

PACTS Transport Commission inquiry 'UK transport safety: who is responsible?

Response on behalf of Living Streets, April 2014

1. We are the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk. We work with professionals and politicians to make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.
2. We started life in 1929 as the Pedestrians Association and have been the national voice for pedestrians throughout our history. In the early years, our campaigning led to the introduction of the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30 mph speed limits. Since then our ambition has grown. Today we influence decision makers nationally and locally, run successful projects to encourage people to walk and provide specialist consultancy services to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions, improve public health, and make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.

Leadership, responsibility and coordination: Are there clear lines of responsibility for transport safety? How is responsibility structured currently across the different modes and for different system providers? Is national leadership in transport safety evident in all the modes?

- 3 We believe that there needs to be political will and ministerial leadership to increase the number of people walking which can help to reduce road danger. Living Streets believes that the Government needs to set out a clear vision that enables planners to reallocate road space from the motor vehicle in favour of pedestrians. This vision needs to be backed by policy and embedded in business plans across Government departments, such as, the Department for Transport, Department of Health, Department for Education and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- 4 The policy approach should be to identify and eliminate structural barriers to walking as well as those to improve road safety for vulnerable road users. These include making it easier to implement 20 mph limits, designing streets with people in mind and giving pedestrians more time to cross at signalised crossings.

Objectives and targets: What transport safety results are currently being sought for the different modes and which agencies are accountable on behalf of government for achieving them? What is the role and nature of aims and targets? Should the long-term Safe System goal and strategy be adopted for all transport modes? How can road safety goals be aligned with other transport objectives such as sustainability, public health and active travel measures to achieve co-benefits?

- 3 Since 2011 there has been no central government target for reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads. This responsibility has been passed to local authorities. This means that it is up to local people to scrutinize local authorities, which can be less effective. Previously when an ambitious government target was set this helped galvanise support and action as well as improving performance.

- 4 It is not only necessary to set ambitious targets but to do so by mode. In London casualty reduction target is not broken down by mode, which means that advances in vehicle technology and improvements to healthcare could reduce the number of vehicle driver and passenger KSIs but that vulnerable road user KSIs have not decreased proportionately. In fact vulnerable road users have become a larger proportion of the overall casualty figure. The Mayor has committed to reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on London's roads by 40%. Pedestrians account for half of all those killed on London's roads, 69 in 2012 last year. A pedestrian casualty reduction target is needed but has still not materialised.
- 5 We strongly support the assertion that road safety goals should be aligned with other transport objectives including sustainability, public health and active travel measures.
- 6 In order to help increase physical activity including promoting and increasing levels of walking road danger needs to be tackled to make people feel safer and more inclined to walk. Traditionally there has been a school of thought that road danger needs to be reduced by separating vulnerable road users from motor vehicles which has created much more hostile and unpleasant environments, such as subways, bridges and guard rail. This has not helped to increase physical activity levels; in fact it has done the opposite. In fact, the four home nations' medical advisers believe all children and young people should do at least an hour's moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. But (50%) of seven year old pupils were sedentary for at least 6.4 hours a day. Girls were particularly inactive: just 38% did the recommended hour of exercise, compared with 63% of boys¹.
- 7 It is necessary to take an approach to road danger which both aims to reduce it as well as increasing the number of people walking. By encouraging people to walk we can encourage modal shift, which will make people feel safer when there are less cars on the road as well as making areas more inviting and this in turn will help encourage more people to walk. This shift in approaching road danger needs to be supported by real investment in walking infrastructure and the public realm to help make it both safer and easier to walk.
- 8 There is a real opportunity to bring these objectives together as they have shared goals with the movement of public health responsibility to local authorities given they also oversee transport infrastructure and programmes locally. With the introduction of the public health outcomes framework local authorities will be measured on results but it will be up to local people and the transport and health community to scrutinize their work.

Case study – Walk to School Campaign

- 9 Our Walk to School campaign has shown how you can align sustainability, public health and active travel objectives together. Walking levels to amongst primary school children have been in decline for a period of time, which means an easy opportunity to be physically active is being missed. For example, in 2012, 47% of trips to and from school by primary school children (aged 5-10) were made on foot compared to 1995/97 when 53% of trips were made on foot whilst for secondary aged children (aged 11-16) 38% of school trips were on foot and 26% were by car, compared with 42% and 20% respectively

¹ BMJ Open (2013) How active are our children - <http://bmjopen.bmjjournals.org/content/3/8/e002893.full>

in 1995/97². However, there is a real opportunity to increase the number of walking trips. Over 30% of primary school aged children live less than half a mile from their school and a further 20% travel between 0.5 and 1 mile. 16% of school journeys under a mile are driven to school, a distance that could be walked within 20 minutes.

- 10 Living Streets has piloted and rolled out an effective outreach project to tackle physical barriers and attitudes to walking which has had fantastic results. Living Streets have operated the national Walk to School (WtS) campaign since 1995 and aims to encourage all parents and young people to make walking to school part of their daily routine. The WtS campaign reaches over 13 million people, making it one of the UK's leading behaviour change campaigns for young people. We work directly with over 750,000 children in 2,000 schools and every year thousands more take part in the national schemes and events we run, including Walk once a Week (WoW) and Walk to School Week. The benefits of walk to school initiatives were recognised by the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in its Walking and Cycling guidance in 2012.
- 11 Living Streets Walk to School outreach project began as a pilot project funded by the Department for Transport in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council to work intensively with a cluster of schools. At the end of the project, walking to school had increased from 46% to 53%. Living Streets Walk once a Week (WoW) extension project for the Department of Health saw Living Streets working with 736 schools and over 118,000 children in order to increase walking levels in schools across England. 61,567 children and 6,515 parents took part in surveys which revealed a 25% increase in numbers of children walking to school (during the project lifetime) and a 35% decrease in car use. Before the WoW intervention, schools had a 43% walking proportion, and following the WoW interventions schools reached a peak of 59% walking in 2011, levelling at 54% in 2012 (the final year).
- 12 In 2012, Living Streets - in partnership with Durham County Council - secured funding through the Government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund to roll out the outreach project in 11 local authority areas. At the end of year one, the project has already seen a 26% increase in the number of children walking at participating primary schools, equivalent to over 2 million new walking journeys by children and accompanying parents, the majority of which would otherwise have been made by car. We have also guided the investment of £140,000 worth of capital improvements to school routes, and new zebra crossings and pathways have already been completed as a result.
- 13 By increasing walking levels through modal shift this has reduced the amount of cars on the road helping to reduce road danger, lower emissions and improve physical activity levels. This demonstrates that it is possible to align public health, sustainability and active goals and achieve fantastic results.

Perceptions and culture: How do we gauge public perception of risk, public acceptability of effective measures; and public and corporate acceptance of liability? How can a greater culture of safety be achieved among employers, transport users and others?

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-travel-survey-2012>

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- 14 A greater culture of transport safety can be achieved by making changes to the civil liability framework as well as reducing real and perceived danger.
- 15 Any strategy to reduce casualties should also consider perceptions of road danger. It is not enough to simply try and reduce road danger as if this approach is taken it could result in deterring people from walking completely to certain places. Measures should both reduce road danger and make people feel safer and places more inviting. Increasing walking levels can also help reduce road danger as it can reduce vehicle traffic too.
- 16 To help increase the numbers of people walking national and local government need to implement measures to reduce real and perceived levels of road danger. This can be monitored through statistics but also interviews and focus groups.

Reform of the civil liability framework

- 17 A measure which would benefit pedestrians is reform of the civil liability framework in the UK. It must be reformed such that the burden of proof falls upon the driver to prove that s/he was *not* at fault in the event of a collision with a vulnerable road user, as is the case in most other European countries. In this way, by establishing an element of fairness in civil liability, we can move towards a culture wherein motor vehicle drivers take their responsibilities more seriously than at present.

Funding: What are the current levels of funding for transport safety? Are annual funding mechanisms and resource allocation procedures appropriate?

- 18 Funding for road safety has been seriously affected by budget cuts. Spending has reduced from £19m in 2008/9 to just under £4m in 2012/13. Investment in road safety education campaigns for children and teenagers was just £78000. With children remaining to be one of the most vulnerable road user groups it seems misjudged to reduced funding to improve their education.
- 19 Furthermore research by both Living Streets in 2013 and Andy Sawford MP's office this year has demonstrated that the number of school crossing patrol officers has been reduced. Living Streets' research found that in two thirds of local authorities the number of school crossing patrol officers had reduced. Research by Andy Sawford's office said that a thousand school crossing patrol officers have been cut across England.
- 20 More widely at Living Streets we believe that a long term funding scheme for walking is important, from both revenue and capital sources, to follow on from the success of LSTF to deliver improved high streets for pedestrians and behaviour change interventions. This would help encourage walking and thereby reduce road danger overall by reducing vehicle traffic.

Promotion: Is transport safety receiving adequate promotion and championing?

- 21 Road safety is not prioritised by Government which is demonstrated by the lack of funds for road safety campaigns and a lack of action in tackling road danger issues such as speed.

Monitoring and evaluation. How should trends in safety be monitored and by whom? What is the case for an independent road safety or collision investigator?

- 22 Trends in safety should be monitored independently at both national and local level. Currently without a national casualty reduction target there is little incentive to monitor road safety. Local people therefore have to help monitor local road safety statistics to ensure local authorities are performing well.
- 23 Given the current way in which road collisions are investigated it would be relevant to consider the use of an independent road safety or collision investigator. Given there are no national targets for casualty reduction there is an increased need for statistics and trends to be monitored independently.
- 24 For more information please contact:

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