we would welcome evidence supporting what the future of enforcement might look like: the who, the how and the governance of enforcement.”

Questions

There are 14 questions grouped under the following headings:

- Current offending behaviour
- The current enforcement picture
- Improving the effectiveness of prosecution
- The future shape of roads policing

Timetable

The Call was issued on 13 July 2020 and will run until 5 October 2020. “The intention is to deliver recommendations in the Spring of 2021.”

ends