

# Enterprise and Learning Committee

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## Purpose

Written evidence from Chief Constable Richard Brunstrom, Head of Roads Policing Business Area for ACPO Cymru, as a precursor to verbal evidence to the Committee on the 29 January 2009.

## Background

Following the collapse of the Home Office proposal to create a single police force for Wales the four Welsh chief constables have decided that it is in the public interest to collaborate with each other on an all-Wales basis, and wherever appropriate to work closely with the Welsh Assembly Government even though policing remains a non-devolved function. The four Police Authorities in Wales have reached the same conclusion, establishing a formal Joint Committee under the Police Act and producing in 2008 for the very first time a 'National Policing Plan for Wales' which contains three key drivers:

working coterminously with WAG

improving performance

reducing the 'protective services' gap [see below]

Real collaboration has already commenced (for instance the Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit [WECTU] went live on 1 April 2008) and work is ongoing across a range of police work where joint working seems likely to be beneficial. Developments in Wales are increasingly seen as leading the evolution of the whole police service.

Road Policing however has been somewhat of a neglected discipline within UK policing for several decades, with the strategic direction of the Home Office focused on other matters like crime, antisocial behaviour and terrorism. While understandable this has had the result of downgrading and marginalising road policing as a discrete function within the service with unfortunate and unpopular results - fewer officers visible on our strategic roads and a lack of integrated multiagency road management.

In the last few years however there has been a belated realisation that road policing, especially of the trunk road network, is an important and specialist area of core police work in need of greater attention leading to improved levels of service and greater consistency of delivery. A prime driver for this change was the UK Government's casualty reduction programme, based on the recognition that large numbers of people a year have been avoidably dying on our roads in the UK, and that better road policing had a large part to play in reducing this toll.

This realisation, coupled with the emerging evidence of the significant role of modern road policing tactics in the UK's counterterrorist effort, resulted in road policing being identified in September 2005 as one of the Home Office's seven key 'protective services' (rather obviously perhaps, those areas of specialist police work that have a direct impact on public safety, security and confidence) the others being, major crime (homicide), serious and organised cross border crime, counter terrorism and extremism, civil contingencies, critical incidents (incidents of significant public concern), and public order.

The Highways Agency [HA] has responsibility for management of the trunk road network in England. Dissatisfaction with the ability of the police to meet the needs of the Agency as network operator led, after lengthy negotiations, to the joint police and HA publication 'Roles and Responsibilities' in 2003. This document set out an agreed division of responsibility between the Agency and the police in England. In summary, the HA as network operator would concentrate on management of the trunk roads, while police would focus on crime and safety; some tasks would be shared. This agreement envisaged the transfer of significant responsibilities from the police to the HA, but to effect this it was necessary to empower HA staff to direct and control traffic - a role previously restricted by Parliament to police officers. The Traffic Management Act 2004 therefore created the new role of HA 'Traffic Officer' now to be seen on the motorway network in England in their highly visible and distinctive black and yellow livery; they now number about 1200. The police agreed to leave existing resources in place (but concentrating on the agreed core policing tasks), so the net effect was a substantial growth in available resources to better manage the trunk road network. HA was successful in securing significant additional funding from HM Treasury to set up the new arrangements in England, equivalent to some 200 full time police officers. No such money was made available to Wales, although the powers to create WAG Traffic Officers were deliberately included in the legislation and are available to the Assembly.

These new arrangements are seen by both HA and the police as having been a literally conspicuous success. There are more visible patrols and quicker response times to incidents and calls for service, network management issues are dealt with more efficiently and both partners feel better able to concentrate on their core responsibilities while collaborating effectively with each other.

The road infrastructure in Wales is inadequate and more vulnerable to congestion than is the case in England - with resulting serious threat to the Welsh economy as periodic closures of the M4 and A55 so vividly demonstrate. Efficient network management is therefore at least as important in Wales as it is in England and probably more so - and yet is less well developed.

## Current situation

The police service in Wales is seeking to redefine road policing in a manner which fully reflects modern circumstances. We wish to take cognisance of the UK protective services agenda, of the UK road casualty reduction targets and of the policy of WAG, specifically including the 2008 Wales Traffic Strategy "One Wales: Connecting the Nation", and the clear need in Wales to tackle congestion - particularly that arising from incidents.

Our intention is to produce a 'Manifesto' setting out clearly what we perceive to be our key tasks in policing the roads of Wales. The purpose of this Manifesto is to explain clearly to our staff what road policing is about and why, to ensure that we concentrate our efforts and resources where they can be of most value. The Manifesto is therefore an internal police document, written in language suitable for directing and controlling the police, with the specific intention of ensuring that our staff fully understand their role and priorities in a Welsh context. It is hoped that WAG will formally endorse the Manifesto so that it carries more persuasive weight - but it is a document targeting a police audience.

It may be felt that there is some utility in preparing a version couched in accessible language more suitable for the general public, to demonstrate clearly and widely the spirit of true partnership between WAG and the police inherent in the principles of the Manifesto. Such a version could readily be produced.

The draft Manifesto [attached as Annex 1] sets out six key themes which seek to encapsulate the most important aspects of road policing in Wales at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with particular reference to arrangements being developed with WAG on the Strategic Road Network (SRN). It is still in draft form but the intention is to finalise the text soon after the Committee Hearing, then seek formal endorsement from the Deputy First Minister as Transport Minister before the end of the financial year prior to a formal launch soon thereafter. The draft presented here has benefited from wide circulation amongst partner agencies and relevant WAG civil servants.

The opinion of the Enterprise and Learning Committee is therefore most timely, and welcome, and will be taken into account before the Manifesto is finalised and adopted.

## The Manifesto

The Manifesto identifies six major policing areas relevant in Wales:

**1. Patrol the road.** There is a clear demand from the public for a reassuring visible patrol presence on the Strategic Road Network to provide a human face to the service. A model is being developed based loosely on the existing HA agreement which will be tested on a 20km stretch of the A55 around the Conwy tunnels during 2009 (in fact a first phase commenced as a pilot scheme on 12 January and already looks very promising). However, unlike in England and recognising the current financial situation, this will require no additional resources from either police or WAG but rather will seek to utilise existing assets more effectively by changing working practices and sharing expertise and capability. This experiment will see close collaboration on decision making between police, North Wales Trunk Road Agency staff and Road Network Management civil servants in the new Conwy Traffic Management Centre, police officers dedicated to patrolling this stretch of road, a new WAG Rapid Response Unit (possibly utilising the latent powers in the Traffic Management Act to stop, direct and control traffic), and much more rapid breakdown recovery using police removal powers to reduce danger.

**2. Enforce the law.** Using the police National Intelligence Model and a new Road Policing Intelligence Forum we will target our law enforcement efforts more effectively in order to achieve greater impact. This will include not only 'traditional' road safety matters like speeding, drink driving and use of seatbelts, but also more effective use of our ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) system, in which the UK holds a global lead, to tackle criminals using the roads. We will ensure that all road deaths are investigated to the highest standards in compliance with the national Road Death Investigation Manual and we will work more closely with our partners in VOSA (the Vehicle & Operators Services Agency) to enforce the law relating to the safe operation of commercial vehicles (especially those that are foreign registered) which are a growing problem requiring specialist knowledge to address.

**3. Reduce road casualties.** At present the police are working to Department for Transport casualty reduction targets which are due to expire in 2010. International research has shown this approach to be extremely effective; those countries with the best global results (Sweden, Netherlands & UK) are all using it. The DFM has stated his intention to continue with a target based approach in Wales after 2010, and we will seek to play an active part. A new all-Wales Safety Camera Partnership (all four police forces and all 22 local authorities) will start on 1 April 2009, and will ensure a consistent approach to casualty reduction across the whole country. We will ensure that temporary speed limits at roadworks on the SRN are properly enforced to protect the workforce. This new Partnership encompasses more than law enforcement, with engineering and educational tactics as well - including highly popular re-education courses for low end speed offenders as an alternative to a speeding ticket for instance, soon to be available across the whole of Wales for the first time.

**4. Tackle terrorism.** The threat from terrorism and extremism remains significant, and road policing has its part to play in support of WECTU. Terrorists are vulnerable when using the roads and we will use our patrolling officers and ANPR system to the full to monitor, arrest and convict them. This work is of course highly confidential and I will not go into further detail here.

**5. Tackle antisocial road use.** Antisocial behaviour is all too prevalent on our roads, and can be annoying and frightening - examples are close following at high speed, use of the highways for racing, misuse of residential streets and the like. We will target this behaviour, and apply the new antisocial behaviour legislation to the full to tackle this persistent problem more effectively.

**6. Reduce congestion and delay.** The Welsh SRN is very vulnerable to congestion and delay caused by maintenance and upgrading work and by incidents. We will use the new joint road management model to reduce these delays by integrated decision making resulting in swifter incident resolution - for instance by using modern technology to survey crash sites more quickly, by removing broken down vehicles more swiftly, use of the police ANPR system to conduct traffic surveys electronically, joint planning to enable movement of

windfarm loads by night, and by jointly planning routine maintenance with the congestion consequences more in mind than hitherto. Given the experience already available from England we are confident that these tactics, and others yet to be developed, will work well in Wales.

## **Summary**

The police in Wales are seeking to define more clearly our road policing role, in partnership with the government of Wales and our various partners and stakeholders. This role is, we think, not significantly different from that of our colleagues in England, with one exception - it seems to us that the road infrastructure in Wales is uniquely vulnerable to incident based congestion which causes both severe economic damage and extreme human frustration. We therefore propose to work in very close collaboration with WAG and other partners to improve network management while increasingly focusing our resources on the key priorities for road policing set out in our proposed Manifesto.

### **Richard Brunstrom**

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