

# Road Safety Stakeholders Event

## Committee for Infrastructure

### 1 Background

- 1.1 At its strategic planning meeting on 7 September 2016, the Committee for Infrastructure agreed that one of its strategic priorities would be to work with the Department for Infrastructure and other stakeholders to highlight road safety and to encourage the implementation of policy measures to decrease the number of road deaths in Northern Ireland.
- 1.2 In a first step towards this aim the Committee agreed to begin engagement on Road Safety by holding a stakeholder event on Road Safety at 5:00 pm on 23 November 2016 in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings, Belfast.
- 1.3 The event was organised as a round table discussion on how to improve road safety. A wide range of organisations were invited, a list of which can be found at Appendix 1.
- 1.4 To aid the discussion, the night began with four presentations. The first was a presentation from Mr Chris Sherrard, whose father died in a road accident and who, in campaigning on road safety outlined the personal impact of losing a close relative to a road accident.
- 1.5 The other three presentations focused on the central themes of Road Safety: Education, Engineering and Enforcement. Liz Loughlan, Director, Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division, Greg McClelland, Road Safety Policy Manager, Transport NI and Assistant Chief Constable, Alan Todd, PSNI provided short overviews of current policy, strategy and any issues on these three themes.
- 1.6 After the presentations, participants were invited to move to the bottom of the front steps of Parliament Buildings to see a mock-up of a road accident site, facilitated by the Fire and Rescue Service, the Ambulance Service and the PSNI.
- 1.7 On the return to their tables after visiting the road accident mock-up the participants were instructed to consider an aid memoir. This included a list of interventions under the 3 headings which have been used to attempt to improve road safety worldwide. Participants were asked to discuss with those sitting at their table what interventions they could agree would make the most difference to road safety if concerted action was taken and to discuss what that action should be.
- 1.8 A note taker recorded the discussion at each table. At the end of the discussions a rapporteur at each table reported the tables discussions and conclusions to the plenary group. This feedback was recorded by Hansard.

## 2 Findings

### Education

2.1 The stakeholders identified early intervention as a crucial element of education policy regarding road safety. Stakeholders voiced the view that, while learning about road safety should be lifelong, there should be a greater degree of education in schools regarding the dangers of driving. The same outcome should be sought regarding mobile phones usage. To this end, teaching the Highway Code as part of the curriculum was suggested. Interactive education resources, such as the RADAR facility, should be made use of. The Roadsafe roadshow was viewed as being highly effective and impactful on young people.

#### *Driving test*

2.2 Some stakeholders raised concerns about the current theory test, arguing it focuses too heavily on driver skill, and not enough on driver attitude and behaviour. The hazard perception element was viewed by some as not being realistic. It was a concern that driving instructors do not teach what is not tested. Good driving attitudes and behaviours should be taught in addition to skills. It was suggested that the driving test could incorporate a staged accident to display the dangers which driving entails to all test-takers. 16-24 year olds are more likely to be involved in accidents due to inexperience. After 'R' plates are removed drivers can have a sense of invincibility, which must be combated.

2.3 Stakeholders voiced support for graduated licensing. Differing opinions were voiced regarding the re-testing of drivers, with the following options being mentioned:

- Retaking of tests every 5-10 years.
- Retaking of tests at the renewal of the 10-year licence.
- Retaking of tests upon reaching the age of 60.

2.4 Some favoured the introduction of logbooks in order to end the 'fast track approach' to learning to drive. However, logbook fraud may be hard to prevent. The advanced driving test is of a high quality, yet few take it without an incentive to do so. It could conceivably be made compulsory in certain circumstances, however this would be challenging as the testing system is struggling to cope with current, never mind additional demand. The advanced test could be made compulsory for:

- Drink drivers.
- Anyone involved in a major or fatal accident.
- People convicted of dangerous or careless driving.
- People over certain ages.

2.5 Another possibility would be adding the in-vehicle testing used in the advanced driving test to the standard driving test. In this system, candidates

would be asked to comment on their decisions (gear changes, brakes, acceleration, manoeuvres etc.). A refresher training course could be provided for older drivers, which would include eye testing. Those who pass the test should be taught that driving is a privilege, not a right, and made aware of the responsibilities they have to all other road users.

#### *Better joined up working*

- 2.6 One of the main challenges surrounding road safety policy is achieving a joined-up approach between government departments. The Road Safety Forum serves an important purpose in this respect, functioning as a forum for sharing information and thereby reducing needless duplication. Many organisations, particularly within the voluntary and community sectors, have not been fully included within joined-up efforts. However, partnership with community-based groups and sporting bodies have proven successful in educating the 21-24 age bracket. The reorganisation of departments has made the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) the clear leader on the issue of road safety.
- 2.7 The road safety message ought to be consistent across schools, and should be taught to pupils of all age groups, as all are road users in different ways. Practical, visually-based learning should be utilised, rather than solely using traditional classroom lessons. 3D goggles could be provided for children, for example. Personnel from the emergency services are respected and listened to, school pupils should have the opportunity to hear them speak on the issue.

#### *Protection of vulnerable road users*

- 2.8 People from all user groups need to be educated on how to safely use roads. As well as targeting drivers there should be education campaigns for pedestrians to use reflective clothing etc. and for vulnerable road users such as children and the elderly. Campaigns should promote respect for others on the road; pedestrian, cyclist or rider.

#### *Advertising Campaigns*

- 2.9 Stakeholders viewed hard-hitting advertising campaigns as necessary and effective, stating that young people in particular need to be shocked. However, they questioned whether television was the most effective medium for reaching young people: paid advertising on social media platforms could perhaps be utilised further. Advertising campaigns should specifically target:

- Mobile phone usage.
- Inattention.
- Novice drivers.
- Delivery vans/lorries.
- Cyclists (for whom the early morning is a particularly dangerous time).
- Speeding.
- Drink driving.
- Seatbelt usage.

- 2.10 As shock and awe tactics only work for a short period of time, peer pressure is a more powerful motivation for safe driving in the long-term. Education should serve to inform of law enforcement and penalties for breaking the law. It was noted that the combination of advertising and the threat of jail sentences have led to a reduction in the number of RTCs since 2001/2. There may be a role for local celebrities to serve as positive role models, and become the 'face' of road safety through advertising campaigns.
- 2.11 Cyclists need better training specifically to deal with traffic islands and to avoid adopting aggressive positions in middle of the road or blocking cars attempting to overtake in a tight space.

## **Engineering**

- 2.12 While stakeholders recognised that DfI is doing what it can with limited resources, it was noted that other UK regions spend twice as much, per km of road than in Northern Ireland.
- 2.13 There was agreement that dual carriageways are in need of upgrading, with dual carriageway safety an issue needing addressed. Present levels of traffic have significantly increased the danger on dual carriageways. Central barriers are essential, and the policy of grade-separated junctions should be continued. There is a need to cut out the cross-overs, as often motorists fail to recognise they are on a dual carriageway rather than a motorway.
- 2.14 The Ambulance service revealed that defective footways are leading to a large number of falls.
- 2.15 Surface dressing of roads can be a good way of adding protection to the carriageway surface, sealing it from the ingress of water while also enhancing its skid resistance. However, loose chippings, when used as surface dressing can be hazardous to motorcyclists.
- 2.16 The removal of central white lines was raised as an issue in light of the successful application of this measure in the Netherlands and Germany. Opinion was split on the matter, with some highlighting it leads to a reduction in speed and others remaining sceptical as to its effectiveness in a Northern Irish context.
- 2.17 The colour coding of road lines to indicate speed limits was discussed, but it remains unclear if such a measure would lead to an increase or decrease in the current levels of uncertainty regarding speed limits.
- 2.18 It was observed that winding roads and pot holes can effectively act as traffic calming measures.
- 2.19 Pedestrian infrastructure is currently an afterthought at best. Examples were given where an absence of parking spaces is leading to cars parking on the side of the road, forcing walkers into the middle of the road in areas which are often poorly lit.

### *Protecting Pedestrians*

- 2.20 Across Europe, the pedestrianisation of city centres is becoming more common. This is often to combat congestion but have other positive benefits. The examples of Oslo, Malaga and Dublin were given. Road engineering must accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists, for example providing safe routes for children to walk to school. There is a need to build infrastructure which reverses the trend of increasing car use, such as improving public transport and introducing better cycling facilities. Cycling infrastructure in particular ought to be built in to new road projects, rather than being added at higher cost at a later stage. In view of the aim to improve public transport facilities, current reductions in train services are discouraging. The Department and Sustrans are currently working on a strategy to open up greenways and this is welcome. Overall, a cultural shift is needed to reach an understanding that roads are a shared space.

### *Speed Limits*

- 2.21 Restrictions on lorry speeds can lead to dangerous overtaking from other road users. Results of a Scottish pilot scheme regarding freight and lorry speed limits should be requested and analysed.
- 2.22 The need to review speed limits was discussed. The widespread application of the national speed limit, particularly on rural roads, was identified as an area to be looked at. While speed limits could be changed, contributors felt that efforts to educate drivers that the nature of the road should dictate speed, and that 60mph is not an aim but a maximum limit, would be more advisable.
- 2.23 Some advocated a speed limit review, but questioned the effectiveness of such regulation when cars are engineered to reach high speeds. There could be potential benefits to raising the motorway speed limit to 80mph. Confusion around speed limits on certain roads has an adverse effect on road safety.

### *Vehicle technology*

- 2.24 Black box technology could be encouraged. Currently some insurers offer discounted rates for young drivers with this installed. This technology allows for a monthly review of driving, with the price of insurance fluctuating as a result. This is a key road safety resource which can help to educate people about bad driving. It provides a real opportunity to use data to educate road users and alter their behaviour.
- 2.25 Consensus among stakeholders was that the UK government should intervene in order to incentivise the use of safe vehicle technology in manufacturing. A role for insurance companies was identified in promoting safer practices – incentivising ‘black-box’ technology with reduced premiums.
- 2.26 Heavy Goods Vehicles have dangerous blind spots. 75% of cycling fatalities in London are caused by 5% of traffic, mainly HGVs. Dublin, by comparison, has largely banned these vehicles from the city centre.

- 2.27 Manufacturers should fit more car models with speed limiters. These are welcomed by insurance companies and transport companies.
- 2.28 Self-Drive and autonomist vehicles – these are the future in driving. Self-driving vehicles could conceivably lower the number of collisions, by removing human error, which accounts for 95% of all accidents. There are, however, huge insurance questions that need to be resolved – for instance, who is responsible for a collision due to an incorrect road sign?

## **Enforcement**

- 2.29 Camera safety scheme should be used to prosecute for other motoring offences such as insurance, taxation and seatbelt offences. Long-distance cameras should also be employed. Any increase in speed cameras and spot testing would be welcome. Speed awareness course was viewed by stakeholders as an overwhelmingly positive tool. The question was posed if the course could be rolled out to all for wider usage, rather than limited to those caught speeding.
- 2.30 Potential roles for community groups in enforcement could be considered, as could the role of new technologies such as telemetry. Lessons for the future must be learned from the first driverless car fatality in California. The Psychological implications of driverless cars are important: will people be more or less safe if they relinquish control?

### *Mobile phone use*

- 2.31 Mobile phone use must be tackled as a priority. The level of offence must be increased, as in GB, with newer drivers losing their license and an effective two strike rate for experienced drivers. The consensus among contributors was that fines for such offenses are not punitive enough. There should be a fixed penalty for careless driving.
- 2.32 It may be beneficial to look at the wording of mobile phone use offences. If the current offense is 'using', a change of wording to 'holding' could make a significant impact. This would make it easier to secure a conviction, which would in turn act as a deterrent. The key challenge in this area is that mobile phone distraction is not limited to making a call. Smartphones are now devices that support social media usage, internet surfing and the watching of media. There ought to be a recognition that hands-free phone calls are still a distraction for drivers.

### *Drink Driving*

- 2.33 Austerity has led to a rise in incidents. Enforcement is only as good as the availability of policing. Contributors noted that previously, cut backs in winter drink driving checks have led to an increase in drink driving convictions, as reduced enforcement creates an impression that people can get away with inappropriate behaviour. Concerns were raised that current testing equipment

is not sensitive enough. A focus on next-morning driving is needed. There is a need for education on how long alcohol stays in the system. The history of drink driving should be explored. A societal change has been achieved over many years. How this happened should be considered. Again, contributors argued that stiffer penalties are required. Driving is a privilege: losing the privilege would enforce this attitude. Some proposed the creation of a new drug offence, currently in existence in GB and the ROI but not NI.

#### *Other Issues*

- 2.34 It was noted that Sweden has an excellent record on road safety – NI should be analysing their education, engineering and enforcement strategies.
- 2.35 There are issues relating to road safety that particularly affect vulnerable road users and those with disabilities:
- Pavement café licensing on occasion pushes people into the road as footpath space is reduced.
  - Cars parked on footpaths pose a massive problem for those with sight disabilities. This needs to be addressed through legislation and enforcement.
  - Modal shift can reduce congestion and RTCs – resulting in more funding for public transport.
- 2.36 The way in which accidents are recorded can have a big impact in what lessons are taken. While primary causation factors are noted secondary and tertiary causes should also be examined to give a truer picture of circumstances. For example, while a person involved in an RTC may have taken alcohol, and this becomes the primary causation factor, it may lead to another issue being missed.

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## Appendix 1 List of Attendees

### Table 1

Angela Bell	Department for Justice
John McPoland	Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust
Andrew Murray	Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation
Maura McMenamin	Ulster GAA
Orla McCann	Disability Action
Colin Neill	Hospitality Ulster
Gordon Finlay	20's Plenty for Us
Eve Bremner	CCMS
MLA	
Note-taker	

### Table 2

Peter May	Department for Infrastructure
Alan Walmsley	Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust
Sam Knox	Road Safe NI
Attendant	Mid and East Antrim District Council
Susan Spratt	The British Horse Society
Gordon Clarke	Sustrans
Michael McKenna	YouthAction Northern Ireland
MLA	
Note-taker	

### Table 3

Pat Delaney	Department for Infrastructure
Maurice Rafferty	Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service
Joan Kinniard	Road Safe NI
Andrew McClenaghan	Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation
Barry Flood	European Cyclists' Federation
Aidan Campbell	Rural Community Network
Michael Lorimer	IMTAC
MLA	
Note-taker	

### Table 4

Liz Loughran	Department for Infrastructure
Attendant	Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service
David Jackson	Road Safe NI
Cllr Keith Elliott	Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Michael Reid	Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster
Howard Anderson	British Motorcyclists Federation
Brendan Walshe	Road Haulage Association
MLA	
Note-taker	

**Table 5**

Greg McClelland	Department for Infrastructure
Alan Todd	PSNI
Carol Follis	Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Donal O'Hagan	Boys & Girls Clubs (NI)
Joe Weir	Association of Driving Instructors
Brian Kenny	Road Haulage Association
Richard MLA	ICE NI
Note-taker	

**Table 6**

Diane Pennington	PSNI
Dermot Harrigan	Derry City and Strabane District Council
Alison Irvine	Boys Brigade NI
Seamus Leheny	Freight Transport Association
Karen Mawhinney	Sustrans
John Murray	Ulster-Scots Community Network
Freddie Patterson	Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation
MLA	
Note-taker	

**Table 7**

Lynda Hurley	Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division
Brian Chambers	Education and Skills Authority
James Bingham	Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
Michael Gallagher	Irish Football Association
Kieran McCullagh	NI AXA Insurance dac
Fiona McAleenan	Public Prosecution Service
Bill Bradford	NI Road Safety Partnership
MLA	
Note-taker	

## Appendix 2 Invitation to the Road Safety Stakeholder Event and Itinerary



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**William Humphrey MLA, Chairperson  
Committee for Infrastructure**

27 October 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Committee for Infrastructure has agreed that one of its strategic priorities is to work with the Department and others to highlight road safety and to decrease the number of road deaths in Northern Ireland.

To begin an engagement on Road Safety the Committee is holding a **Road Safety Event at 5:00 PM on 23 November 2016 in the Members Dining Room and then the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings, Belfast.**

The Committee would welcome your attendance at the event.

Food will be served on arrival at the event followed by short presentations on Road Safety policy. A round table discussion will then take place on how to improve road safety. The Committee is very interested in the views of you and your organisation or group.

I have provided a draft itinerary of the event for your information.

Please indicate via email to [Committee.Infrastructure@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:Committee.Infrastructure@niassembly.gov.uk) whether or not you will be in attendance at the event. If you require any further information please contact the Committee Clerk, Cathie White, on 028 9052 1448.

Yours sincerely,

**William Humphrey MLA**

**Chairperson**

## **Draft Itinerary for Road Safety Event**

- 5:00 pm – 5:45 pm **Registration** - food provided
- 5:45 pm – 5:50 pm **Welcome** – William Humphrey, Chairperson of the Committee for Infrastructure
- 5:50 pm – 6:00 pm **Testimony of individual impacted by a Road Accident**
- 6:00 pm – 6:10 pm **Engineering** – Policy and Practice
- 6:10 pm – 6:20 pm **Education** - Policy and Practice
- 6:20 pm – 6:30 pm **Enforcement** - Policy and Practice
- 6:30 pm – 6:45 pm **Road Collision Scene** – Bottom of front steps of Parliament Buildings
- 6:45 pm – 6:50 pm **Outline of round table discussion** - William Humphrey
- 6:50 pm – 7:40 pm **Round Table Discussion**
- 7:40 pm – 8:20 pm **Feedback Session**
- 8:20 pm – 8:25 pm **Concluding Remarks** - William Humphrey

## Appendix 3 Template for the Table discussion

### **Committee for Infrastructure – Road Safety Event**

#### **Round Table Exercise**

Leading on from the 3 presentations on the topics of Education, Engineering and Enforcement, participants are asked to review the following lists of issues which are important for the continued improvement in road safety.

Participants are asked to consider the lists within their groups and highlight 3- 5 issues in each category which they can agree, if there was a concerted effort, would have the most positive impact on road safety. Discuss what could be done to improve on current practice in these areas.

Groups are asked to spend 15 minutes on each list to ensure that they all get equal consideration.

After the discussions each group will be asked to provide feedback to the plenary.

Thank you.

**What more can be done to improve road safety?**

**Brainstorm what works?**

**Of this list what would be the most effective, value for money and feasible monitoring**

**There are a broad range of measures that can be implemented to improve road safety which can be adapted to suit regional, national and local conditions.**

possible explanations for changes: economy, weather, numbers of young people.

uncontrollable external environmental, social and economic factors: that can have positive or negative impacts on road safety. It is also worth considering if trends such as the re-stabilisation of speed and drink driving convictions are down to better compliance or an issue of enforcement – particularly given the corresponding increase in overall casualties and fatalities and the slowing of reductions to serious injury.

1. Improve education and training of road users
2. Increase enforcement of road rules
3. Safer road infrastructure
4. Safer vehicles
5. Promote the use of modern technology to increase road safety
6. Improve emergency and post-injuries services
7. Protect vulnerable road users

NI's Road Safety Strategy included targets aimed at protecting two particularly vulnerable groups; children (0-15 years) and young adults (16-24):

## Education

### *Education/training of road users*

Changes to driver testing

New post-test qualification

Update theory test

### *Advertising campaigns*

Increase campaigns throughout the year

Engagement with new social media platforms

Lifelong education

Specific Campaigns

- Raise public awareness of driving after taking some prescription or over the counter drugs and illegal drugs.
- Inattention campaigns
- Campaigns focusing on the important function of parents as role models
- Campaigns on “reading the road”
- Raise awareness of the dangers of fatigue among drivers.
- Mobile phone use
- Safe crossing by pedestrians
- Awareness of intoxicated pedestrians
- Awareness of blind spots on HCVs
- Road users and workers at road works
- Novice drivers
- Delivery vans and lorries (cause more serious consequences in a collision)

### *Protection of vulnerable road users*

Six groups of road users have a higher change of falling victim to road accidents:

- Pedestrians
- Cyclists
- Motorcyclists
- Motor scooterists (although motor scooterists also cause traffic accidents),
- Children
- Elderly

### *Other possible issues*

Improvement of emergency/post-injury services

Better Joined up-working

Research, Evaluation and Monitoring - Exchange of best practice and conduct research

Embed road safety in planning process

A new website for the comparison of local performance information

Develop a portal for road safety professionals

Undertake annual surveys of speed, seatbelt usage and other road user behaviours and Safety, publish findings each year



## Enforcement

Targeted operations of traffic law enforcement on:

- Impaired driving (alcohol and drugs)
- Restraint/helmet use
- Mobile phone use

Increased enforcement to raise the perceived risk of being caught.

Conduct speed limit review

Increase use of speeding cameras and spot testing

Review legislation prohibiting Mobile phone use to make it more enforceable and more of a deterrent.

Reduce the drink drive limit.

Seek powers from the UK Government to set drink drive limits

Introduce powers for the police to carry out breath testing anytime, anywhere.

Promote the use of data enabled roadside breath screening devices.

Enhance road side detection of drink and drugs.

Introduce a fixed penalty offence for careless driving

Increase penalty fines

Withdrawal of statutory option for (blood test) drink drivers

Create new drug offence – dealing with specific drugs

Enhance power to seize vehicles

Take tough approach to those who cause unsafe situations:

## Engineering

### Safer infrastructure/road layouts

- Removal of central white lines
- Ramps
- Improve road environment incl. lines, lighting verges, barriers
- Develop design guidelines for forgiving roadsides
- Self-explanatory roads
- Reduction in distractions outside the vehicle
- Rumble strips on country roads
- Central crash barriers on major roads
- Local speed limits at rural junctions
- Variable speed limit signs
- Develop cycling infrastructure

### Vehicle safety - Developing use of modern technologies

- Black boxes
- Lane monitors
- Blind spot detection systems
- Drowsiness detection systems
- Emergency braking systems

## **Appendix 4 Hansard of the Road Safety Stakeholder Event**



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Infrastructure

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Road Safety Stakeholder Event

23 November 2016

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

## Committee for Infrastructure

### Road Safety Stakeholder Event

23 November 2016

**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr William Humphrey (Chairperson)  
Mr George Robinson (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Kellie Armstrong  
Mr Alex Easton  
Mr Fra McCann  
Mr Daniel McCrossan  
Mr Justin McNulty

**Witnesses:**

Mr Aidan Stennett	Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service
Mr Donal O'Hagan	Boys and Girls Clubs (NI)
Ms Liz Loughran	Department for Infrastructure
Mr Greg McClelland	Department for Infrastructure
Dr Andrew Murray	Department for Infrastructure
Mr Pat Delaney	Driver and Vehicle Agency
Mr Christopher Sherrard	
Mr Bill Bradford	Northern Ireland Road Safety Partnership
Assistant Chief Constable Alan Todd	Police Service of Northern Ireland

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** May I have your attention, please? I am George Robinson, the Deputy Chair of the Infrastructure Committee. The Chair, William Humphrey, introduced himself about 10 minutes ago.

We now have the opportunity to listen to one person who has been there and is using his pain to make sure that others do not suffer in the way that his family has. We are privileged to have with us tonight Mr Christopher Sherrard, who will share his personal experience of the continuing trauma that his family has been subject to after his father, Wilson Sherrard, was killed after a road collision earlier this year. We are very grateful to Christopher for coming this evening. He will, of course, speak about the circumstances surrounding his father's tragic accident and how his family is bravely using their grief to highlight the road safety message.

After Mr Sherrard's testimony, we will have three presentations on the central themes of road safety: education, engineering and enforcement. Liz Loughran, the director of the road safety and vehicle regulation division in the Department, Greg McClelland, road safety policy manager in Transport Northern Ireland and Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Alan Todd from the PSNI have been good enough to provide the presentations, all of which will provide an overview of current policy, strategy and any issues. I am really grateful to those three people for coming to this very important seminar

that we are using to highlight the dangers and so forth on our roads nowadays. Just this morning, we had another fatality on the Glenshane Pass in my constituency. I am sure that our sympathies go out to the poor families who have been impacted by that tragic event.

Without further ado, we call on Christopher to give us his testimony on the situation that he and his family have been left in after the tragic death of his father. *[Applause.]*

**Mr Christopher Sherrard:** Tuesday 2 August was just like any other day until 5.20pm, when my wife, Rachel, received a call that nobody wants to receive, which informed her that my father had been seriously injured in a car crash and that the family should get to Altnagelvin Hospital as quickly as possible. When we arrived, the police liaison officer was waiting for us, and two police officers were also present.

When we entered A&E, we did not know what to expect. We were shepherded into the family room in the resuscitation unit, a room that was very cramped and had only six chairs. The police liaison officer informed us what had happened and that they were waiting for an update on my dad's condition from the medical team. It was mayhem, with family members arriving and doctors all trying to get into the family room. When the surgeon arrived, he gave a preliminary assessment of my dad's condition, and we knew that it was bad. He did not mention that my dad could die, although he did say that he had died twice at the side of the road.

After about 30 minutes, we were taken to the intensive care unit to await feedback. The medical team let the family in to see my dad. He was in a bad way. His head was swollen to twice its size, his stomach was packed with padding that was saturated in blood, he has glass sticking in his eye and his face was badly lacerated. He had chunks out of his arms and he was cold. Empty bags of blood were lying everywhere. The surgeon's medical team escorted us back to the waiting room.

After a few moments, the surgeon came back into the room to inform us that my dad's condition had worsened. I had to watch my mum get down on her hands and knees and plead with the surgeon to save my dad's life and not to let him die, as she had been with him since she was 16 and could not live without him. She was in a bad state.

We were taken back into the theatre and were told straight away that the blood was not clotting and that my dad would die within two minutes. Everybody looked at each other in total disbelief. My mum held his hand, my brother cried, and the rest of the family just froze. I put my hands on his head and he died.

It was an unreal situation; the room just went, "boom". Everybody started squealing. My mum dropped to the floor, and I could not move. I had spoken to him at 2.50 pm and to have him on that theatre bed fully busted up and dead just did not register at that moment. For a split second, I could have wrecked that theatre room. Only for the fact that I do not do aggression, that room would have been trashed. That is how intense it was. From then on, our lives have been a living hell.

The next day, the police liaison officer called to tell us what had happened and informed us that my dad's body was in Belfast waiting for a post-mortem. The next few days were just a blur, but it took my Mum's mind off things, as we had over 1,000 people at the wake and my dad was in every newspaper in the county. He even got the whole front page of the 'News Letter'.

At his funeral, the witness who was first on the scene called to ask how we were doing. He was called Paul Deeney. He told us what he had seen and told us that he was with my dad and did not leave his side until the paramedics arrived. He was in pieces. That poor man saw a living hell and is now a major part of our family, as we are helping each other to deal with the after-effects of the crash. We could not have buried our dad the way that we did if Paul had not called. It helped so much to know that someone was with dad and that he was not on his own. It calmed my mum down and stopped her from having a mental breakdown.

A few weeks after the crash, I was given the opportunity to speak on Radio Foyle and articles were placed in the 'Londonderry Sentinel', 'The Derry Journal', the 'Belfast Telegraph' and the 'Donegal News' to make people aware of the hazards on the road and to take care while driving.

My family has an issue with the lack of an aftercare service for families bereaved through road traffic accidents (RTAs) that I have been pressing with local councils and councillors in the north-west and further afield. We received a book from Brake, which helped a bit, and a book to read to my children about what happens when someone dies in a car crash, but there was no one to call at home to see if

the family were dealing with the complex issues that arise after a fatality on the roads. Our police liaison officer has been fantastic, but that role is more aimed at the investigation etc, not the emotional impact that RTAs have on families. Families should be fast-tracked to counselling services. My mum was referred by the doctor and is still waiting for counselling. He prescribed her antidepressants and that was all. At the moment, I am the only person in my family to have had counselling as I work in the NHS. The witnesses who were at the crash are just left to seek help on their own, and that is not good enough.

I have been told that, between a person dying on the roads and the end of the court case, roughly £1.8 million is spent. How much of that money is spent on supporting families of the victims and witnesses? Every time I mention issues, the response that I get is that some families might not want to be pushed into counselling and to get support. My response is that they would at least be given the opportunity to say yes or no instead of getting nothing, as is the case at the moment. Recently, after much pressing, I have been informed that there are groups out there who help with bereavement, but things are so fast-moving that those groups are sometimes missed. That is why, at some stage down the line, it would be great to have a coordinator who could help families to get the support they need in a few days and for them to be made aware of those groups in person. The after-effects on families are immense, and every bit of help that we can get would be greatly appreciated. I hope that if anything can be taken from this speech it is that more needs to be done to help families, not only my family but all who are grieving and families who have not yet had a loved one killed on the roads. Today, we have just had another one. I know exactly what that family is going through and what they will go through tonight.

Just before I finish, I would like to thank the MLAs — Gary Middleton, William Humphrey and George — Councillors Deborah Ramsey, Maurice Devenney, the chairman of the Foyle and District Road Safety Committee, Davy Jackson and, finally, our Infrastructure Minister, Chris Hazzard, who have all taken time to listen to me and ensure that I had this opportunity tonight, and for that I will be eternally grateful. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** I take this opportunity to thank Christopher. He has given us some food for thought by describing some of the difficulties his family went through during and after the tragedy. As a Committee, we will endeavour to take your situation on board. Thank you again for your very moving speech.

Chris Hazzard, the Minister, is here. At the very beginning, I omitted to welcome Chris to our meeting and members of our Infrastructure Committee. It is good to see that so many have attended this evening. It just shows us how important this seminar is. We appreciate your attendance.

I hope that you all are getting something out of the night so far and have focused your minds sufficiently to engage in the next part of the night, the group discussion on evidence gathering. You have all been seated to ensure that each table has a good cross section of expertise and variety of backgrounds to assist a good debate at each table.

At this stage, I will call Liz Loughran to give her account.

**Ms Liz Loughran (Department for Infrastructure):** Before I start, I would like to give my personal thanks to Christopher for sharing his story. It reminds us and those of us who work in road safety that road safety is not about statistics; it is about wrecked lives and heartbroken families. Every single one of us needs to remember that. I am grateful for the opportunity to present tonight, particularly given the level of road safety expertise in the room.

As most of you will know, the Minister for Infrastructure has lead responsibility for promoting road safety here. The Department delivers this through the road safety strategy. Our vision is quite simple: to make a journey on our roads as safe for all the road users here as anywhere in the world. The strategy is based on a partnership. We know that we cannot do this alone. We work with many of you in the room. We depend on the work of all our road safety partners. This is the model that lies at the heart of our road safety strategy, and success really depends on all three elements working together.

My departmental colleague Greg will talk to you shortly about engineering and the investments the Minister is making to improve the safety of our infrastructure. My PSNI colleagues will then talk about enforcement. My main focus tonight will be on education. As far as we are concerned, road safety education is critical. Legislation is important, but it is nothing without enforcement and, while enforcement is essential, it is not possible for us to put a police officer on every corner. The PSNI

cannot do this alone; therefore, we need to rely on education to do two things: change mindsets and change behaviours.

Behaviour is so important. Research shows that 95% of crashes where someone is killed or injured are due to human error, that is, mistakes that people make on the road. Those mistakes are no great surprise. Mistakes continue to be carelessness, inattention, inappropriate speed, drinking or taking drugs and driving, or not wearing a seatbelt. Those have not changed. The same simple things to put right are those that cause 95% of those crashes.

All those mistakes are preventable. If we can get inside the heads of road users and understand their thought processes — we can understand all our thought processes; we are all road users — we can influence the millions of decisions that road users make every day.

To change those bad outcomes, we do a number of things. We provide information to help people understand what the dangers are. For example, we tell you time and again that every drink increases your risk of crashing. Even if you are under the legal limit, there is still a risk. We tell people that research shows that a two-second glance at a mobile phone doubles the risk of crashing. By providing that information, we hopefully enable people to make better decisions, and that will enable them to change their behaviours.

We have a range of methods and interventions, all within that overall hierarchy that is provided by the road safety strategy. These are the ones that the Department for Infrastructure leads on. Legislation is first. At the moment, my team is busy implementing the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2016, a big package of measures which, we hope, will make a real difference. It is a package that many of you contributed to in framing the legislation, getting it through the Assembly and making sure that it is practical legislation that will work. It includes the drink-driving provisions. We will lower the main limit from 80 mg to 50 mg, and we are also going to introduce the new 20 mg limit for novice and professional drivers. We are also giving the police powers to establish random checkpoints. We are reforming the learner and restricted driver schemes, and introducing a new system of graduated driver licensing (GDL). That is all about allowing new drivers to develop experience and skills gradually. Rather than being about passing your test and being free to go out, it is about people taking time to think about developing the skills that they need to become a safe driver in the future.

We do a lot of work in schools and with young people. That is because, as you all know, children and young people are among the most vulnerable groups of road users. Therefore, we try to reach them in schools. We provide resources for teachers, and we run a number of schemes in schools. Some of you have had input on them. We have cycling proficiency, pedestrian safety training and the junior road safety officer schemes. The uptake of all those schemes is good and growing. We want to get into as many schools as possible and get the message out.

In recent years, we have moved outside schools and into the community. We make small grants and we have produced a community toolkit, which we provide free to local community representatives. It is intended to enable organisations and community groups to bring road safety initiatives into their own communities. Communities can get together, look at the issues on the roads locally and decide how they are going to tackle them and how they are going to work together.

Probably the most visible thing we do is our media campaigns. This is the thing that, anytime I say that I work in road safety, people always say to me, "Oh, the adverts", and they can usually quote one or two of the strap lines to me as well. Each of those adverts is designed to address one of the main causes of deaths and injuries. They are intended to inform, but, primarily, they are intended to persuade. The psychology behind each one of them is very carefully researched, and the messages are targeted. Before we develop an advert or a script, we go through a series of focus groups and look at the triggers we need to hit, and we spend a lot of time making sure we hit those triggers.

We use traditional media — TV, radio and posters — but we also have a significant social media presence that allows us to interact directly with people in real time so we can answer questions and promote our headline messages. Over the years we have gathered fairly extensive evidence that people watch, are aware of and are influenced by our road safety campaigns. We consistently achieve awareness levels of about 90%. The average awareness level for TV advertising is about 50%. Most recent research shows the road safety campaigns have achieved levels of influence ranging between 72% and 93%. Again, indicating that our work is influential in improving driver attitudes, and in promoting positive changes in behaviour. Against that 72% to 93% figure, the industry norm for people being fairly influenced is actually about 30%.



Those at the back may have trouble seeing this presentation, but essentially it is compiled from focus group research, and it looks at what people think is influential and what the general public think works. The Northern Ireland public believes that the education campaigns are effective, 61% think that the TV adverts are very influential, 33% say that other types of advertising — radio, press, outdoor and online advertising — are very influential.

In looking at those things there is a caution. It is actually very difficult to measure the sole or unique contribution that any specific area of road safety makes towards reducing casualties. Many factors, education, PR, enforcement, penalties and engineering, work together to support improvements in road safety.

Since 1994 we have seen the average annual road fatality rate, aggregated over a number of years, fall from about 150 down to roughly 60. Unfortunately, I think we will exceed that figure this year.

This slide contextualises how we have improved our relative position in the EU over the past 10 years or so. In 2005, the EU average was 94, and the Northern Ireland average was 80. We managed to improve in 2012. Unfortunately, 2012 was our best year, and from then we have slipped back, and 2014 was a really bad year. We had gained year on year, and that was the first time we started to slip back. We improved slightly in 2015. We hope to make a further improvement this year, but the slide shows how easy it is to slip back once we take our focus off.

The graph on the next slide shows our progress towards meeting the main road safety strategy target, which is to reduce the number of people who are killed in road collisions by at least 60% by 2020. Again, it shows straight-line progress towards that apart from one single blip. We met the target in 2012. We got there and thought, "Great, we are on the right track", but then we began to move in the wrong direction again. The graph shows the curve as far as 2014. By 2015, the line had started to turn down again, but we need to work hard to regain the 2012 position.

Finally, before I hand over to Greg, I will just remind everybody here — most of you know this — that, collectively, the ability to reduce the number of road casualties lies within each of us. We need to understand the real consequences of the choices and decisions that we make. If we all slow down, pay attention, stop checking our mobiles, never ever drink and drive, and always wear our seat belt, we can make the ambition of zero road deaths a reality. Thank you for your time. *[Applause.]*

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** We thank Liz for her very useful road safety education presentation and for the information that she provided. At this point, we will call Greg.

**Mr Greg McClelland (Department for Infrastructure):** Good evening, everybody. Thanks to Liz for giving us a very informative talk about her side of the house. My role in the Department for Infrastructure is that I work for Transport NI. I am responsible for road safety engineering policy. To follow on from what Liz said, engineering is part of the road safety triangle. We all have shared responsibility: car manufacturers; government; police forces; and road users.

The Department's Transport NI is the sole road authority for all the roads in Northern Ireland. It is currently responsible for managing and maintaining 25,000 kilometres of roads, ranging from motorways down to minor, unclassified rural roads, some with grass growing up the middle of them. It could be argued that all works that are undertaken by the authority have at their heart the road safety of all road users. For example, resurfacing improves the skid resistance of road surfaces. Although over 95% of injury collisions are as a result of driver behaviour and less than 2% have been identified as being because of road conditions, it is our duty as the road authority to mitigate the number and severity of those that occur. Fortunately, the media have learnt to stop talking about "dangerous roads".

This slide shows the typical rural roads that cover most of the country. Ours is one of the most dense road networks in Europe per head of population. Most of those roads are of a legacy nature. They were never designed to any safety standard. They present their own unique safety hazards in the form of drystone walling, telegraph poles, and so on. It is such a large network that it could never be expected that we could treat all roads. We have to prioritise them. Most of our treatments on that type of road involve signing and lining as low-cost solutions to guide drivers.

The setting of speed limits is a very important aspect of road safety. I do not know whether you can read this slide from down at the back. Maybe it is better that I read it out to you. Research has shown that for every 1 mph reduction in speed, there is a 5% reduction in collisions generally. Transport NI is currently reviewing speed limits on major roads so that the roads themselves become self-explaining

and you know what speed to drive at by the environment that we have set. I will read these out for the people who cannot see the slide. What the road looks like to road users is a key factor when setting a speed limit. It is about promoting speed limits that better reflect the function of the road or street and the needs of all road users, not just the motorised ones. The setting of a speed limit improves respect for speed limits, and, in turn, you will get improved compliance if you establish it at the correct level.

One of the target groups identified during the development of the Northern Ireland road safety strategy was vulnerable road users. It is our responsibility to install protection measures. Vulnerable road users could be identified as being children, cyclists, bikers and the elderly. They receive the highest priority. One of the photos shows the part-time 20 mph speed limit that we are starting to roll out at primary schools on roads where the national speed limit applies. One way in which we have addressed dangers to vulnerable road users is that we have rolled out about 500 20 mph zones across Northern Ireland. Those contain self-enforcing measures that naturally keep traffic speeds down. The majority of casualties, including slights, occur on urban roads. For fatalities, it is the other way around, with most of them occurring on rural roads. Nearly 88% involve pedestrians and cyclists. We support the introduction of more zones, but we are also piloting the concept of signed-only 20 mph speed limits that will not have any additional engineering measures. We are currently running pilots in five sites throughout Northern Ireland. The most prominent one is in Belfast city centre. We will monitor the pilots to see whether they have any impact on driver behaviour and result in a reduction in casualties. They are really only appropriate for areas where vehicle speeds are already slow, however. The typical traffic-calming measures that we use in 20 mph zones are gateway features; different priorities, such as the direction of traffic; and the classic road humps. Love them or hate them, road humps work. You will find that most traffic does around 15 mph on average. The impact has been seen in the considerable reduction in the number of pedestrian casualties in urban areas.

Another very effective measure that we have is our programme of collision remedial schemes, which have been developed after analysis of statistics supplied by our colleagues in the PSNI. We get information from collision report forms and plot that on our mapping systems. From that, we can identify cluster sites. Within the cluster sites, we can identify the target types of collisions, be they crossovers, right-turning movements or shunts. We get all that and analyse the information. We then roll out a scheme, which could involve adding a right-turning lane, protective central islands, high-friction surfacing, enhanced signing and road markings. We have invariably found that, within the first year of operation, we reduce the target number of collisions by at least 60%. We have been so successful in treating cluster sites that we are starting to run out of them and are now turning our attention to route treatments, such as of a road between two towns. Today, I was up on the A26 between Ballymena and Ballymoney to see how the entire route could be upgraded to a certain uniform standard so that the driver knows what to expect and there are no unexpected hazards.

We were very quick to introduce dual carriageways to Northern Ireland in the 1970s. Although they were designed and built to the highest design standards then, it has become apparent over time that, for such high-speed roads, they have serious road safety deficiencies. There has been a significant number of serious and fatal collisions involving vehicles crossing the median, either at the many crossover points and access points or because the driver has lost control and gone through the central reserve. We have a rolling programme of constructing grade-separated junctions, which are a lot safer. We are also installing median safety barriers and have closed off some access points. At a couple of places, we have reduced the speed limit. The result has been a considerable reduction in the number of collisions in the areas that we have treated so far. We do not work in isolation. With our colleagues in the Irish National Roads Authority we risk-graded our major routes. On the slide, you can see the progress made over time. The reds and blacks are high-risk roads, and the bands are done on the basis of those killed and seriously injured per billion vehicle kilometres travelled. We feel that that is a more accurate reflection of the risk of driving on the road. Over time, you can see the map turning progressively green, which is a reflection of the success of the work that has been done by both road authorities. This is an independent European protocol. All other countries in Europe do it, and we work with them and learn from them on initiatives that they have undertaken, which I will mention later.

Information technology has its place in improving road safety. We would like to develop a digital database of speed limits for use in intelligent speed adaptation devices in cars. They are out there: they are in use in Sweden and other countries. Then there is passively safe roadside equipment that absorbs the impact energy of any collision.

Perhaps the most cost-effective and low-cost solution is road markings. Some are welcome; some are not. As you can see, they were not particularly welcome at the Dark Hedges when we put them down. If you go there now, you will see that the road markings are no longer there. In fact, we are going to

close the road. Road markings are the most effective measure for conveying information on road alignment to drivers. Wet night-time performance of current road markings can be very poor, as I am sure you know. My wife will not drive on a wet night. We have recently conducted trials for new types of raised, multi-dot markings, and those have had very encouraging results. Other measures that we could consider are catseye road studs, which can be supplemented by the newly available solar-powered LED road studs. It could be argued, though, that giving drivers a better view of the alignment of the road ahead may encourage them to speed up. The jury is out on that.

I was fortunate enough to be seconded for a few weeks to the Swedish road authority. It was seen as the world leader in road safety. It developed Vision Zero, where the ultimate vision is to have zero deaths on the roads. The level of protection that a road offers in the event of a collision is an important intervention. They Swedes very keen on barriers. They have two-plus-one roads. They even have single carriageway roads — one lane on each side — with a barrier down the middle, especially in the north of the country, because people fall asleep on a long, straight road. The barrier eliminates head-on crashes. Collapsible posts and street lighting columns that cut off the electric supply also reduce injury severity in the event of a collision. That may be for the future, and, if we get some money, maybe we could undertake mass action programmes to remove or protect roadside hazards, starting with street furniture that we have installed by ourselves, such as reinforced concrete posts. When you hit them, as you can see from the top photograph, the outcome is not very good.

I hope that that has been a useful introduction to what we do. Thank you. *[Applause.]*

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** We thank Greg for his very useful information. I now call Assistant Chief Constable Alan Todd.

**Assistant Chief Constable Alan Todd (Police Service of Northern Ireland):** Good evening, folks. If the uniform does not give it away, I am from the PSNI. I am the assistant chief constable with responsibility for roads policing. It may say in your programme that Inspector Gary McComb is doing the presentation, but he is sat down at the back because I lost the flip of a coin 15 minutes ago. If you did not think that that happens in policing, I am sorry that I have disabused you of the notion.

I have been asked to talk about enforcement this evening. I know that we are little bit pushed for time, so I will try to keep this concise. I will say in my introduction that some of the stories that we have heard this evening from family members and from partner agencies illustrate the width of the work that the Police Service is involved in on road safety. We are involved in education and awareness; prevention; support to families who find themselves involved in tragic circumstances, as you have heard this evening; the investigation of all accidents, including the major ones, which you have heard the cost of; and, indeed, the provision of statistics to other Departments so that we can make evidence-based judgements about what works for keeping safe on our roads.

It is interesting, amusing and reassuring to see many of the faces here that I see at many such events and pieces of work. Alan from the Fire and Rescue Service is right in front of me, for instance. Alan and I are involved in this on an almost weekly basis, but that, in many ways, is a testament to the amount of partnership working that is involved in keeping people safe on the roads, the very strong links across Departments and bodies, and the really healthy working relationships that we have. It is good to see many friends in the Long Gallery this evening.

It is, of course, Road Safety Week. I was at an event run by one of the policing and community safety partnerships (PCSPs) in Strabane this morning, and, given that I lost the flip of a coin to Gary earlier, I thought that I could maybe recycle the presentation from this morning. I see David sat down there. Given that he was there this morning, I am not allowed to do that, so I have tried to put together something a little bit different.

When it comes to enforcement, there are two things that we are all guilty of. I do not mean speeding. I see that one or two members have nipped off early, perhaps giving themselves a bit more time for the journey home this evening. That is fine. The two things that we are all guilty of saying are, "It'll never happen to me", and, "I'll take a chance. I'll never get caught". The role of enforcement, in many ways, is to try to disabuse you of at least one of those notions. The education and awareness role is to say that it could be you. It is bit like the lottery — it could be you. The enforcement side is, "Please do not take the chance. You may well get caught, and there are consequences for doing so". Of course, the consequences are in numbers: 61 fatalities as of lunchtime today. That is 61 people, 61 families, 61 circles of friends, 61 groups of work colleagues. We hear lots of presentations about drivers this, cyclists that, motorcyclists the other, and pedestrians this. We are all people. We are all road users. I am a driver. I am also a keen cyclist. I ride a motorbike, and, when I miss my taxi, I am

a pedestrian. The Minister and the permanent secretary will be glad to hear that I am also a regular user of public transport. We are all people, and the key to some of this is understanding that piece of it, because we are all road users.

Drivers hate to get stuck behind tractors and cyclists. Everybody hates to get stuck behind motorhomes and buses, but we are all road users and people with families. That is often lost among the statistics. If you think that it will never happen to you, 61 people so far thought that it would never happen to them in 2016. Sixty-one is a bad enough number, but, for all those who are killed, 10 times as many suffer serious and, in many cases, life-changing injuries, so we are into the five hundreds and six hundreds of those on top of the 61. Many of them will not be able to be in employment again or do all the things that they took for granted, because, as I said, as well as the 61 fatalities, 10 times as many people suffer serious injuries from road traffic collisions on our roads. In addition, there are 20 times that number again who are involved in collisions. Thousands of people are involved in collisions on the roads every year, so it absolutely could be you.

We touched on the causes earlier. They have been same since time immemorial in road safety: speed and the inappropriate use of speed; inattention and carelessness; not wearing seat belts, and although not a cause of road traffic collisions, deferring from wearing them is certainly the cause of unnecessary injury; and now that we are the mobile data, social media, mobile phone generation, that is just adding to the careless and inattention numbers. However, the one that I want to spend most time on, because it is Road Safety Week, and tomorrow the PSNI will launch the 2016 anti-drink-driving campaign for the Christmas season, is the re-emergence, in my view, of drink- and drugs-related driving that we are detecting on the roads. It is not just here, because the inspector from an Garda Síochána who was at the Strabane event this morning talked about the same trends on the rest of the island of Ireland.

I stood at a cold roadside this time last year launching the campaign and said that success for the PSNI in our enforcement campaign for anti-drink-driving at Christmas was to do more breath tests and catch fewer people. That is the essence of success for policing. It is like the cameras on the A1 carriageway between Bangor and Holywood. We want to put up more cameras and catch fewer people speeding, because we want people to change their behaviour to safer habits that keep us all safe on the roads. I was therefore very clear: I want to be putting more enforcement in and catching fewer people. Alas, I was disappointed. Some 375 people were caught drink-driving in the period of the campaign last Christmas, compared with 282 the previous year, a rise of about 40% according to my maths, which is a bit rusty, I am afraid. It is a shame and disgrace in many ways that 375 people thought, "I'll take a chance. I won't get caught", which is the second message that I touched on this evening. Drink-driving is no respecter of class or age: 16 years of age was the youngest, and 83 the oldest. The highest reading that we have from a breath test is 140 micrograms in 100 millilitres of blood. I am waiting for a thumbs-up from Gary at the back of the room to make sure that I have got my technical test right, but that is four times the legal limit, folks. People have died with that level of alcohol in their blood, never mind got behind the wheel of a car. That is a growing trend, and throughout the rest of the year since then, we continue to detect between 35% to 40% above what we were last year and the year before, and that is not good enough. These people put themselves at risk, they put us at risk and they put our families at risk. We need to change and, frankly, refine the social rejection of that type of behaviour.

Please understand our role. We continue to catch more people. That is not a success for us, but, be assured, do not take the chance. The strapline for this year's Christmas piece is this: if you wonder whether or not you're safe to drive, the answer is you're not. The answer is this: do not drink and drive, and do not take the chance. There is every chance that you will get caught.

To help ramp up our efforts, the random roadside breath test goes live this Friday. That has never been an option for police officers in Northern Ireland before. We have had to have cause to run breath tests before: either because you have been involved in a road traffic collision or in what we call a moving traffic offence. In other words, there had to have been some sort of offence where the vehicle is being driven, or where an officer had reasonable grounds to suspect that you might have been consuming alcohol. All those tests before you will be tested have been taken off the books, and the PSNI will be free, throughout the Christmas period, to run random checks and spot checks and to conduct spot breath tests across Northern Ireland. I suspect strongly that the number of tests will go up and, regrettably, the number of people being caught will go up. The increase in enforcement is part of an attempt, as part of our wider approach, to convince people that this is a really bad idea.

However, that is only part of the message. You will be at functions at which you see people drinking, knowing that they are driving home. You will see them lift their car keys and head for the car park.

They may even offer you a lift, and you may even be tempted to get into the car beside them. You have much more control over those people than I and my officers can ever have. There is a civic responsibility — nay, duty — to find whatever it was we found previously to take the scourge of drink-driving, which is now re-establishing itself, off our roads.

There is still other work to be done. Bill Bradford, from the Northern Ireland Road Safety Partnership, is here. The partnership runs speed detection vans and cameras across the Province. We are working with politicians across Departments to make sure that the funding that we raise through that continues to be reinvested in wider road safety. Regrettably, we need to have more detector vans and more cameras out there to convince people that speeding costs lives, and we need to be out there to enforce that.

As I said earlier success, for me, looks like continued solid enforcement activity from the PSNI but with fewer people getting caught because more people are getting the message. I look forward in hope that that will happen over Christmas, with the expectation that it may not, but we all have a responsibility to try to help each other to get to that place.

Thank you for listening this evening and have a happy Christmas. *[Applause.]*

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** I thank Alan for his very stark presentation. It was very useful and helpful, and it reminds us all of our obligations when we are on the roads. At this stage, participants are invited out to the bottom of the front steps of Parliament Buildings to look at a mock-up car crash. When we return to the Long Gallery, participants will be asked to carry out an information-gathering exercise on how to improve road safety. Groups will be asked to discuss what works in tackling road safety and to feed back into a short plenary session on the outcome of their discussions. That will be reported by Hansard along with the presentations to help inform the Committee's report, which, we hope, will assist in developing road safety policy.

Thank you all. I hope that you have had a good evening so far. We will engage in a full discussion and speak to you all throughout the rest of the evening.

*On resuming —*

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** Thanks to everyone for their participation in this very useful event. I hope that you have all got something out of the night so far and that you have focused your minds sufficiently to engage in the next part: group discussion and evidence-gathering. You have all been seated to ensure that each table has a good cross-section of expertise and a variety of backgrounds to assist a good debate at each table. Participants have been provided with an aide-memoire for the exercise. The structure for the discussion is organised to mirror the three presentations on education, engineering and enforcement. We ask each table to look at the list of interventions under the three headings, highlight the ones that would make the most difference to road safety if concerted action were taken, and then discuss what that action should be. There will be a note-taker at each table. I also ask for someone at each table to volunteer to be the rapporteur and feed back at the end of the session on your conclusions. I will leave it up to you now.

A microphone will go round the room. We will start at table 1.

**Dr Andrew Murray (Department for Infrastructure):** I am head of roads and rivers in the Department for Infrastructure; I am a member of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation and am on its policy committee. Our table started off by asking, "Are we content that these three pillars of education, engineering and enforcement are the correct three pillars?". We concluded, basically, that they are, although we thought that "engineering" should be "engineering and technology" to reflect that it is not just road engineering but the technology that goes with it. With that qualification, we thought that the three pillars are correct and that all our efforts should be focused on those.

On the education side, there was some discussion about the theory test; we were not sure that the theory test in its current form has added anything to road safety. There might be an argument for changing the theory test to make it more directed towards directing people to correct behaviours. We thought that road safety education in schools is very important. There was discussion of the Road Safe roadshow, which was considered very effective. We thought that we should make more use of the RADAR centre facility in Belfast and that a focus should be placed on vulnerable road users,

particularly elderly pedestrians who can suffer serious injuries from fairly minor accidents. The use of graduated licensing was thought to be a very positive step.

On education, we also thought that we need to have very good information not only on what causes accidents but on the secondary and tertiary causes. What are the other factors that contribute to the seriousness of an accident? We said that all that information should be fed into education programmes.

On engineering and technology, we thought that all the measures listed are useful. We had some discussion about the removal of central white lines, which has been tried on the Continent and has apparently been found to be effective because, when you remove white lines, the road seems to be less safe and people therefore pay more attention. On the topic of engineering, we highlighted the importance of road maintenance. The engineering measures listed here are things that road engineers could do to make things safer. However, if you do not maintain roads, you end up having streetlights that do not work, and people cannot see properly; road markings that are ineffective, particularly in wet conditions; and gullies that are blocked, and therefore you get ponding water and aquaplaning. So, there is an important element of road maintenance that needs to be included in the engineering section.

Technology was considered to be something that will have a major effect in the future. Autonomous or semi-autonomous vehicles could be game changers. Some of my counterparts in GB say that children who are born today might never need to take a driving test because vehicles will be so autonomous that a driving test will not be necessary. That might be sensationalism; it might not happen, but it is certainly a view that some people are taking. If we had autonomous vehicles, it would change all road engineering: road signing, road marking, speed limits and all sorts of things.

A lot of technology is available that is not being used. We thought about legislation to bring about more use of technology; however, we concluded that that would be quite difficult. We believe that we can incentivise people, either through lower insurance payments or financial incentives of some other form, to use more technology. Vehicles can restrict speeds and build in lots of things that make them safer, both to the occupants and to other road users.

We were running against time when we came to enforcement. However, we thought that mobile phone use is one of those new things that causes more accidents, so we thought that enforcing the prohibition on mobile phone use was very important. We like the idea that, in GB, they are making use of a mobile phone a six-point offence. If you are under 25 and you get six points, you lose your licence. That is something that we thought would be a real deterrent, particularly for young people using mobile phones.

That is all that we have.

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** Thank you, Andrew. Let us move to table 2.

**Ms Kellie Armstrong:** One of the things that we noticed that is not listed is that there are many organisations that deliver many different courses, going into schools and training young people. We thought that we should consider who is delivering what, consolidate the training in some way and make sure that the same message is shared by all organisations. If we need to target something like the danger of using mobile phones while driving, everybody should do that over a 12-month period.

The second thing under education that we thought was a priority was specific campaigns. That was mentioned by table 1; mobile phones was raised in particular, and we felt that there needs to be something done on that.

The third thing was practical awareness training, which could be available for everyone, not just for young drivers but also for older ones like me, or even older than that again. It would make sure that people had access to practical training. We talked about the speed-awareness course that some people undertake, as it is a vital course that can change the way you drive. We also talked about updating the theory test to ensure that it is in line with all that we are talking about here and the different enforcement needs.

Under engineering, we recognised that the issue is really about drivers reducing their speed. We talked about speed cameras, but I will come to that under enforcement. We felt that Transport NI should continue to deliver road safety methods and the current actions are being taken to improve safety on the roads. However, it is still up to drivers; they are the ones who cause many of the

crashes. Black-box technologies was something that we thought should definitely be used more often. It would be a deterrent for younger drivers and speeding drivers. That technology should be looked at more. We agreed that, if we continue to engineer only for cars, we will always have the issue of speed and crashes. We need to engineer for all road users, including active travel users such as cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders. If we do that, it could be a game changer. We would take the focus away from cars alone and, by doing that, we would give people an alternative way of travelling.

We mentioned autonomous vehicles; that could be a game changer. Of course, the extension of the new greenways that are coming into effect will enable people to travel in a different way off-road.

Under enforcement, we felt that speed cameras and spot testing are definitely things that should be enabled to be carried out more often. If you are caught speeding and it is under a certain number of miles per hour, you can do a speed awareness course. However, that is not open to everyone, and perhaps those who are the worst offenders need to take that course as well. We felt that there should be a review of legislation with regard to mobile phones to enable the PSNI to take enforcement. It was mentioned that any video evidence could be used in court to help to back up the PSNI so that they do not have to be there and say that the person was holding the phone; there could be video evidence.

Perhaps we should look at technology. Is there an opportunity to develop something that, as soon as the key is put into the car, the mobile phone is deactivated and turned off? With enforcement and education, we need to look at creating an environment of social rejection so that people do not use mobile phones, do not drink and drive, do not drive the day after they have been drinking in order to create an abhorrence of bad driving and dangerous driving.

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** Thank you very much. We move to table 3. Who is doing the reading?

**Mr Aidan Stennett (Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service):** On the education side, the group said that it was a good idea to review the driving test, as it has not fundamentally changed since 1956. Whilst it was recognised that 16- to 24-year olds are more likely to be involved in accidents, there is also an issue of people becoming complacent once the R-plates came down and they got used to driving. There is also an issue about what the driving test actually teaches; it concentrates on driving skills rather than on behaviours. The group also spoke about Northern Ireland's road-safety advertising; there was agreement that it was strong and that the shock factor works. They have been shown in other countries; in Madrid they silenced the room. Again, on education, there was a discussion about how everything is focused on drivers; however, it should be emphasised that driving is a privilege and not a right. More emphasis should be placed on education and on how drivers interact with other road users.

On the engineering side, there was a discussion about how traffic-calming islands cause problems for cyclists. Cyclists need to be trained specially to deal with them to take a more aggressive position on the road. There was a discussion on how pedestrian infrastructure was not even mentioned in the list given and that pedestrians are always an afterthought. A comment was made that making any changes to the road infrastructure requires political courage because of the strength of the road lobby. An example was given of the reaction to the Belfast bus lanes in the media. It was pointed out that these improvements cost money, which can be in short supply at the minute. A comment was made that austerity had led to a rise in incidents. Engineering should be targeted towards reversing the trend of increasing car usage and focus more on other forms of transport, such as public transport and cycling.

On enforcement, there was agreement with the other groups that the use of phones, smartphones and tablets in cars needs to be dealt with. There should be fixed penalties for careless driving. Legislation needs to change. There were also comments saying enforcement is fine but there is also an issue with the availability of policing. There were some examples of that with drink-driving, where there was less drink-driving enforcement but more people being caught. Less visibility of policing on the roads may give the impression that people can get away with inappropriate activities. There was also comment about there being too few speed cameras. Communities should become more involved in enforcement and in the education side of things. There was a brief discussion at the end about driverless cars, the psychology of driving and how new technology is changing that.

I think that is roughly it.

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** That is great; thanks very much. We will move to the next table.

**Ms Loughran:** I will try to keep this brief. We, like the last table, talked about changes to driver testing. We think those changes are long overdue and very important. We talked about various aspects of the forthcoming changes, as well as about logbooks and how that is a useful system but there is potential for abuse. We also talked about issues in the time frame for learning to drive.

We talked for quite a long time about new post-test qualifications and what they might look like, when they might be done, how they might work and whether they would be compulsory. We also talked about the need to make sure that people learn to drive in the scenarios they will be driving in. It is not just about the test; it is about learning to drive for life. We also talked about whether it is possible that causing a collision through dangerous or careless driving could be a trigger for a retest in the same way drink-driving is now. We talked briefly about the protection of vulnerable road users, but there are many issues that affect the various vulnerable groups, so we found it hard to come to a consensus on something in particular we could do.

We also talked about better joined-up working. There is an awful lot of good work going on, but we do not always talk to each other about what we are doing or focus our efforts in the same direction. We were wondering what has happened to the all-party group on road safety. We found that quite useful because there was a focus on road safety at the heart of the Assembly.

We then moved on to talk about engineering. There were particular concerns about the dressing of roads and particular concerns for motorcyclists. We really welcome black box technology; it is a key resource, and we should make greater use of it. It is a key mechanism to inform people of bad driving and help them correct it. One thing we really did not support was the suggestion that on multi-lane carriageways we should allow overtaking on the left. We said you should teach people to do it properly rather than changing the law to fit their behaviour. We talked about the potential for variable speed limits but were unsure whether it would be confusing if you were not sure what was happening on different parts of the road.

Finally, when we were talking about enforcement, we talked about two main issues: implementing the new lower drink-drive limits as soon as possible and the morning-after limit and issues in that. Like most other groups, we talked about mobile phone use. We were very keen on increasing penalties and fines. We also wanted to look at the offence itself. It is very old-fashioned; it is about using a mobile phone. People do not use just mobile phones any more; they use smartphones and do lots of things other than just make calls. We finished by talking about hands-free as a distraction, and maybe we need to look at the hands-free use of mobile phones as well.

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** Thank you very much, Liz. We will move on to the next table.

**Mr Donal O'Hagan (Boys and Girls Clubs (NI)):** We echo what has been said. A hot-ticket issue for us around this table, though, was an update on the theory test after 10 years when you are renewing your licence. We also welcome the use of new technology. We are looking forward to the day we have driverless cars. We particularly welcome the use of, maybe, black boxes in cars — stuff that actually changes behaviour. Where enforcement is concerned, we think they all look like eminently good ideas.

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** Thank you. We will move on to the next table.

**Mr Fra McCann:** Like the last table, much of what we said has been covered. When thinking about education, we talked about the advertising campaigns. There were people who asked whether they were hard-hitting enough and whether TV is the most effective medium for reaching young people, suggesting there should be more use of social media. Some asked whether paid advertisement could be used further. They said shock-and-awe tactics work, as has been seen when they have been used in other parts of the world. The advertisements need to highlight the danger of phone use, and young people in particular need to be shocked into seeing the difficulties and dangers on the road. We discussed which social media outlets would reach the target audience. People felt that, near enough, Facebook is a thing of the past because there are so many new pieces of social media coming through. We said there should be an increase in the campaigns on road safety, and new social media platforms came through on that for specific campaigns on mobile phone use and inattention to target novice drivers.



The protection of cyclists came through. It was emphasised that early morning is a dangerous time for cyclists. Some people felt the removal of central white lines can play a part because it gives people more of a focus, and they said white lines at the edge of the road would be more effective; we were talking about rural roads where they have seen this. We thought dual carriageways have become very dangerous with present levels of traffic and that a central barrier is essential. The policy of grade-separated junctions should be continued, and we should cut out the crossovers, because people felt they were very dangerous. The building of cycling infrastructure came through. That needs to be taken into consideration at the beginning of road-building rather than added at a later stage. There needs to be a speed limit review and restrictions on lorries and freight to reduce risky overtaking. There was a pilot scheme carried out in Scotland that seemed to be effective, so we should look at the results of that to see whether they can help with certain road safety aspects. On enforcement, the camera safety scheme should be used to prosecute in the likes of insurance and tax offences. Some other issues were mentioned.

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** We will move on to the next table.

**Mr Bill Bradford (Northern Ireland Road Safety Partnership):** I am the manager of the Road Safety Partnership. Essentially, if you have been caught by one of my cameras, you would like to think it is my fault, but unfortunately, folks, it is your fault.

We talked quite a lot about education to the detriment of our discussion about engineering and enforcement. There is a bit of expertise around the table in education and enforcement, but, unfortunately, we were a bit light on engineering. However, there were some enthusiastic amateurs amongst us who came up with suggestions.

We talked a lot about the effect of advertising campaigns throughout the year on the topical issues that apply, for example, summer and winter campaigns, drink-driving and vulnerable road users, and, of course, there was the perennial complaint that the budget was not sufficient to do all we would like. Specifically, we talked about inattention and mobile phone use. I am going to echo that later when I come back to enforcement. There was also some talk about protection of pedestrians and cyclists.

Engineering-wise, we liked the idea of grade-separated junctions on dual carriageways and would like to see more of our primary routes upgraded, such as the A1. We said that, rather than having central barriers on single carriageways, perhaps improving the retroreflectivity of the edge markings and centre white lines, including using innovations in LED technology for the likes of cat's eyes, would be an improvement.

Moving on to enforcement, I will be quite honest and say that we did not really get a chance to go around the table on that. However, the results of the Stockholm jury are as follows: mobile phone use was very much up there, and we were alarmed at the statistics for detections and causation factors — in other words, where the primary causation factor in a killed or seriously injured accident was very rarely shown to be mobile phone use. However, that was at variance with the consensus around the table, which was that we all — everyone in this room, probably — recognise that mobile phone use or, shall we say, mobile data use perhaps, is a big problem.

I cannot say this represents the whole table, but a few of us talked about stronger legislative penalties — in other words, we should have mandatory minimum sentences — for those who kill and injure on our roads. We felt that, for the innumerable incidents of careless or inattentive driving we all witness on a day-to-day basis, a fixed penalty should be introduced to save court time.

There is one more thing — I think Fra McCann mentioned this, and it was talked about by one or two people at the start — about extending the use of mobile detection vans to deal not just with speed but other offences such as seat belt offences and mobile phone use. It is a resource that is there to be used; it is just a matter of getting the correct technology to deal with it.

Someone at one of the last tables mentioned other offences, such as insurance and tax offences. We have tax cameras, and we all know about that, but if someone is detected speeding by a mobile camera and a no insurance offence was also revealed, that would be progressed as a matter of course. It is not just left alone, with the offender getting away with having no insurance. That is just in case anyone was querying that.

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** Thank you very much for that. We are almost at the conclusion of our event. There is a roving mic going around, so if anyone wants to add any very brief

comments to what has already been said from each of the tables, now is your chance — the floor is yours.

**Mr Pat Delaney (Driver and Vehicle Agency):** Could I have a show of hands of anyone in the room who has not done the theory test? I can see the vast majority of people in the room have not done the theory test. Has anyone tried the theory test online? There are a few. Do all of you agree that the theory test is not a sensible way to test knowledge and skills about driving and hazard perception? That is good; that is just a straw poll. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Robinson):** Thanks very much for that input. The floor is still yours; we have another few minutes yet. Does anyone else wish to speak? No — going, going, gone.

I thank everyone for attending tonight, and I thank the Committee Chairperson, William Humphrey, for masterminding the event. We have reached the end of what has been a very productive and thought-provoking event. As well as pointing out the challenges facing road safety, there has been a positive look at what more can be done to improve road safety for drivers and pedestrians. The Committee for Infrastructure will consider what has been discussed and will produce a short report on the event. When that has been produced, the Committee will bring it to the Assembly with a motion to act.

I will not keep you from your home any further, but the Committee appreciates your attendance and expertise. I particularly thank Chris Sherrard for his personal account of the impact of a road collision on his family. I thank the three presenters for their informative and interesting policy perspectives and the PSNI, the Ambulance Service and the Fire and Rescue Service for the accident scene outside and, indeed, for all the sterling work they do for our communities. We are all really indebted to the emergency services for the sterling work they do.

I assure you all that, once a report is produced, all attendees will be sent a link to it on the Committee website. It would be remiss of me not to thank the Committee Clerk and her very able staff. We appreciate all the hard work you have done, particularly for this and all the events I have been associated with over the last few months. Thank you very much, Cathie. *[Applause.]* Good night, everyone, and have a safe journey home.