

National Assembly for Wales
Enterprise and Learning Committee

Casualty Reduction and Trunk Road
Management

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Report of the Enterprise and Learning Committee on Casualty Reduction and Trunk Road Management

Introduction

1. Statistically, the UK has the best road safety record in Europe, and the frequency of accidents is falling for all road user groups. However, some 1,400 people are killed or seriously injured on Welsh roads a year, including 111 children. 74 per cent of all road deaths and 68 per cent of motorcyclist casualties in Wales occur on rural roads. Between 20 and 25 per cent of fatalities occurring in Wales annually are riders of powered two wheelers.
2. Welsh Government officials summarised the current situation for us as follows: in urban areas, speeds broadly tend to be lower, and accidents less serious; in areas where there are highly segregated roads that have been built to a modern high standard, safety tends to be better; but single carriageway rural roads are less safe.¹
3. As Sustrans told us, there is a tendency to become immune to casualty figures such as these, and to almost accept that transport policy results in this heavy and ongoing cost.²
4. Yet we heard during our evidence gathering that there is the opportunity for Wales to “have the safest roads in the world.” It requires the techniques, the technology and partnership working, but above all, it requires clear leadership from Government.³
5. The purpose of this short inquiry was therefore to examine progress on casualty reduction on the Trunk Road network in Wales and to make recommendations to Welsh Ministers on how to achieve further progress, particularly on encouraging further partnership working. Our scrutiny built on our work earlier this year on the draft road policing manifesto, the Welsh Government’s new plan to improve safety and reduce congestion on Wales’s busiest roads.
6. The current road safety strategy and targets for Wales cover the period up to 2010, and a new Great Britain strategy rolling these forward to 2020 has just been launched for consultation. It is therefore timely for us to be considering these issues.

¹ Record of Proceedings column 66, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

² Record of Proceedings column 93, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

³ Record of Proceedings column 173, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

Evidence base

7. We held two evidence sessions: on 4 June 2009 with officials from the Welsh Assembly Government (Welsh Government), Sustrans - the sustainable transport charity - and the Chief Constable of North Wales Police; and on 11 June with the Freight Trade Association and Road Safety Wales, which is the partnership created between all 22 local authorities, Welsh Government, the four Police Forces, the three Fire and Rescue services, Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, to prevent incidents through education and raising public awareness. The written evidence from those bodies is included in Annex 1 and the transcripts of the meetings are included in Annex 2. Additional evidence is included in Annex 3. Living Streets, the national charity that represents pedestrians, provided us with a written submission. We wish to thank all the witnesses who submitted written or oral evidence to our inquiry.

Legislative background

8. Under the Transport (Wales) Act 2006, Welsh Ministers have a general duty to develop and implement policies for the promotion of safe, integrated, efficient, economic and sustainable transport facilities and services.
9. Other powers devolved to Welsh Ministers include:
 - Powers to regulate traffic (Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984)
 - Power to promote road safety (Road Traffic Act 1988)
 - Traffic management measures (Traffic Management Act 2004)

Trunk roads

10. Responsibility for road construction, maintenance and management is devolved to Wales. The 22 unitary authorities (highway authorities) are responsible for road maintenance and repairs and building new roads. The Welsh Government is the highway authority for over 1,000 miles of trunk road and 75 miles of motorway network. The unitary authorities are the highway authority for all other roads.
11. The Welsh Government has established three Trunk Road Agencies in Wales (North, Mid and South) that are responsible for the management and maintenance of the trunk roads in their specified area.

Road safety

12. The Road Traffic Act 1988 places a statutory requirement on each local authority to carry out a programme of measures for promoting road safety. The Local Road Safety Grant (£8.129m for 2009/10)⁴ was introduced in 2000 and has been provided to local authorities each year by the Welsh Government to contribute towards solutions to road safety problems in their respective areas. The 1988 Act also provides Welsh Ministers with the power to promote road safety by disseminating information or advice relating to the use of roads.
13. The Road Safety Act 2006 gave Welsh Ministers enhanced powers to make payments to local authorities and others to promote road safety, but road safety policy, speed limits, policing and road signs are matters reserved by the UK government.
14. The Welsh Government's Road Safety Strategy for Wales was published in January 2003. It sets targets for reductions in the number of people killed or seriously injured, the number of children killed or seriously injured and the number of people slightly injured. These targets are to be achieved by 2010 and are drawn from the UK government's road safety strategy, published in 2000. The Welsh Government's written evidence stated that good progress is being made towards achieving those targets.⁵
15. The Welsh Government's Transport Strategy for Wales, "Connecting the Nation", states that the 2003 Road Safety Strategy continues to be central to accident reduction measures on the roads of Wales. Its key actions are:
 - Casualty reduction strategies
 - Developing plans for casualty reduction among vulnerable groups
 - Taking forward the Safe Routes in Communities scheme and encouraging local authorities to develop 20mph zones
 - Measures to improve security on the public transport network
 - Measures to improve the security of the transport system
16. On 21 April 2009 the UK's Department for Transport published "A Safer Way", a consultation paper on a new road safety strategy for Great Britain to 2020. The paper proposes a new approach to road safety, new casualty reduction targets and a number of new measures to assist in achieving those targets. It also proposes a long-term vision to 2030 to make Britain's roads the safest in the world. We heard that the Welsh Government has been actively involved in the development of the Department for Transport's consultation document. The UK strategy may offer consistency across borders and a useful benchmark for safety standards, but the flexibility is still there for Wales to focus on different casualty reduction targets.⁶
17. The speed camera programme in Wales has been the responsibility of the Welsh Government since April 2007, and from April 2009 was transferred to the All Wales Casualty Reduction Partnership – an amalgamation of the previous two partnerships set up in North and South Wales. The Welsh

⁴ Welsh Government written evidence, Annex 1 para 4

⁵ Welsh Government written evidence, Annex 1 para 2

⁶ Record of Proceedings columns 43-52, Enterprise and Learning, 4 June 2009

Government is providing £8.4m in 2009/10 to support the enforcement of speed limits to reduce road casualties, including broader safety activities such as engineering, publicity and marketing.⁷

The wider picture

18. In focusing our inquiry on casualty reduction, we do not wish to forget the wider picture of Wales's national transport policy. Sustrans argued in its evidence that Wales "remains wedded to the 'predict and provide' approach - the view that the growth in private motor transport is inevitable and must be catered for." We note Sustrans's concern that augmenting the capacity of the roads network and making journeys by car easier and more convenient - in short, placing the car at the centre of transport policy - will not help change the travel behaviour of motorists, and will therefore not contribute to health and lifestyle or environmental strategic objectives or indeed social exclusion policy. Walking and cycling account for a quarter of journeys yet the Welsh Government's planned total of £22.4m for walking and cycling initiatives is less than seven per cent of the £300m roads budget, when Transport spending should more properly reflect the modal share.⁸

Trunk roads

19. Written evidence from the Chief Constable of North Wales Police explained that policing of trunk roads over the last ten years has been devolved from an omnipresent police response to a partnership approach between various agencies. In Wales, an "embryonic" Welsh Traffic Officer Service is developing for the M4 and the A55 in North Wales, which the police force views as an opportunity to "share responsibilities and not to shed them."⁹ The Service is based on the "Rijkswaterstaat" approach adopted within the Netherlands, acknowledged as one of the world's leading countries for effective road safety and casualty reduction.

20. We later heard from the Chief Constable's oral evidence¹⁰ that the Welsh Government Traffic Officers service has been launched for North Wales, and for South Wales later this year. The protocols to make that partnership work effectively are still in development, but good progress is being made. The Traffic Officers will also form part of the police's intelligence gathering network used in helping to tackle criminal use of the roads.

21. There was some criticism expressed in the Chief Constable's written evidence that the agencies contracted by the Welsh Government are sometimes reluctant to make decisions delegated to them, which detracts from a proactive control of the trunk road network. He therefore recommended that the Welsh Government should review the way its agents are contracted to ensure they have a properly grounded legal framework that gives them autonomy to take decisions without referral to Welsh Government officials.

⁷ Welsh Government written evidence, Annex 1 para 5

⁸ Sustrans written evidence, Annex 1

⁹ Chief Constable written evidence, Annex 1

¹⁰ Record of Proceedings column 146, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

22. We spent some time questioning Government officials about the relative safety of three-lane roads compared with two-plus-one lane roads.¹¹ A subsequent note by the Welsh Government¹² detailed collision figures for three-lane trunk roads but confirmed there are no two-plus-one roads in Wales so we were unable to make a meaningful comparison.
23. The Chief Constable of North Wales Police told us he was in favour of the introduction of a national roads authority,¹³ which does not necessarily have to be autonomous from Government (the Highways Agency in England is autonomous to some degree). The important point was that the body would be a single agency. He felt that the current situation was a “rather strange jigsaw pattern of bodies with responsibility for managing the trunk road network or the road network in Wales. It really is quite perplexing and it does not work very well.” **We conclude that the current pattern of trunk road network management in Wales is complicated and we recommend the Welsh Government consider the creation of a national trunk roads agency.**

Collision investigating equipment

24. We were told that a single business case has been prepared on behalf of the four Welsh police forces for the Welsh Government to release funding for the very latest collision investigation technical surveying equipment. The aim is to minimise collision response and road closure times.¹⁴ We were also fascinated to hear about initiatives to design and make “frangible” street furniture...¹⁵

Road safety targets

25. Sustrans argued that the setting of road safety policy targets has been unhelpful as it perpetuates a long-standing culture among road safety officers of regarding walking and cycling as hazardous modes of transport, and acts as a disincentive to encouraging more people to walk or cycle. Rather, there is evidence to show that cycling becomes safer the more cyclists there are - the “safety in numbers” effect.¹⁶
26. The Welsh Government’s written evidence showed that good progress is being made towards achieving its targets for reducing road casualties in the period up to 2010, as follows:

¹¹ Record of Proceedings columns 70-88, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

¹² Additional evidence submitted, Annex 3

¹³ Record of Proceedings column 188, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

¹⁴ Chief Constable written evidence, Annex 1

¹⁵ Record of Proceedings column 88, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

¹⁶ Sustrans written evidence, Annex 1

Classification	2010 Target*	Progress (2007 data)
Total number of Killed or Seriously Injured	40% reduction	30% reduction
Total number of children Killed or Seriously Injured	50% reduction	62% reduction
Slight casualties per 100 million vehicle km travelled	10% reduction	28% reduction
* from the average for 1994-98		

27. The Chief Constable of North Wales Police believed that the UK Department for Transport's current consultation on post 2010 casualty reduction targets presented Wales with a "golden opportunity" to produce its own targets and to "go a little bit further than England",¹⁷ and to "rewrite the speed enforcement rulebook to allow for the unique and special circumstances in Wales." He believed that a challenging target of a 40 per cent reduction in deaths or serious injuries by 2020 can be achieved on roads in Wales compared with a 2004-08 baseline (the proposed target for Great Britain is a 33 per cent reduction over the same period). He also wanted to see a 50 per cent reduction in casualties among young people, and the same figure for pedestrians and cyclists per 100 million km walked or cycled. Sweden, for example, currently has a "Vision Zero" policy where the country aims to have no road deaths in the future. Roads there are being re-engineered to create as many three-lane roads as possible.

28. The Committee believes that the Welsh Government should set its own road safety targets for 2020, taking account of the unique and special circumstances in Wales and we recommend that the Road Safety Strategy for Wales should be reviewed and updated to include these new targets.

29. The Chief Constable also advocated a more radical approach to improving road safety by expanding the development of diversionary and educational schemes to keep traffic offenders out of the criminal justice system; by acquiring state-of-the-art technology such as PentiP, the police back office computer system due online soon, and the Specs average speed enforcement system on the M4; and by improving compliance with speed limits.

Speed Limits

30. The power to alter speed limits in Wales is distributed between the following bodies:

- UK Government, which sets national speed limits for different road types – 30mph on street-lit ("restricted") roads; 60mph on single carriageway roads; and 70mph on dual carriageways and motorways
- Welsh Government, which sets local speed limits on the trunk road and motorway network and issues guidance to Local Traffic Authorities on determining speed limits on the local road network

¹⁷ Record of Proceedings column 171, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

- Local Traffic Authorities (the 22 unitary authorities), which set local speed limits on the local road network, with regard to guidance issued by the Welsh Government.

31. A local speed limit can only be set by the making of a Speed Limit Order and where variation from the national speed limit is justified.

Urban roads

32. In his written evidence, the Chief Constable of North Wales Police argued that speed limit compliance has to be achieved or “we will fail to reach the suggested targets set for casualty reduction by the year 2020.” He later told us that he believed the country was “ready” for lower general speed limits in urban and rural areas¹⁸ and wished to see the Government move that debate along. He suggested concentrating efforts on areas where vulnerable road users are in close proximity to vehicles, e.g. by reducing speed limits to 20mph zones or imposing speed limits on streets where pedestrian and cyclist use is high and which are not through routes. The Association of Chief Police Officers in Wales goes further in recommending 20mph limits on the approaches to all schools regardless of whether they are part of a through route.

33. Written evidence submitted by Living Streets reported that in Hull, where a 20mph speed limit has been rolled out in 118 zones over the past five years, overall injuries have declined by 60 per cent, and child pedestrian injuries have declined by 75 per cent.¹⁹ Their evidence also quotes from the Commission for Integrated Transport’s 2001 study that where European cities have 20mph limits covering between 65 per cent and 85 per cent of the urban network, they are transformed “from being noisy, polluted places into vibrant, people-centred environments.”²⁰

34. This view was echoed by Sustrans.²¹ We were interested to hear about “consensual changes” introduced in consultation with local communities, which are being tested in a UK-wide programme called “DIY streets”. This involves residents of individual streets in developing low-cost traffic-calming measures, such as breaking up the line of sight with planters, street art and other means to reduce speed and to recreate the street as a social space. Three of the 11 pilot schemes across the UK are in Wales - Grangetown in Cardiff, Bridgend and Port Talbot. Road Safety Wales is also involved in advising local authorities about design features with regard to the environment, roads and pavements.²²

35. When we previously reported on Road Policing in Wales, we recommended that the Welsh Government should undertake an evaluation of best practice with regard to zoning in northern Europe and review current policy regarding the implementation of 20mph zones, home zones and quiet lanes. The Minister accepted that recommendation.

¹⁸ Record of Proceedings column 156, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

¹⁹ Living Streets written evidence, Annex 1 para 8

²⁰ Living Streets written evidence, Annex 1 para 10

²¹ Record of Proceedings column 97, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

²² Record of Proceedings column 120, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 11 June 2009

36. We were therefore pleased to hear from Welsh Government officials that it was moving towards 20 mph limits in urban areas, particularly residential urban areas.²³ **We recommend that local authorities look seriously at increasing the use of 20mph limits in built-up areas across Wales. We also recommend that the Welsh Government should issue guidance to assist local authorities in making greater use of 20mph limits.**

Rural roads

37. When we questioned Welsh Government officials about the appropriateness of the 60mph speed limit on rural roads we were told it was necessary to balance safety issues with the requirements of road users to get to places relatively quickly. Speed limits needed to be set accordingly but to reduce the number of accidents, the Welsh Government works with the police to ensure correct speed enforcement.²⁴ The Welsh Government and the UK Department for Transport have considered lowering the national speed limit to 40mph on rural roads (which is the default speed advocated by Sustrans), but based on research, have concluded that 60mph is still correct.

38. We were told by Sustrans that reducing speed also results in lower emissions: an enforced speed on motorways of 60 mph could save nearly 2 million tonnes of carbon a year, which is nearly twice the savings anticipated to be delivered as a result of the biofuels directive.²⁵

39. This point was reinforced by the Freight Transport Association who told us that they reduced the limited speed for their vehicles from 56mph to 52mph. This has had the effect of making the drivers of the vehicles more relaxed and more efficient. Journey times have not increased and fuel economy has improved.²⁶

40. **We recommend that the Welsh Government keep under review speed limits on rural roads and that it should encourage local authorities to make greater use of their powers to lower speed limits to 40mph where appropriate so that they respond pre-emptively to concerns raised about speed problem areas, as opposed to reacting after casualties have arisen.**

Speed cameras

41. We heard from Welsh Government officials that Wales is moving towards adopting average speed camera technology, although not everywhere and not as a major change of policy. It was argued that it is more complex to use the system for some of the road networks in Wales than in England because of the large number of on and off slip roads on main roads as opposed to long stretches between junctions. It has also been relatively expensive to operate the technology as until recently there has only been one approved manufacturer, although more are now coming on-stream.²⁷ The Chief Constable for North Wales welcomed the introduction of

²³ Record of Proceedings column 9, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

²⁴ Record of Proceedings columns 11-23, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

²⁵ Record of Proceedings column 98, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

²⁶ Record of Proceedings column 6, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 11 June 2009

²⁷ Record of Proceedings columns 25-26, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

average speed measurement devices and told us²⁸ that in the first instance there will be mobile equipment, rather than fixed-site equipment, so that it can be moved around from one site to another where the need is greatest. Evidence has shown that average speed cameras are more effective in achieving driver compliance. **We recommend further investment in, and greater use of, mobile camera technology on the trunk road network in Wales.**

Illegal drivers and vehicles

42. The Chief Constable of North Wales Police informed us that uninsured drivers and those who fail to stop after a road collision are involved in an estimated 160 road deaths and injury to 23,000 other road users every year. Drivers without a vehicle excise licence or without a Driving Licence also feature highly in road collisions: that is why they are the focus of police operations. In partnership with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, North Wales Police seized and removed over 1,800 vehicles from the roads during a dedicated 23-day operation, costing £100k, which proved popular with the general public.
43. We were later told that during the operation, the police made more than 50 related arrests for crime and seized more than £32,000-worth of criminal gains.²⁹ We commend this initiative for being the largest operation of its kind in the UK and we believe it delivered good value for money. **We recommend that the Welsh Government should encourage each of the police forces in Wales to carry out enforcement campaigns on illegal vehicles to reduce casualties and minimise road collisions.**

Commercial vehicles

44. When a commercial motor vehicle is involved in a road collision, it is likely to be a serious incident. The Freight Transport Association told us, however, that Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) traffic collisions tend to happen more at slower than at higher speeds. To reduce the risk of collision, the Freight Transport Association believes that the best approach is to remove HGVs from problem areas, so its policy is to encourage travel during night time or off-peak times when the roads are less congested.³⁰ The Association is also looking into the idea of “consolidation centres” which would ensure that only smaller commercial vehicles enter city centres, rather than the larger articulated lorries, and it also advocated more blue sky thinking to enable night-time deliveries in urban areas. Trials involving night-time deliveries to Sainsbury’s in Wandsworth Borough Council resulted in improved fuel consumption, fresh produce for the supermarket for when it opened, a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, and no complaints from local residents.³¹ Another good practice scheme is in Newcastle-upon-Tyne where there are special car-free lanes so that lorries, buses and taxis share the same road space.

²⁸ Record of Proceedings column 150, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

²⁹ Record of Proceedings column 165, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

³⁰ Record of Proceedings column 7, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 11 June 2009

³¹ Record of Proceedings column 27, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 11 June 2009

45. Although the trend is for significant reductions in the rate of serious and fatal accidents involving Heavy Goods Vehicles and Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs), the Freight Transport Association expressed concern³² that **the Welsh Transport Statistics 2008 Road Safety Chapter does not contain details of the number of HGVs and LGVs involved in accidents on Welsh roads. We recommend that this information should be provided to enable industry and Government to make a more effective diagnosis of road safety in Wales.**
46. Non-UK registered lorries pose more of a problem. The Freight Transport Association has major concerns about non-compliant operators (particularly some foreign operators whose vehicles are overloaded or whose drivers work over their hours).³³ Latest figures published by Accident Exchange found that such vehicles are “at fault” for one in every 378 traffic accidents, a rise of 10 per cent from March 2008 to the end of February 2009. The biggest cause of foreign vehicle accidents is “sideswiping” where lorries pulling out to overtake are unaware of other vehicles on their blind side. According to the Association of British Insurers foreign lorries are, mile for mile, three times more likely to be involved in collisions than their UK counterparts.³⁴
47. We heard from the Chief Constable for North Wales that much more needs to be done to tackle defective heavy goods vehicles.³⁵ North Wales Police and the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency have introduced a joint initiative targeted at commercial vehicles whose owners/drivers commit offences that impact on road safety and place other road users at risk.
48. **We recommend that enforcement authorities should target those commercial operators with the poorest safety records and non-compliant operators, both UK and non-UK registered and that graduated fixed penalties continue to be used to improve vehicle standards on the road.**
49. The Freight Transport Association also expressed concern at the number of dedicated truck parking areas and lay-bys closed over recent years, which impacts upon drivers’ legal requirements concerning rest breaks. The Association has taken forward its own initiatives, for example on tired-awareness campaigns, but there is a general lack of provision of suitable rest and overnight parking on Welsh roads.³⁶ The Wales Freight Strategy includes an action to review current provision of these facilities and for the Regional Transport Consortia to work with local authorities to address the gaps in provision. **We recommend that the Welsh Government should take the lead in developing a coherent strategy for the provision of driver facilities and work with the Regional Transport Consortia and the local authorities to ensure adequate provision of regularly spaced rest and overnight facilities for HGV drivers on major freight routes.**

³² Freight Transport Association written evidence, Annex 1 para 3

³³ Record of Proceedings column 10, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 11 June 2009

³⁴ Freight Transport Association written evidence, Annex 1 paras 7-8

³⁵ Record of Proceedings column 146, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

³⁶ Freight Transport Association written evidence, Annex 1 para 15

50. We were pleased to hear from the Freight Transport Association that a Certificate of Professional Competence will be introduced for professional drivers later this year (35 hours' training every five years), which will be safety related.³⁷ There is a wider issue, however, about ensuring that all drivers go "back to basics" and are up to speed on the Highway Code regarding vehicle types and sizes and that HGV operators have different speed limits. **We recommend that the Welsh Government should encourage the road freight industry in Wales to adopt SAFED ("safe and fuel-efficient driving") techniques to enable companies to reduce the amount of fuel that they use, with the knock-on effect of reduced emissions in the atmosphere as well as smarter drivers on the road.**

Road safety education

51. We heard that since 2000 the Welsh Government has awarded grants of approximately £7 million to £8 million each year to local authorities to assist them with road safety measures, including funding for engineering measures, road safety training and education and publicity. Pre-driver education and training initiatives such as Megadrive and Pass Plus have been implemented to offer new young drivers the opportunity to develop their hazard awareness and improve their knowledge of road safety. Initiatives such as Megadrive also include training on basic vehicle maintenance checks, including checks on Heavy Goods Vehicles.³⁸ We understand that a review is currently under way, through the Assembly Government, ROSPA and Road Safety Wales, of the effectiveness of the Pass Plus scheme. **We welcome road education courses but recommend that there should be better monitoring of participants' courses to understand the impact on their driving behaviour and skills.**

52. We were pleased to hear from the Chief Constable of North Wales Police³⁹ that the Road Policing Manifesto was to be launched on 22 June and that the draft had been amended on the recommendation of our Committee to include greater emphasis on the role of education in road safety. The Chief Constable also recommended that the delivery of road safety education, especially at years 9, 10 and 11, should form part of the National Curriculum as well as being extended into higher education and lifelong learning – "in short delivery of the right message, at the right time, to the right students, by the right people."

53. Road Safety Wales stated that all school based programmes delivered by local authorities are linked to the National Curriculum, and their written evidence goes into the detail of the whole range of programmes provided for each road user group, from pre-school to the over 50s, and from cyclists to motor cyclists.⁴⁰ Road Safety Wales strives to reach 100 per cent of school children across Wales. The Welsh Government-funded children's traffic club, for example, has almost a 98 per cent take-up in

³⁷ Record of Proceedings column 49, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 11 June 2009

³⁸ Record of Proceedings columns 30-36, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

³⁹ Record of Proceedings column 144, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

⁴⁰ Road Safety Wales written evidence, Annex 1

Neath and Port Talbot local authority.⁴¹ Road Safety Wales also receives funding from the Welsh Government for Kerbcraft on-road cycle and child pedestrian training. Invariably, however, children are knocked down by motorists who are driving too fast for the conditions, and regardless of how much work is targeted towards children, there also needs to be a focus on drivers and the importance of considerate driving.

54. Sustrans believed that schools are a crucial place to instil changes in behaviour and attitudes towards people's mobility.⁴² Bike-It! is a project run by Sustrans in schools in Conwy and Neath and Port Talbot to encourage children, parents and head teachers to change their travel behaviour and give them skills to deal with risks. The project has recently been taken forward by Cardiff City Council as part of its sustainable travel town initiative. We were told that the provision of good-quality, on-road cycle training in schools is important, but very patchy between different local authorities. **We recommend that the Cyclists' Touring Club, funded by the Welsh Government to build capacity and increase the standard of cycle training, should be properly resourced and delivered consistently across Wales.**
55. Sustrans also felt that young people should be trained to consider their driving standards in relation to how they treat other road users. When people stop cycling, they often forget what it feels like to be a vulnerable road user.
56. The Chief Constable of North Wales Police mentioned the DangerPoint centre, near Prestatyn in north Wales, which includes the CrashPoint safety education centre for children. The police are trying to put every young person in North Wales through CrashPoint before they start driving. **We recommend that consideration and resources be given to providing a DangerPoint and CrashPoint road safety education centre in locations across Wales so that this kind of training can be offered to every young person in Wales in due course.**
57. The Chief Constable also wished to see enforcement programmes supplemented with a "massive expansion" of driver improvement and speed awareness retraining courses to rectify bad driving habits among offenders – as opposed to a system of fines and penalty points on licences, a view shared by Road Safety Wales.⁴³ **We recommend that drivers who have been caught breaking the law should be sent on mandatory driver improvement and speed awareness training - whether they receive a fine or not - and that the system be monitored to ensure that improvements in driving behaviour are achieved.**
58. The Chief Constable's evidence said that the Police will be adopting a new approach to careless driving offenders not involved in a collision by using wise discretion and the option of a new Fixed Penalty Notice. Police will continue to target, however, the relatively small category of dangerous drivers, especially on rural roads.

⁴¹ Record of Proceedings column 80, Enterprise and Learning Committee 11 June 2009

⁴² Record of Proceedings column 101, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

⁴³ Record of Proceedings column 84, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 11 June 2009

59. The Freight Transport Association explained how the logistics industry is taking steps to help reduce casualties through various initiatives aimed at professional drivers and commercial companies. However, they also wanted to see safety consciousness and initiatives to modify behaviour targeted at “vulnerable” groups and situations where the risk of accidents is high, e.g. educating cyclists on how to behave around goods vehicles (including positioning at red traffic lights, anticipating HGV manoeuvres at left hand turns and being seen at night or when visibility is poor); inclusion of “awareness of trucks” within the Highway Code; and additional information on motorway and trunk road driving in the driving test.⁴⁴
60. Road Safety Wales argued that as a direct result of the Welsh Government’s road safety grant Wales has, over the last eight years, experienced a “boom in the quality and quantity of road safety education, training and publicity promotional activities”, which has had an impact, as overall, the number of deaths on Welsh roads in 2008 was the second lowest ever.⁴⁵
61. We heard how the road safety partnership focuses on publicity campaigns on, for example, the wearing of seat belts – working with children and their parents to raise awareness of the risks of not wearing a seat belt and ensuring a cohesive approach between enforcement, education and publicity.⁴⁶
62. However, the partnership acknowledges that more work needs to be done, and they predict an uncertain future. Road Safety Wales’s concern is that funding after 2009/10 will be aligned to the new Regional Transport Planning process, which could mean a drop in funding being directly allocated to local authorities for the statutory delivery of education, training and publicity. The Welsh Government has encouraged local authorities to allocate 20 per cent of the Road Safety Grant to education, training and publicity initiatives in order to promote an holistic approach to road safety. Road Safety Wales is concerned that such initiatives will in future suffer from competition with large-scale transport engineering schemes, which are significantly more expensive.
- 63. We believe that it is essential to change the hearts and minds of current and future road users, and we recommend that the Road Safety Grant funding should be continued in its current form to enable local authority road safety officers to deliver against the objectives set within the Welsh Government’s Road Safety Strategy, and in particular, to focus on those living in deprived areas.**

Walking and cycling provision

64. Sustrans told us they were not satisfied with the standard, design or quality of cycle lanes – the picture is patchy and the application of the design guidance on cycling infrastructure by road engineers was

⁴⁴ Freight Transport Association written evidence, Annex 1 paras 12-13

⁴⁵ Road Safety Wales written evidence, Annex 1

⁴⁶ Record of Proceedings columns 95-98, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 11 June 2009

“notoriously fickle”.⁴⁷ Thirty years ago, Copenhagen had the same levels of cycling as Cardiff, but now a third of all commuting and journeys there take place by bike. This was achieved through doubling the city’s budget for walking and cycling over that period and creating deliberate infrastructure changes to make cycling more convenient than driving. **We recommend that there should be a significant increase in the Government’s walking and cycling budget from 2010-2011 onwards in order to help meet the targets that the Welsh Government has set in its Walking and Cycling action plan.**

Road clutter

65. The point was made that there is too much “clutter” of road signs on the roads which tends to overload information for drivers.⁴⁸ **Studies in Sweden have shown that reducing roadside clutter actually improves road safety, and we recommend that a similar approach be followed in Wales.**

⁴⁷ Record of Proceedings column 123, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 4 June 2009

⁴⁸ Record of Proceedings column 16, Enterprise and Learning Committee, 11 June 2009

Conclusions

66. Despite the Welsh Government's new transport strategy changes, we regrettably anticipate a continuing increase in the volume of vehicular traffic on Welsh roads. The wider reach of this inquiry would therefore be to encourage greater emphasis in Government policies on effecting cultural and behavioural change – not only among road users, but also among the transport planners and the engineers who design the transport infrastructure.
67. While the UK might be at the forefront of road safety in Europe, deaths or injuries in road collisions are not acceptable in a contemporary, progressive Welsh society. Partnership working lies at the heart of improving safety on Welsh roads - both when incidents occur but also in delivering proactive initiatives and programmes to prevent them happening in the first place – and will be a significant contribution to achieving targets and implementing strategies. A single casualty reduction partnership for Wales was established on 1 April 2009, a significant step in a right direction. **We recommend that the embryonic casualty reduction partnership be developed so that it can play a coordinating role in casualty reduction initiatives across Wales.**
68. There is an important role for the use of cutting edge technology to bring down speed, but also to ensure better enforcement to prevent people from breaking the law and the rules of common sense. We would like to see an increase in human interaction between the police and road users complementing the time and energy invested in robot cameras.
69. However, it is through the educational and training programmes of Road Safety Wales and local authority road safety officers that the greatest inroads are to be made in creating and shaping the road users of both the present and the future. **We recommend that greater emphasis be placed on investing in effective and well resourced educational schemes in order to influence attitudes and behaviour on Welsh roads.**
70. This is a real chance for the Welsh Government to work with partners in raising the profile of road safety and delivering further improvements across the road network. However, it appears to us that many agencies are now trying to convey similar messages about road safety but in different ways. There is therefore a need for a more strategic approach so that everyone is working together to best effect. **We welcome the fact that the Welsh Government is currently reviewing how all of the agencies concerned with road safety are working together, as it is important to clarify roles. We recommend that the outcome of that initiative should be the development of a more strategic and effective approach in future.**

Summary of Recommendations

We conclude that the current pattern of trunk road network management in Wales is complicated and we recommend the Welsh Government consider the creation of a national trunk roads agency.

The Committees believes that the Welsh Government should set its own road safety targets for 2020, taking account of the unique and special circumstances in Wales and we recommend that the Road Safety Strategy for Wales should be reviewed and updated to include these new targets.

We recommend that local authorities look seriously at increasing the use of 20mph limits in built-up areas across Wales. We also recommend that the Welsh Government should issue guidance to assist local authorities in making greater use of 20mph limits.

We recommend that the Welsh Government keep under review speed limits on rural roads and that it should encourage local authorities to make greater use of their powers to lower speed limits to 40mph where appropriate so that they respond pre-emptively to concerns raised about speed problem areas, as opposed to reacting after casualties have arisen.

We recommend further investment in, and greater use of, mobile camera technology on the trunk road network in Wales.

We recommend that the Welsh Government should encourage each of the police forces in Wales to carry out enforcement campaigns on illegal vehicles to reduce casualties and minimise road collisions.

The Welsh Transport Statistics 2008 Road Safety Chapter does not contain details of the number of HGVs and LGVs involved in accidents on Welsh roads. We recommend that this information should be provided to enable industry and Government to make a more effective diagnosis of road safety in Wales.

We recommend that enforcement authorities should target those commercial operators with the poorest safety records and non-compliant operators, both UK and non-UK registered and that graduated fixed penalties continue to be used to improve vehicle standards on the road.

We recommend that the Welsh Government should take the lead in developing a coherent strategy for the provision of driver facilities and work with the Regional Transport Consortia and the local authorities to ensure adequate provision of regularly spaced rest and overnight facilities for HGV drivers on major freight routes.

We recommend that the Welsh Government should encourage the road freight industry in Wales to adopt SAFED (“safe and fuel-efficient driving”) techniques to enable companies to reduce the amount of fuel that they use, with the knock-on effect of reduced emissions in the atmosphere as well as smarter drivers on the road.

We welcome road education courses but recommend that there should be better monitoring of participants' courses to understand the impact on their driving behaviour and skills.

We recommend that the Cyclists' Touring Club, funded by the Welsh Government to build capacity and increase the standard of cycle training, should be properly resourced and delivered consistently across Wales.

We recommend that consideration and resources be given to providing a DangerPoint and CrashPoint road safety education centre in locations across Wales so that this kind of training can be offered to every young person in Wales in due course.

We recommend that drivers who have been caught breaking the law should be sent on mandatory driver improvement and speed awareness training - whether they receive a fine or not - and that the system be monitored to ensure that improvements in driving behaviour are achieved.

We believe that it is essential to change the hearts and minds of current and future road users, and we recommend that the Road Safety Grant funding should be continued in its current form to enable local authority road safety officers to deliver against the objectives set within the Welsh Government's Road Safety Strategy, and in particular, to focus on those living in deprived areas.

We recommend that there should be a significant increase in the Government's walking and cycling budget from 2010-2011 onwards in order to help meet the targets that the Welsh Government has set in its Walking and Cycling action plan.

Studies in Sweden have shown that reducing roadside clutter actually improves road safety, and we recommend that a similar approach be followed in Wales.

We recommend that the embryonic casualty reduction partnership be developed so that it can play a coordinating role in casualty reduction initiatives across Wales.

We recommend that greater emphasis be placed on investing in effective and well resourced educational schemes in order to influence attitudes and behaviour on Welsh roads.

We welcome the fact that the Welsh Government is currently reviewing how all of the agencies concerned with road safety are working together, as it is important to clarify roles. We recommend that the outcome of that initiative should be the development of a more strategic and effective approach in future.

Annex 1 – Written evidence

Chief Constable, North Wales Police

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=130755&ds=7/2009>

Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=130768&ds=7/2009>

Freight Transport Association

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=131212&ds=7/2009>

Living Streets

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=131217&ds=7/2009>

Road Safety Wales

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=131215&ds=7/2009>

Sustrans Cymru

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=130642&ds=7/2009>

Annex 2 – Transcripts of oral evidence

4 June 2009

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=132038&ds=7/2009>

11 June 2009

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=132939&ds=7/2009>

Annex 3 – Additional evidence submitted

Welsh Assembly Government

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=140181&ds=7/2009>

Freight Transport Association

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=140182&ds=7/2009>