

APPENDIX 2

Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2010 – 2020

Draft Response

1 Introduction

- 1.1 NILGA, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, is the representative body for district councils in Northern Ireland. NILGA represents and promotes the interests of local authorities and is also supported by all the main political parties.
- 1.2 NILGA welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation on preparing a Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland, and hope that comments contained within the document are taken into account when developing the final Road Safety Strategy, due to be issued for consultation before the end of the year.
- 1.3 This response was developed by holding a local government consultation seminar in Craigavon Civic Centre on 2 June 2010 in conjunction with DOE Road Safety Division.

2 Key Challenges

- 2.1 Overall, local government is content with the key challenges that have been identified by the DOE Road Safety Division.
- 2.2 In addition to the key challenges identified by the Department, it was strongly advocated that the higher incidence of collisions for those who drive for work (including those who drive as part of their occupation and those who use fleet or private vehicles to travel to meetings) should be highlighted as a key challenge to be addressed over the life of the strategy. Local government are particularly concerned that research indicates that more people are killed and seriously injured in 'at work' road collisions than in all other occupational collisions put together.
- 2.3 The high incidence of collisions for those who drive for work is an issue of importance of local government. Recently, four councils worked together (namely Ballymoney, Moyle, Coleraine and Limavady) to organise a breakfast seminar for the local business community to encourage employers to develop and implement effective policies in relation to driving for work. The breakfast seminar was extremely well received and local businesses commented on how useful the morning had been. The seminar was relatively inexpensive to organise (costing £1,500 which included breakfast for all attendees and the costs associated with a key note speaker travelling from England). Local government would strongly recommend that this type of event is rolled out throughout Northern Ireland to highlight this serious issue and try to minimise the amount of collisions occurring for those who drive for work.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Local government strongly advocate that partnership working and co-ordination between all key stakeholders (in particular, DRD Roads Service) is essential to ensure the effective implementation of the Road Safety Strategy.
- 3.2 Local government commend the success of pilot schemes at two primary schools developing 20 mph speed limits at rural schools on roads where the national speed limit

applies. It is hoped that DOE Road Safety Division can identify a budget to roll-out this scheme to install 20mph speed limit zones around all schools in Northern Ireland.

- 3.3 Local government welcome proposals for novice drivers to demonstrate a competence of driving in different conditions such as at night-time, on the motorway and during wintry weather, as well as a post-test restriction on the number of passengers that can be carried.
- 3.4 A note of caution was aired in relation to demonstrating experience of motorway driving for rural dwellers. Novice drivers in Fermanagh, for example, would have 1 hour to travel to reach either a motorway or a dual carriageway.
- 3.5 It is strongly advocated that DOE Road Safety Division research the use of road signage in other jurisdictions in order to improve road signs in Northern Ireland. This could include increased use of flashing lights and road markings to indicate the location of schools, larger speed limit signs and fatality toll signage (as utilised in RoI).
- 3.6 Proposals to allow local councils to become more involved in the delivery of a Road Safety Strategy (including developing lower-level local road safety plans) are welcomed, provided that local authorities are adequately resourced to do so.
- 3.7 The issue of cross-border travel was highlighted as an issue of concern. It was asserted that it is not clear on many cross-border roads that a driver has crossed into the other jurisdiction. This causes problems for drivers particularly as speed limit signs are indicated in miles per hour in NI and kilometres per hour in the RoI. It is thought that this would be a particular problem for visitors and tourists to border areas.
- 3.8 It is suggested that training for driving instructors should be reviewed, in order to ensure that instructor training is as robust as possible.
- 3.9 Members put forward the idea that white line marking at the edge of roads could be introduced, to help road users identify road edges, particularly when driving in poor visibility conditions. Suggestions were also made to increase the maximum speed on motorways to 75 mph and to include more over-taking lanes to allow road users to pass slow moving vehicles.
- 3.10 It is also suggested that random breath testing for alcohol, regardless of suspicion, should be introduced. A further suggestion was made to introduce 10 yearly eye tests and theory tests to ensure that drivers and riders have adequate vision and knowledge of the Highway Code.
- 3.11 Local government would welcome a time restriction for carrying out blood tests for drivers and riders suspected of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs to ensure accuracy of results.
- 3.12 It is stressed that the effectiveness of these proposals will rely heavily on a commitment by all stakeholders to enforce the proposed actions, within the framework of a fair process with an adequate appeals procedure.

4 Delivery of the Road Safety Strategy

- 4.1 NILGA would strongly advocate that the delivery of the Road Safety Strategy is carried out through effective working partnerships of all key stakeholders to ensure a collaborative and joined-up approach.
- 4.2 It is also important to recognise, and work with, local voluntary road safety committees, community groups and sporting organisations who have taken a role in promoting road safety in their local areas. Concern was voiced in relation to the recent funding cuts for

road safety committees, particularly as the work carried out by these committees is of such importance.

- 4.3 Proposals for the Department of Education to engage with DOE, Education and Library Boards and the Educations and Skills Authority (once established) to explore how resources for schools on road safety can better empower children to make informed safe choices and decisions are welcomed by NILGA. It is suggested that Road Safety Events held in conjunction with NIFRS, PSNI and the Department of Education should be utilised to explain to young people how to deal with an accident or potential hazards on the road.
- 4.4 The use of modern technology such as Bluetooth messages, social networking sites and 'YouTube' was recommended as a means to promote road safety messages (particularly to young people).

5 Role of Local Government in the Strategy

- 5.1 Road Safety is often named as a top priority for local councils and a number of local councils have been developing innovative and effective programmes to promote road safety in Northern Ireland.
- 5.2 Local government representatives highlighted the work District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) and Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) working with the PSNI to identify particularly dangerous stretches of roads and other local road issues. One such example is an initiative originally instigated by the DPP manager for Dungannon and South Tyrone District Council. The four DPPs in the 'F' district police cluster (Dungannon, Cookstown, Omagh and Fermanagh) along with statutory representatives from the Fire Service, PSNI, Education and Roads Services formed a Road Safety Forum to co-ordinate efforts and resources – focusing and promoting key messages at the same time throughout the forum's area. An action plan has been developed and the Forum is currently working through the actions. Some of the initial items of work have included awareness raising such as themed DPP discussion forums and meeting with organisations such as the Vintners Association. Education programmes are also currently underway; such as 'Bike Safe' for motorcyclists, 'Roadsafe Roadshow' for sixth formers and a Christmas anti drink-driving campaign. It is important to note that the concept of the Forum is not to erode any work being carried out by the different organisations with a remit or interest in road safety but rather to co-ordinate and deliver a more focused message across the district. It is important that all stakeholders communicate and take a co-ordinated approach, in order to learn from best practice and to minimise duplication of effort.
- 5.3 The Department of Justice (NI) are currently working through proposals to amalgamate DPPs and CSPs in May 2011 into one single partnership. It is suggested that the new partnerships could be used as a mechanism to deliver some aspects of the Road Safety Strategy, within local authority structures.
- 5.4 Finally, NILGA would stress the importance of providing a statutory footing for local authorities if expected to play a role in delivering and implementing the Road Safety Strategy on a local level.

6 Areas of Research

- 6.1 It is suggested that good practice examples in road safety strategies from other jurisdictions are utilised when developing the final draft of the Road Safety Strategy for NI.
- 6.2 Research indicates that brain development is still in progress during adolescence. The developing brain of the teenage years may help explain why adolescents sometimes make decisions that seem to be risky, as it is thought that a person's sense of danger signals are not fully developed until they reach their twenties. This research is particularly relevant to young drivers and NILGA would suggest that this information is publicised in order to encourage younger drivers to take more care on the roads.
- 6.3 It is also suggested that research is carried out comparing the experiences of drivers who have undertaken the Advanced Driving test to those who have not. This may encourage others to undertake the Advanced Driving Test, if results prove that undertaking the course helps minimise the likelihood of being involved in a collision.
- 6.4 Members further suggested that research is undertaken to ascertain the extent that driver/ rider fatigue plays in the incidence of road traffic accidents.

7 Other Issues

- 7.1 The consultation document states that DOE Road Safety Division "will work with any new authorities, when the structure has been finalised, to explore ways to build capacity to reduce casualties at a local level, identify local road safety issues and objectives and determine how we can work together to address local needs and priorities". Due to the current uncertainty surrounding local government re-organisation, NILGA would seek assurance from the Department that regardless of whether local councils will be operating on a 26 or 11 council model, local government will still be provided the opportunity to be involved in helping to improve road safety at a local level.
- 7.2 Local government have also requested further information on actions that are proposed to be undertaken and would encourage that an action plan to deliver and implement the Strategy is developed as a starting point for delivery.

For further information regarding this response, please contact Claire Bradley at the NILGA offices on (028) 9079 8972 or at c.bradley@nilga.org