

## PACTS – keynote Speech 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Thank you very much for inviting me to address this year's conference on in my capacity as the Shadow Minister with responsibility for Road safety.

It's a privilege to speak on behalf of the Opposition in front of leading representatives from across the Road Safety Sector.

I would like to pay tribute to the work that the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS). Whether it is supporting the All Party Parliamentary Group for Road Safety or producing reports like their

“safe system and road safety indicators report” that was published last year they do an excellent job. As someone who has not come from a background in road safety they have been a vital resource

This year’s conference theme is “Driving Down Risk – work-related road safety in the gig economy era”.

I would like to speak about this issue within the wider context of what a future Labour Government’s priorities will be when it comes to Road Safety.

Although the Government has talked a good game when it comes to the road safety, their legacy so far is one of disappointment and frustration. Since 2010, progress has well and truly stalled.

In 2017 there were nearly 1,800 deaths on our roads and almost 25,000 people seriously injured. That's five people killed on Britain's roads every single day, and over ten times that number seriously injured – many with life-changing injuries.

Out of the 1,800 there are around 500 work-related road deaths a year in – around 30%

of total road deaths. This far exceeds the number of deaths in the workplace reported by the Health & Safety Executive.

If these were British troops serving overseas, then quite rightly, this would be headline news.

We seem to have come to accept the steady death toll on our roads – as an acceptable cost to pay for the convenience of car use. No other transport sector – rail, aviation or ferry services would tolerate these shockingly high numbers of casualties.

Yet for road transport we seem to assume that these casualties are unavoidable.

This is why I believe we need to adopt a new approach to reducing death and serious injury on our streets. This will require a change in thinking and culture when it comes to road safety.

Labour is committed to following the lead taken by other forward-thinking nations such as Sweden and commits itself towards a target of zero road deaths and serious injuries on our roads – the Vision Zero approach.

Our three guiding principles are that:

1. No loss of life or serious injury should be accepted or seen as inevitable
2. Communities need active targeting of road danger from motor vehicles.
3. All transport schemes and changes to the public streetscape must aim to reduce road danger, especially for vulnerable road users – that is pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

The next Labour Government will tackle road danger in a number of ways. The Vision Zero approach will require action to deliver:

- Safe Speeds

- Safe Streets
- Safe Vehicles
- Safe Behaviours

Over the next months we will be putting out a consultation document which will have policy ideas that will address each of these areas. By doing this we will make our roads safer for everyone, bringing down the number of deaths and seriously injured on our roads whether they are work related incidents or not.

Today I am not going to set out detailed policy proposals but I will speak about the areas we will be looking at.

## **Safe Speeds**

I am sure everyone recognises that reducing traffic speeds is fundamental to reducing danger on our streets and roads. Research has shown that the death rate of pedestrians is dramatically reduced if a collision happens at 20mph rather than 30mph or 40mph.

Given this it seems common sense to me that the national default road speed in built up areas should be reviewed and there is a

strong argument that it should be reduced to 20mph.

Rural roads bring their own unique challenges and can be extremely dangerous. It seems to me that local Highway Authorities would be best placed to bring forward action plans to reduce speeds and improve enforcement in high risk areas.

### **Safe Streets**

It is vital that we deal with the issue of dangerous roads. We know the impact they have on the community. They discourage parents from letting their children walk to

school. It severs communities and adds to air pollution.

We know through analysis of the locations of collisions that there tend to be more dangerous locations on our road networks.

For example in towns and cities the majority of collision take place at road junctions.

Where we know there are locations that are high risk we should take action to improve them before collisions occur – we should be proactive rather than reactive.

We will ensure that design of the public realm will meet new high standards of disability access.

Quiet, traffic free or especially protected routes for cyclists and the installation of pedestrian areas and safe crossings will be at the heart of Labour's policy to promote healthy, active and environmentally friendly transport.

### **Safe Vehicles**

We will push for the best safety standards of design for vehicles to help reduce danger.

You may have seen a great example of this in

action with Tideway's fleet of safer HGV's. We will consider the wider implementation of innovations like this as well other 'safer vehicle technologies' such as speed limiters and cameras.

I welcome this week's announcement that speed limiting technology looks set to become mandatory from 2022.

We will look at all new and emerging technologies and projects – such as autonomous vehicles or electric personal vehicles from the point of view of a public health and risk and danger reduction –

putting these issues centre stage in Britain's national transport policy framework.

## **Safe Behaviours**

We also have to recognise that human behaviours are often a major contributing factor if not the main cause in many incidents.

We will tackle this issue through a mixed program of action including using public marketing, education, better enforcement and raising training and entry level standards for drivers.

For example we know Motorcyclists are particularly vulnerable and are over

represented in collisions with pedestrians. We also know it is young men who suffer most with life changing injuries as well as a disproportionate rate of fatal collision on Motorbikes. This seems to me to be an area where raising the entry level standards for motorcyclist could have a real positive impact. As part of better enforcement there may be areas in the criminal justice system that need to be amended or modernised to ensure the law is applied fairly when it comes to road safety.

I think there needs to be a much better system of support for victims of collisions.

This ranges from practical to financial support for them and their families.

The reduction of road danger in Britain is in all our interests. We recognise that any sustainable transport policy must see improvements to roads safety as a key issue in promoting sustainable transport.

The next Labour Government will lead a step change towards 'Vision Zero' to make our

community safer, healthier and more pleasant  
place to live and work.

I hope and look forward to working with you  
to achieve this change.