

POLICY BRIEFING - A VISION FOR ROAD SAFETY THE ROLE OF A ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY AND CASUALTY REDUCTION TARGETS BEYOND 2010

Summary

The coalition government will be looking afresh at road safety in the context of its commitment to reducing public spending. It is vital that death and injury on British roads continues to be tackled as effectively as possible, not only to reduce the emotional trauma and other costs for those directly affected, but also to reduce costs to the public purse. Road collisions impose a significant burden on the NHS and social security budgets, both in the immediate aftermath and longer term due to permanent disablement, and reduce economic output. The established average value of preventing a fatal collision is £1.9 million, and the value of preventing a collision involving injury averages £75000 across all reported injury collisions. The total value of preventing all reported collisions in 2008 would have been around £18 billion. The argument to improve road safety is therefore not simply ethically, socially and emotionally driven but also an economically sound policy area that will deliver real cost savings.

A road safety vision and strategy for beyond 2010 is vital if we are to achieve political, professional and public buy-in and make a significant impact on casualty numbers. A vision and strategy are necessary parts of a safe system approach to road safety which stresses the importance of and interaction between the road user, the road environment and the vehicle. By prioritising a vision and road safety strategy against which outcomes and progress can be measured, it will be possible to ensure private sector, professional, parliamentary and public buy-in and encourage the most effective use of resources.

We urge Ministers to commit to working towards having the safest road users in the world and to generating the tools with which a joined-up work force can ensure that no more than 1000 people die on our roads by 2020.

Recommendations for Government

- Maintain and build on Britain's reputation and experience as a world leader for road safety by prioritising the publication of a road safety strategy and measurable road safety goals alongside a long-term road safety vision.
- Commit to working towards having the safest road users in the world beyond 2010.
- Commit to a reduction in road deaths to no more than 1000 per year by 2020.
- Focus resource on need, alleviate high-risk areas of the system and generate greater equality between all road users.
- Maintain its focus on evaluation of effective delivery of policy outcomes.
- Centre the road safety vision, strategy and goals upon the safe system approach.
- Complete the process of strategy and goal formulation in consultation with professionals in the field and service users.

Death and Injury on British Roads

Even after more than two decades of steady progress in road casualty reduction, with the numbers reported Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) reduced by two-thirds since the early 1980s, a total of 26,906 people were reported KSI in 2009, a year which saw 222,100 road casualties in collisions reported to the police in Great Britain and 2,222 deaths on British roads. It has long been known that a considerable proportion of non-fatal casualties are not known to the police, as hospital, survey and compensation claims data all indicate a higher number of casualties than are reported to and by the police. The best estimate produced in 2008¹, is that the total number of road casualties in Great Britain each year, including those not reported to police, is within the range 680 thousand to 920 thousand with a central estimate of 800 thousand. The total value of prevention of collisions and road casualties is therefore likely to be well over the 2008 DfT estimate of £17.9 billion (around 1.25 per cent of GDP). It is therefore vital that action continues to be taken to build on the internationally respected road safety culture and progress in casualty reduction in Great Britain.

Tomorrow's Roads – A Strategy for Partnership Development

A road casualty reduction target for GB was set for the first time in 1987 for a one-third reduction by 2000. It was very successful in increasing the priority to be given to road safety and generating activity to reduce deaths and injuries and by 2000 deaths and serious injuries had fallen by 48% compared with the baseline. Following public consultation a new strategy and target were proposed for 2010 to build on this success. March 1st saw the tenth anniversary of the road safety strategy *Tomorrow's Roads, Safer for Everyone*.

Recent PACTS research² has found widespread support for the role which the Tomorrow's Roads strategy has played over the last ten years. The strategy provided the headline casualty reduction targets for 2010 of 40 per cent reduction in overall numbers of people Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI), 50 per cent reduction in child KSI and 10 per cent reduction in the slight casualty rate and encouraged specific efforts on ten key themes.

Tomorrow's Roads was developed in active consultation with many road safety stakeholders, and was comprehensible, feasible and relevant. Delivery partners found that it helped to generate support for road safety within the wider context of their respective areas of work. A positive outcome from the focus on achieving measurable goals over the last decade has been the building of local partnerships involving a wide range of organisations which promote road safety and to work together to implement locally relevant and cost-effective measures.

International Experience

Great Britain is an international leader in road safety and together with Sweden and the Netherlands has the safest roads in the world. It is important that our achievements and reputation are built on beyond 2010 and that we improve our position further by achieving a vision that makes our road users of all kinds the safest in the world.. Research shows that the most effective way to reduce road death and injury is to apply ambitious goals to measurable

¹ DfT (2009) Reported Road Casualties Great Britain 2008, The Stationary Office, London

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/accidents/casualtiesgbar/rrcgb2008>

² <http://www.pacts.org.uk/docs/pdf-bank/Beyond%202010%20-%20Taking%20Stock%20and%20Moving%20Forward%20.pdf>

outcomes in combination with a long-term vision and a strategy for delivery using proven cost-effective measures together with innovative programmes based on sound research.

The UN report *Improving Global Road Safety: Setting Regional and National Road Traffic Casualty Reduction Targets*³, showed that by 2004, many countries had set national targets, and in addition regional targets had been set within the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) for its member countries. A review of the safety performance of 7 OECD countries⁴ showed that having in place a quantified target is associated with an annual average reduction in road deaths over the whole target period that is 4 per cent per year greater than in previously similarly performing countries that set no target. There are several reasons why having measurable outcomes for road safety deliver augmented benefit:⁵

- Measurable goals help to widen the range of delivery partners including the private sector and the public and increase accountability.
- Performance monitoring conveys the message that the Government is serious about reducing road casualties.
- Sub-national goal-setting widens the sense of ownership by creating greater accountability, establishing more partnerships, and generating more action.
- Performance monitoring raises media and public awareness and motivate politicians at all levels of government to support policy changes that improve road safety and to provide an appropriate share of available resources.

The UN report endorses British practice that the strategy and goals should be empirically based taking account of the existing road safety situation and the policy framework necessary to deliver casualty reduction measures.

The 2004 *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*⁶ recommended that national road safety strategies should include ambitious but achievable performance targets, supported by national plans that set out specific interventions to achieve them.

In *Safety on the Roads: What's the Vision?* The OECD makes the following recommendation: Target setting leads to more realistic and effective programmes, results in better integration of institutional efforts and, by securing political commitment, often produces a more focussed allocation of resources.⁷

The Global context

The First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in November 2009 resulted in the *Moscow Declaration*⁸ which included among others, a commitment by Ministers to 'Set

³ United nations (2010) "Improving Global Road Safety: Setting Regional and National Road Traffic Casualty Reduction Targets", United Nations Regional Commissions, New York

⁴ Wong, S.C., N.N. Sze (2010) Is the effect of quantified road safety targets sustainable? To appear in *Safety Science* and presented at SWOV Workshop *Scientific Research on Road Safety Management*, Haarlem, November 2009

⁵ United nations (2010) "Improving Global Road Safety: Setting Regional and National Road Traffic Casualty Reduction Targets", United Nations Regional Commissions, New York

⁶ WHO (2004), *World Report on road traffic injury prevention*, World Health Organisation, Geneva.

⁷ OECD (2002), *Safety on the Roads: What's the Vision?*, Road Transport Research Series, OECD, Paris

⁸ http://www.unece.org/trans/roadsafe/docs/moscow_declaration_en.pdf

ambitious yet feasible national road traffic casualty reduction targets that are clearly linked to planned investments and policy initiatives and mobilize the necessary resources to enable effective and sustainable implementation to achieve targets in the framework of a safe systems approach'. This approach was further endorsed by a UN General Assembly Resolution in March 2010, supported by 100 countries including the UK. The Resolution welcomes the conclusions and recommendations of the report *Improving Global Road Safety: Setting Regional and National Road Traffic Casualty Reduction Targets*, and invites all Member States to set their own national road traffic casualty reduction targets in the context of a Decade of Action for Road Safety, 2011-2020.

A Safe System Approach

There is a growing and encouraging tendency in road safety management to view the road user, the road environment and the vehicle as a system, treated in its entirety. The OECD/ITF report *Towards Zero* concluded that a fundamental shift in road safety management to a safe system approach is required, pointing out that the safest communities in the future will be those that embrace this shift and begin work now on the interventions required to close the gap between current performance and the performance associated with a genuinely safe road transport system.⁹

The systems approach furthermore incorporates a commitment to shared responsibility. *Tomorrow's Roads* addressed a range of stakeholders for road safety. It is hoped that in a new strategy for GB, this group could be extended within the public, private and third sectors to maximize public and political buy-in, as indeed it has already been in the consultation *A Safer Way*¹⁰ of April 2009 and the earlier consultations *Learning to Drive* and *Road Safety Compliance*. The responses to these consultations by wide ranges of respondents represent a substantial input by all parts of the road safety profession and community, which should be taken fully into account in the government's fresh look at road safety.

Effectiveness of Measured Performance in Road safety

Experience here and in other countries in road safety has shown how effectively measurable goals can highlight key aspects of policy and act as a stimulus to increase commitment to policy implementation. Successful goals are evidence-based and developed in consultation with those who have to deliver them. Previously, road casualty reduction targets have been set as high level goals following substantial stakeholder consultation, rather than operational targets that run the danger of distorting priorities and using resources inefficiently. Most importantly they have been widely supported and they have promoted activity and focused effort.

It is recognized that target setting based on inadequate data or unrealistic short term objectives can be counterproductive in that the resulting targets may discourage action and place unnecessary stress on those expected to achieve them.^{11, 12} as within some aspects of health policy over the last decade where there has in some cases been a poor link between the target

⁹ OECD (2008) *Towards Zero – Ambitious Road Safety Targets and the Safe System Approach*

¹⁰ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/roadsafetyconsultation/>

¹¹ National Audit Office (1996) *Health of the Nation: a progress report*. London: HMSO, 1996

¹² See also http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article648832.ece and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2002/may/20/uk.thinktanks>

setting process and delivery. But in road safety, experience has been quite the opposite. Consultation has been wide-ranging and delivery has been tied, both nationally and sub-nationally, to the delivery of road safety objectives, namely, to improve the safety of road users in Britain, as measured directly in terms of casualty reduction.

Moving Forward in New Territory

As we move beyond 2010, it is important that Great Britain continues to lead the field and can be seen to perform effectively and systematically in order to achieve a range of shared goals against which performance can be measured and delivery can be made more transparent and accountable.

The first DH White Paper from the new government detailed the reform process for the NHS based on partnership and driven by performance¹³. A number of the approaches being applied to the New NHS are already taking place in road safety and many others would be well suited to a new approach for road safety beyond 2010. By developing a new national performance framework measuring how local services are progressing, alongside a pragmatic but optimistic vision and a strategy which involves a wide range of stakeholders and delivery partners and underlines the need for evaluation and accountability, the new Ministerial team will be making a contribution to individuals, to society and to the economy.

In our report Beyond 2010 – Taking Stock and Moving Forward, PACTS looked at inequality in road risk, outlining the augmented degree of risk to certain user profiles (young people, the elderly, males, people from deprived and ethnic minority backgrounds) user types (motorcyclists, pedal cyclists) user behaviours (drink/drug driving, speeding, non wearing of seatbelts) and user locations (both rural and urban).

We believe that our report offers a first attempt to set out what the health agenda is seeking to achieve: a combination of a headline goal and vision for KSI reduction and road safety alongside local performance measures.

Casualty reduction mapping or benchmarking in the report generated a role for more sophisticated methods of comparison between the various types of road safety delivery body. The comparison of areas with like circumstances proved a useful way to identify similar circumstances and the related links to road safety.

Notwithstanding the benefits of headline casualty reduction goals for Great Britain, the separation of area groups underlined the need for more sophisticated, non-general measurable goals at the local levels so that road safety delivery partners can focus on the specific issues which will make the greatest contribution to casualty reduction in their area.¹⁴

¹³ <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/doh/newnhs/contents.htm>

¹⁴ <http://www.pacts.org.uk/docs/pdf-bank/Beyond%202010%20-%20Taking%20Stock%20and%20Moving%20Forward%20.pdf>