

STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 FRIDAY 7 OCTOBER

FACTS COMMENTS ON MINISTRY OF JUSTICE PROPOSALS

Commenting on the proposals from the Ministry of Justice for a new offence of causing serious injury by dangerous driving, Robert Gifford, Executive Director of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, said "The main response to this proposal must be to ask: what exactly is meant by "serious injury"? The definition in Reported Road Casualties refers to a visit to accident and emergency or an overnight stay in hospital. I assume that, if the injury results from an act of dangerous driving, then the definition must imply an injury that is life-changing.

"It will be important for Parliament to give a clear indication of what is understood by serious when the amendment is debated. Otherwise, it is quite likely that the offence may be placed on the statute book with little or no effect.

"At present, just under 6,000 drivers are charged every year with dangerous driving. Yet we have no information about how many of those charges are the result of a crash involving serious injuries. So, it will be important to understand just how many extra court cases will result from the new offence.

"I hope that MPs and Peers will therefore look very carefully at the detail of this offence to ensure that it leads to improvements in road safety, especially as it was not referred to in either the Strategic Framework for Road Safety published by the government in May 2011 or the earlier consultation document on Road Safety Compliance published in November 2008".

ENDS

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