

Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation response to the Transport Committee road safety inquiry (April 2019)

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CIHT is a charity, learned society and membership body with over 14,000 members spread across 12 UK regions and four international groups. We represent and qualify professionals who plan, design, build, manage and operate transport and infrastructure networks. Our vision is for world-class transportation infrastructure and services. Our values are to be Professional, Inclusive, Collaborative and Progressive.

CIHT welcomes this inquiry into road safety by the parliamentary select committee and supports the UK's ambitions to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries nationwide — while delivering safe, healthy, equitable transport for all. This response is informed by feedback from our membership and specialist panels.

Q1: How effective is the Government's current approach to road safety?

1. CIHT believes that national government has good ambitions on road safety with a clear commitment to reduce the number of 'road users killed and injured on the roads every year' in *Working Together to Build a Safer Road System: British Road Safety Statement*¹ and it has published updates on the progress towards those goals in *Road Safety Statement: Progress Report*². There is also the recently published *Cycling and Walking Safety Review* and the forthcoming *2 Year Action Plan on Road Safety* which will put attention on motorcyclists, older road users, younger road users and rural road users who make up an increasing proportion of those killed and seriously injured (KSI's) on our roads.
2. However, road safety can only be understood in the wider policy context which includes funding, increased devolution and greater autonomy for local authorities. These all affect spending, network management, asset maintenance, public health, transport planning and more which indirectly affects the numbers of those killed and seriously injured (KSI's)
3. Ongoing maintenance is an important part of road safety and fewer resources for the proper management of infrastructure can lead to reduction in surface quality and may present an increased accident risk. For example, 27 per cent of the local highways network has need further investigation for skid resistance and it is estimated it would take up to 10 years to alleviate the total maintenance backlog.³
4. CIHT believes that the recent safer roads fund is a welcome infusion of money into the sector, however it relies on a bidding process which inevitably pushes money to those authorities which are the most engaged with road safety and have the capacity to apply, and that reactive maintenance can be up to twenty times more expensive to perform. Road safety requires long term planning and investment to achieve optimum results.
5. Further, the economic harm of failures of road safety are not well understood and therefore the level of spending may not be equal to the value of prevention. Government and the industry should be aware of the opportunities for large returns on investment.
6. CIHT notes that some of the most vulnerable users of our roads are pedestrians and cyclists. Highway design in the UK has consistently been aimed at the needs of motorised vehicles with a great deal of data analysis, innovation, and investment taking place in that area. There has been less focus on the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, and there is no comprehensive equivalent of

¹ DfT (2015) *Working Together to Build a Safer Road System: British Road Safety Statement*, accessed [here](#)

² DfT (2018) *Road Safety Statement: Progress Report* accessed [here](#)

³ AIA (2018) *Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance Survey (ALARM)*

DMRB for walking and cycling infrastructure. We would like to see more attention paid to the safety and security of all pedestrians and cyclists throughout the planning and transport systems.

Q2: Are there any areas where the Government's current approach to road safety could be improved?

7. "There will always be an important role for central Government to play in road safety." Philip Hammond, Secretary of State for Transport, May 2011⁴
8. Great Britain has a long tradition in road safety delivery dating back to the publication of *Road Safety: The Next Steps*⁵ in 1987 which was an early example of targets for casualty reduction. It aimed for a one-third reduction in all casualties by the year 2000 and achieved a 39 per cent decline in deaths and a 49 per cent decline in serious injuries. Following from that, in 2000, the government adopted new targets in *Tomorrows Roads: Safer for Everyone*, including reducing all KSI's by 40 per cent and child KSI's by 50 per cent by 2010. Totals KSI's fell by 49 per cent by the end of that decade.
9. The adoption of targets was a major step forward and one developed with professional support and which industry believes resulted in "an increased profile for road safety; increased resources for, and more discussion of national and local action"⁶. These targets were based upon widespread consultation and analysis of casualty trends, policy options and potential changes in traffic mix.⁷
10. In 2010 targets were abolished. This has been defended, including recently by the Minister of State for Transport, Jesse Norman MP, who has argued that there is no correlation between countries with safety targets and those without ⁸ however that does not pay attention to the UK context where targets are widely regarded as being successful in driving change.
11. CIHT suggests that Government could improve its leadership role in the sector, by improving coordination with local authorities and creating a national framework to assess road safety progress. Local authorities are struggling to prioritise effective road safety systems and Government can provide that impetus through funding, incentives and guidance
12. CIHT would question why there is such a major a distinction between how we manage our local highways and the Strategic Road Network for which government has set specific targets for reduction of road casualties and empowered Highways England (HE) to achieve them through dedicated funding. This is monitored by the Office of Rail and Road who annually publishes how HE is doing when compared to its targets.
13. CIHT would recommend that government review and consider implementing the recommendations in the recent *Road Safety Management Capacity Review*⁹ and the results of the *consultation on driving offences and penalties relating to causing death or serious injury*.

⁴ DfT (2011) *Strategic Framework for Road Safety*

⁵ DfT (1987) *Road Safety: the next steps*

⁶ SafetyNet (2009) *Quantitative road safety targets*, accessed [here](#)

⁷ J Broughton, R E Allsop, D A Lynam and C M McMahon (2000) *The numerical context for setting national casualty reduction target*, TRL

⁸ United Kingdom, House of Commons, *Debates*, 5 November 2019, accessed [here](#).

⁹ Department of Transport & Systra (2018) 'Road Safety Management Capacity Review' ([accessed here](#))

Q3 What interventions would be most effective at reducing the number and severity of road traffic accidents?

14. CIHT argues that better transport planning, speed reduction, enforcement and increased funding are the key elements.
15. Better transport planning will lower the number of miles driven through provision of walking and cycling routes and public transport as too many towns and cities are based around unnecessary vehicle movements and high-speed corridors. In CIHT's response to the recent consultation on cycling and walking safety we highlighted that the UK is still building environments which are hostile to cycling and walking, and that fixing this will lower the amount of motor vehicle journeys taken, lower exposure to risk and improve safety outcomes.
16. Reducing speeds on the network will lower the likelihood of collisions and of serious harm when collisions occur. In particular average speed cameras have proven effective at reducing the speed travelled on roads, as demonstrated on the A9 where they managed to reduce the number of drivers exceeding speed limits from 1 in 4 to 1 in 15 and reduce the numbers of KSI's.¹⁰
17. CIHT further notes that enforcement and regulation has an important role to play, with the National Police Chiefs' Council reporting that since 2010, traffic officer numbers have reduced by around 36% from 5,500 to 3,500¹¹. Linked is the often-perceived low likelihood of being fined for blocking pavements, speeding on A roads or driving while distracted. Discouraging these behaviours will have an impact on overall safety.
18. CIHT argues that government should assess how design standards and other safety requirements should apply to the local highway network, given the changes to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges being undertaken by Highways England. CIHT is working with DfT to consider updating modern guidance on highways, including Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2: Further Applications of the Principal to ensure that roads are designed in a safe manner initially. These design standards must be reviewed to ensure that they support safe system principles and local authorities encouraged to use them.

Q4 What evidence is there on the effectiveness of these interventions?

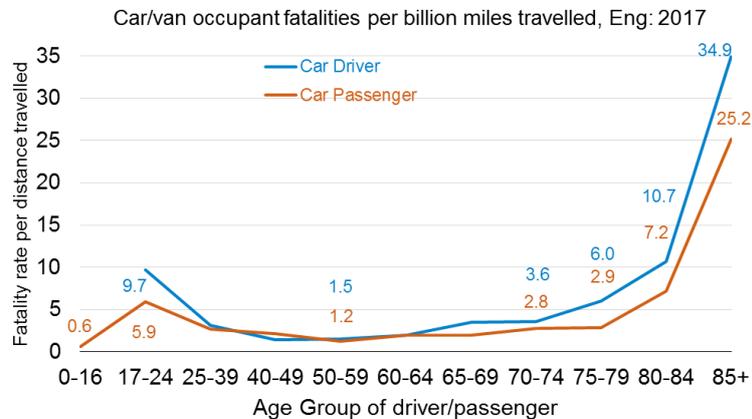
19. CIHT would highlight that the two comparable countries who have avoided the plateauing of road safety seen throughout the EU are the Netherlands and Denmark who have invested heavily in pedestrian and cycling safety.
20. CIHT recently fed into the Road Safety Management Capacity safety review commissioned by the DfT and we would encourage the committee to review the evidence in that document. Evidence on emerging trends such as distracted driving, limits of current safety practices and ageing populations are difficult to evidence at the population level despite widespread acknowledgment of the issues during individual accidents.
21. This report also notes concerns around young driver crash injury rates and numbers. The report found support for managing initial exposure to risk through graduated licensing, an approach that has been found effective in several countries. CIHT would recommend that the committee consider graduated driving licences in their review as one potential application in reducing safety risk exposure to young drivers.¹²

¹⁰ Scottish Government (2018) *Comprehensive A9 performance data published*, accessed [here](#)

¹¹ Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary (2016). *State of Policing – The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2016*

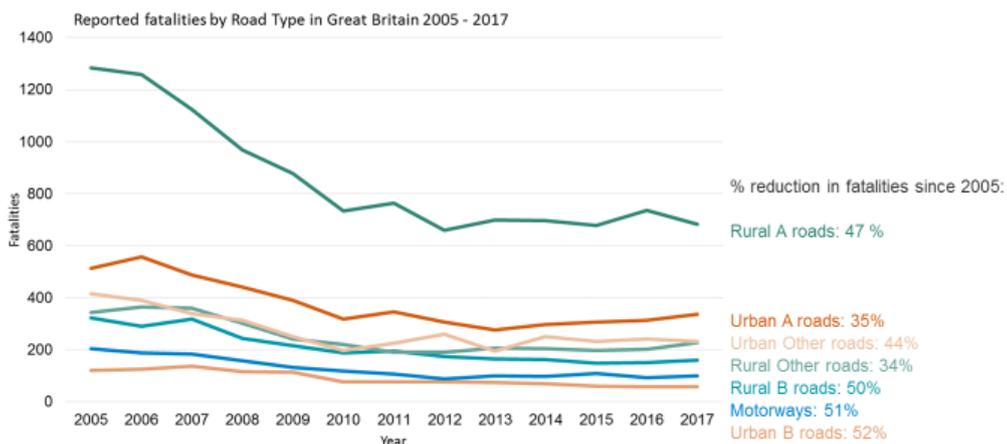
¹² Road Safety Management Capacity Review (2018), access [here](#) [see page 25]

- 22. Recent statistics show that the risk for drivers over 85 is dramatically higher per distance travelled, and projected demographics indicate that this category will increase over the coming decades.¹³
- 23. CIHT would also encourage the committee to assess the different interventions being performed by the home nations, such as Scotland’s lowering of alcohol consumption limits and determining whether they may be useful nationwide.



Q5 How can interventions to reduce the number and severity of road traffic accidents best be implemented?

- 24. CIHT has consistently argued that our highway networks deserve sustained, predictable and reliable funding. The balance between capital (new construction and capital maintenance) and routine revenue maintenance is often sub-optimal. This has particularly been the case in recent years, and the position is expected to worsen as unprotected revenue allocation from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government continues to decline. One of the consequences of this approach is the inability to undertake long term planning which is necessary to achieve sustained improved road safety.
- 25. There are at least thirteen ways in which highways authorities are funded and there are almost entirely separate methods of receiving funding for new developments as there is for maintenance and renewals. These different funds are the initiatives of several ministers and departments, which has resulted in a complex and inefficient approach that do not necessarily prioritise safety
- 26. CIHT appreciates that this is a challenging time for the government and welcomes government recognition that there is a need for investment to both support and grow the economy. However



¹³ DfT STATS19 and National Travel Survey

local government can only increase spending through, taxes, borrowing or user charges and there needs to be a discussion about sustainable long-term funding road safety funding.

27. CIHT argues that parliament, government and local authorities have not settled the question of how we can pay for better, more reliable and safer roads in a way that is fair to road users and good for the economy and the environment.

There is also a need to pay specific attention to our rural road network which accounts for the largest amount of roads fatalities and yet unlike the Strategic Road Network does not receive dedicated funding and is not specifically monitored.