



House of Commons  
Transport Committee

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**Ending the Scandal of  
Complacency: Road  
Safety beyond 2010:  
Government Response  
to the Committee's  
Eleventh Report of  
Session 2007–08**

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**First Special Report of Session 2008–  
09**

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## The Transport Committee

The Transport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Transport and its associated public bodies.

### Current membership

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Mr David Clelland MP (*Labour, Tyne Bridge*)  
Clive Efford MP (*Labour, Eltham*)  
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Mr Graham Stringer MP (*Labour, Manchester Blackley*)  
Mr David Wilshire MP (*Conservative, Spelthorne*)  
Sammy Wilson MP (*Democratic Unionist, East Antrim*)

The following were also members of the Committee during the period covered by this report:

Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody MP (*Labour, Crewe and Nantwich*)  
Mr Lee Scott (*Conservative, Ilford North*)  
David Simpson MP (*Democratic Unionist, Upper Bann*)

### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at [www.parliament.uk/transcom](http://www.parliament.uk/transcom).

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Annette Toft (Clerk), Jyoti Chandola (Second Clerk), David Davies (Committee Specialist), Marek Kubala (Inquiry Manager), Alison Mara (Senior Committee Assistant), Ronnie Jefferson (Committee Assistant), Gaby Henderson (Committee Support Assistant) and Laura Kibby (Media Officer).

### Contacts

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# First Special Report

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The Committee published its Eleventh Report of Session 2007–08, *Ending the Scandal of Complacency: Road Safety beyond 2010*, on 29 October 2008. We received a memorandum from the Department for Transport dated 8 January 2009, setting out the Government's interim response. The memorandum explains that the Government is in the process of developing a new road safety strategy, which will be published for consultation in the spring of 2009. In that context, we are content to accept the interim response published as Appendix 1, and we look forward to receiving a comprehensive and detailed response to all of our recommendations before the publication of the consultation document this spring.

The Committee has also received a letter from the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), dated 24 November 2008, which seeks to clarify and amend a number of statements made in their written memorandum submitted to our inquiry. The memorandum was published at page Ev 239 of our report. The amendments to ACPO's memorandum would not give rise to any changes in the Committee's recommendations. ACPO's letter appears as Appendix 2.

## Appendix 1 – Department for Transport Response to recommendations 4, 22 and 23

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### Introduction

The Department welcomes the Committee's thought-provoking and challenging report on road safety policy.

We are currently developing a new road safety strategy and we intend to consult on the detail of this in the spring of 2009.

Since so many of the Committee's recommendations relate to the new strategy, we propose to provide a substantive response at the same time as we publish the road safety strategy consultation paper. This will allow the Committee to see clearly how their recommendations have helped to shape the development of the strategy.

However, three recommendations (4, 22 and 23) are not so closely connected with the road safety strategy work and our responses are set out below.

### Recommendation 4

**1. There is a significant body of evidence to suggest that the current methods for recording road-traffic injuries are flawed. We recommend that the Government commissions an independent review of the STATS19 system in order to establish its strengths and weaknesses, bearing in mind our recommendation above for a British Road Safety Survey. The review should also examine ways in which the system could be**

**simplified, with a view to promoting greater consistency, and consider ways of routinely linking police and hospital data. (Paragraph 34)**

## Response

It has been recognised for many years that many road accidents, especially less serious ones, are not recorded as the police have not attended the accident. There is no legal requirement to report accidents, provided necessary details are exchanged by those involved at the scene of the accident. The ‘body of evidence’ mentioned depends largely on misleading comparisons with hospital admissions (Hospital Episode Statistics or “HES”).

These data have been affected by administrative changes over time and are not suitable for trend analysis of road casualties. The HES website contains a weighty caveat about using the data for time series analysis given “organisational changes, reviews of best practice within the medical community, the adoption of new coding schemes and data quality problems that are often year specific”. For example, the introduction of “Payment by Results” in the NHS is undoubtedly improving the accuracy of HES data, but has also had the effect of making the current records less comparable with those of previous years.

The first linkage of police and hospital data at national level was carried out in 2008, and some details were published in Road Casualties Great Britain in September.<sup>1</sup> It is planned to continue this linkage as a matter of routine to assist research into the medical effects of road accidents.

The STATS19 system is reviewed about every 5 years, most recently with a National Statistics Quality Review, with independent external assessment. The recommendations were implemented in 2005. A further review is taking place. In addition, road casualty statistics have been included in the UK Statistics Authority initial programme of assessments announced on 10 November 2008.<sup>2</sup>

Questions on road safety were added to the National Travel Survey in January 2007, and the first results were published in 2008. Over time, these data will provide useful extra information on trends to supplement STATS19.

We are also working with the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) on a project known as CRASH to enable road accident details to be captured electronically by police officers. This will improve the quality and consistency of accident data as well as reducing the burden of reporting.

## Recommendation 22

**2. We understand that the Department is to shortly consult on proposals to address the problem of drink-drive collisions. As in our report on Novice Drivers, we welcome this much-needed investigation and look forward to a thorough examination of what should be the permitted blood alcohol concentration for drivers. Should our**

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<sup>1</sup> Article 6 (page 66–78) in Road Casualties Great Britain: Annual Report 2007  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgpr/statistics/datatablespublications/accidents/casualtiesgbar/roadcasualtiesgreatbritain20071>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/programme-of-assessment/index.html>

**recommendation for a lower alcohol limit for novice drivers be implemented, this would provide further useful evidence on the impact of a lower alcohol limit for drivers in general. (Paragraph 118)**

## Response

The Committee refer to the Government's proposal at the time of its Report to publish a consultation document looking among other things at measures to reduce road casualties relating to drink-driving; and looked forward to what that consultation document might say about the prescribed alcohol limit for drivers. The document, "Road Safety Compliance Consultation", was published on 20 November 2008.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter 3 of the consultation document describes the Government's proposals on drink-driving. There are a range of measures designed to make enforcement of the law against drink-driving more effective. A number of proposals are also made to collect better information about the problem, including the involvement in accidents of all drivers who have been consuming alcohol, whether over the prescribed limit or not.

The paper also delivers on the Government's commitment to keep the prescribed limit under review. Respondents are asked to say –

- what priority they think should be given to a change in the prescribed alcohol limit for driving?
- what evidence are they able to offer – and what further evidence do they consider should be obtained – to support a fully-considered decision whether or not to change the limit?

We will give a view on the drink-drive questions in the compliance consultation, in light of the responses, in the final road safety strategy which we expect to publish later in 2009.

## Recommendation 23

**3. It is unacceptable that such a major element of the Government's road safety strategy can be given such a low priority by a key department. It is imperative that the Home Office gives much higher priority to enforcement of drink-drive and drug-drive offences. This should include the type-approval of roadside evidential breath-testing devices and development of equipment to assist the police to identify and prosecute drug-impaired drivers. (Paragraph 119)**

## Response

It is not the case that the Home Office gives a low priority to roads policing. It is a specific responsibility within the portfolio of a Home Office Parliamentary Under-secretary of State. Home Office Ministers have repeatedly emphasised that roads policing is an integral and important part of police work. It is about reducing and detecting crime, enforcing the law and increasing safety. This is core police business and none the less so because it involves how people behave on the roads and how they use vehicles.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/compliance/>

It is a mark of the importance which the Home Office has attached and continues to attach to roads policing that there is a separate, specific, national roads policing strategy. This was agreed by Home Office and Department for Transport Ministers and ACPO to emphasise their shared commitment. The National Community Safety Plan 2008–11 gave further recognition to roads policing's importance. It set implementation of the strategy as a key action for the police, with the aim of reducing the numbers of people killed or seriously injured. It committed the Government to supporting the police service in implementing the strategy, with a particular focus on drink driving, speeding and failure to wear a seat-belt, as well as driving whilst disqualified, uninsured or unlicensed. The Plan set out the consistency of this with the Government's Public Service Agreement 23, Making Communities Safer. How police chief officers deploy their resources to comply with these policies and achieve their aims is however a matter for them, taking into account the specific local problems and concerns with which they are faced.

As part of the Home Office's support for roads policing, the Department is determined to play its part in enabling effective action on drink and drug driving. Its objective expert advisers are continuing work to develop a specification for a type approved drug screening device and to prepare a type approval guide for mobile evidential breath test instruments. In both cases it is essential that the specification guarantees devices that do all that is required of them and are accurate, reliable and practical. This is necessarily a complex and lengthy task, but to approve devices that did not meet the requisite standards would be counter-productive and damaging. Separately, the Home Office Scientific Development Branch is continuing its own long-term work on drug and impairment testing devices.

## Appendix 2 – Association of Chief Police Officers Response

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I am writing to you in my capacity as the ACPO Motorcycle Safety Lead concerning the submission earlier this year by the former head of the Roads Policing Business Area of ACPO. Following the publication of the evidence submitted to the Select Committee, further discussion has taken place within ACPO concerning Paragraphs 7.2 to 7.4 inclusive, which specifically relate to motorcycles. There has been some adverse reaction within the motorcycling community following the publication of these paragraphs and, for the sake of clarity, I would like to amplify those paragraphs to provide some context and qualify some factual information.

Firstly, in Paragraph 7.2, the original ACPO position made reference to the vehicle excise duty evasion by powered two wheelers as being on a "massive scale". At the time this submission was made, the latest research available indicated that a significant problem did exist in relation to vehicle excise duty evasion by motorcyclists. Subsequent to this, further research has indicated that whilst vehicle excise evasion by motorcyclists is a problem, it is not, in fact, very much greater than that of other vehicles.

In relation to Paragraph 7.3, which suggests consideration be given to "the creation of protection zones where all motorcycles other than those specifically permitted would be

prohibited”, ACPO would like to contextualise this comment because it seems there has been some misinterpretation of this which has erroneously been reported as an ACPO position of seeking to ban motorcycles from using certain roads. In actual fact, the discussions that took place within the ACPO business area related to environmental concerns over noise and damage caused by off-road motorcycles (and other vehicles) in areas of outstanding natural beauty. ACPO does not hold the view that consideration should be given to banning or restricting road-going motorcycles on public roads. I apologise if this was the impression created by the submission and would seek your permission to have the record qualified in that respect.

Turning to Paragraph 7.4, reference is made to production motorcycles being available with “top speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour”. It has been pointed out that, in actual fact, no production motorcycle in the UK has a design top speed in excess of 190 mph. We understand that manufacturers have a voluntary restriction of 186 mph although we have found evidence of motorcycles being tested with top speed capabilities approaching 190 mph. Whilst, with some minor modifications, production machines can be made to be capable of speeds of over 200 mph, I acknowledge that to suggest they are readily sold as such in the UK is factually incorrect. The point actually being made in the submission is that it is of concern to ACPO that a significant number of production models of motorcycles in the UK are capable of extremely high speeds, which in some cases are not far off 200 mph.

Finally, also in Paragraph 7.4, the phrase “motorised toys” was used. The context of this remark relates to the relatively small number of very high powered sports machines ridden by a minority of thoughtless riders in an inconsiderate way, causing danger to themselves and other road users. This was not intended to describe the vast majority of motorcycles used for both leisure and business purposes. In retrospect, it would have been prudent to contextualise the comment to avoid the potential for misinterpretation.

I realise that it is somewhat unusual to be in a position where we are seeking for a qualification to be made to published evidence of the Select Committee but, I am sure you will appreciate, given the reaction to publication of the original evidence in the motorcycling community, it would be remiss of me not to seek to contextualise the evidence submitted. I apologise on behalf of ACPO for any misunderstanding that has arisen as a consequence of this and would be grateful if you could accept this clarification of the material submitted to the Select Committee. Should you wish to discuss the matter, please feel free to contact me and, in any event, I would be grateful to receive any observations you may have.

*David Griffin*  
Deputy Chief Constable  
ACPO Lead on Motorcycle Safety