

**Written evidence submitted by Retired Traffic Sergeant Mike Rawson
(RSM0119)**

I am grateful for the opportunity to submit additional evidence to the committee.

The committee has heard from various experts, engineers and representatives of motoring organisations and has received a wealth of statistics all of which will contribute to the committee's Report.

I would like to explain the human aspect of fatal and serious accidents on Britain's high speed motorways, the devastating effects upon families of those killed, the life changing implications for those seriously injured and, to a lesser extent the effects on those whose job it is to deal with accidents and who witness scenes often too horrific to describe.

Responding to calls to very serious accidents is stressful but during my service I had the benefit of the Emergency Hard Shoulders to facilitate progress to the scene.

On *All Lane Running* motorways this facility no longer exists making progress extremely slow (especially for wide fire engines) so delaying arrival at the scene. This simply adds to the stress of first responders.

In the most serious accidents victims are either dead or seriously injured, many trapped in extensively damaged vehicles some of which have been 'shortened' to almost half their original length.

In high speed impacts victims are sometimes conscious but seriously injured and in excruciating pain.

Being unable to help a fellow human being in their time of acute suffering is distressing and immensely frustrating and watching a person die is a dreadful experience, regardless of how hardened emergency workers have become over the years.

When the deceased persons have been cut free from the wreckage of their vehicles they are placed in body bags and conveyed to the mortuary, only stopping outside of A & E for a doctor to enter the ambulance to pronounce life extinct.

Then comes the distressing task of meeting family members at the mortuary where they must identify their loved ones. People who lose family members in road traffic accidents experience unspeakable sorrow and distress because death is so final and so very hard to accept.

Almost all of the serious accidents I dealt with were avoidable, due in most cases to bad and inattentive driving by people behind the wheel of their vehicle.

But, the advent of *All Lane Running* motorways, where the most important safety feature on a motorway has been deliberately removed, has added a new factor when proportioning blame for deaths and serious injuries.

For the Collision Investigator, assessing blame for the accident, there is a simple question –

‘If there had been an Emergency Hard Shoulder present, would this accident have happened?’

When the answer is 99% certain the accident would NOT have happened, there is only one conclusion to be reached – the *All Lane Running* policy, which abolished the Emergency Hard Shoulder, is ultimately responsible for the death and serious injury.

When seeking to defend its *All Lane Running* policy, Highways England make it very clear there are no Emergency Hard Shoulders on the country’s ‘A’ Roads which they insist are little different to motorways as they are subject to the same national speed limit of 70mph.

If there is no difference between a motorway and an ‘A’ Road, why are there no Regional Control Centres, no gantries and no Highways England Traffic Officers patrolling the ‘A’ Road network?

We all know that on most ‘A’ Roads it is possible to pull onto the grass verge out of the path of traffic but this option is not available on motorways with crash barriers next to the nearside lane.

At this point I feel it essential to stress the opposition to Smart Motorways relates *only* to the abolition of the most important safety feature, the Emergency Hard Shoulder. It is the *All Lane Running* aspect of the Smart Motorway policy which will never be acceptable to the majority of people.

I do not dispute the Smart, or Controlled Motorway, is a welcome addition to safety and there is no doubt mandatory variable speed limits and stop signs have contributed to a reduction in accidents.

But a stationary vehicle in a live lane used by vehicles travelling at 100 feet per second is a very serious accident waiting to happen.

A motorway without an Emergency Hard Shoulder is like a cruise ship without lifeboats.

I hope the committee will put the following question to Baroness Vere, and the witnesses from Highways England, when they appear before the committee on June 30th :-

'If, late at night, you were to receive a phone call from members of your family telling you they were broken down in a live lane of a motorway with no emergency hard shoulder and unable to reach an Emergency Refuge Area – would you:-

- (A) Be unconcerned and tell them not to worry?
- (B) Be frantic with worry?
- (C) Hope and pray they survive the terrifying experience?

Thank you for your time and I hope the committee recommends the return of Emergency Hard Shoulders and a complete stop to any more motorway conversions to dangerous *All Lane Running*.

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