



# A Safer way: consultation on making Britain's roads the safest in the world

## Key issues

The death and serious injury figures on roads remain too high. DfT is looking to introduce a strategy covering all major elements. Targets include a reduction in road deaths and serious injuries by 33% by 2020 and a reduction by 50% for children and young people.

## 1. Introduction

This Department of Transport consultation paper begins by highlighting the fact that nearly 3,000 people still die on the roads each year and so there remains a great deal to do to improve road safety further. The document includes proposed targets for reductions in deaths and serious injuries to be achieved by 2020.

The paper notes the need for balance between efficient mobility and the obligation to maintain public safety. The scale of death and serious injury (nearly 28,000 serious injuries) is a huge public welfare issue, causing physical and emotional pain to the victims their families and friends.

The overall social and economic cost of road collisions is estimated at £19 billion per year. Travel is important to our prosperity and quality of life, but there is clear potential for us to achieve cost-effective improvements in our overall wellbeing by improving road safety.

The consultation document can be found at [www.dft.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations).

## **2. The challenges**

Analysis of the evidence has led the Department to identify 8 challenges for a new strategy as follows

- reducing the number of road deaths, which have fallen at a slower rate than serious injuries;
- pedestrian and cyclist casualties in our towns and cities – particularly in deprived communities;
- protecting children, particularly in deprived areas, and young people, who are greatly over-represented in the statistics;
- protecting motorcyclists, who represent 20 per cent of road fatalities but just 1 per cent of traffic;
- safety on rural roads: 62 per cent of all road fatalities in 2007 occurred on rural roads, which carry only 42 per cent of traffic;
- variations in safety from area to area and road to road;
- poor road user behaviour amongst a minority, where drink-driving and failure to wear a seatbelt remain a problem;
- illegal and inappropriate speed: excessive speed was recorded as a contributory factor in 26 per cent of road fatalities in 2007.

Rural roads are also an issue of particular concern which has been highlighted by evidence. Research has shown that reducing speed limits on the most dangerous rural roads could save a great number of lives. Highway authorities are currently responsible for reviewing speeds on these roads, and the Department believe that this remains an appropriate way forward. However progress with reviews has been patchy and further efforts are needed to bring everywhere up to the standard of the best.

The Department aims to reduce further the prevalence of behaviours that, whilst seen to be unacceptable by the vast majority, persist in causing death and serious injury, notably drink-driving, failure to wear a seatbelt, and careless or dangerous driving. They believe that drug driving presents a significant danger. They have consulted on a package of measures to address these issues in the recent road safety compliance consultation. The responses are now being considered and will be reflected in the final strategy.

## **3. Evidence**

Unsurprisingly, pedestrians are most at risk on urban roads, where 65 per cent of fatalities and 82 per cent of people killed or seriously injured (KSIs) occur. Ages at greatest risk are 11–15 and older people aged 80 and over. Similarly, 73 per cent of cyclist KSIs are on urban roads.

The younger adult age groups are disproportionately likely to die on the roads, with the 16–29 age group accounting for over a third of all deaths. Road

collisions account for around 30 per cent of all deaths of 15–19 year olds and around 17 per cent of all deaths of 20–29 year olds. Peak road KSIs are in the 16–21 (inclusive) age group whilst 75 per cent of all road deaths are among men. Whilst men travel around 26 per cent further per year on average than women, this does not account for the difference in fatality rates.

38 per cent of road deaths occur on rural 'A' roads and when all rural roads are considered together, they account for 62 per cent of total fatalities but carry only 42 per cent of traffic. 68 per cent of motorcycle fatalities are on rural roads. 74 per cent of car-occupant fatalities occur on rural roads, and these roads have a higher ratio of fatal collisions to serious collisions than urban roads.

For some aspects of road safety, achievement of improvements has been fairly evenly spread around the country. But for others, looking at where we are now compared with 10 years ago, reveals some different patterns of success, even between areas with similar socioeconomic characteristics.

Research shows a link between deprivation and road safety risk and although total road casualties in the most deprived English districts have reduced faster than for England as a whole, the most deprived areas remain slightly over-represented in the casualty population.

This link between casualties and deprivation is largely due to pedestrian casualties, where the rate falls from 70 casualties per 100,000 population in the most deprived areas to 21 in the least deprived. The rate in the most deprived areas is higher across all age groups, but most stark for children; the rate for pedestrian casualties per 100,000 population in the 0–16 age range is approximately 4 times greater in the 10 per cent most deprived areas than in the 10 per cent least deprived.

#### **4. Vision for the future**

The paper notes that planning five, ten and twenty years ahead is a difficult business and achievements will depend crucially on the environment we will be working within. The further ahead we look, the greater these uncertainties become. With the current economic downturn introducing uncertainty into expectations for casualty trends and, in the case of vehicle safety technologies, might well have a negative impact on casualties.

The environmental, economic and social context in which this new strategy may include the following factors all of which may present quite significant challenges for road safety:

Environmental: more carbon-constrained; land-use patterns becoming more concentrated around urban areas; changing travel patterns – more walking,

cycling and motorcycling; changing vehicle mix – a greater proportion of smaller, lighter vehicles and different fuels.

Economic: changes in demand for travel, probably seeing an increase in the longer term; increased long-distance freight traffic; increase in light goods vehicle traffic, especially for local deliveries; increasing use of, and familiarity with, technology.

Social: busy lives, involving multi-tasking and immediate communications; stronger local democracy; changing demographics, with an ageing population and greater proportion of female drivers; greater demand for road travel for leisure purposes.

The overall approach of the paper is to deal with this uncertainty by identifying these potential areas of risk and working to mitigate any negative effects through targeted use of technology, engineering solutions, awareness-raising and enforcement where appropriate. The paper also looks to maximise the opportunities that these changes may present, for example, through using the synergies that reducing emissions may have with improving safety.

## **5. Delivering the approach**

The relationship between central Government and local authorities for this strategy is very different from its predecessors. Whereas in 2000 Government required all English highway authorities to set their own casualty reduction targets, reflecting the national targets, road safety is now one of a number of areas of responsibility for which local authorities must consider Government's guidance and determine their own priorities for future targets and investment. Nevertheless, within their new Local Area Agreements, more than one-third of English local highway authorities have chosen a road safety target, reflecting the high priority that road safety is given within local communities.

In general terms, then, we need to make our roads, vehicles, drivers and riders safer, but also ensure that each of these elements of the system takes account of the limitations of the other elements and provides an additional layer of protection against death and injury. For example, highway design can help to mitigate the consequences if a vehicle does leave the carriageway.

Looking at road safety as a system also allows us to achieve better value for money in our interventions, as we are able to prioritise those measures that are most likely to cost-effectively reduce casualties.

The Department wishes to see a holistic road system incorporating

- roads that take account of the level of safety vehicles can deliver and what drivers need to help them drive safely at all times;
- vehicles that deliver greater safety, taking account of how drivers will respond to new technologies and what protection vehicles will offer in the event of a collision;

- education and promotion that enable and encourage all types of road users to improve their safety skills and attitudes – we can *all improve*
- more intelligent use of road safety data at national and local level; national capability to learn the lessons from fatal collisions with the power to take recommendations to national and local government;
- improved skills and capacity in local highways authorities;
- traditional road safety interests, such as highway authorities and the police, working increasingly in partnership with others not immediately associated with road safety, such as educationalists and the Probation Service;
- good practice sharing among local road safety practitioners; improving the quality of our data to help us to target our interventions more effectively.

### Pedestrians

The paper notes that engineering measures can reduce pedestrian casualties (e.g. crossings, traffic calming), but too many pedestrians are hit by vehicles in residential streets at speeds that the human body cannot bear. As in other areas of road safety, there is an established suite of measures to assist in protecting pedestrians, including infrastructure such as pedestrian crossings and refuges, and it is expected that these kinds of interventions will continue to be made by highway authorities.

Research showing that pedestrians struck at slower speeds have a lesser chance of dying means the Department will amend the guidance on speed limits, recommending that highway authorities, over time, introduce 20 mph zones or limits into streets that are primarily residential in nature and which are not part of any major through route as well as encouraging local authorities to consider introducing 20 mph limits or zones in town or city streets, such as around schools, shops, markets, playgrounds and other areas where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high. The Department feels that these zones will offer greater protection for pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists as well as for children and older people, since both groups are less able to withstand the impacts of collisions.

### Tackling the riskiest routes

The Department will support a programme of improved information on the relative risks of British roads to provide highway authorities with good information about the safety performance of their roads, if they are to take effective action to manage it. They have funded the Road Safety Foundation to extend its current risk-mapping of British roads to cover all 'A' roads and this data will be published in June 2009.

The Department will also look to highway authorities to form partnerships with police and other interests to develop and implement proposals to rapidly improve safety on the riskiest routes. These partnerships will be best placed to bring forward engineering, design, education and enforcement measures to deal with the specific problems of those roads.

### Reducing speeds

The paper notes that a range of measures to reduce speeds on the riskiest rural single carriageway roads has been considered but the wide distribution of risk on rural roads of this type, makes a blanket approach to speed limits inappropriate, as it would reduce casualties, but would also impose large economic costs, through increasing journey times, even on roads that are relatively safe.

The current approach is to ask highway authorities to review their speed limits, giving priority to their 'A' and 'B' roads. We still think that this is the right mechanism for ensuring that right roads have the right speeds. Some authorities, such as Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire County Councils, have been making good progress with their reviews, resulting in reduced speeds and fewer casualties. However, we want authorities to take account of the forthcoming evidence on the riskiness of individual roads, and on the greatly enhanced risk at 60 mph compared to 50 mph. Across the country as a whole, the Department is concerned that progress has generally been too slow and too patchy.

So, to complement the better data on risk described in the Department will also revise existing guidance to highway authorities to assist the ongoing review of speed limits, recommending that highways authorities prioritise the review of 'A' and 'B' class national speed limit single carriageways, given the high proportion of traffic and casualties on these roads, and encourage the adoption of lower limits wherever the risks are relatively high and there is evidence that a lower limit would reduce casualties. Authorities' progress in reviewing speed limits will be tracked and the Department will ensure that knowledge about successful speed limit review is shared.

## **6. Measuring and ensuring success**

The paper notes that the Department believes that the key national target should be to reduce deaths, since they have been less successful in reducing deaths than serious injuries over the last decade. At the local level, as road deaths are much rarer occurrences, it is more reliable to address the combined number of deaths and serious injuries. Monitoring local progress against this benchmark will continue. Therefore the paper proposes the following targets:

- to reduce road deaths by at least 33 per cent by 2020 compared to the baseline of the 2004–08 average;
- to reduce the annual total of serious injuries on our roads by 2020 by at least 33 per cent compared to the baseline.

A more challenging target for children and young people is proposed to maintain progress on child road safety and to tackle the pressing problem of young people's safety:

- to reduce the annual total of road deaths and serious injuries to children and young people (aged 0–17) by at least 50 per cent against a baseline of the 2004–08 average by 2020.

To improve health, the environment and congestion, The Department is keen to encourage more walking and cycling. They wish to reduce the risk to the individual walker or cyclist, and to take into account expected growth in activity and are therefore proposing a target based on the rate of casualties:

- to reduce by at least 50 per cent by 2020 the rate of KSI per km travelled by pedestrians and cyclists, compared with the 2004–08 average.

Further performance information will also be maintained with annual publication of key indicators covering casualties, behaviours and trends. The proposed indicators are detailed below.

1. Rate of road deaths per 100 million vehicle kilometre.
2. Rate of killed or seriously injured pedestrians per 100 million kilometres walked.
3. Rate of killed or seriously injured pedal cyclists per 100 million kilometres cycled.
4. Rate of killed or seriously injured motorcyclists per 100 million vehicle kilometres.
5. Rate of killed or seriously injured car users per 100 million vehicle kilometres.
6. Number of killed or seriously injured casualties resulting from collisions involving drivers under the age of 25.
7. Number of people aged over 70 killed or seriously injured in road collisions per 100,000 population aged over 70.
8. Number of people killed in road collisions on rural roads.
9. Number of pedestrians killed or seriously injured per capita in 10 per cent most deprived Super Output Areas compared with 10 per cent least deprived.
10. Number of people killed where at least one of the drivers or riders involved was over the legal blood alcohol limit.
11. Number of car occupants killed who were not wearing a seatbelt.
12. Proportion of vehicles exceeding speed limits.
13. Cost of road traffic casualties.

The Department will compare safety to that of other leading nations by reference to the number of deaths per 100,000 population.

## **7. APSE Comment**

APSE welcomes the opportunity to respond to specific consultation papers as part of the process of policy making. We will reflect members interests and opinions in all our responses and so would encourage members with

responsibility for highways, street lights, winter maintenance and other relevant services to respond to this briefing and send comments to APSE.

APSE will be sending a joint response to this consultation document on behalf of its members and all comments should be sent by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 by e-mail to [pbrennan@apse.org.uk](mailto:pbrennan@apse.org.uk)

The consultation period will run for 12 weeks until 14 July 2009 so direct responses should reach the Department by that date. Comments on the proposals should be sent by e-mail to: [roadsafetyconsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:roadsafetyconsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk) or by post to Road Safety Consultation, 2/13 Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DR.

**Phil Brennan**  
**Principal Advisor**

## Appendix 1

### List of consultation questions

#### Vision and Targets (Ch.s 3 and 8)

1. Do you agree that our vision for road safety should be to have the safest roads in the world? (Ch. 3)
2. Do you agree that we should define a strategy running over twenty years to 2030, but with review points after five and ten years? (Ch. 3)
3. Do you agree that our targets should be to reduce:
  - road deaths by at least 33 per cent by 2020 compared to the baseline of the 2004–08 average number of road deaths;
  - the annual total of serious injuries on our roads by 2020 by at least 33 per cent;
  - the annual total of road deaths and serious injuries to children and young people (aged 0–17) by at least 50 per cent against a baseline of the 2004–08 average by 2020;
  - by at least 50 per cent by 2020 the rate<sup>24</sup> of KSI per km travelled by pedestrians and cyclists, compared with the 2004–08 average? (Ch. 8)
4. We are proposing a set of indicators in order to help us to monitor performance (Appendix A). Do you believe these cover the right areas? (Ch. 8)

#### Context (Ch.s 2, 3 and 4)

5. We have identified a number of factors that may affect our ability to deliver road safety improvements in the future world we are planning for. Do you think we have taken account of the key risks and opportunities? Are there others you would add? (Ch. 3)
6. We think that the key challenge for road safety from 2010 is better and more systematic delivery, rather than major policy changes. Do you agree? (Ch. 4)
7. This consultation document sets out the current evidence on the key road safety challenges. Do you agree with our analysis? Would you highlight any others? (Ch. 2)

#### New performance framework (Ch.s 4 and 8)

8. We are proposing a number of measures to support the effectiveness of the road safety profession. Do you think they will be effective? What else might need to be done? (Ch. 4)
9. Do you agree that an independent annual report on road safety performance, created on an annual basis, would be a worthwhile innovation? (Ch. 4)
10. Do you agree that the Road Safety Delivery Board should be tasked with holding Government and other stakeholders to account on the implementation of a new national road safety plan? (Ch. 8)

#### Roads and local authorities (Ch. 5)

11. Do you agree that highway authorities reviewing and, where appropriate, reducing speed limits on single carriageway roads will be an effective way of addressing the casualty problem on rural roads? Are there other ways in which the safety of rural roads can be improved? (Ch. 5)

12. How can we most effectively promote the implementation of 20 mph zone schemes in residential areas? What other measures should we be encouraging to reduce pedestrian and cyclist casualties in towns? (Ch. 5)

13. How can we provide better support to highway authorities in progressing economically worthwhile road safety engineering schemes? (Ch. 5)

Vehicles (Ch. 6)

14. What should Government do to secure greater road safety benefits from vehicles?

15. Do you agree that, in future, crash avoidance systems will grow in importance and will have the potential to greatly reduce casualties?

16. How can we best encourage consumers to include safety performance in their purchasing decisions?

Behaviours (Ch. 7)

17. We have highlighted what we believe to be the most dangerous driving behaviours. Do you agree with our assessment?

18. What more can be done to persuade the motoring public that illegal and inappropriate speeds are not acceptable behaviours?

19. What more can be done to encourage safe and responsible driving? 20. Should more be done to reward good driving? If so, what?