

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 13 March 2002
Time: 2.00 to 5.00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY

Purpose

1. To update the Committee regarding the results of the consultation on the document Safe Roads, Safe Communities and to detail progress on the production of the final Road Safety Strategy for Wales.

Summary

2. A document was issued for public consultation in September 2001. This took account of members' comments at the Committee meeting on 27 June 2001. A copy is on the website at the following address www.wales.gov.uk/subitransport/content/consultation/saferoads/index.htm The consultation closed on 30 November 2001 and work is now progressing on production of the final Strategy. The committee are invited to comment on the key issues which have emerged and to indicate any further changes members would wish to see.

Timing

3. The Strategy is due for completion by the end of April 2002 with a launch programmed for early summer. The Strategy will cover the period from the summer of 2002 until the end of 2010.

Background

4. The Plan for Wales 2001 states as a priority 'Improved road safety through our new Road Safety Strategy and developing safer neighbourhoods'.
5. In 2000, the UK Government published "Tomorrow's Roads, Safer for

Everyone" – the UK Road Safety Strategy which includes challenging casualty targets for 2010. These include a 40% reduction in people killed or seriously injured, and a 50% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured compared with the mid nineties.

6. In September 2000, the Minister for Environment agreed to the formation of the Road Safety Strategy Board, to oversee drafting of Road Safety Strategy for Wales which could deliver the challenging 2010 targets. The Board, chaired by Robin Shaw, included representatives from the Assembly Transport Directorate, local authority road safety officers and highways engineers, Sustrans, Friends of the Earth, health interests and a community design consultant.

7. The goal is to devise a practical and prioritised programme from now until 2010, in partnership with local authorities, the police forces, and all the organisations and individuals with a responsibility for road safety. The first stage in this process was to hold a Consultative Conference in Llandrindod Wells on 15 May. The second stage was the public consultation.

Consultation Responses

Introduction

8. A total of 96 responses were received from a wide variety of organisations including local authorities, Community Councils/Association road safety pressure groups, transport user groups, motoring organisations, the Police/Emergency Services and Health Authorities/NHS Trusts. There were also a number of responses from private individuals.
9. The consultation responses were of a very high quality, and contained large amounts of detail on existing problems and possible solutions. The respondents were generally supportive of the principles outlined in the road safety consultation document and the document was well received in all quarters.

Responses to Individual Questions

10. In terms of the main issues arising from the consultation, these can be summarised with reference to the questions posed by the consultation document:

Question: What are the specific road safety problems in Wales that you think should be analysed?

Consultation View: In addition to road safety problems generally prevalent in the UK, a number of essentially Welsh problems were identified:

- Danger to horse riders on rural roads.
- The high number of motorcyclist casualties.
- Child pedestrian casualties in deprived urban areas.

Response: All these issues are being addressed in the final strategy. Current initiatives include:

- The Wales Transport Forum is setting up a motor cycle strategy group.
- Child Pedestrian Training Co-ordinators are being funded in every local authority to equip children with the essential skills they need.

Question: Do you believe that the public perception of road safety is as important as actual road safety as measured by the statistics?

Consultation View: Perceived road safety was felt to be as important as actual road safety (as measured by official statistics).

Response: In view of the need to meet the UK government targets, casualty reduction should remain the main focus of the road safety strategy – with perceptions taking a secondary (but nonetheless important) role. Current initiatives such as Safe Routes to School address both actual and perceived safety problems in a co-ordinated way.

Question: What additional crash information could realistically be included on the Stats19 form?

Consultation View: The problem of the official statistics under reporting both casualties and collisions was generally recognised. The lack of information on collisions on off-road cycle/pedestrian paths was considered to be a particular problem – leading to a possible misconception that such routes are inherently "safe". Some respondents favoured increasing the information collected on the official Police *Stats19* form. Others argued that the form is already too long and as a result is often filled out incorrectly.

Response: The Quinquennial Review of the Stats19 form is addressing these issues and the results will be rolled out in Wales.

Question: How do you think that the reporting of damage-only, pedestrian and cyclist crashes could be increased?

Consultation View: Some good alternative proposals for gathering additional

collision and casualty information were put forward, including:

- Use of insurance company records.
- Data from Hospital A&E departments.

Response: These ideas will be considered for development as pilot projects in the early stage of the strategy.

Question: How do you think that local communities can be involved in developing road safety strategies?

Consultation View: The Assembly and local authorities already undertake a great deal of consultation work on transport projects. Greater community involvement ("participation" in addition to consultation) from the outset of road safety projects will encourage local people to "take ownership" of problems and solutions. Some local authority respondents, whilst fully supportive of the principles of participation, expressed concern about the implications for additional staff resources. A number of respondents felt that some kind of locally-based road safety "forum" should be set up to consider projects and monitor progress.

Response: The issue is about giving local authorities and communities the resources to make participation an integral part of any project. Projects in other areas of policy (such as *Communities First*) should recognise road safety as a key area for development.

Question: How do you think that 20mph zones can be effectively enforced?

Consultation View: Almost all respondents believed that physical traffic calming measures – such as road humps or build-outs – are required to enforce 20mph limits.

Response: The designation of 20mph limits in urban areas is an important initiative – especially if more walking and cycling is to be encouraged. The need for physical enforcement measures is generally recognised – although the role of publicity (making drivers aware of the need for a lower limit) should not be forgotten.

Question: How do you think that non-engineering solutions can complement the local strategies?

Consultation View: It was felt that non-engineering solutions such as education/publicity and enforcement should be integrated with engineering through "Area-

wide" and "Route Action" Strategies. There is often a need to explain the rationale behind traffic calming schemes to drivers and local residents.

Response: The Area-wide and Route Action initiatives will become more prevalent in Wales as the ongoing programme of local safety schemes addresses traditional casualty clusters. The *Rural Village Trunk Road Initiative* has already re-defined the definition of a cluster and links safety to levels of local pedestrian/cycling activity.

Question: What practical actions do you believe to be necessary to implement child road safety audits?

Consultation View: The importance of child road safety audits was emphasised, although there is still an apparent lack of clarity as to exactly what they involve. One submission in particular emphasised the need for audits to be carried out over a wide area on existing transport networks rather than simply being limited to new highway schemes.

Response: The strategy will emphasise the need for highway authorities to undertake child road safety audits at both scheme and network levels. Linking audits to the policy and planning process will also become a requirement for future grant funding support of schemes.

Question: Do you think that road safety education should be compulsory in the school curriculum?

Consultation View: Most respondents called for road safety education to be compulsory in the school curriculum – as it was felt that provision varies widely between local authorities, resulting in something of a "postcode lottery". However, even some of those in favour sounded a note of caution – stating that the minimum standards laid down in any revised national curriculum could limit innovation/flexibility and actually encourage some local authorities to reduce the very comprehensive road safety education initiatives that they currently provide.

Response: The strategy will examine various means of improving road safety education in schools. Whilst a lot of very positive work is being undertaken, it is recognised that there is a need for a more consistent application of road safety education across Wales. In particular, there is a need to ensure that a targeted education programme for children of pre-school, primary and secondary age groups addresses their specific needs. Compulsory introduction into the curriculum requires further investigation and should probably be viewed as a longer-term option.

Question: How do you think that road safety, good driving practices and proper maintenance of vehicles can be encouraged at workplace level?

Consultation View: There was real concern about poor driving standards by company car and van drivers and a number of suggestions were made as to the means of tackling this issue. These included:

- Road safety to be enforced through health and safety procedures.
- Road safety as an integral part of company travel plans.
- Incentives for drivers to take additional training courses.

Response: The issue of casualties occurring whilst driving at work are being addressed by the Health and Safety Executive initiative *Reducing at-work road traffic incidents*. The Assembly was involved in the production of this report. The final strategy will make this issue a priority.

Question: Given the Police have only limited resources, how do you think that speed enforcement should be targeted?

Consultation View: Strong support for greater Police enforcement of speed limits was expressed. This included calls for the "netting off" of camera fine revenue for additional enforcement to be extended throughout Wales. In general, respondents felt that camera sites should be selected on the basis of identified casualty problems – although there was some concern that this could exclude areas or routes where excessive and inappropriate speed was known to be a problem.

Response: The netting off experiment in South Wales has been very successful in terms of casualty reduction. The project is now being rolled out across Wales.

Question: Are there other road safety problems that could be the subject of Police and local authority campaigns?

Consultation View: The use of mobile telephones whilst driving (currently not a specific criminal offence) was cited as a problem by a large number of respondents. Continuation of drink-driving campaigns – targeting the hard core of persistent offenders – was also strongly supported.

Response: Raising awareness of road safety issues is an important responsibility for all public bodies. The issues highlighted by the consultation will be addressed in the strategy – along with drug-driving and the effects of driver fatigue. All Police Forces in Wales are currently embarking on an enforcement campaign to tackle

the use of mobile phones whilst driving. This supports the current Assembly publicity campaign to highlight the issue.

Question: Do you think there is a case for changing the current institutional arrangements?

Consultation View: Almost all respondents felt that the current institutional arrangements were too complex, with organisations appearing to have overlapping roles. However, opinions on how to change current arrangements varied. Generally, local authorities were seen as the most appropriate organisations to deliver road safety projects. However, ideas for the structure for regional and national bodies varied.

Response: Conducting a review the institutional issues, in close consultation with the relevant organisations, will be an early action point. All those involved should be mindful of the potential costs of any restructuring compared with the resulting benefits.

Question: Do you think that continuation of the Road Safety Special Grant is beneficial?

Consultation View: Almost without exception, respondents highlighted the need for additional resources to deliver road safety projects – especially at local level. In particular, the need for additional staff resources and training were seen as critical. The continuation of the Road Safety Special Grant was therefore universally welcomed. Additional sources of funding from private companies and the social inclusion, education and health policy areas were frequently cited as being necessary.

Response: Road Safety Special Grant will continue for at least the next two years. A process of evaluating the benefits will be undertaken at the start of the strategy. If there is evidence that the strategy targets and objectives are not being achieved, then there will need to be a major reappraisal and reallocation of resources. In addition, the road safety expenditure on the Trunk Roads, for which the Assembly is directly responsible, will continue to address safety problems.

General Issues

11. In addition to responses to individual questions, a great deal of material was received that addressed more general road safety issues. The main points can be summarised as follows:

- **The management of vehicle speed, and its effects both on casualty numbers and life in urban and rural communities, is a key issue.** This applies to both exceeding the speed limit and driving too fast for the prevailing conditions. The severity of casualties rises with increases in speed. Drivers who regularly speed are more likely to be involved in a collision. Following on from the DTLR project to develop practical speed management measures on rural roads, the Assembly will be closely involved in the development of practical projects (such as vehicle activated signs) to address identified problems.
- **Emphasis on the safety of road users (and their behaviour) as opposed to roads.** Too much emphasis is often placed on road design as the only safety solution – with the result that there is often a call for investment to address bad road user behaviour. More effort should be concentrated on improving standards of road use, in conjunction with better road design, in order to promote mutual respect and tolerance.
- **Practical actions required to achieve road safety improvements.** There is a need to identify practical projects and explain how these address identified road safety problems in Wales. Merely setting broad policies, without explaining how they will be applied and monitored, is not enough.

Compliance

12. The Transfer of Functions Order transferred S39(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to the Assembly. This provides the power to promote road safety and is exercised concurrently by the Assembly and the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. This has been delegated to the Minister for Environment. Any expenditure incurred as a result of producing the Strategy will be under S85 Government of Wales Act (exercised in conjunction with the 1988 Act).

Financial Implications

13. The preparation of the final Strategy is being accommodated within existing and planned administration costs budgets. Any additional expenditure arising from the proposals within the final Strategy will need to be met from the budgets approved by the Assembly.

Cross-Cutting Themes

14. The Strategy is framed in the context of the Assembly's sustainable development scheme and its commitments to tackling social disadvantage and equal opportunities. The policy context of the Strategy has been provided by the

Transport Framework for Wales.

Action for Environment, Planning and Transport Committee

15. To consider this report and to offer any further comments before the Strategy is finalised and formally launched.

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