



Tomorrow's roads: safer for everyone - Summary document

Introduction

This document is a summary of Tomorrow's Roads - Safer for Everyone which was published by the former Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, on 1 March 2000.

Every year, around 3,500 people are killed on Britain's roads and 40,000 are seriously injured. In total, there are over 300,000 casualties. These cause inestimable human suffering. And they represent a serious economic burden too - the direct cost of road accidents involving deaths or injuries is thought to be in the region of Â£3bn a year.

Britain has a comparatively good road safety record. The casualty reduction targets for deaths and serious injuries, set in 1987, have been achieved. Road deaths have fallen by nearly 40% and serious injuries by 45% compared to the 1981-85 average. However, there has not been such a steep decline in the numbers of road accidents, nor in the numbers of slight injuries. Nor does our record for child pedestrian deaths compare well with other European countries. There is no room, therefore, for complacency.

It is against this background that the new strategy has been formulated. And why there is special focus given to reducing the numbers of children who are killed or injured in road accidents. By 2010, the Government wishes to achieve, compared with the average for 1994-98:

- a 40% reduction in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents;
- a 50% reduction in the numbers of children killed or seriously injured; and
- a 10% reduction in the slight casualty rate, expressed as the number of people slightly injured per 100 million vehicle kilometres.

The strategy

Tomorrow's Roads - Safer for Everyone contains many specific recommendations, but is not intended to be a rigid blueprint. The strategy and targets will be reviewed every three years to take account of new ideas and new technologies. A Road Safety Advisory Panel will be established to assist in that review process.

Safer for children

Children should be able to walk and cycle in safety. They need the freedom to use the roads for their social development and exercise for their general health and fitness. We want to make it safer for everyone to encourage healthy travel choices. Yet road traffic accidents are the leading cause of accidental injury amongst children and young people. Every year, over 130 children die and more than 4,500 are seriously injured while walking and cycling, many of them close to their homes. Another 60 die and over 1,100 are seriously injured travelling in cars.

Our overall rate of serious road injuries to children is better than the European average. But, despite recent improvements, our child pedestrian record is still particularly poor, especially compared with other European countries. We must do better.

Children will benefit from the broad range of proposed road safety policies but some measures, such as traffic calming, produce greater than average benefits for children. This, combined with a range of child safety specific policies, make the more stringent target of 50% feasible.

We will take action to equip children with the life skills needed to ensure they can travel safely and become responsible road users.

We have a duty to teach children the basic skills appropriate to their age and help parents and teachers to get them across.

The action plan below identifies the four key stages in road safety education we aim to tackle:

- babies and very young children - through advising their parents and first teachers on protection in cars and teaching safe behaviour on the road;
- primary age children - through child pedestrian training schemes and, later, cycle training, alerting parents to the risks of cycling in particular traffic conditions;
- older children - by providing road safety information as they change schools and go on longer journeys on their own; and
- older teenagers - providing advice as they contemplate much more independent mobility.

Safer drivers - training and testing

Better driving skills and better driving behaviour would make an enormous difference to reducing the number of road casualties. Driving is an acquired skill, and a demanding one. As well as the right skills, drivers need the right attitude - towards speed, other road users, alcohol, drugs and fatigue. We want to make learning to drive more relevant to today's road conditions, and those of the future.

The Government are introducing measures to:

- instil in young people the right attitudes towards road safety and safe driving;
- guide learner drivers to take a more structured approach to learning, to prepare them for their driving career, not just to pass a test;
- raise the standard of tuition offered by driving instructors;
- improve the driving test in the light of better understanding about what needs to be examined and

effective ways to do it;

- focus on the immediate post-test period for novice drivers;
- enhance the status of advanced motoring qualifications;
- address the needs of professional drivers; and
- bring safety benefits for all categories of motor vehicle.

Safer drivers - drink, drugs and drowsiness

To drive safely we need to be physically and mentally alert. Drink, drugs and tiredness contribute to driving accidents.

Over 16,000 casualties in 1998, including 460 deaths, were caused by accidents where at least one driver was over the legal alcohol limit. Even a very small amount of alcohol affects driving. Drugs too, both illegal and medicinal, can impair driving skills. And according to the latest research, fatigue may be the principal factor in around 10% of all accidents.

The Government will:

- introduce new measures to reduce drink-driving further;
- develop more effective ways to tackle drug-driving;
- carry out research to improve understanding of drug-driving;
- strengthen and enforce laws on driving time for lorry, bus and coach drivers; and
- make people aware how much tiredness contributes to road accidents and advise drivers and employers how to cut the risks.

Safer infrastructure

The White Paper *A New Deal For Transport: Better For Everyone* made clear that simply building more and more new roads is not the answer to traffic growth. The emphasis is now on making best use of the existing highway network, giving priority to treating the places with the worst safety, congestion and environmental records. In England there is a new role here for the Highways Agency as well as new responsibilities and funding for local authorities. Key elements of the approach in England include:

- a recognition that good engineering reduces the risk of accidents;
- on national roads, a strategy focused on better maintenance and a targeted, seven-year programme of road improvements. Twenty-one of the 37 schemes have as their primary objective "safer and healthier communities" and the other 16 are in part designed to help prevent road traffic casualties. Route Management schemes and use of electronic information and signing has also helped safety;
- on local roads, the introduction of longer-term, more co-ordinated local planning and improvements for walkers and cyclists as well as motor traffic through local transport plans. The devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales are taking a similar approach.

The Government will:

- ensure safety continues to be a main objective in designing, building, operating and maintaining trunk and local roads;
- ensure safety continues to be part of the planning framework for main and local routes;
- publish guidance about engineering for safer roads based on sound research and experiment;
- use local transport plans to promote safer neighbourhoods; and
- monitor progress on local efforts to reduce casualties.

Safer speeds

Too many people take a cavalier attitude to speed. Yet research has shown that speed is a major contributory factor in about one-third of all road accidents. This means that each year excessive and inappropriate speed helps kill around 1,200 people and to injure over 100,000 more. This is far more than any other single contributor to casualties on our roads.

We have carried out a complete review of speed management policy to establish where the problems lie, what measures work and what don't, and what additional information we need to develop some policy recommendations more fully. In a number of areas we need to carry out studies to develop our policies further.

The Government will:

- publicise widely the risks of speed and reasons for limits;
- develop a national framework for determining appropriate vehicle speeds on all roads, and ensure that measures are available to achieve them;
- research a number of speed management problems to gain the necessary information to develop and test new policies; and
- take into account environmental, economic and social effects of policies when assessing their ability to reduce accidents.

Safer vehicles

Modern vehicles are overwhelmingly better than they used to be in every way, and not least safety. Improvements in vehicle safety have contributed significantly to reducing road deaths and injuries and will continue to do so. We see technology as a vital ally across our transport policy, and particularly in safety issues. The Motorists' Forum, made up of a wide range of motoring interests and including manufacturers and managers of the road network, has been asked to advise on safer, smarter, cleaner innovations driven by new technology.

It is because vehicle design can influence such a broad area of road safety that it is worth making continuous improvements, either through regulation or by other means. We need to work in partnership with the industry to ensure the improvements in safety continue.

It is also vital that cars already on the road are fit to be there. It is in everyone's interest that owners maintain their vehicles to avoid unnecessary safety risks.

The Government is determined to improve vehicle safety further, by encouraging:

- improvements which prevent accidents happening in the first place;
- improvements which protect car occupants in the event of an accident;
- improvements which protect other road users;
- better information for consumers, helping them to choose safer vehicles;
- better standards of vehicle maintenance; and
- renewed emphasis on new vehicle safety inspections by manufacturers and dealers.

Safer motorcycling

Mopeds and motorcycles can present environmental advantages on some journeys. They are a sensible means of transport for many journeys where public transport is limited and walking or cycling unrealistic.

However, motorcyclists represent a large proportion of road casualties in relation to their numbers. They make up less than 1% of road traffic, but suffer 14% of deaths and serious injuries.

We believe we can influence the casualty figures through better training and testing for both riders and drivers and through better engineering construction and design, which will help to make motorcycling safer than it is now.

Our strategy is:

- to improve training and testing for all learner riders;
- to publish advice for people returning to motorcycling after a break, and people riding as part of their work;
- to ensure the quality of instruction;
- through training and testing, to help drivers become more aware of how vulnerable motorcyclists are;
- to promote improvements in engineering and technical standards which could protect motorcyclists better; and
- to work with representatives of interested organisations, in an advisory group, to look at issues of concern.

Safety for pedestrians, cyclists and horseriders

Making it easier for people to walk or cycle short journeys is a key part of integrated transport strategy and of wider Government objectives. It is also consistent with the aims of the Urban Task Force report Towards an Urban Renaissance. As well as reducing car dependency, congestion and local air pollution, walking and cycling can improve people's health and fitness.

Guidance to local authorities makes clear that we want higher priority for walking and cycling, as well as public transport, in their local transport plans. We know that both pedestrians and cyclists are vulnerable road users so improving their safety will be an important element in the plans. Local authorities must set out how, in their traffic layouts and urban design they are to encourage more people to walk and cycle instead of drive, and what safety measures they propose in support.

There are over 3 million horseriders in the UK and they all have to use the roads from time to time. Riders are especially vulnerable to inconsiderate drivers and they need well developed skills to ride safely on the road.

Our strategy is both to improve conditions for vulnerable road users and to encourage them to protect themselves.

We will work with voluntary bodies to improve training for cyclists and horseriders; to promote use of protective clothing, including cycle helmets, but, most importantly, to help drivers become aware of just how vulnerable these groups can be.

This includes:

- helping drivers become more aware of their responsibilities towards all vulnerable road users through better training and testing.
- working with the CTC to develop cycle training courses for adults:
- schemes to promote cycle helmets;
- supporting training schemes for horseriders through the British Horse Society; and
- improving victim support systems.

Better enforcement

Road traffic law sets the framework for using the roads safely. It provides clear standards based on experience and analysis. Enforcing the law is an essential part of reducing road casualties and the police have a central role in improving road safety.

Traffic offences range from minor, careless errors to extremely serious, deliberate offences with devastating consequences for other road users and the drivers themselves. There has to be a correspondingly wide range of penalties.

But road policing is not only about traffic offences. It will be easier to persuade people to get out of their cars to walk, cycle and use public transport if roads are largely free from crime as well as danger from motor traffic. Road policing is an important element in reducing crime, the opportunities for crime and the fear of crime and it must be recognised as such.

We want to maximise the contribution that road traffic law can make to reducing road casualties. As far as possible, we want this to be achieved through persuasion and deterrence.

But we need to have more effective penalties which are properly enforced.

We want to see:

- more effective road traffic law enforcement;
- better public understanding of and respect for road traffic law;
- penalties more appropriate and proportionate to the seriousness of offences;
- more emphasis on education and retraining; and
- maximum use of new technology.

Promoting safer road use

Publicity campaigns can change attitudes and behaviour and create a climate where people understand and accept road safety measures. There have been many notable successes - such as the drink-drive advertising, and the clunk click campaign in the '70s and early '80s. More recently, high profile publicity campaigns have led to an increase in the number of people wearing rear seat belts.

We now need to build on our reputation for strong and effective road safety promotion, and target those areas where we most need to change attitudes and behaviour. The motor manufacturing and retail industry should be a natural and powerful ally in promoting safety generally.

We will:

- run a programme of high quality, well- researched and evaluated advertising and promotion; and
- build partnerships to carry through a wide, co-ordinated and sustained road safety "crusade".

Further Information

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