

Transport safety: who is responsible? 4th Oral Evidence
Session, Thursday 3rd July 2014, Thatcher Room,
Portcullis House



Panel 2 - Transport safety specialists: 1400-1500

- **Honor Byford**, Chair, Road Safety GB
- **John Cartledge**, independent (formerly London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus)
- **John Elliott**, Vice Chair, National Transport Committee, Local Government Technical Advisers Group

Panel 2:

Stephen Glaister: Does the current Government give sufficient priority to transport safety?

John Elliott: I was disappointed in the 2011 road safety strategic framework document; and the statistics have shown a levelling off in casualty reduction.

John Cartledge: Rail safety is at its highest ever level and the improving trajectory has continued irrespective of changes in government.

Honor Byford: The opposite is the case for road/ The road safety grant has not been replaced; the penalty framework has been popular but emphasis has switched from prevention as a result; perceptions of likelihood of being caught have reduced (like the maintenance budget). Road Safety GB wants national casualty reduction targets.

Stephen Glaister: There are no targets in rail yet a good safety performance. Do targets matter?

John Cartledge: Actually, there are three levels of rail 'targets':

- ALARP (a legal duty set by the Health & Safety at Work etc Act for all employers)
- ORR - Seeks zero industry-caused casualties as a policy goal
- EU – seeks to maintain current safety levels and over time to bring all member states' performance up to the standards of the best.

Honor Byford: Individual drivers on the highway networks operate individually and many are out with any controlled or professional system. The railways, air transport and merchant shipping are all closed and controlled systems within which there is also a system of third party control: signalling, air traffic control and, at least in busy shipping lanes and coastal waters; coast guards. Air and Sea Captains and train drivers are all required to qualify and re-qualify for their commands and when they change routes or vehicle type. There are strict rules concerning fitness for duty, alcohol and drugs and medical fitness tests etc. On the Highway networks, there are some controls on some professional drivers e.g. HGV, PSV and taxi licence holders and those within large fleets but the majority of drivers of cars and LGVs are not within such systems and the network itself has no

controls beyond those of infrastructure and signs and lines and the final sanction of police enforcement. Once a driver has passed their driving test, they are free to drive without further training or checks until they reach significant age and even then they self-report fitness to drive.

For these reasons the application of the types of closed system and no fault reporting and investigation such as air and rail use would be extremely difficult if not impossible to apply in any rigorous and reliable way.

Stephen Glaister: Should we place responsibility on the Highways Agency to prevent KSIs?

John Elliot: Concerned that 97.6% of roads (local) will get frozen out in new Strategic Highways Network/ Highways Agency arrangement.

Measures are needed to increase the respect of employers for road risk.

John Cartledge: When the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was set up in 1974, the relevant minister (Michael Foot) sent a letter of guidance saying it should focus on risk sectors not covered by other agencies. (Road safety was deemed to be covered by what is now the DfT.)

Honor Byford: If HSE took an interest in the road casualties, employers would take it seriously, unlike now.

Richard Allsop: Is the rail sector's concern about their employees' work-related risks purely about the employees or are they concerned about the safety of other road users?

John Cartledge: The "etc" in the title of the 'Health and Safety at Work, **etc.** Act' refers to the safety of passengers, level crossing users, members of the public, etc, so rail employers' duties are not simply to their workforce. Most risk is now to third parties.

Honor Byford: Small employers will cut safety corners, which we can't control.

John Cartledge: There is increasing use of sub-contractors in rail maintenance, with agency staff who may be travelling long distances (by road) between multiple work sites; also problems with language skills; etc.

Kate Carpenter: Should we introduce Highways Agency type safety assessment for all work on highways?

John Cartledge: If you look at trends in rail casualties, there was no break point associated with privatisation. British Rail's record was not perfect; safety regulation was enhanced to meet privatisation and has since been brought within the scope of EU legislation. New technology and systems have emerged irrespective of ownership. Killing or maiming people is not a route to profitability

Rob Hunter: Are there difficulties with obtaining quality data and monitoring safety?

Honor Byford: The quality of STATS19 data varies from area to area; increasingly it is completed by non-specialist police officers or civilian staff. There is a Quinquennial review – but what outcomes? She has tried accessing hospital data but this has proved too difficult to use effectively locally. She welcomed the 2 levels of serious injury proposed by the EC.

Until recently police refused to record non-injury accidents. Parallels between cycle and motorcycle crashes both deliberately risk-taking. There is a need to get data from the A&E and from cycling groups.

John Cartledge: All incidents are reportable on rail but whilst KSIs are reported comprehensively, slight injuries and near 'hits' are less likely to be reported comprehensively, especially if the victims are trespassing. Rail has promoted a "just culture" to encourage honesty about safety errors in order to learn from them.

[Session ended: 15:04]