

POLICIES REQUIRED TO DELIVER ON SAFER VEHICLES

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Keynote Speech with Q&A [check against delivery]

PACTS CONFERENCE: *SAFER VEHICLES 2016*

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INTRO

- It's great to be here at the PACTS Conference.
- I am here to talk about policies required to deliver safer vehicles and protect lives.
- I'd firstly like to start by thanking PACTS for work you do – for over 30 years you have worked to “protect human life through promotion of transport safety”.
- Provide invaluable information, advice and solutions in transport safety – and importantly consider sustainability and public health too.
- As a community you keep the pressure up on politicians and policy makers - even when the UK has a proud record and some of the safest roads in the world.
- This is as important now as it has ever been: particularly when the downward trend in killed or seriously injured casualties across Great Britain has slowed considerably since 2010.
- And the latest figures show on road safety there is simply no room for complacency: **In 2014, 1,775 road users were killed and a further 22,807 seriously injured in Great Britain – an increase of 5% on 2013.**

ROAD SAFETY CONTEXT

- We must not think it is job done when thousands of families each year are still being traumatised by the tragedy of losing a loved one in what are so often avoidable circumstances.
- The Government talk about road safety being a top priority, but so far their legacy has been one of disappointment and frustration:
 - In the last Parliament **they scrapped road targets** which Labour introduced and successfully reduced the number of KSIs by a third - some argue targets don't achieve anything but I disagree - they focus minds and attention, and hold the Government accountable.
 - They are **continuing to fail on enforcement** – a majority of forces have recorded **year-on-year fall in full-time roads policing officers**. There are **1,437 fewer** designated officers outside London in 2015 than in 2010.
 - Meanwhile the Government's Road Safety Statement, which was published just before Christmas allowing no Parliamentary scrutiny, **lacked ambition**:
 - No statement of support, resources or guidance for local authorities.
 - No objective measures to improve young driver safety.
 - And no mention of Vision Zero goal of eliminating deaths as part of their safe system approach.
- **It did however**, promote the uptake of safer cars the Road Safety Statement centred on improving consumer information and also in procuring the Government's own fleet in the future.

- Government policy to be a role model and invest in highly rated safe vehicles for public fleets does send a powerful message.
- But how much progress they have made remains to be seen and Labour urge the Government to speed this up.
- But before I focus on the case for more joined up thinking across Government and the need for quite simply more substantive safety policies in probably all transport modal areas, I want to reflect on the importance of the UK working internationally on road safety too.
- I want to for two reasons:
 1. We are at the beginning of the process to strengthen EU General & Pedestrian Safety Regulations.
 2. And because of late, I just don't think we are talking about it enough!

CROSS-BORDER, EU & N CAP

- Now it wouldn't be a referendum campaign if I didn't acknowledge that cross-border action and cooperation is critical both to UK and to global road safety.
- And dare I say it, along with the Euro NCAP, the European Union is among the safest vehicles for countries to pool resources and develop policies that make our vehicles and our roads safer:
 - On financing research that led to world-leading vehicle crash testing standards.
 - On regulating work-related road travel that reduces the risk of driver fatigue.

- And exchanging information between enforcement agencies on traffic offences.
- Therefore when it comes to policies to deliver safer vehicles at home, I would argue that remaining in the European Union and continuing progress on safety standards must be key priority.
- And in order to make good progress I hope that when we wake up on 24th June and the UK has chosen to remain in the EU, that the Department for Transport will be ready to lead on revising regulations.
- The Government must actively back improvements of minimum standards for vehicles and promote innovations like **autonomous emergency breaking** and **intelligent speed adaptation**.
- The UK must also actively lead on securing safer HGV designs, with Vulnerable Road Users and congestion in mind.
- The fact the UK has an ever-growing driver shortage of 50,000, cross-border HGV standards should really be a focus to ensure foreign HGV drivers are trained and equipped to high standards.
- And of course aside from the EU, the UK must actively lead in the European New Car Assessment Programme or Euro NCAP.

- Although it is only optional, the 5-star system has come to be the gold standard of safe vehicle design.
- We should be proud of our role in helping to establish the programme nearly 20 years ago.
- And despite our role within the programme diminishing under the Coalition Government, the emphasis on consumer awareness in the Government's Road Safety Statement does show a step change for UK cooperation with the system.
- In further cycles we should be doing our best to lead and extend the scope of ratings to address big policy questions:
 - How can the system improve crashworthy designs that are good not just for occupants but protect pedestrians and other vulnerable road users better?
 - Can the system work with new non-traditional entrants to the autonomous market like Google and Uber?
 - And can the programme's scope extend to reflect new technology? Incorporating additional autonomous emergency braking and lane running standards?
- The Euro NCAP is the forum for answers to these and many other questions that will eventually help shape regulation of new technology at all levels of governance.
- The existing NCAP also offers untapped potential to be integrated into a far more joined up transport safety policy framework in the UK.

JOINED UP POLICY

- The government must not miss opportunities to fully utilise financial incentives that aim to shift driver behaviour to be safer.
- For example in the way they promote electric cars and ULEVs through the plug-in grant, why couldn't an emphasis be placed on safety too?
 - Whether that's adding an NCAP standard requirement to the existing grant.
 - Or even incentivising the uptake of AEBs as advocated by Thatcham Research?
- Indeed joined up thinking has been on Labour's agenda for a long time now – going in to the last election our support for Ultra Low emissions vehicles, pushed for clear action to ensure that quieter vehicles do not pose new hazards for blind, partially sighted and other vulnerable road users.
- To be fair the explicit mentions of Vulnerable Road Users in the Government's recently published Motor services strategy were encouraging, but there remain plenty of missed opportunities:
 - Could the Government have incorporated safety in new clean air zones around five city centres?
 - Will the second Road Investment Strategy package allocate a specific budget to road safety or cycling, like what was achieved in the first Strategy?
 - Or could the tax rates on insurance premiums which were increased at The Budget have included a discount for users with telematics/ black boxes as recommended by PACTS?

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

- One policy which the Government is looking at seriously and may transform road safety is autonomous vehicles.
- When human error accounts for over 90% of road incidents¹, the development of autonomous vehicles will mean a significant reduction in the number of road traffic incidents.
- I think it's safe to say most people are excited by the opportunities, even I am as a self-professed petrol head!
- But from what I've learnt so far at meetings on autonomous & driverless vehicles is that they pose several questions and every answer you find produces several more.
- One area I think will be particularly interesting is how they may shape behaviour and redress current trends around maintenance of your vehicle.
- Let me give the example of tyres:
 - Tyres are the most significant vehicle defect for Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) collisions.
 - Motorists increasingly wearing their tyres below the legal limit, or opting to buy part worn tyres - which I understand are being sold illegally in large numbers.
- Will autonomous technology be able to reverse that trend either by notifying drivers when treads become too worn? If not could the expectations of vehicles being autonomous mean drivers are put at risk?

¹ Association of British Insurers

- Moving forwards both drivers and all other road users need to be fully aware of an autonomous vehicles capabilities but also shortcomings.
- The Modern Transport Bill announced in the Queens Speech is a great opportunity for the UK and could be a boom for our manufacturing sector.
- But the complete lack of detail on the Bill does suggest it's a while off yet.
- This gives us time to really think about what artificial intelligence (AI) in automotive means for all roads users.
- When proposals do eventually come forward:
 - We must consider what wider infrastructure investments will be necessary and how they will affect public transport and vulnerable road users.

NO DISTRACTION

- Finally, I do want to underline that making sure regulations keep up with research are crucial, but autonomous vehicles and the Bill must not serve as a distraction from dealing with current safety issue:
 - HGV design
 - Driver fatigue
 - Young drivers
 - Older drivers
 - Drink/drive rates
 - Congestion
 - Cycling and Walking
- All these issues rightly deserve substantive thinking about.

CONCLUSION

- So before I take questions, to sum up: there's lots to be optimistic about.
- There are a whole host of areas where Government must deliver on to ensure safer vehicles and safer roads.
- And a key part of doing so is leading the way in Europe to shape technical possibilities and give manufacturers the clear signals they need to make vehicles safer.