Thursday 24 October 2013

“INVESTMENT PLANS MUST MAKE UK ROADS MEASURABLY SAFER”
ROAD SAFETY FOUNDATION TRACKING DATA 2013

- Report analyses the 44,373km (11%) of Britain’s network where 51% of Britain’s road deaths take place: motorways and A roads outside major urban areas
- Risk to road users is now 7 times greater on single carriageway A roads than motorways
- Running off the road accounts for 30% of all deaths
- Junction crashes are the most common crash leading to serious injury
- 99% of motorways are rated in the ‘low risk’ category; 97% of single carriageway A roads are not
- Britain’s economy loses more than 2% of GDP in road crashes
- Overall risk of death and serious injury on motorways and A roads is lowest in the West Midlands and highest in the East Midlands
- The most improved region is the East of England with a 30% fall in risk

In its Action for Roads proposals, the government has recognised that Britain is falling behind other countries and has announced “the biggest ever upgrade of our existing roads worth up to £50bn over the next generation”. It is also proposing that the Highways Agency is turned into a publicly owned corporation. With road crashes costing two per cent of GDP and other countries managing infrastructure in a new way, the Road Safety Foundation’s 2013 report “Measuring to Manage” calls for the new investment to be targeted so that the safety of the network is raised in a measurable way using world class techniques.

Dr Steve Lawson, director of the Road Safety Foundation says: “Most recent improvement in road safety has come from car design and safer driving. The specification that authorities currently set road managers is to reduce crash rates in general. That approach is too weak and must be replaced, because it muddles factors over which road managers have no control – such as car safety, hospital care and traffic levels - with factors very definitely under their control such as roadside safety barriers or
junction layouts. Road managers need not only money, but the tools and goals to measure and manage infrastructure safety. Many proposals in government’s *Action for Roads* are sound, but there is need now to focus on improving infrastructure safety itself in a measurable way.”

These words are reflected starkly in the report, which shows dramatically the dominance of crashes at junctions leading to serious trauma and of death from running off the road.

The report highlights typical improvements leading to major reductions in serious crashes. These include removal of roadside hazards (such as trees, rigid poles or lighting columns), the introduction of interactive warning signs, anti-skid surfacing and road studs. For junction crashes, improved layout, signing, lining, resurfacing with high friction treatments and better tailored local speed limits were common.

The report also celebrates the work of a group of authorities who have made significant improvements to their roads. A remarkable 70% drop in serious crashes – some 250 fatal and serious injury crashes saved – on the ten most improved sections achieved by a variety of infrastructure improvements.

The measurements of the safety of UK roads were carried out using international benchmarks developed by the European Road Assessment Programme. Chair of EuroRAP, John Dawson, comments: “With new investment, Britain can join leading countries which are raising safety in a transparent, systematic way. The British public knows the safety rating of the cars they’re buying but not their roads.”

Some key facts:
- 1,754 people were killed on Britain’s roads in 2012
- 11,457 were killed on British roads in the 5 year survey period 2007-2011 compared with 16,533 in the previous 5 years, a drop of 31%
- The 44,373km network of motorways and A roads outside major urban areas analysed in this report represents just 11% of Britain’s road length - but carries 56% of traffic and more than half (51%) of all deaths
- Motorways and dual carriageways have seen the greatest improvement with a 24% reduction in the survey. The improvement for single carriageways is 18%
- On average, 4 people are killed or seriously injured on each mile of motorway and A roads outside major urban areas each decade
- In the 2007-2011 data period, single carriageway A roads are 7 times more risky than motorways. In the 2002-2006 period this figure was 6.
- Travel on single carriageways is 3 times more risky than dual carriageways
- 62% of fatal and serious crashes occur on single carriageway A roads, 12% on duals, 15% on mixed single/dual and 11% on motorways
- The most common crashes on motorways and A roads leading to death are run-offs (30%) The most common crashes leading to either death or serious injury occur at junctions  (36%)
- 21% of fatal and serious crashes involved pedestrians or cyclists; 10% were head-ons and 8% shunts
- 22% of fatal crashes involved pedestrians or cyclists; 19% were head-ons and 6% shunts
- 99% of motorways are rated in the ‘low risk’ category; 97% of single carriageways are not
- The British economy loses more than 2% of GDP in road crashes
- British road users pay 1% of GDP on motor insurance
- In the last five years, Britain suffered serious injury costs of £1.9 billion on motorways, £8.4 billion on primary A roads and £5.9 billion on non-primary A roads
- Motorways account for 36% of travel on the network analysed, 18% on duals and 32% on singles
- Motorcyclists make up just 1% of traffic but 21% of fatal and serious crashes on Britain’s motorways and A roads
The report is sponsored by Ageas, whose chief executive, Andy Watson says: "As the economy recovers, we can no longer rely on depressed demand to reduce road casualties. If we are to succeed in making road use no more risky than any other activity in daily life then we need relentless combined action, year after year, on safer driving, safer vehicles and safer roads.

“The government has recognised Britain has been falling behind on infrastructure investment. Improvement in infrastructure safety performance now needs to be at the heart and not peripheral to the new plans being prepared.

“As Britain’s second largest motor insurer, Ageas is once again pleased to support this annual publication from the Foundation, ultimately making roads safer for our employees, our customers and our partners. It makes public debate possible on where progress is or is not being made in making roads safer and how we should best plan for the future.”

The next 10 years

The Road Safety Foundation has used the same EuroRAP risk rating categories for 10 years, with highest-risk roads in black and safest roads in green. This current report is the last to use these bands, which will change for the next 10 years. Just as sister organisation EuroNCAP is tightening its criteria for a 5-star car, EuroRAP is placing higher demands on road engineers to raise standards for road safety.

Notes to editors

“Measuring to Manage: Tracking the safety of Britain’s major road network” report is temporarily available at http://www.roadsafetyfoundation.org/british-eurorap-results-2013-embargoed-content.aspx) and will be on the Road Safety Foundation website on Thursday 24 October.

*Regional summaries are also available on this link, along with a breakdown of road risk nationally and by parliamentary constituency. The Foundation is unable to provide more detailed regional breakdowns than in the report.

About Risk Mapping:

In countries where detailed crash and traffic data are available, EuroRAP risk maps give an objective view of where people are being killed or seriously injured on a road network and where their crash risk is greatest. By showing the number of fatal and serious crashes per vehicle kilometre travelled, the results demonstrate the risk arising from the interaction of road users, vehicles and the road environment.

The emphasis of Risk Mapping is on identifying high risk routes rather than ‘blackspots’ or ‘cluster sites’. The costs of proactively treating known areas of high risks by upgrading the safety detailing along a length of road are often far lower than piecemeal change once a crash has occurred. Risk maps help to create awareness and understanding of road safety risk as users move around a network. They are being increasingly adopted by road authorities and Governments across Europe as a way of prioritising network improvements and leveraging the funds required to take action.
The Risk Mapping shown in this year’s report uses the most up-to-date crash and traffic data available. Crash data are from the national road injury and accidents (STATS19) database provided by the Department for Transport (DfT), and include all crashes resulting in fatal or serious injuries during the data periods 2002-2006 and 2007-2011 inclusive. Traffic flows are from the DfT database based on automatic and manual vehicle counts, the latter carried out at three-yearly intervals. Values used for individual road sections are the average for the data periods 2002-2006 and 2007-2011 (inclusive) weighted by section length.

About the Road Safety Foundation
The Road Safety Foundation is a UK charity advocating road casualty reduction through simultaneous action on all three components of the safe road system: roads, vehicles and behaviour. Several of its published reports have provided the basis of new legislation or government policy. For more information visit www.roadsafetyfoundation.org

About Ageas UK
Ageas UK is a leading provider of award-winning Personal, Commercial and Protection insurance solutions in the UK. Ageas UK distributes both its Non-Life and Life products through a range of channels including brokers, IFAs, intermediaries, affinity partners and the Internet, as well as through its retail strategy and its wholly or partially-owned companies trading as Groupama Insurance Company Limited, Ageas Insurance, Ageas Protect, Ageas Insurance Solutions, Castle Cover, Kwik Fit Financial Services, RIAS and Tesco Underwriting. Insuring around eight million customers and working with a range of partners, Ageas is recognised for delivering consistent and high-quality customer experiences. It employs over 6,000 people with offices based across the UK. For more information visit www.ageas.co.uk

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**Around the UK**

A key variation in the different safety performance of Britain’s regions is the variation between the amount of travel on ‘low risk’ motorways and the amount of travel on higher risk single carriageways. World class practice is not to accept that just because traffic flows are too low to justify dual carriageways or motorways that important single carriageways need less safe. New safe designs for higher flow single carriageways which are as safe as motorways are being implemented by leading countries. The government is now proposing to upgrade some of the busiest single carriageway A roads to dual carriageway ‘expressways’ which, if implemented systematically where crashes are most concentrated, could raise safety performance markedly.

**South East**

With 21% of all serious crashes in Britain, tackling infrastructure safety in the South East is vital to reducing Britain’s total road crash toll but improvement in the south east lags every other English region. Single carriageway safety in the South East is one of the poorest in Britain (8th out of 10 nations and regions).

The South East has the most intensely trafficked network on roads of all types. The more a road is trafficked, the sooner any safety flaw will lead to serious consequences and the more overwhelming the economic case for safety improvement. For example, the lack of roadside safety fencing on motorways carrying in excess of 100,000 vehicles per day or lack of safe right turn islands on single carriageway A roads carrying in excess of 10,000 vehicles per day is unacceptable.

In straight economic terms, road crashes in the South East result in the second highest economic drain (£66 per capita) of all the English regions and the business case for major review of infrastructure safety in the south east is overwhelming.

- The South East carries the densest levels of traffic with 21% of travel on 14% of the road network
- South East lags behind only Wales as the slowest improving region with a 15% fall in risk
- Highest-risk road here is a 19km section of the A285 from Chichester to Petworth which falls into the second-worst red rating and is one of the UK’s 10 most persistently higher-risk roads

**East of England**
The East of England is one of the four English regions with low motorway provision. Its motorways carry only 24% of travel and as a result it is not a top performing region overall. It is however mid-ranking (5th of 10) and the fastest improving of all British nations and regions.

A key reason for this improvement is single carriageway safety performance. For example, only 1 in 44 non-primary A roads were rated higher risk in the survey. Nonetheless, its single carriageways are still around 25% riskier to use than those in the South West.

- This is the most improved region, where fatal or serious road crashes have fallen by 30%
- Risk on motorways is highest in the East of England
- 1 in 44 non-primary A roads is rated higher risk in the East of England compared to 1 in 7 in the North West and 1 in 8 in the East Midlands
- Highest-risk road here is 17km of the A113 between Chigwell and Chipping Ongar

**East Midlands**
The East Midlands is the riskiest of all British regions in which to travel - 33 serious crashes per billion vehicle kilometres travelled. The risk of death and serious injury is 63% higher than neighbouring West Midlands. The economic drain (£69 per capita) is the highest of any English region.

Low motorway provision results in the lowest proportion of travel on this safest British road type (24%). In addition, the region also contains some of the worst performing roads in Britain with the average single carriageway in the East Midlands some one-third riskier than the best performing region. This is the case even though the region has more ‘primary routes’ (routes signed at the roadside with green signs) than any other and these routes historically have captured more central government funding than ordinary A roads. The safety strategy for the East Midlands network is in urgent need of strategic review.

- This is the riskiest region of all: the risk of death and serious injury is 63% higher than the West Midlands
- The overall risk of death and serious injury is highest in the East Midlands (33 fatal and serious crashes per billion vehicle kilometres)
- The East Midlands has a small proportion of travel on safe motorways (24%) and its single carriageways risk rate is one-third higher than the best (57 fatal and serious collisions per billion vehicle kilometres).
- Highest-risk road here is a 15km section of the A5012 from Pikehill to the A6 at Matlock – one of the UK’s 10 most persistently higher-risk roads (rated black), along with a further three of the 10 falling in this region

**West Midlands**
The West Midlands is Britain’s safest region by far. It has high proportions of travel on motorway with 100% of the motorway network in the 'low risk' band. In addition, single carriageway safety, although poor relative to its motorways, is also much better than average (45 serious crashes per billion vehicle kilometres compared with an average of 54). This combination of high motorway travel and better performing single carriageways, together with dual carriageways which are also well performing, provides the formula for the safest region in Britain.

- The region has high proportions of travel on low risk motorways (49%) and its single carriageway safety is well above average (45 fatal and serious crashes per billion vehicle kilometres)
- Overall risk of death and serious injury on motorways and A roads is lowest in the West Midlands (20 fatal and serious crashes per billion vehicle kilometres)
- Highest-risk road here is 21km of the A426 between Southam and J1 of the M6 at Rugby – however, this is the only higher-risk road by region to be classed in the lower yellow band
- No West Midlands roads feature among the UK’s top 10 persistently higher-risk

Wales
Wales is the slowest-improving region with only a 11% fall in risk during the survey period. It has the highest economic drain (£71 per capita) from road crashes on its major road network of all the British nations and regions. Of the British nations and regions, Wales loses the greatest GDP per person from serious crashes on motorways and A roads – 30% higher than the national average.

Wales, like Scotland and the South West, is one of the three British nations and regions whose overall safety performance is heavily determined by the risk users face on single carriageways. The motorway network in Wales carries only 18% of travel, the lowest of all nations and regions except the North East. Despite a significant dual carriageway network carrying 22% of all travel, the safety of Welsh single carriageways (unlike those in Scotland and the South West) is below average. The safety of Welsh single carriageways needs a systematic review to establish how their infrastructure safety rating can be raised quickly and cost effectively.

- The highest risk road in Wales is 38km of the A44 from Llangurig to Aberystwyth.

North West
The North West has the most extensive motorway network in Britain by far. Some 63% of all travel on motorways and A roads is on low risk motorways. This is up to 4 times greater than the motorway travel of other regions and more than double the majority of British nations and regions.

With such an advantage, safety performance in the North West would be expected to be well ahead of all other regions. However, the safety of single carriageway A roads in the North West is the worst in Britain (69 serious crashes per billion vehicle kilometres) which is more than half as much again as the West Midlands. One in 7 non-primary A roads is rated in the higher risk category. In total, the region contains 5 of Britain’s top 10 most persistently higher risk roads.

As a result of this poor A road performance, overall travel in the North West is a substantial 35% riskier than the West Midlands despite the proportion of motorway
travel on the network being much lower. The North West ranks 2nd of the 10 British nations and regions but sits in a cluster of 5 regions achieving similar safety performance. The safety of the region’s single carriageways needs a systematic review to establish how their infrastructure safety rating can be raised quickly and cost effectively.

- The North West has the most motorway, 20% of its network length
- The overall performance of the North West is 27 fatal and serious crashes per billion vehicle kilometres
- Its network is 1/3rd riskier than the West Midlands despite higher motorway travel
- 1 in 7 non-primary A roads is rated higher risk in the North-West compared to 1 in 44 in the East of England
- Highest-risk road in the region is also the UK’s most persistently higher-risk road: a 12km stretch of the A537 Macclesfield to Buxton with a black rating, and the region has in total five of the UK’s 10 most persistently higher-risk roads

North East
The sparse network in the North East carries only 3% of all British travel on motorways and A roads. Of this travel, just 16% is carried on motorways although 35% is carried on dual carriageways and a further 21% on a mixed single/dual carriageway network. This leaves a relatively low 28% of travel on single carriageways which are the least risky in the survey except for the West Midlands and the South West. The safety performance of the single carriageways and the relatively low amount of travel on them means that, despite the lack of divided carriageways at full motorway standard, the motorway and A road network in the north east ranks 3rd in overall safety performance of the 10 British nations and regions. Given travel patterns on the north east’s network is distinct in many ways from other regions, it warrants review to investigate if it could become substantially safer with targeted safety investment along the lines being pursued, for example, in Sweden.

- There are no higher-risk single carriageways in the North East
- Highest-risk road in the region is 14km of the A181 between the A19 (Peterlee) and Durham

South West
Only a quarter (26%) of travel on the motorways and A roads of the South West is on motorways, all of which falls in the ‘low’ risk category. Nearly half of all travel (47%) takes place on single carriageways.

Travel on the single carriageways of the South West is, on average, the safest of any of the nations and regions of Britain. A significant mileage of major single carriageway A roads in the south west was built or re-engineered to engineering standards introduced in the 1980s. These engineering standards were better suited to the traffic conditions of modern Britain and based on the best research evidence then available.

Because of its top ranking single carriageway safety performance, the overall safety performance of the South West is higher than might be expected. The South West is ranked 4th of the 10 nations and regions of Britain. Nonetheless, its single carriageways are 5 times riskier than Britain’s motorways and much remains to be done, particularly
to upgrade the safety of the busier single carriageways with high concentrations of crash cost. Much of the £61 per capita is lost on the motorways and A roads of the South West is lost on single carriageways.

- The lowest risk on single carriageway roads is in the South West (43 fatal and serious crashes per billion vehicle kilometres)
- There are no higher risk single carriageways in the South West
- Risk on motorways is highest in the East of England and lowest in the South West
- Highest-risk road here is a 22km section of the A3066 Bridport to Crewkerne

**Yorkshire and Humber**

Motorway travel in Yorkshire and the Humber accounts for 40% of all travel on motorways and A roads in the region. The region is one of 4 (along with the West Midlands, North West, and the South East) in which motorway travel is sharply higher than all other British nations and regions.

However, despite the inherent advantage of so much travel on lower risk motorways, the safety performance of Yorkshire and the Humber is substantially below what should be achieved. The region lags at 7th out of the 10 British nations and regions. It has the riskiest dual carriageways and the risks for pedestrians and cyclists are double those of the West Midlands.

The key reason for the poor safety performance is the safety of the region’s single carriageways: Yorkshire and the Humber ranks 9th out of the 10 British nations and regions. At 62 serious crashes per billion vehicle kilometres, this rate is half as much again as the best performing region. The safety performance of the A roads in the region requires urgent review.

- Highest-risk road here is a 30km section of the A169 from Pickering to Whitby

**Scotland**

Scotland’s road geography is distinct among the nation and regions of Britain. It has the longest length of motorways and A roads accounting for 20% of Britain’s total network but only 10% of travel. Traffic levels are highly variable from busy motorways in the central belt to the lightly trafficked A roads in the Highlands and Borders.

Along with the South West, Scotland is the most reliant on its single carriageway network which carries nearly half (47%) of all travel. Scotland’s single carriageways are on average, like Britain as a whole, 7 times more risky than Scotland’s motorways.

The average safety of this long single carriageway network is improving. The safety of Scotland’s single carriageways is ranked 4th of the 10 nations and regions of Britain. They are, for example, safer than the single carriageways of Wales and much safer than those of the South East, Yorkshire & Humberside or the North West.

However, despite the above average safety of its single carriageways, the high proportion of travel on this riskier road type means that Scotland ranks 9th out of 10 in overall safety performance of the nations and regions of Britain. Recent Scottish investment proposals to increase the length of divided highway and marry speed limits
more closely to infrastructure safety recognise the challenge which is among the most demanding of any in Britain and will require innovative approaches during the current decade.

- Scotland has the longest length of motorways and A roads, accounting for nearly one-fifth of Britain’s total length.
- Scotland has the highest proportion of fatal and serious run-off crashes (34%)
- Some 81% of Scotland’s networks are single carriageways.
- Highest-risk road here is a 13km black rated stretch of the A937 from Montrose to Laurencekirk

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