

**A Safer Way: Department for Transport Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World
Devon County Council Response**

Report of the Executive Director of Environment, Economy and Culture

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Executive (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: It is recommended that:

- (a) the Executive supports the proposed Devon County Council's response to the Department for Transport consultation 'A Safer Way';**
- (b) the Executive supports Devon County Council and its LAA partners playing a full part in supporting a future national Road Safety Delivery Plan;**
- (c) the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer be asked to support the Executive Director of Environment, Economy and Culture prepare a strategy for further road casualty reductions in Devon post 2010;**
- (d) the Executive support Devon being put forward for consideration as a member of the National Road Safety Delivery Board.**

1. Summary

The Appendix I to this report sets out Devon's proposed response to a Department for Transport (DfT) consultation on road safety policy to 2020 and a new set of national targets for casualty reduction.

2. Background/Introduction

Devon County Council has a statutory duty to carry out studies into accidents, and take measures to prevent further accidents including the dissemination of advice, the giving of practical training and the improvement, maintenance or repair of roads (other than Highways Agency roads) (1988 Road Traffic Act Section 39).

Devon achieved Beacon status in 2006 for its road safety programmes, and in 2008 had already met its targets to reduce child casualties by 50% and is on course to meet its stretched target of 55% reduction in overall deaths and serious injuries. Devon has a further target within the second Local Area Agreement to reduce the costs of collisions, which are calculated from government figures as being £133m in 2008 alone.

Since 2006 Devon has been convening a Road Safety Partnership with other agencies including Police, Fire and Rescue, Ambulance Service, Highways Agency, Primary Care Trust, Safety Camera Partnership, Plymouth and Torbay Councils.

3. Proposal

The DfT consultation is wide ranging, and some themes are less relevant to a local authority than others, for instance vehicle technology. The responses below and in the Appendix refer to those parts of the consultation that most directly affect local authorities.

New targets. The relationship between central government and local authorities for this strategy is very different from its predecessor. Whereas in 2000 Government required all English highway authorities to set their own casualty reduction targets, reflecting the national targets, road safety is now seen as one of a number of areas of responsibility to which local authorities must consider Government's guidance and determine their own priorities for future targets and investment.

Devon is one of over one-third of English local highway authorities that have included road casualty reduction as a priority within its Local Area Agreement. Local decision making regarding the future emphasis to be given to road safety in Devon is acknowledged as sensible.

New support for local authorities, Government has identified a key role to provide its 'delivery partners' with the information and support they need to carry out their roles as well as they can. Government will build a stronger national capability to lead the dissemination of research, good practice and evaluation, and promote the road safety profession such that local road safety systems emerge that integrate engineering, education and enforcement. This is very much welcomed, and Devon may be able to play a strong part in this through its Road Safety Academy.

Legislation and regulation There will be differing reactions to the assertion by Government that 'the legal and regulatory framework that governs safe road use is now broadly fit for purpose'. Many would argue that scope will still exist for legislation over the next ten or twenty years, for example to reduce drink drive limits, introduce a specific offence for drug driving, and introduce graduated licensing for young drivers.

Accountability. The Government will publish a set of indicators to enable a new national Road Safety Delivery Board to provide an annual assessment of progress, to be submitted to Parliament. It is planned that the new Road Safety Delivery Board will include representatives of local authorities, police and fire service. This Board will be tasked to 'hold Government and other stakeholders to account on the implementation of a new national road safety plan'. It is not clear what is meant by 'holding to account' and what the implications might be to local authorities, especially as Government has already declared that it will not expect local authorities to adopt the national targets or indicators. Government is also proposing to 'assist and challenge those highway and police authorities with lower standards of road safety to improve their road casualty record...(and) will publish an annual account of progress on road safety area by area and will challenge those which are not reducing casualties fast enough to do better.'

The document makes a renewed request that all local authorities undertake a speed limit review to ascertain whether their speed limits are appropriate. This exercise is being undertaken in Devon and a report will be presented to the Executive in the near future on progress to date and proposed way forward.

There is no indication of any reward for local authorities, such as Devon, that are high performers in reducing casualties, nor any indication regarding the future of its (Area Based) Road Safety Grant that is currently used in Devon to fund the use of speed cameras and the work of the Devon Road Safety Partnership.

4. Sustainability Considerations

The new Government strategy recognises that road safety should be seen together with other overlapping priorities to support the economy, protect the environment and improve public health. Devon shares the aspiration to increase levels of walking and cycling, and provides safety measures to mitigate the risks as much as possible. Devon also supports the

enforcement of sensible speed limits, recognising the need to balance safety with efficient journey times. The current policy of Devon is to introduce lower rural speed limits of 50mph only where a collision record would justify a lower limit.

5. Carbon Impact Considerations

Devon's programme to introduce 20mph limits and zones in certain residential areas with high use by pedestrians also recognises that there may be some associated disbenefits in terms of additional noise and higher levels of vehicle emissions.

6. Equality Considerations

The government's proposed strategy for road safety recognises that there is a link between deprivation and risk of injury, particularly to pedestrians. Devon offers practical support to road users who by nature of their age, ethnicity or disability are at disproportionate risk of being involved in a road collision. The new Devon Road Safety Partnership strategy will be subject to an Equality Impact and Needs Assessment.

7. Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations associated with this government consultation.

8. Options/Alternatives

The County Council has the option of not responding to the consultation, but that would weaken our ability to influence national policy.

9. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

The responses to the DfT consultation are recommended for approval in order that Devon's perspective, as a largely rural authority with Beacon status in road safety are understood by government when drafting national policy for the next ten years.

Edward Chorlton

Electoral Divisions: All

Executive Member (Designate) for Highways and Transportation,
Councillor Stuart Hughes

Local Government Act 1972:

List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Ref
1. A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World.	April 2009	
Department for Transport Road Traffic Act	1988	

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**Department for Transport Consultation
A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World
Proposed Devon County Council Response**

Devon County Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on "A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World".

Set out below (in bold text) are the County Council's responses to the questions relevant to its functions.

Vision and targets

Do you agree that our vision for road safety should be to have the safest roads in the world?

Response:

A more meaningful vision might be to make Britain's roads the safest in the industrialised world i.e. OECD or G20 group of nations. International comparison is achieved by reference to deaths as a rate per head of population, as a rate per registered vehicles and as a rate per vehicle miles travelled. Data for many developing countries is unreliable and using the criterion of deaths per head of population these countries will in theory have the 'safest roads'.

Do you agree that we should define a strategy running over twenty years to 2030, but with review points after five and ten years? (Chapter 3)

Response:

Ideally a strategy should be coterminous with the period over which measurement indices have been set, in this case 10 years. There is little to be gained by stretching the assumptions made from a base year of 2009 into 2030. It could also ham-string future governments if the message is sent out that there will be a presumption against more regulation over the next 20 years.

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 rate¹ of KSI per km travelled by pedestrians and cyclists, compared with the 2004–08 average?*

¹ Expressed as a three-year rolling average

Response: Some English local highway authorities are likely to wish to align themselves with future national targets, as they have done with the 2010 targets. But the potential for making further casualty reductions will vary between authority and authority.

It is reasonable that there is a challenging national target to reduce deaths only. However such a target would be inappropriate at the level of most local authorities due to the small numbers and random fluctuations.

It would be useful to continue with a target to reduce deaths and serious injuries combined, rather than serious injuries alone.

The target to reduce child deaths and serious injuries by 50% is extremely challenging, inasmuch as there have already been significant reductions.

The target to reduce by 50% deaths and serious injuries to pedestrians and cyclists as a rate per kilometre travelled recognises that the increased health and environmental benefits of these modes should be seen to offset a possible proportionally small rise in casualties. However, it is unclear how any reliable and consistent data on walking can be achieved, and what role there might be for local authorities to collect this.

We are proposing a set of indicators in order to help us to monitor performance. Do you believe these cover the right areas?

Response:

The proposed indicators refer to the rates of death and serious injury to pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, car users and people over 70 years of age. Also the numbers of deaths and injuries involving drivers; under 25, drivers on rural roads, drivers with excess alcohol, and car occupants not wearing seatbelts. There will also be an indicator measuring the proportion of vehicles exceeding speed limits, and one measuring the costs of road traffic casualties. Pedestrian deaths and serious injuries will be measured per capita in the 10% most deprived Super Output Areas compared with the 10% least deprived.

By collecting these data to determine performance indicators, rather than just understand trends, it suggests these are the themes that the Government will be paying particular attention to. It is not clear from the consultation whether data on all these themes will be collected at highway authority level, and whether local performance will be monitored.

Do you agree that an independent annual report on road safety performance, created on an annual basis, would be a worthwhile innovation?

Response:

Agreed as a national initiative, but when examined at local authority level the numbers would often be so statistically small that random annual fluctuations would lead to unreliable performance conclusions. More reliable would be a rolling 3 year average as with the current National Indicators NI47 and NI48

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?

Response:

It is not clear what holding to account will mean, nor how the responsibilities for success or failure are identified to central government or local stakeholders. If there is an expectation that local authorities will all play a part to deliver a national road safety plan there will need to be some commitment to funding local activities.

However, Devon would like to put itself forward for consideration as a local authority representative on such a Delivery Board in order to use its acknowledged expertise to support the government.

Roads and local authorities

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?

Response:

It is sometimes reasonable to set a lower speed limit of 50mph or even 40mph on lengths of A and B roads where the task demand for the driver is particularly complex and where there is evidence from collision data that drivers or riders fail to negotiate natural hazards at a safe speed. A lower speed limit, sensibly applied, can give clearer guidance to the driver of the sort of challenges he or she can expect over the course of a length of road. However, for most A and B roads in Devon the national speed limit remains at 60 (or 70) mph and the onus should remain with drivers to select the safest speed for the conditions.

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?

Response:

The setting of speed restrictions, especially 20mph limits, is an emotive subject; and is particularly the case in areas where there is a perceived risk to young people and other specially vulnerable road users, such as outside schools. Nevertheless, speed restrictions should only be introduced where there is a need; otherwise there is the risk that the benefits of more appropriate speed limits would be eroded and the likelihood of non-compliance increased. Blanket approaches to the setting of speed limits are not recommended unless driven at a national level with suitable publicity and education awareness raising. Part-time speed limits incorporating flashing amber warning signs are currently not an option prescribed in DfT regulations and are therefore unenforceable. Alternatives entail high financial cost, are technically unreliable and could be confusing to highway users (for example rotating face signs). In some instances temporary 20s may be merited and consideration should be made to looking for low cost, legally enforceable solutions for local authorities.

For newly built residential areas it is straightforward to design-in environmental features that make 20mph a 'natural' speed. It is more difficult retro-fitting older residential areas to meet the criteria for 20mph zones where the roads were designed for higher speeds. It is unlikely that funds will allow full traffic calming in all residential areas for them to be designated 20mph Zones. Non compliance with uncalmed 20 mph speed restrictions can lead to community expectation of police enforcement, but this is generally not regarded as an appropriate use of police resources other than in exceptional circumstances. If 20 mph limits are to become a

standard for residential and other speed-sensitive urban areas then these limits will need to be normalised and new advice issued that removes the need for full traffic calming before they can be enforced in the same way that 30mph speed limits are enforced.

The goal, however, should always be to encourage driving behaviours appropriate to the conditions and which are dependent neither upon engineered restrictions nor upon visible enforcement. We would encourage, therefore, the vigorous pursuit of educational, training and promotional programmes that are designed to influence the highest risk behaviours such as the inappropriate use of speed.

Behaviours

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

Response:

Government publicity should consider supporting drivers and riders who do drive at legal and sensible speeds with positive imagery as part of a long term social marketing campaign. There should be a contagion effect if a critical mass of drivers do abide by speed limits.

Encouragement should also be given to harnessing for road safety purposes the emerging in-vehicle satellite navigation technology.

What more can be done to encourage safe and responsible driving?

Response:

There is a need to ensure that penalties for violations, together with the perception of the chances of being 'caught' offending are sufficiently high to deter most bad drivers from repeat offending. Use of ANPR technology, suitably regulated, should be used to apprehend drivers who continue driving after having their licence withdrawn, and choosing to drive while uninsured. There is a pressing need to invest in harmonising technologies such as cameras and ANPR to increase efficiency of detection and prosecution of moving traffic offences.

Although the consultation suggests that current legislation and regulation are broadly fit for purpose there is a strong case to introduce a lower drink drive limit to be consistent with most of Europe, to introduce drug-drive legislation and to introduce a graduated license system for young drivers.

Should more be done to reward good driving? If so, what?

Response:

Good driving should be encouraged wherever possible by means of financial incentives. This is already possible through use of 'black-box' technology provided by insurance companies and potentially used to adjust insurance costs according to how safe the driving was shown to be.

Social marketing should also be used to portray good driving as a desirable lifestyle attribute.