HOUSE OF COMMONS

Transport Committee

Oral evidence: Road safety strategy, HC 81

Wednesday 24 June 2026

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Ruth Cadbury (Chair); Steff Aquarone; Dr Scott Arthur; Mrs Elsie Blundell; Jacob Collier; Daniel Francis; Olly Glover; Alex Mayer.

Questions 86–153

Witnesses

I: Dan Campsall, Chairman, Agilysis; Sarah Whitebread, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Cycling UK; Martin Wiltshire, Assistant Manager, Safer Roads and Parking, Hampshire County Council; Kate Carpenter, Vice-President, Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation; Zak Viney, Campaigns & Public Affairs Coordinator, Living Streets.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- Agilysis
- Cycling UK
- Hampshire County Council
- Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dan Campsall, Sarah Whitebread, Martin Wiltshire, Kate Carpenter and Zak Viney.

Q86 **Chair:** Welcome to this morning's evidence session, which is the second session of our inquiry into the Government's road safety strategy. Today we are going to be focusing on the role of infrastructure in improving road safety. We are aware that there may be references to distressing topics, and please do not mention individual cases where there may be ongoing legal proceedings. Could I ask you all to introduce yourselves?

Dan Campsall: Good morning. I am the chairman of Agilisys and chair of the board of trustees for the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety.

Kate Carpenter: Hello. I am vice president of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, a membership body for road safety engineers and the design and transport community. I also have a day job in casualty reduction.

Zak Viney: Good morning. I am the campaigns and public affairs co-ordinator for Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking.

Sarah Whitebread: Hi everyone. I am head of policy and public affairs at Cycling UK. We are the UK's national cycling charity, working for healthier, happier and greener lives through cycling.

Martin Wiltshire: Good morning, everybody. I am assistant manager of safer roads and parking at Hampshire County Council.

Q87 **Chair:** Welcome everybody. We have heard the Government strategy's targets described as ambitious. Can the same be said of the measures in it to make the road infrastructure safer?

Dan Campsall: It is a very ambitious target if we compare this with other comparable countries such as Sweden and Norway, which have taken 20 years to deliver this level of reduction. My team has done some modelling of the measures that are in the strategy, and some are quite hard to model because we do not yet know exactly how they will be implemented. It is hard to see that the measures that are currently in the strategy will be sufficient, and it is likely that further work will be required with consideration of some other policy measures.

Kate Carpenter: We fully agree that the targets are aspirational and the measures in the strategy are supported. The previous session discussed the issue of needing a plan. For us, that is the gap between an aspirational target and the split between enormous numbers of highway authorities, each doing their own element. That is where the biggest potential gap for us sits from a highway infrastructure point of view.

Zak Viney: I am going to say that the strategy is ambitious but the targets are a bit more of a yes and a no. Obviously, it is ambitious to reduce KSIs by 65% and 70% for children. Between 1975 and 2025, the Netherlands achieved 80% fewer road fatalities and 95% across children, but that is 50 years, and we are looking to do 65% and 70% in 10 years. So that is ambitious. For Living Streets, anything less than calling for Vision Zero on our roads before 2050 is giving a sense of acceptable losses. If you ask any parent who has lost their child through a road traffic collision, I am sure they would say that is not good enough.

To answer the Chair's question, at Living Streets we think there are lots of strong measures. However, the strategy has a lack of real emphasis on the need to change the status quo and put the onus of road safety on to street design. We believe that, predominantly, it feels centred on individual behaviour. For decades, our streets have been built around motor vehicles, so changing our street scene in a very radical way to focus on people could give the Government a chance of achieving Vision Zero, which we know would be great for the nation's health and get more people walking, wheeling and cycling.

Sarah Whitebread: We were really pleased to see the strategy; it has been a long time coming. We have had over a decade without a strategy. We know that targets work—they worked really well in the last Labour Government—so it is a shame we have not had them for such a long time. We also would have liked to see a Vision Zero target but we recognise that the targets in the strategy are ambitious.

The key thing for us on delivery is that this is not just about Government; it is about all different parts of society—local authorities, police and different agencies and organisations such as ourselves—working together to deliver the strategy. That is going to take a lot of co-ordination and work, and that work needs to happen very quickly. Given the ambition of the strategy, it is concerning that we have not seen quicker progress, even in these first six months, on some things that could be done very quickly. For example, six months in, we are still waiting for the board that is going to govern and hold the strategy and make sure that we are delivering. We still do not yet know the make-up of that board or when it is first going to meet. We need to see rapid progress on these things if we are going to meet the strategy.

Martin Wiltshire: I echo those comments. The targets and the strategy are welcome, but investment is required for the local authorities to play their part.

Q88 **Chair:** Dan, in your written evidence you said, "The current measures are probably insufficient to meet the stated ambition." What do the Government need to do to fix that?

Dan Campsall: Subsequent to our submitting evidence, we did some modelling of the likely savings associated with some measures—for example, the introduction of a lower blood alcohol concentration limit,

which we recognise as valuable and which brings us into line with other countries. That measure on its own is likely to deliver only about a 0.36% reduction in KSIs and would require additional enforcement to make it really pay.

There are other measures out there that we have international evidence on that would likely deliver considerably more than that. For example, the introduction of graduated driver licensing, which I know was discussed at the previous evidence session, would probably bring a 2% to 5% reduction in KSIs. If you were to explore using a default 20 mph limit—as per the situation in Wales—that might deliver more like a 10% to 15% reduction in KSIs. General safety regulation would probably deliver something like a 3% to 5% reduction over the term of the strategy.

Some measures in there are great, but when we look at the international evidence and model it out, more still needs to be done. Even with a decent package of measures, getting to 65% will be a challenge.

Q89 **Chair:** Kate, in your written evidence, you said that there are concerns about the suitability of the strategy using the 2022 to 2024 baseline, because changes in the DFT's data formats, the inclusion of publicly reported data and system changes within police forces have not yet been taken into account. What risk does that create for measuring progress against the strategy's KSI targets?

Kate Carpenter: There is an issue around whether you are comparing like with like. We have inconsistency around the country and different authorities using different approaches. The bigger problem—almost existential, from an understanding of causation to prevent future incidents—is that the availability of data has now become a crisis. Even within public sector bodies, the data are restricted in what they can access. You cannot get contributive road safety factors.

We cannot get the written description of a collision or its location and they are often plotted many miles from where they happened, even in fatalities. We cannot get speeding, drink drive, drug drive, seat belt or all the medical data. The big four or five factors are concealed from people analysing data. We have concerns about a disparity in baseline and inconsistency around the country. The quality of the data is a real concern to people doing analysis, but the access is actually a bigger issue now.

Q90 **Dr Arthur:** The Government say the safe system approach is at the heart of their strategy. Is it?

Dan Campsall: If you talk to those who implemented Vision Zero in Sweden, it took an Act of Parliament and a commitment to say, "Actually, we are going to address the safety of our citizens on our road as a policy intervention. That requires us to address the infrastructure, the

enforcement landscape, the behaviour of road users and so on." The system really encompasses all those aspects of it.

At the moment, what we have in the strategy are measures that seek to address quite a lot of the behavioural outcomes, and there are some measures around the learning associated with the system. We have not necessarily got the holistic approach. We are still reliant on highway legislation that dates back 40 to 50 years. If we were to really want to embed the safe system, we probably ought to be looking at it in a more holistic way, including the duty on those who design, operate and maintain the roads, as well as those who use them.

Kate Carpenter: People often think about the interconnectedness of the elements as separate items. They are primarily under the control of different elements, but they are fundamentally interconnected, which means modelling is difficult. In the highway community there is a lack of understanding of what a safe system looks like in practice.

We have 192,000 miles of road just in England. You cannot change nearly all that, even in a 10-year period. Applying the system to that then requires doing things that you can do systematically more widely—for example, the general safety regulation, graduated driver licensing and national level speed limit changes. They could achieve that kind of national change over 192,000 miles of road, whereas engineering individual junctions and changing individual designs will not even touch it.

Q91 **Dr Arthur:** In Scotland—just as in England—we have supported the safe system approach. Sometimes it is too easy for the person responsible for one part of the system to say, "Well, we're doing our best but it is really up to these other people to do much more." I think that is what you are saying—that we have to somehow connect these silos together to break down the barriers.

Kate Carpenter: We need a vision and leadership that says, "This is the approach that we're taking and every part of what we do must be aligned to that in a local or strategic authority." Every choice of surfacing material, drainage asset, whether or not we are going to light this road, management of clearing vegetation, and management of road markings—every single bit of it—has to be aligned. The incremental gains point was raised in the previous hearing and that is really helpful to think about. There will have to be 1,000 things to hit that level, each of which brings a small element.

Q92 **Dr Arthur:** Do you think we have seen this in Sweden, which Dan mentioned? I am not claiming it is perfect but is Sweden well down the road to delivering that?

Kate Carpenter: It has embodied the vision.

Sarah Whitebread: I would really echo that. This is obviously partly about resource, because if you are going to take a truly safe system approach, you have to really think about every aspect of it. For example,

in some places in this country we have lowered speed limits, which is great and we really want to see that. The best way to do that is to have the lower speed limit in combination with measures to naturally get the road user to slow— for example, altering the road layout in such a way that it encourages people to drive more slowly. Obviously, that costs more money. It is good to put in speed limits regardless, because any reduction in speed is welcome. They have an impact without those measures, but it makes a much bigger difference if you can include those measures as well.

The trouble that we see is that we do not have the investment to do that, and we do not have the holistic view across different Government Departments that it is their responsibility. It is not just the responsibility of the DFT; it is also about MHCLG, Justice and the Home Office. We need to bring all these Departments together to really embed the safe system.

Zak Viney: Just following on from Sarah's point, what are we trying to do? If you are looking at safe roads and safe roadsides, I would say that we are trying to design self-explaining roads for self-enforcing safe behaviour. To use an example of something that we were really happy to see recently in the third cycling and walking investment strategy, the UK Government committed to 10,000 new safer crossings by 2035.

Recently, within the Better Connected strategy, they granted powers for local enforcement to roll out sideroad zebras. I want to emphasise that we really support this and better crossings, but a sideroad zebra is not our end goal. If you have a sideroad zebra, you are reinforcing and strengthening pedestrian priority around the highway code, but you are relying on the conformance of vehicular behaviour on those sideroad turns to slow down.

Our technical team at Living Streets came up with a campaign called Bin Your Flares, which refers to flared junctions where a low radius of curvature—sorry for the technical term; my engineering background is coming in here—means that motorists and cyclists could turn at very high speeds, and this prevents conformance to the highway code. Essentially if you lowered that radius of curvature, it would naturally slow motorist behaviour. We also see sideroad zebras as a stepping stone to greater roll-out of continuous footway, which is such a great thing in terms of accessibility for wheeled road users as well.

Q93 **Dr Arthur:** My next question was going to be about infrastructure changes. I know with safe systems we have much more on infrastructure. Sarah and Zak, you have talked a little about that and designing for speed rather than just putting a sign up. Are there any other changes you think we should see in our communities, if we are thinking about the safe system approach and infrastructure?

Sarah Whitebread: The most important thing we can do to protect road users is to separate people. Where we can, we really need to see people who are cycling separated from people who are walking and separated

from car drivers. That is why the cycling and walking investment strategy is so important, and why we are concerned that the investment is not going to be enough to be able to do that to the extent that we would like.

Dan Campsall: At the heart of the safe system is an understanding that the human being has a certain tolerance to kinetic energy. As soon as you exceed that point, the human body breaks down quite rapidly. At the moment, we have large parts of our network where the conflict types and crash energy are simply too high to be tolerable. We have talked about this somewhat in the urban environment. That is particularly true in large parts of our rural network as well, where we have junctions where the kinds of conflicts that are capable of occurring at 60 mph are completely permissible by law, but actually the outcomes of them would be and are consistently horrendous.

We need to look at the combination of the speed at which things move on that network, the energy that they carry, and really what is survivable in terms of conflict type. That would either require us to engineer up the quality of, particularly, some rural single carriageways or reduce the speeds to manage their level of energy.

Q94 **Dr Arthur:** You are reading my questions from just across the table. The next one was going to be about National Highways and what role it plays, or what role it has played over the last 10 years since we adopted the safe system approach at a UK Government level. For single-carriageway roads, is it about just changing the design or the speed limit, or a bit of both? Sarah was talking about urban areas, and there is a similar tension on single-carriageway roads, is there not? The cheap thing to do is change the sign, but that might not have the impact we want. I do not want to put words in your mouth.

Dan Campsall: It is true. You referenced Scotland, and we did some work looking at the scale of change that might be required across the network if it were to reduce the speed limit on its national single carriageways. Largely, the driving population tends to stick to somewhere around 52 mph or 53 mph in a 60-mph zone anyway—they are not travelling at 60 mph. They are already accepting that these roads cannot be travelled at that speed and need to feel comfortable at a lower speed.

Arguably, once you get to about 40 mph, if you sustain a T-bone style crash—even in a modern car—then the injury outcomes will be severe and quite possibly fatal. In those cases, if we are allowing for those sorts of conflicts where a vehicle emerging from an at-grade junction could be involved in a T-bone type crash, the speeds are too high. We would either need to reduce them or design junctions that remove the risk of that sort of conflict.

Sarah Whitebread: Something that is really important is that rural roads are the most dangerous roads for people who are cycling, and this is something that can be done really quickly. In the road safety strategy, the Government say that they are going to look at the Agilisys road

categorisation research. We would really like them to do that quickly, and it would be great if this Committee makes that recommendation. Essentially, the Government need to issue guidance to local authorities, decide what the appropriate speed limits are for different categories of road, issue that guidance and give the local authorities the resource they need to implement the speed limits.

We have done some YouGov polling on this, and it has huge public support, with an overwhelming 78% or 79% supporting lowering speed limits on single-carriageway rural roads when they are passing through villages or where they are narrow and winding. This is a very popular measure that could be done very quickly, and if we are going to meet the ambitious targets of the strategy, we need to take those quick wins.

Q95 **Dr Arthur:** When we looked at rural roads in Edinburgh—there are quite a lot outside the city—on Google Street View, you could actually see that there are quite a lot of people walking between different settlements. There are no footpaths and rubbish public transport, and it is actually quite incredible how many people are there. It can be a real issue.

Kate Carpenter: There are things that you can do on a fairly large scale relatively quickly in urban areas—for example, the reallocation of road spaces and light segregation, which was done very widely in covid. The authority in Leicester was delivering virtually a mile a week of protected infrastructure and has made it permanent. You can do something temporarily, show that it works and that there is enough space if you reallocate some space, and then change it. In rural areas, you cannot really do that.

One of the biggest things about infrastructure is the use and metrics against which we measure it. You asked about National Highways. It has mean speed as a primary indicator, but mean speed is a poor indication of the variance of speed at a point in time between vehicles right now, over the time of the day, and over the length of a route. As Dan said, it is a bit like the concern around 30 mph being reduced to 20 mph. People envisage going from a constant 30 mph to a constant 20 mph, which of course is not what you do; you have increase and decrease in speed. Fuel use is dominated by accelerating and braking, and ironically, a lot of benefits we saw in Wales from the infrastructure change of bringing speed limits were around public health and that wider perspective.

Something that is really important to us is the communication that goes alongside the infrastructure, because the messaging has not been helpful. There is a perception that things are not supported. The majority of people in Wales who have 20 mph limits like them and want them kept; they can have more walking, cycling and all those wider benefits of the knock-on effects on active travel and public health. The messaging is part of that. Although most of National Highways' network is more high-speed, it has urban parts of the network. It also has the deepest pockets and the ability to do things that local authorities just cannot do.

Q96 **Dr Arthur:** In Edinburgh, we still get grumbles about the 20 mph scheme, but nobody wants it removed from their street. Dan, you previously said the safe system approach relies on the four Cs—none of the words that you might be thinking—commitment, capability, capacity and culture. What is the most challenging? What is the biggest gap among the four of them? Sorry to quote your words back.

Dan Campsall: A question that I have now taken to refusing to answer is, "If you want to do one thing in the safe system, which should you do?" It is a system. In a sense, there is the same argument that these things are mutually beneficial and cohere in order to strengthen the response as a whole.

We developed that framework in partnership with Transport Scotland as it was looking to implement the safe system. What it has demonstrated is that the commitment has been there very strongly from Governments through the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Ms Hyslop, who stood down at the last election but gave significant leadership, and from within Transport Scotland, with senior training sessions for people such as the Transport Scotland board and Members of the Scottish Parliament.

It has been working on building the capability as well. We have delivered training to around 500 professionals, local authorities, police, fire and rescue services, public health colleagues and so on. It has really recognised that if we want to get the safe system understood, it needs to build out that capability. It is working to improve the capacity as well by bringing in more partner agencies to be included in that.

The culture piece is quite interesting. What we focused on is not trying to address the culture among the public—obviously quite a big challenge—but the culture in organisations, so that the safe system and principles that underpin it are shared between organisations within their strategic partnership board, operational partnership group and local authorities. There is now shared language and shared ambition that works across the piece. They all need addressing collectively.

Q97 **Dr Arthur:** Is there anything else we can take on board from Scotland? I guess that is a general question. You have outlined the approach there. Is there anything else we can learn—good or bad—from Scotland?

Dan Campsall: We can take a lot from the Scottish example. One aspect of the commitment is that it has continued to pump funding into supporting the ambition. It has developed something called the framework fund. There is a specific pot of money that people can bid into to innovate around their safe system ambition at a local level or policing—they have put more money into the trunk road network and so on. It is a combination of the political commitment that is backed by the resource to try to get this thing operationalised.

Q98 **Dr Arthur:** I used to be a councillor in Edinburgh and I agree that Fiona Hyslop was an excellent Cabinet Secretary for Transport. The funding

that was available to councils was not always enough, to be honest, but that is always a challenge and is not a criticism of Fiona at all. Zak, I have been guilty of overlooking you so much that I have been chastised by the Chair.

Chair: We will have a couple of questions on rural roads later but Zak wanted to come in.

Zak Viney: I guess I was picking up on Dan's really thoughtfully put four Cs. I had a really strong reaction to "culture" when Scott said that. Inherently, usually on the road, a person in a motor vehicle is killed or seriously injured in a collision. I would comment that the general commercialisation of motor culture and how speed and motoring are sold creates a behaviour where people are less likely to be safe road users. Adverts rarely show any people outside the car. There is the family car narrative, which normalises driving children instead of encouraging them to travel actively. It makes car culture seem cuddly or soft.

To give a specific example, I will speak to an excellent campaign being run by our allies, the Clean Cities Campaign. You may have heard of the car-spreading campaign, which takes notes of cities such as Paris that are bringing in higher parking charges for SUVs. This might seem like a niche issue, but if SUVs were a nation, they would be fifth in the table of global CO_2 emissions, and they are a growing presence on our roads. SUVs and trucks have had a tenfold increase in sales in two decades and make up 66% of the vehicle registrations in the UK. The selling of motoring as glamorous rather than walking, wheeling or getting a bike could really change the way people see our streets.

What could the Government do tangibly? They could bring this into public awareness, for example with a THINK! campaign on the danger of bigger cars, especially to children. I was really happy to see in the road safety strategy that Cardiff is looking at bigger parking charges. I believe it came from the Clean Cities Campaign that actually most people do not see this as a particular issue, but it is an issue because cars are getting two centimetres bigger and wider every year. I was really happy to see a commitment in the road safety strategy for car spreading to be looked at by the Government.

Q99 **Dr Arthur:** Culture is really important. On Monday, we rightly had a statement about the rail crash where somebody unfortunately died, which is an awful situation, but just imagine if we had a statement every time someone died on the roads. We would be a busy place.

Sarah Whitebread: I agree. Why do we put up with 1,600 people being killed on our roads every year? I completely agree with the point that Zak was just making. The fact is that if a child is hit by an SUV, they are 83% more likely to be killed. That is a serious thing and we need to address it. Saying in the strategy that they are going to look at the evidence around this is excellent, but the evidence is there, so if we can move on this, we should.

Dr Arthur: We are all starting to get a bit ranty now so I will pass back to you, Chair.

Chair: Yes, we are here to ask the questions.

Kate Carpenter: Let me add one more thing about what Scotland did. A single police authority has been really beneficial in clarity of vision, and there are a lot of differences between police authorities. I am not suggesting a single English police authority would be a simple thing to do, but it shows how organisational structure can affect outcomes.

Dr Arthur: The challenge with that is local accountability of a nationally set policy. That can be a huge challenge, but it is a good point.

Chair: We are going to come onto that. We will move to Elsie for questions about funding and resources.

Q100 **Mrs Blundell:** So far in this inquiry, we have heard evidence that our roads have been in a state of managed decline for a decade. Obviously, that has huge implications for our constituents' safety, and that is certainly raised repeatedly with me in my constituency. Given this situation, do you think that the funding earmarked in the road safety strategy is enough to see the reductions in deaths and serious injuries that the strategy commits to?

Kate Carpenter: There are two issues. The funding is welcome but it is unclear how or where it will be spent by the leadership. The scariest thing I hear in transport is that it cannot do any harm. People spend a lot of money on initiatives that not only do not make things better but actually make them worse. There also needs to be clarity on where you are spending it.

We had a lot of evidence about what works and what does not, but people are doing a lot of what does not work. I mentioned the political disparity between different authorities. We just had our annual two-day conference for road safety auditors and lots of people from local authorities came up to me and said, "Our elected members want to scrap all 20 mph limits because they're not interested in any safety benefits and they're not interested in air quality," which I found interesting. People are not realising what the benefits are.

The irony is that what they should be interested gets them re-elected. The actual interest of the public is tricky but the funding must be spent on things that work. You would think that people would spend it only on things that work, but they really do not; there is a lot of money spent on things that do not make the situation better.

Q101 **Mrs Blundell:** Do others have comments on whether the funding earmarked for road infrastructure is enough?

Dan Campsall: The funding that is identified within the strategy principally addresses the settlement under the road investment strategy

for National Highways, part of the integrated settlement to mayoral combined authorities, and the pothole funding. There is relatively little that addresses the safety changes that we might need in terms of infrastructure elsewhere.

A large amount has gone into the road investment strategy—£27 billion over the term of the strategy—but the strategy actually reduces the responsibility of National Highways in improving casualties. It only has a target of 7.5% over the five-year strategy, which is discordant with the national ambition that we started with today. As Kate says, when they have the deepest pockets, they should probably address the larger part of that.

If you actually carry this forward, these currently account for 6.6% of KSIs on the network. By the end of 2035, if they continue at that rate and we achieve the national ambition, they would account for 16.4% of KSIs. They would actually be accounting for more KSIs unless they speed up progress. The money for local authorities—principally the maintenance money—is about filling potholes, not addressing safety measures. I guess Martin would speak well to that as a local authority representative.

Martin Wiltshire: The investment falls short of what we need to do to maintain our roads in a safe condition. We prioritise safety defects. The budget does not stretch to refreshing signs and lines, so we have to prioritise them and make stop and give way lines our top priority.

Q102 **Mrs Blundell:** Sarah, you raised concerns in your written evidence about the amount of funding allocated to local authorities to deliver the strategy. Would you agree though that it is a matter not just of funding but of expertise in local authorities?

Sarah Whitebread: We would definitely agree with that, but obviously getting those staff with that expertise, training them and so on also takes resource. We absolutely recognise that it is about the expertise, having the people to do that work and the political direction, but it is also about the resource. Just to emphasise that point, the funding allocated in the road safety strategy is from the road investment fund. That fund is not primarily about safety; it is about investing in the road network for all sorts of different reasons. There is no funding allocated in the road safety strategy specifically for road safety.

The funding that will be relied on to make the biggest improvements for cyclists will be the money identified in the cycling and walking investment strategy. Again, a lot of that £4.5 billion funding that was announced a couple of weeks ago, which we really welcome, is made up of lots of different pots of money that are going to local authorities and will not necessarily be spent on cycling and walking. It is not a clear picture exactly how much resource is going to go into delivering this strategy, which is what makes it really hard to determine at this point whether the resource is enough. The Government have not been clear on exactly how they will fund this.

Zak Viney: We are asking the question: is funding enough? Each road death costs society £2.5 million. Since we are starting to transgress into the realm of English devolution and local powers, I will say I spoke to the West Midlands road safety commissioner about this today. Interestingly, he said that he did not feel like he had any direct powers over anything. A lot of local authorities can do what they want, but he felt that there were probably tools—I think there are—available to the central Governments that they do not use, such as Wales doing a national default 20 mph speed limit. When speaking to capability, he said, "Highways engineering has an archaic tradition of looking to move vehicles as quickly and efficiently as possible, usually cars, but this culture, I believe, is changing and quite slowly."

I really would like to second Sarah's remarks to do with there being no designated pot for road safety. While I appreciate that there is a lot more of a joined-up approach between the Better Connected, road safety and cycling and walking investment strategies, it feels like there are some areas with the road safety strategy—such as its links to the work that is being done in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government—where it is not quite realised that you can actually plan quite a lot of these things out. I hope this is not something the Government are going to miss in a joined-up approach.

Q103 **Alex Mayer:** The strategy says that national targets are an effective way to achieve goals. Does it give enough guidance to the local authorities on what the effective implementation of safer road infrastructure actually looks like in practice?

Martin Wiltshire: There is no real mention of the strategy for safety engineering. The traditional three Es for casualty reduction have been enforcement—largely carried out by the police—education, which is a joint responsibility between county councils and other organisations, again such as the police and fire and rescue services, and then engineering.

Engineering encompasses the whole of casualty reduction. It is a continuous cycle of analysing collision data, preparing a programme from that information to address casualty reduction locations, implementing those measures and then monitoring their effectiveness. We normally use five years' worth of collision data to support our priority programmes. That is really the process that local authorities probably use.

Sarah Whitebread: I would go back to the point I raised earlier that local authorities need more resource, but also, there are some quick wins that could be implemented where local authorities could be given guidance more quickly—for example, around speed limit setting on rural roads. There could be more support for local authorities in reducing speed limits and in the resource to put into the infrastructure to make those speed limits more likely to be complied with.

Q104 **Alex Mayer:** Are you suggesting that, basically, that would be a national

approach, so this must happen across the whole country?

Sarah Whitebread: We see a definite role for local authorities in understanding their road network. The Government could do it in a couple of different ways. They could accept the categories, say, "These are the speed limits we think should be on each of these categories," and then it is up to the local authority to determine what road fits into what category. There is definitely a role for local authorities, but the Government should be setting a clear expectation as to what the speed should be.

The other area where local authorities have a key role is in education. One of our concerns is around the awareness of the 2022 changes to the highway code. It is actually referenced in the road safety strategy that we did polling a year after those changes were introduced; we are coming up to five years next year. A year after they were introduced, 75% of people said that they were aware, but only around 28% of those people could actually say what the correct passing distance is if you are driving past a cyclist at 30 mph, for example. Those changes are not yet fully understood and we really need to see a national education campaign on that, with the Government working with local authorities to embed those changes as part of national understanding.

Zak Viney: When we speak about local enforcement, we have some really good strategic goals for this strategy from the UK Government, but I do not see where the accountability for the local authorities to want to achieve them lies. Active Travel England has an ATE capability score, where it rates a local authority's ambition and capability to deliver walking, wheeling and cycling projects focused on political leadership. Whatever score they are given corresponds to a certain amount of funding. There is a bit of a danger to this. With a devolved approach, it is very much based upon the willingness and progressiveness of the local authority. In that lies a really good opportunity for the Department for Transport to properly provide really good, leading guidance.

We are Living Streets, so we are going to speak about pavement parking. I would say we do not have loads of data on how much pavement parking is a contributing factor to road traffic collisions. Following the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026, we will now actually see a transport policy being implemented at a local level in real time. It is really important that the DFT produces strong, robust guidance so that the local authorities—it would be interesting to see what Martin has to say on this—feel like they have the knowledge and capability, as well as, hopefully, the funding. There is a big opportunity going beyond pavement parking for the manual for streets and the Road Safety Investigation Branch to provide similar hubs of expertise to educate local authorities.

Kate Carpenter: The leadership and context are really powerful. We have had a progressive localism of giving local authorities the power to take decisions. The context they are in is that they are cash-strapped and resource-strapped. We have road safety teams that are tiny. Around 10

years ago, one authority got rid of the whole of its road safety team and essentially now has none at all. We are in a position where the industry is strapped and there are increasing political pressures. More and more of our highways authorities are telling us that they know what good looks like but they politically cannot do it.

Q105 **Chair:** Politically or in budget terms?

Kate Carpenter: Politically. There is political pressure to say, "We don't want this thing that you say is safer because we think something else is more appropriate." It is almost arguing about the laws of physics. Some authorities are passionate about doing the right thing but are struggling politically. Some may believe that they are doing the right thing already and they are not aware of what is necessary about being resource-strapped.

If we are giving guidance on setting speed limits, they may choose to ignore it. Even if they choose to comply with it, it is incredibly inefficient for individual authorities to be processing thousands and thousands of traffic regulation orders and thousands of signings of individual routes. It is efficient to do that at a national level but it is also about the leadership at that national level.

Something we learned in the early 2000s with the speed camera roll-out—it was often referred to as hypothecation, but it was cost recovery—is that people would often say speed is not the cause of collisions, and they are right, in a sense. For example, let us take T-junctions where, as Dan said, a lot of our unsurvivable collisions occur. The primary cause is a driver pulling out of that junction and making a misjudgement of the speed and position of vehicles on the main road. The drivers who make those errors the most are the youngest and oldest drivers; graduated driver licensing and supporting older drivers is important for that.

You cannot engineer and educate 40 million drivers. We showed that tackling a secondary factor—speed on the main road, which made it harder to judge turning in and out of the sideroad—eliminated fatal and serious injuries, and in many cases eliminated injuries completely. In the authority that I delivered road safety for in Bedfordshire, we met our 2010 casualty reduction targets five years early just from enforcement on 5% of the network.

People would say that speed was not the issue. If we only changed speed, we would not change the casualties. That is why the Wales lesson and lots of the London and Scotland examples are helpful in showing that if we only change speed and get a change in outcome, we know it works. We need to recognise the political context that local highway authorities are in; they are in a cleft stick now.

Q106 **Alex Mayer:** You have told us about authorities that cannot or will not spend on improvements for road safety. You also said that there is money being spent on things that do not work. Is this an increasing

problem because of the way that local government and devolution are working, or has it ever been thus?

Kate Carpenter: There are three bits of it. This is increasing because we have ever more resource reduction in local authorities and, unfortunately, reorganisation will make that worse. If you have a county council with two road safety engineers and that county is split into four authorities, they are each going to get half a road safety engineer. There is an interesting challenge coming with the move to smaller local authorities.

We are seeing more people saying, "We've had enough of experts; we know what good looks like," so the political context is changing that, and that is a problem. We have an amazing community of road safety engineering experts and auditors who look at highway proposals before they are implemented. They need to be involved at the inception, not just when you are starting to do a scheme and saying, "Is this what we are doing?" You have to define what the problem is. We need people who have experience in analysing collision data and understanding what works, not just in safety but in what creates the efficient movement of traffic, people being able to make their journeys and the difference in speed metrics.

If you only have one metric, you may not spot a difference in a problem. You might have two speed limits, both 30 mph and both having an 85th percentile speed of 30 mph. In one, everyone is driving at 33 mph, say, and in the other, 90% of the traffic is travelling at 20 mph and the remainder at 60 mph. They have different problems but the 85th percentile may be the same. If you only have one metric—National Highways has one metric, which is mean speed—you tackle the wrong problem, and local authorities often do not have the power to do this.

Oxfordshire has done something interesting. It has stopped measuring speed on school streets and speed limit changes and it spends the money on engagement and doing more sites. I have never been surprised by a speed limit survey in my 38 years of looking at them, so let us stop measuring things when we know what the answer will be. I can almost draw the graphs for you. Let us spend the money on the stuff that works and engage with the public about benefits, which are public health, active travel, air quality, noise and vibration reduction, and journey time reliability.

Chair: And fewer child deaths.

Dan Campsall: To build on the case that Kate has been making, I came into road safety because of the programme to expand safety camera partnerships back in the early 2000s. We had guidance and national structures to support the delivery of that guidance. It was not just, "Here's the guidance, now it's over to you." It was, "Here's the guidance. Now we'll work with you to establish a business case, evaluate your data and ensure that there is academic rigour in the programme." There is quite a lot that we can do that does not necessarily require us to have

big, mandated, heavy central Government programmes, but basically goes beyond just, "Here's a circular. Now you consider what to do with your limits," by increasing the amount of what I would refer to as the tooling available.

Let me build on the speed limit example. We can quite easily now build out a data set across an entire network—we have done it for large parts of the country—that will tell you things such as carriageway width, residential development, trip attractors, light commercial development, school locations, potential pedestrian densities, traffic flow, traffic speed and all those sorts of things. Therefore, we can say that these parts of the network will probably be amenable to these sorts of speed limits.

You then hand that back to your professionals in the local authority and say, "Make some judgments. We've given you a whole load of data that says that it probably looks like it should fit into this sort of categorisation and this sort of functional hierarchy. Now it's up to you as the local professionals to judge that for yourself." There are a lot of ways that we could utilise good quality national guidance with some additional tooling—particularly utilisation of the data that is now available to us—to enable local authorities to succeed.

Q107 **Chair:** I have a question on local government structure. Kate, you made a really important point about the potential loss of capacity in the smaller authorities, although there are ways around that with joint services and so on. I am a London MP and we have unitary authorities with TfL roads but similar policy outcomes are sought by both tiers; there are just organisational issues about trying to address safety problems across TfL roads.

I am aware—do I have this right being a London MP?—that in two-tier authorities you have a challenge where you have a town district, maybe a large town or a series of towns, that has a strong set of policies on road safety and proactive travel, but the highways authority has a different set of priorities. Often, if there are party political differences, there may be geographic priorities as well. Is that a serious challenge in certain places, and does the reorganisation and the ending of the two-tier structure move away from that? Martin, I know you are in a two-tier setup.

Martin Wiltshire: Our district and borough councils have limited road safety functions anyway, so the county council is responsible and has the statutory duties that exist.

Q108 **Chair:** The example I am thinking of is Ipswich, where there was a strong case for pedestrianisation and pedestrian-friendly work from the city.

Martin Wiltshire: There are elements of that where the funding from SEAL and other elements and desires from boroughs and districts want pedestrianisation but we work together to achieve that.

Q109 **Alex Mayer:** Actually, when you end up with a mayor on top, the mayor

then becomes the transport authority and the local councils are still the highways authority, so that would be a new problem.

Chair: There is still a potential challenge. From the cycling and the walking perspective, Sarah and Zak are trying to get in.

Sarah Whitebread: I was just going to echo that this is definitely an issue. I am from Cambridgeshire and we have an incredibly complex system, where we have the city council, the county council, the combined authority and the Greater Cambridge Partnership. We have all these different layers that all deal with a bit of a related thing. We have housing and planning separate from highways, which is very confusing for the public and can often mean that you cannot act quickly. The politics of these different bodies are often different. Trying to get a joined-up approach to delivery is very challenging.

I was also going to bring in the issue of National Highways. Along the A21 in Kent, National Highways put in a lovely cycle lane but it is the responsibility of the local councils in the two towns that are at either end of it to put in the final bit to take you into the centre of the town and they have not done that. You then have a network that is not connected. No one is going to use a cycle lane that does not take you the full stretch that you want to go. We need a more joined-up approach.

Zak Viney: I was going to use Cambridge as my example as well so that is quite frustrating. I echo the points: within a big county authority you can have a huge level of disparity in political will. I will talk about pavement parking again. With the new powers for local leaders, if there are local prohibitions that are delivered by a combined authority mayor, it will be really interesting to see how well enforced they will be in local authorities. I have heard rumours that it might be a local authority vote or the mayor might have that ultimate power. I do not have much more to add on this because I share a lot of Sarah's views.

Chair: We are doing away with one set of complications but new ones are coming in, which is quite important.

Kate Carpenter: Can I add one point? I definitely agree that two-tier can create different policies. Rural road safety tends to come off worse in that situation. It is the county level that tends to see the rural context; the smaller authorities tend to focus on the urban areas and the problems are different in different places. Vulnerable road users are vulnerable in both.

Another thing we have not talked about yet is development management. New proposals—including highway designs done by consultants on tiny fees and often a little separated from what is best practice knowledge about what works—ironically incentivise making things compliant with standards because that gets through planning easily. Compliance is often worse than non-compliance. If you are building a new junction on an existing road, if the existing road is all three steps below the desirable

minimum standards, so should the new junction be. If you build a junction you can see from space on a very low-quality road, it actually will have a worse safety performance because of the self-explaining road and people feel very confident when there is lots of space.

Development management is a problem. Of course, the district councils are planning authorities, the county councils are highway authorities and the conflict between those in development is huge, especially with sustainable development. Developments with no public transport within a 15-minute walk, no active travel and no joined-upness of active travel are a big thing with authorities as well.

Chair: With the manual for streets, we see how out of date some standards are. Let us move on to road conditions and maintenance.

Q110 **Mrs Blundell:** How significant a factor is road maintenance in reducing deaths and serious injuries, and do you think that the strategy gives that role enough weight?

Kate Carpenter: It is important. There is a joke in road safety engineering terms that potholes and parked cars are the best traffic calming measures, but there is a serious point, which is that a driver attending to potholes is not attending to cyclists and pedestrians. We know that 50% of fatal and serious injuries are people outside cars, pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists, and equestrians are numerically relatively small but particularly vulnerable. There is a serious point that those users are at risk of losing control due to carriageway defects.

We used to use hot-rolled asphalt for road surfaces and when it failed, you got an isolated pothole that you could fill. The material we use for road surfacing now is thin and when that fails, 15 square metres fall off in two weeks, which is very difficult to tackle and you end up with piecemeal patching. It is a real problem, and I cannot explain the reason that it has escalated; it is about funding, management and all sorts of things. It is diverting budgets away from doing other network improvements because we are just frantically trying to patch the roof.

Q111 **Mrs Blundell:** I will bring in Martin in a moment and listen to his specific experience, but first, are there any major measures that you think could be taken by the Department to achieve maximum impact?

Kate Carpenter: From a maintenance perspective?

Mrs Blundell: Yes.

Kate Carpenter: I don’t think there is anything specific, apart from what we flagged around resourcing and knowledge. Some 50% of those in the transport industry is eligible for retirement in the next 10 years, so we are dealing with a loss of expertise. A lot of people also left the profession because of covid. A lot of the really sound experts have gone so we have lost a lot of knowledge of what good looks like. In the same way that the

road safety community has been decimated by successive cuts, so has the maintenance community, which is probably an issue.

Q112 **Mrs Blundell:** Martin, which parts of the road network tend to cause the greatest problems for safe infrastructure, in your experience? Obviously, there are huge areas such as drainage surfacing, skid resistance, road edges and markings. Is there anything that you would emphasise more than others?

Martin Wiltshire: The skid resistance of the road surface is very important. There is an annual programme of testing the skid resistance of the surface. We plot our accident and collision data on top of that to see, particularly, whether there are any wet condition-type collisions occurring, and we can have an input into any surfacing options there. All our planned maintenance work comes via the casualty reduction team, so we can have input on what actually goes back because we have a nice blank canvas. We may look at revised road markings. Again, maintaining visibility and sight lines, and keeping the signs and lines clear and well maintained are factors in casualty reduction across the network.

Q113 **Mrs Blundell:** Just to broaden it back out again, I will ask you the same question as I asked Kate: do you think that the strategy gives this area enough weight?

Martin Wiltshire: Probably not. Again, it goes back to the investment needed to keep on top of it. Resources and funding are also linked to that.

Q114 **Mrs Blundell:** Dan, your written evidence says that maintenance is also an undervalued element within the safe system. Why do you think that is, and is the Department waking up to that in your view?

Dan Campsall: It is because of that holistic view of how these things all work together. For example, if you do not cut back your vegetation, you have a glorious spring, all the hedges grow out and the signs are no longer visible to drivers. They are also no longer visible to the intelligent speed assistance that is embedded in most modern cars. There is then no feedback to the driver to say, "Actually, this road is 40 mph, not a national speed restriction." It is the fact that many of those things interact.

We talked primarily about the maintenance of the road surface, but if we do not maintain the barriers and a vehicle leaves the carriageway, that barrier is not going to perform to standards and then the outcomes of that collision will be much more severe. It is about the fact that the whole network is designed to function as a safety system, and if you do not maintain all those aspects, the interoperability of those systems is depleted and the outcomes become worse.

Zak Viney: A lot of the discourse focuses on the carriageway, but I remind the Committee that this is about safer roads and roadsides. We were really pleased to receive funding from the DFT a number of years

ago to investigate the true cost and impact of pedestrian trips and falls, which can be very much exacerbated by broken, cracked and disintegrating pavements.

This is very much an issue that happens to people getting older. Some 30% of people older than 65 and 50% of people older than 80 fall at least once a year. The declining condition of our pavements—as observed in street reviews we undertook—represents an increased risk to pedestrian trips and falls. That might seem quite small fry, but it is estimated to cost the NHS more than £2.3 billion per year. There are also other effects to do with social alienation that, particularly, elderly people, those who use wheelchairs and those who are visually impaired may experience if they feel trapped in their homes.

My final point on this is that the UK Government have provided £7.3 billion over the next four years for highway maintenance. We would advocate for pavement maintenance being given equal priority to carriageways, because everyone walks or wheels.

Martin Wiltshire: Rural crossroads are a particular issue. There are several counties working with the Ordnance Survey to look at locations where there have been collisions and to actively seek some funding for a project to try to address satellite navigation systems, so they say stop or give way rather than proceed ahead at these junctions.

Q115 **Mrs Blundell:** Finally, Sarah, from a cycling safety perspective, do you have anything to add on the issue of road maintenance?

Sarah Whitebread: It is incredibly important. Normally around two or three cyclists are tragically killed every year by hitting a pothole and around 60 a year are seriously injured. All those incidents could have been avoided by proper investment in the maintenance of the road and cycle paths. We really want to see that investment in cycling infrastructure; it should be maintained and obviously given the same priority as roads and footpaths, and there should be parity so that we are protecting everyone using the road.

For some new technology in cars, the markings on the road are what is used, so it is really important for the car to detect where the centre of the road is or where they should be to protect people who are cycling. It is not just about potholes; it is also about making sure that the road markings are kept in good condition so that new technology and everyone can see and use the road safely.

Q116 **Chair:** On the data collection on KSIs for cyclists and potholes, does this include where the incident was possibly triggered by the cyclist seeing it, braking suddenly and toppling over the handlebars or swerving into the path of a car—so avoidance as much as actually going into the pothole? There is another example I know of where someone was in a peloton and it is possible that the person in the front of the peloton swerved and that was where the collision was. Is that data collected as well as actually

going into a pothole?

Sarah Whitebread: That is a really good question. I don't know so I will have to take that away and have a look. I am not aware that data of that level of detail is collected, but we could certainly look at that and write to the Committee if we find anything.

Martin Wiltshire: If the police attend such an incident and there is an injury collision, that would hopefully be reported as some circumstances and contributory factors on the STATS19 forms.

Kate Carpenter: There is a reference to technology in the strategy but we only have lagging indicators. Leading indicators such as harsh braking, harsh acceleration, harsh cornering and lane departure—for which there is quite good data available—can give an indication of unsafe behaviours. There is Operation Snap where people can upload video footage and send it to the police. People are getting enormous penalties just from using video footage from the public. It is actually giving information to road safety professionals of behaviour that is occurring.

An experiment was submitted to the CIHT Road Safety Award of using telemetry on bicycles, where if cyclists have to brake hard, that is an indicator that motorists are travelling inappropriately—for example, close passes, pulling in and out of junctions without looking, "Sorry I didn't see you" type incidents. Telemetry could tell us some of that, and you can get a bigger picture of what is happening on the network; it is about the efficiency of those tools. Harsh braking is a good predictor.

Q117 **Chair:** Telemetry is a really useful point, but my particular point is about dangerous behaviour as a result of emergency action to avoid a pothole or something like that.

Kate Carpenter: If we had harsh braking and the officer attending believed it was a factor, they would record it in the contributive factors. Of course we do not get the contributive factors from doing the collision analysis, so we would not know even if they did record it.

Zak Viney: To go back to my previous career in engineering, in engineering there is a lot of risk mitigation that goes on to even prevent a collision from happening. I can really clear out a pub speaking about the risk mitigation triangle. I find it quite ridiculous when we consider roads and road size that considering elimination or substitution of a risk is something that we rarely do. No wonder five times more people are killed or seriously injured on the journey to work and school than they are at work and school.

In engineering, we have something called near-miss culture. I know that there are so many incidents on the road, and what is the Road Safety Investigation Branch going to do? It will not thank me for suggesting that near-miss culture comes in, but this is the preventive stuff that could stop the KSIs that you are speaking to, about swerving to avoid a pothole. The general broad culture of how we mitigate risk within road

safety could really help the Government try to hit the targets that many people agree are quite ambitious.

Chair: The Committee members are queuing up to go for a drink with you. Let us move on to rural road conditions and our particular expert on the topic, from very rural north Norfolk, Steff Aquarone.

Q118 **Steff Aquarone:** I am an expert by virtue of the number of people I speak to about it and their challenges. I am interested in your views about what makes rural routes a distinct challenge, bearing in mind that rural roads are not all the same. On the issue of resource allocation, notwithstanding local government financial constraints, many of my constituents are very frustrated that essentially the answer they get is, "You can't get a road safety improvement here because not enough people have died yet." Are there any views on whether that is a particularly stark example of survivorship bias or maybe the opposite?

Martin Wiltshire: It is a common misconception that we will not do anything as a local authority if there has not been a fatal collision. We analyse all the collisions across the whole network on a regular basis. We run different programmes to identify hot spots or particular routes that are causing concern and that may have a pattern or collision of these incidents, and we will take the appropriate action when we find these. Again, skid resistance on the routes is an important factor in investigations across the whole of the network.

Q119 **Steff Aquarone:** I have tried to do my bit to try to explain this, but it is also the case that people feel like perceived safety does not factor into those decisions, and that may be causing changes of behaviour if it is not factored into the wider programme.

Martin Wiltshire: Our emails are filled with such requests. How do we prioritise those? We have to do a thorough investigation to see whether it is perceived or not. Does it translate into people being killed, hurt or injured on our road network? Those are the key factors.

We had a scheme a few years ago where we had a very rural crossroads in the middle of very flat terrain. The visibility was very good but we had 18 collisions, two of which were fatal. After a series of measures, such as changing give way signs to stop lines and various other things that we have measured in the past and implemented, we actually realigned a junction at a staggered crossroads. That was about four years ago and we have had no collisions at that junction since.

Q120 **Steff Aquarone:** I do not think any of my constituents are complaining about the road safety improvements that happen; it is the ones that do not. Sarah, if I were to say that I would accept that if you are looking at one trunk road or network, but is that sufficient for rural roads?

Sarah Whitebread: I wanted to come back to your point about perceptions of safety, because one of the biggest barriers to getting more people active in how they travel is fear of road danger. We know from

loads of different surveys that that is the big thing; in particular, women are concerned about making the switch to cycling.

We would have really liked to see a target in the strategy around the perception of road danger the strategy. If you could have that aggregated to the local authority level, that would be a helpful way for local authorities to track and not just have to be reliant on collision data, as you talk about; they would also then be aware of perceptions. If what we are trying to achieve is actually getting more people out of their cars for all the huge benefits that walking and cycling bring, which we know and which are absolutely possible to do in rural areas, we should look at how we can mitigate and improve those perceptions.

The other thing I would say is that Government can do more to help local authorities in rural areas by issuing much clearer guidance about appropriate speed limits for different types of roads, and that could happen very quickly.

Q121 **Steff Aquarone:** Just for Martin's reassurance, it is clear that the biggest issue is funding constraints on local authority schemes. Sarah, what you have done is open up the discussion about the funding to other objectives within transport, which is extremely welcome.

Zak Viney: I am going to indulge Sarah's tangent because I really wanted to speak in support of KPIs that reference participation, especially with walking, wheeling and cycling. Within the strategy, there is a KPI for walking or cycle injuries per mile so that references participation. This is good, but I would advocate that it is actually the defining statistic of this strategy. It is all good to reduce killed and seriously injured, but if you do that by decreasing walking, wheeling and cycling you have just scored a massive own goal.

I have a colleague who is providing recommendations for the Welsh road safety strategy and who provided a few recommendations on how the number of children playing on streets could be used, as well as surveys, to capture how safe it feels to walk or cycle. I know we are taking a dive away from rural roads, and as a pedestrian advocate, it may feel less relevant here, but rural roads are one of the few instances that we see pedestrians exercising risk compensation. They may not make a walking journey because of perceived danger. A very vague question is: do all rural roads have pavements? No. Should all rural roads have pavements? That is a really open question and I do not have the answer to that.

Q122 **Steff Aquarone:** Thank you for bringing us back to the topic of rurality. Kate, does the infrastructure response need to be adjusted for rural road schemes, and do we need to shut some rural D roads? Not everybody needs four different routes to their remote property, do they?

Kate Carpenter: There can be network management changes. The A21 was mentioned earlier. We did an award-winning route scheme on the A21 looking across all the dimensions. We did a safe system approach

where we looked at speed, vulnerable road users, active travel and school accesses, and we engaged with the elected members and so on. It was really effective.

Rural areas are a challenge because of the unsurvivable speed, as Dan says; it is about the physics and biology. Marginal gains are really powerful. Because inertia is a function of the square root of speed, relatively small changes in speed will have disproportionate benefits, and they can take not just a "fatal" to be a "serious" or a "serious" to be a "slight", but remove a collision completely, as I described that speed camera data had done. The marginal gain can be huge and those who are disproportionately penalised are older drivers who are fearful of travelling on rural roads.

We increasingly remove lighting. At an aggregate level there is no adverse effect of removing lighting, but some users are disadvantaged more than others. Unfortunately, the things that help some users do not help others. Older drivers like more clarity of markings, studs, lighting and so on, but younger drivers will actually drive faster given those things. When we removed thousands of streetlights in Buckinghamshire, casualties fell on those roads by more than on the roads where we kept the lights on, but older drivers stopped going out because they are fearful. Social isolation kills faster than smoking or obesity. It is those bigger pictures of benefits that are really embedded in the rural ones.

There is a tool we used that shows how engagement can be really helpful. When we got newly elected members in a council, we would play a game of pin the tail on the donkey. You would give them paper—in the days of paper—a map of the county and a sheet of sticky red dots and invite them to stick a dot on the highest risk junctions. They would identify the self-evidently highest risk junctions where nobody crashed.

We need to be attending to data collisions and telemetry of where the risk is highest in rural areas, not where someone feels safer. In our authority area, the entire road safety budget was spent on a crossroads that had very few injuries; it has now been converted to a roundabout. There were the same number of injuries after as before and the whole budget had been spent on one junction. The perception that something has to be done is understandable, but something that was helpful in a way, but not a good spend of the budget, was done, and it was not helpful that—

Q123 **Steff Aquarone:** Politicians queuing up to cut the ribbon does not help. Can I just check what I understood? You said that adversity is a function of the square root of speed. Is that adversity or the impact of the crash is a function of the square root of speed?

Kate Carpenter: The energy of a collision is a function of the square root of the speed. The two-stage process is that reducing speed reduces the likelihood of a collision, because braking distance reduces disproportionately with relatively low speeds. When there is a collision,

the chance of surviving it is better and the disproportionate benefit is to the oldest drivers who are the most likely to die when there is a crash.

Steff Aquarone: We have seen improvements in braking distance over the last few years, which is about to be eroded by heavier vehicles. That is a whole other topic area.

Kate Carpenter: It is a moot point because vehicles have evolved but humans have not.

Steff Aquarone: I have noticed that.

Kate Carpenter: With the cost of living crisis, people are stopping putting new tyres in their car and are driving without fuel and breaking down on the motorways, which we have not talked about. Tens of thousands of people a year are running out of fuel on motorways and putting themselves at risk. There are tyre blowouts because of bald or incorrectly inflated tyres, which creates a risk to the road worker community. We have not talked about them today. I have been to lots of funerals of colleagues who were killed on the roads as well.

Q124 **Steff Aquarone:** I am sure we will pick up on these topics. Can I just come to Dan? Let's focus perhaps on the potential gains of looking at severity rather than just frequency. Do we need a different approach to infrastructure in rural areas?

Dan Campsall: Yes. Something that the safe system doctrine includes is that we actually move away from being reactive and move to being more proactive. When we find the collision circumstances that are likely to lead to severe collisions, we look to address those systematically. That is slightly different to what Martin described. Here there is a bit of tyranny.

As a local authority that only has a limited budget, of course you need to address the places where the crashes have happened because there is an expectation on you to do that. What the safe system basically tells us is that where you get poor road surface, excess speeds, high volumes of traffic and those sorts of collision circumstances, they conflate. In an age of predictive analysis, we can say we are likely to get these levels of fatal and serious crashes occurring in these locations.

The remedy is to take more of what we would refer to as a road assessment approach—something like the International Road Assessment Programme. That is where we look at the profile of routes that we can identify through things such as junction density, traffic flow and speed, asset condition and where we are likely to have problematic areas. We can then treat them in a more holistic and proactive way. Actually, the Government's previous safer roads fund sought to identify routes that were amenable to that kind of treatment. We would like to see something more along those lines.

Q125 **Jacob Collier:** The strategy's main commitment is around a new way of categorisation. Dan, I know that you have been working on this. What

potential do you think that holds to improve safety on rural roads?

Dan Campsall: In the previous evidence session a question came up around what a rural road is and Steve Gooding said, "Well, it's not urban." We worked with the RAC Foundation on trying to establish whether it is possible to define different sorts of rural roads from data and, indeed, we did that. You look at things such as how wiggly the road is—curvature—the roadsides, road carriageway width and those sorts of things. We created some clusters or classifications of road groups from the data.

We then tested those with professionals to say, "Does this cohere as an approach?" There is good evidence from the project that not all rural roads are the same. Some are highly specified, well-designed dual carriageways that are designed to carry high volumes of traffic. They are not to be treated in the same way as low-volume hill roads to isolated communities. What having a proper functional classification allows you to do is use the data to define what those roads are like and treatment plans that are appropriate, and not try to fix everything with the same approach.

Q126 **Jacob Collier:** How do you go from having a categorisation to then potentially changing speed limits or putting in place other infrastructure changes? How do you think that should happen?

Dan Campsall: It goes back to the point that I made earlier about the tooling. You need guidance that supports doing that. Actually something such as the International Road Assessment Programme is great, because it gives you star ratings for roads and says, "Well, if you want to reduce the collision frequency on this stretch of the road broadly by half—i.e. improve it by one star rating—here is a package of measures that you could deliver." We have quite a lot of tools that would enable us to do that and move from route identification through to route treatment. It is important that we do not just jump to treating the routes first but actually use the data to help us triage the network.

Q127 **Jacob Collier:** Martin, do you have anything from your experience that you think the Department should consider to improve rural road safety?

Martin Wiltshire: Probably about 15 years ago, there was a Government directive that all local authorities should review their speed limits on all A and B-class roads. They set a threshold for the collision rate per vehicle travelled on those routes. When we assessed those routes, if they exceeded that, it recommended that we review the speed limit subject to other factors, taking into account mean speeds being inappropriate, the composition of traffic and things like that that would normally go into a speed limit assessment.

We had a programme of about 50 speed limit changes as a result of that and that has been successful in casualty reduction in overall terms. Some actually increased but most decreased. That could be reflected across other sections of the road network such as C or U-class roads.

Kate Carpenter: I mentioned the route you did on the A21. Something we found useful on that was using that same kind of approach of categorising different bits of the road, not just as a dual and single. Interestingly, the injury rate on the dual carriageway was the same as on the single carriageway. In some ways that was surprising but not really to us because people are more confident and travel with more speed and less attention, so when something happens, they do not respond. It can be helpful in categorising chunks of road and treating them as chunks so that drivers experience them as chunks. You then have a consistent approach to vegetation management, road marking form and speed limit.

We increased some limits on that route as well as reducing some limits. We reduced the number over the length. It was quite helpful to draw a bar chart that shows the current speed limit. We know drivers really struggle with the 50 mph, 40 mph, 50 mph, 40 mph, 30 mph, both on rural routes and motorways. If you can smooth the algorithm and find a sweet spot that is something in between, it is more self-explaining to drivers. Of course, you can then use average speed enforcement very affordably to maintain it at that level, and the incredibly effective return on investment of enforcement on rural roads is very high.

It is popular with the public. There is a fallacy that people do not like enforcement, but average speed is respected by the public. It avoids that, "Well, if I do a quick overtake to get past this tractor, I'll get caught in the camera." It feels more respectful to drivers trying to go about their business. The Which? consumers association consulted drivers on which behaviours by other road users they most disliked, and speeding had the highest number. Did people want more speed enforcement? Yes, provided that it was the right evidence-based enforcement. Well-communicated, you can find a sweet spot there. Clear, self-explaining roads, consistent routes that drivers can understand, no nasty surprises and lowering the speeds and variance of speeds will give good benefits at a relatively low cost.

Chair: Is everyone okay to continue? Is nobody about to keel over with the heat? Okay. We will now move on to iRAP and road assessment tools, which some of you have touched on, so no need to repeat yourselves.

Q128 **Olly Glover:** I am not making any promises on the keeling over point but we will do our best. Thanks to all for coming during the heatwave. We have touched a little on iRAP, which the acronym bustometer says is the International Road Assessment Programme. It would be good to perhaps just start with a short opening paragraph on your overall thoughts of it and then we can perhaps have a bit of discussion. How can the Department best identify infrastructure risk across the road network before collisions happen, and what role should assessment tools such as iRAP play in that? Perhaps we will start with you, Martin, given your earlier comments about collisions.

Martin Wiltshire: We have used iRAP through the safer roads fund—as Dan mentioned—for about four roads in Hampshire. We secured roughly

£9 million worth of investment from the DFT to use iRAP to model the risk. It has been limited to high-risk routes across the country. We have had good results as a result of implementing the measures that were recommended through that computer programme modelling. It has been confined just to those particular routes and that investment in that programme; we have not had any experience of using it on other sections of Hampshire's road network.

Q129 **Olly Glover:** Sarah?

Sarah Whitebread: To be honest I would probably defer to other members of the panel on this one.

Olly Glover: That is all right. None of us knows everything; some of us do not know anything.

Zak Viney: I just reiterate a point I made earlier about near misses, but my knowledge is not as high of this.

Kate Carpenter: We see a lot of authorities that recognise the benefit of risk rating but see it as either unaffordable or a disproportionate level of evaluation, because they feel they know what the answers are. We feel that if you can bring together the components of the tools, the iRAP risk rating is a forgiving roadside: if somebody had a collision here, what is the likelihood of injury, what kind of injury, plus telemetry using harsh braking—that is another layer on top of it—plus the STATS19 and where people are actually crashing. You can have two roads that have an identical iRAP score; they are identically theoretically hazardous. On one, no one ever crashes so it must be self-explaining, and on the other it has a very high collision rate so there must be something different about it.

The self-explainingness is quite hard to capture. Something iRAP has not done well and is trying to change is route consistency. We know that route consistency is a good predictor of good outcomes, but because iRAP is done on chunks—this 100 metres, that 100 metres—in theory if you had 100 metres of dual six-lane road, 100 metres of single narrow car track, and then 100 metres of dual four, it would take each of those in isolation. Obviously, the driver experience on that would be dreadful so we need to make sure that the route consistency bit of it gets picked up. It struggles with things like coding accesses versus minor sideroads, industrial premises in rural areas and farm accesses. When you get down to the detail of the B, C and unclassified roads, it struggles a bit more.

Dan Campsall: I have already addressed the fact that it is part of the toolbox and there are a number of things that are in the pipeline that start to address some concerns. The cost of data collection and coding has been raised by authorities as we move into an increasingly digitised age, and there are ways of using remote sense data to be able to improve data access.

Actually, the International Road Assessment Programme team are developing a network-wide assessment tool that allows you to effectively cluster attributes and build out a sense of what the overall network performance is likely to be on the basis of your design specification and that sort of thing. There are some things that are definitely helping to improve that.

To go back to the point I have made on a couple of occasions, data facilitates us being able to do an awful lot more—we are sitting here in 2026—of triaging networks, understanding which bits of it we then need to use a full road assessment programme to explore, and then what the interventions are that need to be delivered there.

We now have connected vehicle data that tells us about vehicle speeds, the amount of slippage from tyres and whether people's windscreen wipers were in use. So much data is available now that allows us to describe networks and the performance of vehicles and drivers on them that actually we quite quickly get to a point where we start to use tools such as iRAP in a very focused and productive way.

Q130 **Alex Mayer:** The strategy will introduce a road safety investigation branch. Dan, in your written evidence you said that existing coalition data is useful, but actually, we want this to be a road safety investigation branch rather than an analysis branch. What powers do you think the body would need to be effective?

Dan Campsall: At the moment, what is imagined does not have the ability to compel witnesses and collate evidence. In some cases, we have some very good police collision investigation teams, and they produce thorough reports but are generally focused on trying to identify whether there is fault in the crash and therefore whether somebody needs to be arrested and have criminal proceedings. There is an awful lot below that that we can learn from about the circumstances of a crash. There was a study in Cambridgeshire that said that probably only 40% of the factors that you would identify are at that sharp end, and 60% of the stuff that we could learn from the crash would come from a more detailed investigation.

There is a lot more that we can learn. There is definitely more that we can get out of the investigations that we have and feeding through into things such as prevention of future death reports from coroners, child death overview panels and so on. If we genuinely want to understand, we can look at some of what Kate just described. We could have two bits of road where they have different outcomes despite the fact that we think they should be performing the same to all intents and purposes. That requires a level of insight that is only likely to be delivered if we can have the quality and parity of investigation that we apply to rail, marine and aviation. Given the numbers that we have already talked about—1,600 to 1,700 people a year dying on our roads—we owe it to them to learn from the crashes that happen in a consistent way with other modes.

Sarah Whitebread: On the road safety investigation branch, I just want to make the point that we are really keen and welcome it; we called for it. We think it is really important that it can look at crashes thematically. Rather than just focusing on large crashes that happen on motorways involving heavy freight or that sort of thing, it should able to look thematically, for example, at crashes that involve pedestrians and cyclists. You could look at similar crashes and try to draw conclusions from those in a thematic way.

I also just echo the comments that it is important that it is transparent, its recommendations are available to the public, and that there is then an expectation that those measures and actions will be taken in response to the branch's recommendations.

Q131 **Alex Mayer:** Martin, please answer what we were just asking, and also, how should the Department ensure that the recommendations are practical for local highways authorities to implement?

Martin Wiltshire: We already operate a casualty reduction partnership in which we investigate all fatal and potentially fatal collisions that happen on our road network. We work in partnership with the police and will go to look at the site within 30 days of an incident occurring. We will look at the existing history of the collisions at that location and take into account the circumstances of the actual collision and public comments. The aim is to prevent another incident from occurring at that location.

It has been very successful. Probably before the casualty reduction partnership was formalised in the early 2000s, we had about 70 fatal collisions occurring on the network, and we are down to an average of around the low 30s each year. The road safety investigation branch could build on what local authorities already do and then have another layer on top of that to oversee and learn from all our experiences collectively.

Q132 **Alex Mayer:** In which case, should we not just move all your officers into a national scheme so that all this best practice could be shared, but you are on the ground?

Martin Wiltshire: That is one good reason.

Q133 **Dr Arthur:** The Government are going to issue guidance for local authorities on speed limits. I do not want to pre-empt your answers but is guidance enough? That is what is lacking.

Kate Carpenter: We talked earlier about one of the difficulties that authorities have: their own political pressures and context. They know their networks really well, which is helpful, but local flexibility creates national inconsistency. Drivers then experience that when they go across boundaries between authorities, for example.

It is not quite clear what the guidance will cover. We have had guidance in the past. Some tools that were supposed to come with it—the speed limit assessment tool—never really existed. It was an Excel spreadsheet

that never really operated well. It needs to be effective and easy to use, but you need the leadership and direction that says, "This is what good looks like and we expect you to do it."

Enforcement is very effective, but if you do not give any direction, an authority where that is not aligned with the political priorities will not make the changes or the enforcement. There has to be some sort of lead between it so that the limits are reviewed, and in urban areas, we have a place and movement matrix of the relative function of the road. Speed limits need to be assessed on that basis. You need that pushdown to actually make it happen.

Q134 **Dr Arthur:** Last week, when we spoke to the Secretary of State about that, she said that if local authorities do not support making streets safer, the electorate can always change them in the next election. Do you think she should be more involved in trying to direct those authorities to make, I would say, the right decision, but you know what I mean?

Kate Carpenter: We need a direction but we also need to communicate the scale of the benefits that we see. The prize is not actually road safety but public health in air quality and people who are physically active. The mortality and morbidity benefits of active travel dwarf the road safety impact. The prize is getting re-elected because you make the change, not getting re-elected because you did not make the change.

There are some fallacies around what people want. We need to hear more from the voices of the people who have had the change and like it. People tend to be vocal if they oppose something; if they like it, they are not. There are some big political examples we can remember. We need to recognise what people value and their everyday experiences. People take safety for granted. It is an electoral issue but the public need to understand the benefits, and the authorities need to understand that it is a vote-winner to do the right thing and communicate it well.

Q135 **Dr Arthur:** That is the key point; it is not just up to the public to understand the benefits. People who are elected and experts such as your also have a duty to explain and promote those benefits. Just going back to where you started, the guidance is not just about where we put the sign, how big it should be and what the repeater frequency is; it should also be about the actual design of the road when it comes to upgrading. I am putting words into your mouth, of course.

Kate Carpenter: It is the operating speed. In a design context, you have three metrics: the speed limit, the design speed, which makes an allowance for some people travelling above the limit, and then you have the actual profile of speed on a proposed road. Obviously, you do not have that third component yet. It is a really complex matrix and hard-pressed designers are trying to set those things. Sometimes we will think a higher speed limit is necessary.

There was a coroner observation of a collision, where National Highways and the local authority network joined, and the view was that the slip road from the motorway had an excessively high speed limit so that any error by a driver at that point would almost inevitably lead to a credibly high severity incident. National Highways' perception was that it cannot reduce the speed limit because it impacts journey time. It does not impact journey time; it improves journey time reliability with almost no effect and often no effect on journey time.

There is a perception that lowering the limit reduces journeys. We have seen it on the motorway with variable speed limits. Travelling at a lower speed, you get there faster. It is counterintuitive but people experience it. They realise that it is a less stressful journey if you have clarity on what the speed limit is and fewer changes are helpful. You need that direction to understand that lower limits are just an imperative where these unsurvivable collisions occur.

Q136 **Dr Arthur:** Sarah, you are sitting at the edge of your seat. Earlier you were speaking quite excitedly about how CWIS comes with ringfenced money for walking and cycling. Do you think we need ringfenced money to encourage local authorities to reduce speed limits?

Sarah Whitebread: Yes. It is very hard to see how the targets in this strategy are delivered without some quite big intervention on speed across the country.

Q137 **Dr Arthur:** Intervention by whom though? Do you think it should be left to local authorities through guidance or direction from the Secretary of State?

Sarah Whitebread: Political leadership is needed. Local authorities are best placed to make those final decisions, but there is definitely a role for national Government in the culture, selling the vision, the public messaging around why lower speed limits are so important and beneficial, and setting the expectations and guidance. What is happening is that it is being done piecemeal at a local level, and in lots of cases, there is not the political leadership at the local level to sell why we are doing this.

We are seeing situations where even though a majority of people might support an intervention, whether that is speeding or school streets—we have done polling on this at Cycling UK—this thing called pluralistic ignorance is occurring. It is all the rage in active travel and folk such as me are thinking about this. Basically, it is a phenomenon whereby people are in the majority in what they feel, but they perceive themselves to be in the minority and are therefore less likely to speak out.

School streets are a classic example of this. They are very popular. If you ask people if they would support a school street where they live, 70-something percent support them. If you ask them, "Do you think your neighbours would support this?" the support is around 20% lower. It has

this chilling effect because people are seeing the loud voices that are in the minority of opposition. They are then less likely to speak out because they think they are in the minority and that then has an impact on the local councillors thinking that maybe the majority do not support this. You need political leadership at every layer of government, but there is definitely a role for national Government to say, "We think 20 mph in urban areas is absolutely the right approach for these reasons. We think 40 mph on this type of road is right for these reasons."

Q138 **Dr Arthur:** Should we set that nationally then and just get local authorities to opt out of that if they think it is the right thing to do? I think that has happened in Wales.

Sarah Whitebread: Yes, the Wales example has shown huge benefits relating to the number of lives lost on the roads.

Q139 **Dr Arthur:** People in the street walking past this building probably think, "Oh, it's been really unpopular in Wales; it didn't work," but in fact, it is working, is it not?

Sarah Whitebread: The evidence is that it absolutely worked. It has been a huge success. We see the role for Government as setting what the expectations are and then local authorities can decide which type of road is right for them. They know their roads better but what type of road should have what speed limit is a role that national Government should play.

Zak Viney: I will just pick up on what Scott said about people walking past this building, but actually I am going to bring this round to political leadership, obviously. Within these circles of transport, we generally have a consensus that 20 mph limits save lives. I was showing the benefits of Living Streets' Walk to School Outreach programme to the right hon. Member for Doncaster North a couple of months ago. This is one of the things that has transcended transport circles. All I needed to say to him was, "Do you know, in the first 12 months of Wales implementing this, it is estimated to have saved 100 lives?"[1]

On a constituency level, if you say that to a constituency MP, something that they and ward councillors will hear a lot about is speeding traffic. Following what Sarah said about plurality, as soon as you speak to your community about what this means for the people you know, it reframes the issue. I would encourage the Committee, as what I would call advocates for this, to speak to your peers and fellow Members on this issue. No one in their constituency wants more people killed on their roads. Lead with that and be impassioned and unwavering.

Q140 **Chair:** On differing speed limits potentially in different areas, at the moment we have a default 30 mph in urban areas with street lights. We are all supposed to know and remember that from the highway code. Is

[1] Correction by witness: 100 fewer KSIs in the first year following the implementation.

there a risk that, where different authorities have different rules on default, there will be a plethora of additional signage or a risk that drivers will get away with saying that they did not know because they did not know they were in a different authority? Is there a quick answer to that, Kate?

Kate Carpenter: There is a risk. Wales shows that there is clarity, efficiency, and an unambiguity about consistency of approach. With hundreds of highway authorities each doing their own thing, you will end up with inconsistency. The law in England will be the same. If it is street lighting, it is the same, and that would be the same between authorities unless we had a national change. It absolutely has to be that.

One other point on what the public would like is that it is cheaper to get your car insured if you live in Wales. That is quite persuasive as a benefit. Insurers are only based on an algorithm model of risk.

Q141 **Chair:** Martin, do you have a thought on that?

Martin Wiltshire: Obviously, the current default is a 30 mph speed limit. Many of our newer residential roads are designed with a 20 mph limit in mind, but actually they are not. A traffic regulation order is needed to put a 20 mph limit in. Setting aside the funding limitations that we have, if we were awash with money, 20 mph limits would be encouraged in those residential areas across our network.

Chair: Jacob, on the speed and the design of roads.

Q142 **Jacob Collier:** We touched on this in your evidence on how streets and roads can be designed to reduce speed. What are the best physical features that can be put in place to reduce speed? Which do you think are the most effective?

Zak Viney: Hearing the excellent evidence that Kate has given, she will be able to go deeply into this. But a 20 mph limit on a wide straight road with long sightlines often experiences lower compliance than a 20 mph limit on a street designed for lower speeds. Generally, speed limits establish the legal and social expectation of appropriate behaviour. We have had a consensus on the panel that speed limits should be self-enforcing. Generally, and I am not going to speak much more, compliance is poorer when road design suggests a higher speed is acceptable.

I will give a practical example from when I used to live in Sheffield. This leads into a general contradiction in how we design our streets; we have places for people intertwined with places to move vehicular traffic. You can imagine a particular street—Edgware Road or Ecclesall Road in Sheffield—where you bring a lot of people into an environment to enjoy the nightlife or shopping. You will also use it as a main arterial road for moving traffic. At the moment, Ecclesall Road in Sheffield is going through a speed reduction scheme, but an issue here is purpose, and that is reflected in KSIs. If you mix vehicular traffic with people and say that it

is a space for both, that is a contradiction. I might have widened it out but I am really interested in hearing more technical stuff from Kate.

Kate Carpenter: We absolutely have loads of evidence about what reduces speed. The self-explained road is the key. We have tended to have excessively wide and linear roads. We can re-engineer to reduce those characteristics, and we know it is very effective, but it is incredibly expensive. While engineering works, the deliverability of it, even if you have an unlimited budget and an unlimited number of people, and the logistics as to how much of the network you could change is quite small. We have 192,000 miles of road; that is nearly all of it. The irony is that if the new roads do not look like the existing roads, you have made it more inconsistent and confusing.

We know that things such as the manual for streets guidance work really well. We get naturally low design speeds and high compliance. You do not need 100% compliance with a 20 mph limit to get safety as 90% of the benefit comes from the few miles at the top, just as 90% of the health benefit comes from the first few hundred steps that you walk. Sometimes great is the enemy of the good. People think we must make it gold-plated. Gold-plated is great, especially if someone else is paying for it. It is actually about what you can do most effectively. What is the return on the investment? Speed limit changes are the biggest return on investment with enforcement. The perception of enforcement is what drives compliance, not the penalty. Penalties matter but if you do not think you will get caught, it does not matter what the penalty is.

Martin Wiltshire: There is probably no one solution to cover all options. Many traffic calming or traffic management measures have pros and cons for each scenario. In residential areas, traffic road humps are very effective at reducing speeds but have an impact on drainage, parking, chicanes, and build-outs of traffic islands. A series of factors have to be taken into account to support lower speed limits. Village gateway signs to enhance the start of speed limits are very effective as well.

Q143 **Jacob Collier:** In terms of what Zak was saying, where you have spaces in which traffic and pedestrians come into close contact, particularly around schools —I have a lot of contact with them, and there are school zones in London that have limits on where people can drive—what do you think would be most effective in those contexts so that pedestrians and those in active travel can use the road safely?

Martin Wiltshire: Changes in the materials used on the carriageway surface can create a different type of zone and give priority to pedestrians over vehicles. Restrictions placed on the road to prevent vehicles from going down it in the first instance or limited to allow residents to gain access at school times—a variety of options could be considered.

Sarah Whitebread: There are obviously loads of benefits in getting children to walk or cycle to school. That is why there is such an ambitious

target in the cycling and walking investment strategy. When thinking about the environment immediately around a school, everything that can be done to discourage people from driving their children to school, such as school streets and restrictions on motor traffic going near schools, are really important in sending a clear signal to make the easiest choice of walking or cycling.

Zak Viney: On funding, one thing Living Streets called for in the evidence we submitted with our Safer Streets for All report is a dedicated routes to school fund and school streets fund. Over the next five years, CIWIS3 is hugely focusing on walked, wheeled and cycled journeys to school, which we really welcome.

We deliver, as I mentioned, a walk to school programme on behalf of the UK Government, but we have been using an amazing tool called school route audit. We are doing things on behalf of children, but it is really important to put the microphone on the children and ask them what they want in their school environment. It is a very powerful thing to bring local authorities along. Children have a right, in my opinion, to walk, wheel and cycle to school if they choose and to play on the streets.

Going back to culture, which we were speaking about earlier, this is a win-win. We can really embed healthy habits for life, and we will see the various benefits of that over decades.

Dan Campsall: As we said in our written evidence, which I have echoed here, we need to start with function. School streets or low-traffic neighbourhoods are a great example of that. The low-traffic neighbourhoods implemented in London reduced KSIs by 37%. There is evidence that they work from a safety benefit point of view, but if we just take these smaller and localised geographic areas, we fail to achieve the benefits that are available across the entire network.

The first time I found, in documents from DFT, that we discussed a national functional road hierarchy—where we basically thrash out what we expect these roads to do, how we expect them to perform, what kinds of activity we want to go on them and what kinds of speeds and infrastructure we should have in place—was 1998. We have been talking about it for 30 years, and it is at the heart of delivering a safe system. Yes, let us look at school streets. My kids cycle four miles to school, so localising the infrastructure around their school is great, but they are off it in 30 seconds. They still have 3.5 miles of journey to make.

Q144 **Daniel Francis:** Does the strategy do enough to recognise the link between accessibility and road safety, particularly in terms of how disabled people experience and navigate the road?

Kate Carpenter: CIHT has done a lot of guidance and training for the community around accessibility. Things such as mobility and visual impairment are reasonably well understood, albeit that there is still poor compliance with the design guidance. Neurological impairment is an

increasing issue from a transport point of view. Dementia and autism, for example, change how people perceive the highways. People who are fearful or uncertain about their journey, the place and public realm—shared space in streets in urban areas—even if they are safer in those places but do not feel safe, they do not go there and social isolation is then the threat.

There is a road safety issue. There is an accessibility issue in having access to transport in urban and rural areas, but it comes back to the public health prize of social engagement and access to goods and services. People are disproportionately unable to get to education, employment, shops or medical facilities if routes do not meet their needs or they feel they do not meet their needs. Perception is everything when you leave your front door; you are not sure that you will get there. It only takes the lack of one dropped kerb to make a whole route inaccessible. The bus stop might be accessible, the bus might be accessible, but if you cannot get to the bus stop it is academic.

Zak Viney: I was really happy to see this question on the billing. Road safety does not only disproportionately affect those with accessibility issues; it is also a racialised issue. I am really glad that the Government reflect this within the strategy. People from an ethnic minority and deprived area are three times more likely to be killed or seriously injured walking on Britain's roads than a white person from a non-deprived area. Disabled people are five times more likely to be injured than non-disabled people, which is quite a startling statistic.

I mentioned this earlier but it does not speak for roadsides and enabling the things Kate so articulately mentioned. Living Streets would advocate for clear pavements. We might move on to this when speaking about the manual for streets, but I will give us a starter for 10 anyway.

I would not want to conflate the manual for streets with the requirement for appropriate pedestrian design guidance. Cycling has LTN 1/20, which has been doing some really good things but the "And walking" is in very small text. A lot of the time, when you speak about the public realm people struggle to articulate what that means for walking.

The manual for streets considers all the factors you mentioned and undercuts things such as micromobility, storage and accessibility. We are facing new technologies, and in 2026 a real competition for kerbside space. You will expect me to go back to pavement parking but indulge me and I will give you a different issue. We have seen private organisations operate delivery robots in various areas of the UK. These are a huge obstruction for wheelchair users and visually impaired people. At the moment, they are operating in areas with no national regulatory framework. There is a culture here that is driven by private interests first in trial without consultation. Surely these delivery robots should not come at the convenience of pedestrians.

I will close my bit on robots by saying that they are already being banned in North American cities such as Toronto and parts of Pittsburgh and Chicago, but that is not everywhere. I read yesterday that Pennsylvania has changed high-rise regulations to give delivery robots the same status as pedestrians. What is that saying about accessibility? We need the legal status of delivery robots, also known as PDDs, clarifying and we would advocate for them to be excluded from upcoming micromobility regulation. Are we making our footways more accessible? No, the scales are taking us the other way.

Q145 **Daniel Francis:** I am the parent of a wheelchair user with a severe sight impairment so I live and breathe these issues. I heard what you said about neurological conditions but do you think there is still a need for that stronger guidance? We will see more guidance on mobility hopefully coming forward for the blind, visually impaired and wheelchair users.

Zak Viney: Yes, absolutely. Pavement parking is a particular issue as it forces those with accessibility requirements who are visually impaired and/or use wheelchairs into the road. We are working closely with the national Government to produce robust guidance. Coming back to a general theme today, it would be great if the national Government had strong advocacy and accountability to local authorities on these issues. I do not have any more detail to go into on that but other people might.

Kate Carpenter: When we talk about the safe system, two aspects are often not included. The first is crime, the fear of crime and the design of areas that inherently feel safe. It is about lighting, locations and types of planters. It is about sight lines and those sorts of things that have a big impact. The second is suicide. That might seem to be an outlier, but one in five deaths on the strategic road network is suicide. It is a huge issue and it impacts the public realm because, for example, if you have a high bridge that might be a suicide risk and you put a very high parapet on it to reduce that suicide risk, you can then create a character that makes people fearful and reduces active travel.

For the interaction of people's experience as pedestrians or cyclists going about normal travel behaviour, persons at risk from a mental health perspective, or workers who get tied up in both those, then it is really important that they get picked up, as well as the micromobility links to crime. A lot of crime is on illegal electrical motorbikes.

Chair: I am going to press on because it would be good to get out of this heat in 10 minutes. A quick question on the manual for streets, Olly. Zak is not allowed to answer as he has already answered it.

Q146 **Olly Glover:** A quick-fire round here. If you had one suggestion for what the Department should include in the updated manual for streets to improve road safety, what would that be?

Zak Viney: I would—

Olly Glover: The Chair says that you have already given one.

Zak Viney: I might offer it anyway. I would advocate that the hierarchy of road users, as introduced in changes to the highway code in January 2022, is prevalent throughout and an accountability mechanism. What use is a strategy document or a manual if there is no incentivisation to keep to it?

Q147 **Olly Glover:** Who else would like to offer a quick suggestion?

Martin Wiltshire: The update should include strengthened clarity over vulnerable road users.

Sarah Whitebread: A vision-led approach is the important thing. What are we trying to encourage? What behaviour we are trying to encourage when we design these streets? Make the space for the types of transport we are trying to encourage: walking, cycling and more separated space. That will then have knock-on effects and improvements for road safety.

Kate Carpenter: Absolutely. It needs to be system-based but it also needs to have enough clarity in its status, because at the moment, a lot of local authorities are requiring the design manual for roads and bridges to be used as the design input for 20 mph, 30 mph and 40 mph schemes, because they feel it has status, certainty and standards written in a way that are clear and unambiguous, and they like that. A departure from standard is very clear so—

Q148 **Chair:** The manual for streets does not have the equivalent status?

Kate Carpenter: No.

Dan Campsall: I would circle back to this point on the clarity of function and having a clear functional hierarchy that is well described as to what roads should be doing and how they should perform.

Chair: There is some commonality, which is very helpful.

Q149 **Daniel Francis:** Given the evidence about the disproportionate risks cyclists face on the roads, do you think the strategy does enough to turn that evidence into practical measures to improve road safety?

Sarah Whitebread: I would go back to what I said at the start. The strategy is broad and it relies on lots of different parts of society to implement it. The critical thing for us is infrastructure, so that is going to be about the delivery of the cycling and walking investment strategy over the next period and how much investment goes into creating safe segregated cycle lanes to encourage more people to get out on their bikes. It is then going to be about speed. How quickly the Government move on things such as rural speed limits will have a really big impact on whether enough is done for cycling. This stuff on awareness around the highway code is really important as well. Those would be the critical things for us.

To quickly go back to investment, we have done some research with the IPPR looking at the amount of investment you need to create a really

safe, high-quality cycle network across the country. It comes out at about 10% of the transport budget every year, so around £50 a head. At the moment, if you look at the £4.5 billion allocated in CIWIS3, it comes out at around 3% depending on whether you include HS2 and some other bits. Essentially, we are looking for a magnitude of investment significantly more than is currently in the ambition of the Government on this.

Q150 **Chair:** Do you think the road safety measures set out in the third cycling and walking investment strategy are sufficiently ambitious?

Zak Viney: Yes, because it includes a KPI to do with perception of safety. Why is that not in the road safety strategy as well?

Q151 **Chair:** Interesting. Anyone else?

Sarah Whitebread: The ambition is there but it is about delivering.

Q152 **Alex Mayer:** Motorcyclists make up 1% of traffic but about one in five road deaths. Do you think that the strategy adequately addresses the infrastructure risks that they face and what can Project PRIME—Perceptual Rider Information for Maximising Expertise and Enjoyment—realistically achieve?

Dan Campsall: Project PRIME is fantastic, and at this point it would be worth acknowledging Alex Stedmon, who led that work and sadly passed away quite recently. It works in specific circumstances. It helps riders find their way around curves on rural roads. It therefore reduces some conflicts, but the exposure of motorcyclists, particularly at higher speeds, is still a persistent problem that is quite difficult to reconcile within the boundary of the safe system, because they are ostensibly vulnerable and moving at high speed. We arguably need to look at the powered two-wheeler piece in its fullest sense, because we have touched on powerful electrically power-assisted cycles that are now being used extensively in urban areas for food delivery and those sorts of things. We need a more systemic look at protecting those on powered two-wheelers.

Martin Wiltshire: Education, training and publicity play an important part along with enforcement by the police.

Kate Carpenter: At the Society of Road Safety Auditors conference that CIHT holds every year, I heard in detail about the PRIME initiative and how it worked. It did 22 sites and got a reduction in speed and an improvement in lane positioning at those sites. It is helpful that there are not many measures that work in places where you do not do them. The riders who learn at those locations where to position on a rural bend can then use that skill in places where the markings are not present. It is quite an unusual one as it is essentially a conditioning tool. It helps you to learn how to position.

Q153 **Alex Mayer:** Do we need more pilots or should we just get on and roll it out?

Kate Carpenter: For PRIME specifically, it primarily only tackles single vehicle loss of control collisions or losing control and going under somebody else. The motorcycle error positioning on bends is a brilliant tool that helps in other places, but many other collision types involving motorcyclists are disproportionately turning collisions.

Motorcycle Law Scotland did a fantastic session at the auditors event looking at large numbers of motorcycle collisions. It showed videos of the collisions and explained in each case the legal action taken on road users and motorcyclists, where they were found to be partly responsible for the outcome—either the causation of the collision or the severity of injury—because of their speed, positioning, and attention to other users.

It struck me that we know little about some rider understanding and behaviour. Education is tricky. If it were easy, we would have been doing it years ago. You tend to educate the people who want to know, and often the people who most need the knowledge may not come forward and take part. Messaging is critical for the motorcycling community, positioning it where it is helpful and useful and not nanny state nagging and deterring enjoyment.

Chair: Thank you ever so much for your time, everybody. That concludes today's session. We did zip through a couple of questions that you might have prepped for, so write to us if there is anything you feel you have not been able to cover in your answers this morning. We will continue this inquiry in a few weeks' time.