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UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL EVIDENCE To be published as HC264-i

House of COMMONS

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

TAKEN BEFORE

Transport Committee

The Government's Motorcycling Strategy

Wednesday 24 January 2007

MR DAVID SHORT, MR NICH BROWN and MR CRAIG CAREY-CLINCH

MR TREVOR MAGNER and MS SHEILA RAINGER

Evidence heard in Public Questions 1 - 105

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Oral Evidence

Taken before the Transport Committee

on Wednesday 24 January 2007

Members present

Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody, in the Chair

Mr David Clelland

Clive Efford

Mr Philip Hollobone

Mr John Leech

Graham Stringer

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**Memoranda submitted by Motorcycle Action Group  
and Motor Cycle Industry Association**

**Examination of Witnesses**

Witnesses: **Mr David Short**, Campaigns Manager, Motorcycle Action Group (MAG), **Mr Craig Carey-Clinch**, Director of Public Affairs, Motor Cycle Industry Association (MCIA) and **Mr Nich Brown**, Director of Research & Statistical Services, Motor Cycle Industry Association (MCIA), gave evidence.

Chairman: Good afternoon, gentlemen, you are very welcome to the Committee. We do have one or two little bits of housekeeping before we actually come to you. Members having an interest to declare.

Mr Clelland: Member of Amicus.

Clive Efford: Member of the Transport and General Workers Union.

Graham Stringer: Member of Amicus.

**Q1 Chairman:** Gwyneth Dunwoody, ASLEF. Gentlemen, would you first, for the purposes of the record, identify yourselves, starting on my left and your right?

Mr Brown: Thank you, Chairman. My name is Nich Brown, I am the Director of Research and Statistical Services at the Motor Cycle Industry Association.

Mr Carey-Clinch: My name is Craig Carey-Clinch, Director of Public Affairs for the Motor Cycle Industry Association.

Mr Short: Madam Chairman, I am David Short, I am the Campaigns Manager for the Motorcycle Action Group.

**Q2 Chairman:** Did any of you have a short statement you wanted to make before we begin, or may we go straight to the questions?

Mr Short: Madam Chairman, I would just like to announce that our organisation, the Motorcycle Action Group, is one of the two leading rider interest groups in the country and we represent approximately 45,000 to 50,000 motorcyclists. We are delighted to be here engaging in this debate today.

**Q3 Chairman:** Long may that be your attitude, Mr Short, that is very good and we are very pleased to see you all here and very pleased to get the opportunity of talking to you about this subject. Is there a particular reason why we need a national motorcycling strategy?

Mr Carey-Clinch: Yes, a strategy is important from the point of view of securing safety improvements, accessibility and security for motorcycle users. There is no such strategy that has been formed so far; there are

many for other different types of vulnerable road user groups, and the situation of safety and both accessibility and integrated transport really demands the need for a such a strategy.

**Q4 Chairman:** What do you think of the motorcycling strategy which was published in 2005?

Mr Brown: It is fair to say that the motorcycling strategy is a very comprehensive document. In my previous incarnation working in local government, working for the road safety department and working with pedestrians and cyclists I saw the way that the walking and cycling strategies were developed. The department did a very good job learning from those processes, the process of the strategy went very well in my view. It is a starting point, I believe, but it is a very comprehensive, wide-ranging one. The number of action points involved, the number of agencies and local authorities and other organisations that are required to deliver the strategy really does make it a community document and that has to be a good thing for motorcyclists.

**Q5 Chairman:** Has anything changed since it was published two years ago?

Mr Brown: A lot has changed, yes. Several of the actions have already been completed and we can provide a list of those actions, or we have done in our briefing document so far. The key to it is how it goes on to be implemented and there the Department for Transport has shown great willingness to work with the motorcycle community and other interested bodies.

**Q6 Chairman:** You think they are showing leadership?

Mr Brown: It would be fair in this context to say that it is not a question of one side leading; I really do believe that this is a community-based situation. Again, from my past experience in local government there has been a tendency to ignore motorcycles and that has been reflected in a worse than necessary casualty situation, a higher than necessary theft problem and, if you look at the statistics, from about 1996 when local authorities started to first take motorcycling seriously you can see a divergence between rising use of motorcycles, which rose at a higher rate than casualties did, and that speaks volumes for how important it is for local authorities and national government to get involved in positive measures that address motorcycling.

**Q7 Chairman:** You said that implementation of the actions in the strategy did not begin until Spring 2006, which was nearly a year after its publication.

Mr Brown: I am sorry if I gave you that impression. All the way through since publication a lot of those things that have been implemented and are currently being worked on were already in train as part of the Government Advisory Group process which preceded publication of the strategy.

**Q8 Chairman:** Do you want to tell us about the National Motorcycle Council; what does it do and what is its strategy?

Mr Carey-Clinch: If I may, Madam Chairman, a little piece of history. The National Motorcycle Council was a coalition of motorcycling organisations brought together to discuss issues of common concern, pretty much predominantly transport policy and motorcycling. When the NMC was working in the mid Nineties it talked to Government about the idea of generating a national strategy, and once the advisory group was convened by ministers in late 1998/99 the NMC pretty much fell into dormancy. With the publication of the strategy the previous members of the NMC felt that it was an opportunity to offer such a body as an umbrella with government and through which to offer and implement the national strategy. Ministers were quite keen to support that idea.

**Q9 Chairman:** Between you, you were particularly asked to achieve seven of the actions set out in the strategy. Will you get that done by February 2007? I can take you through all the actions if you like, but they are promoting the benefits of environmentally better performing bikes; a campaign to encourage riders to keep their machines road legal; support the manufacturers' efforts to improve rider knowledge of braking systems and road safety problems.

Mr Carey-Clinch: In the broadest sense some of these actions are, by necessity, on-going. The first thing to do is to establish the need for these - this was done within the strategy - and then to convene the people who can actually make a difference to some of these and to start on-going discussions, particularly on the issue of encouraging different types of bike usage and emphasis on different types of bikes.

**Q10 Chairman:** Let us take it the other way around; is there anything in that list that you think is unachievable?

Mr Carey-Clinch: In the list of actions, particularly with regard to the motorcycle industry, no, and I would say in the longer term for the other actions for Government and the deadlines that have been set, they are all achievable provided we get the necessary level of engagement.

Chairman: The necessary level of engagement. Mr Leech,

**Q11 Mr Leech:** Just on that particular point, are any of the points that you were asked to look at ones that you feel you should not have been asked to look at or ones that you feel uncomfortable with?

Mr Carey-Clinch: Certainly from the point of view of working within the strategy, no. The strategy itself, although as representatives of our organisations we had to agree those, we also had wider memberships both from the industry and, at the risk of speaking for my colleague Mr Short here, and the riders group. There had to be sign-up from within the industry and the riders and the other stakeholders involved and they all have.

**Q12 Clive Efford:** A lot of people say that motorcycling is extremely dangerous and that it should be curtailed; what would your view on a statement like that be? What would your response be?

Mr Brown: You can look at the numbers involved in two ways: you can look at the absolute numbers of people involved and you can look at the proportionality, and generally when motorcycling is criticised it is criticised because it is one of the most vulnerable groups. In terms of proportions of road users, we account for a lot of casualties, but in actual fact the risk, if you look at it in absolute terms, at the moment is running at around one death for every 10 million kilometres motorcycled on the road. We are working, as are the riders groups, the trainers, local government and all the agencies, to try and reduce that rate - as we are with all road user groups, but I think it is unfair to single out a group which is in itself vulnerable and say that it should not exist. There is a misconception that motorcyclists bring a lot of the risks upon themselves, and clearly the figures do not bear that out. The clear majority of motorcycle accidents that result in a rider casualty are caused by the actions of other road users, and it is unfortunate that people do not pay attention to that.

Mr Short: If I may, Madam Chairman, from the rider's perspective we have to appreciate that motorcycles are a recognised transport mode, it is an expression of individuality and personal choice. The fact that we have a government motorcycle strategy is fantastic news, in terms of myself as a lifelong motorcyclist, seeing it being recognised as such by Government. We have to look at the proportionality in terms of what we do to achieve casualty reduction in terms, balanced against the benefits which motorcycling can bring in terms of congestion and in terms of reducing the greenhouse gas emissions which are very, very high profile at the moment. Certainly in terms of the rural area which I come from, low cost two-wheeled transport is an excellent means of engaging youth with employment and inculcating a sense of social responsibility, diverting them away from a potential life of crime. We must therefore look at the benefits weighed against the risk factor which you outline.

**Q13 Clive Efford:** From the driving perspective, then, how could you make motorcycling safer, what could be done in your view?

Mr Short: There are some excellent initiatives which have taken place in terms of the department's Think! Campaign and we have seen some quite hard-hitting television advertisements which have highlighted the necessity to "Look once, look twice, think bike", going back to an earlier campaign. Training is the key and making motorists aware of the potential dangers, not just of motorcyclists but, let us be honest about this, other vulnerable road users, whether they be on horseback or whether they are cyclists. Anybody outside that protective cocoon of a car with air bags and side impact bars can generate a mindset that I am all right and it does not matter so much about other people. We have to overcome that, and I am speaking there from my 30 plus years as a senior police officer until I retired last year, a lot of it on traffic. There is a mindset which we must engage with and encourage everybody that to use the roads has a responsibility on other people as well. It is about that educative process.

Mr Carey-Clinch: If I may add something, if you look at the progress of casualty reduction across the board we seem to be reaching a sort of low level and it has been very difficult to address beyond that in terms of reducing casualties. This implies that some very innovative ideas are required, rather than just relying on traditional road safety methodology. One particular area, particularly with driver training and I would say also with rider training, is the issue of road user education - pre-driver training, particularly, as part of the school curriculum. There have been some positive noises made about that of late and Dr Ladyman himself also made a statement just after Christmas, but a curriculum within schools that asks young people to recognise their rights and responsibilities as potential road users of the future can help to generate an environment where road safety is something you think about, not as an add-on or inconvenience as a teenager or a young person.

**Q14 Chairman:** Mr Carey-Clinch, I do not want to be too unkind but if you look at the road casualty by selected road user type, pedal cyclists have come from 20,000 down to 16,000 plus, but then when you look at motorcycle riders the difference is 26,000 down to 23,000 and hardly any changes at all in passenger figures. That would seem to indicate that some sections of the road are trying very hard to learn the lessons and some are not. Are you really saying that there is not a great deal more that you can do for motorcycles, riders and passengers, and it will just have to be everybody else who does something different?

Mr Carey-Clinch: I believe there is an enormous amount more that can be done and the fact that in last year's casualty statistics the greatest gains were made amongst motorcycle users shows that we are really only starting to get to the root of the problem and are beginning to make progress downwards. It should be noted that we are looking at a backdrop here where motorcycle mileage and use increased incredibly over the last ten years.

**Q15 Chairman:** I do not think anybody is disagreeing with you but the figures are pretty stark, are they not; even amongst car drivers they have come down proportionately more?

Mr Brown: Madam Chairman, the car as a technical platform for deploying safety measures - seatbelts, airbags, crumple zones, the fact that it is a protected tin box, offers a lot more physical opportunities for protecting the occupants, and the cyclist, the pedestrian, the motorcyclist the horse-rider does not have that kind of technological advantage. There are some disadvantages to that: the strengthening of car windscreens has prompted fears that that makes it more difficult for a car driver at a junction to see a vulnerable road user,

especially a motorcyclist or a cyclist approaching, and there is research being carried out by the Department to look into that. With all the right intentions, the engineers and the politicians point the resources in the direction of where something can be done, but there can be unintended consequences. For the motorcyclist, the environment in which the motorcyclist operates is where a lot of the risk lies. Work that we have been doing with the Institute of Highways and Incorporated Engineers and other local authorities throughout Europe has been showing to us that we think the estimate of how important the road itself is to road user safety is such that (a) it has been under-estimated and (b) with all the progress that has been made with education and training and vehicle design, it is probably the road management, the road design which offer the greatest opportunities for casualty reduction in the future.

Chairman: I am sure various people will want to come onto that. Mr Stringer.

**Q16 Graham Stringer:** Can I move on to mini-bikes. Do you believe that the nuisance they are causing is giving a negative view of motorcycling in general and is there anything that can be done about that?

Mr Carey-Clinch: Unfortunately, yes, the public image of the problem caused by these motorcycles for use on private property, which includes these mini-bikes, is knocking onto the image of motorcycling. We are making efforts to ensure that the public knows there are two distinct issues at play here, and this is also where road user education comes in. It is an issue that we have had to face this year.

**Q17 Graham Stringer:** What do you think can be done about it?

Mr Carey-Clinch: We had a number of initiatives which we put forward from diversionary schemes through to enforcement. What we have seen has been a success factor was the Home Office campaign last summer, combined with the work of the Auto-Cycle Union on lobbying for diversionary schemes in local authority areas. We have the powers, but it is how they are applied. For example in Coventry we saw a reduction of 80 per cent in complaints from the seizure of just a relatively a few number of bikes and a local publicity campaign.

**Q18 Graham Stringer:** Do you think that the Government should move to restricting the import and sales of these vehicles?

Mr Carey-Clinch: I believe there may be a lot of unintended knock-on effects to other products. I do not have a complete answer to that, but it is something where I do not believe it would be ---

**Q19 Chairman:** Is that a yes or a no?

Mr Carey-Clinch: No, they should not.

**Q20 Graham Stringer:** Do you believe that they are safe? I do not mean that people fall off them and hurt themselves but do you think their fuel pipes are safe, do you think they are structurally safe, do you think they are fit for purpose, to use a word often used in this place nowadays?

Mr Brown: If I can put some figures to that, historically a well-designed children's motorcycle, built by one of the major manufacturers, built for eventually an introduction to competitive motorcycle sport, if those are the sort of bikes we are talking about then the import volume we are talking about is roughly 7,000 a year in total. What has changed over the last three years has been the exponential growth in copies of these machines from the Far East and, last year, our estimates were such that we believe there was something like 170,000 of those machines brought in. If we look at the figures for the first six months of this year, for the first time we have seen no increase in imports of those machines. They are mostly from China but we recognise that products from China can be extremely high quality if that is what is ordered by the people who are importing them, but unfortunately most of these bikes are being imported by people who operate outside of the motorcycle industry; basically, they are not viewing them as motorcycles, they are not part of the motorcycle trade. That is an important distinction.

**Q21 Graham Stringer:** That is very interesting, but do you think they are dangerous? Are they likely to blow up, are they likely to fall apart when being driven? Do you have any evidence or statistics you can give us on that?

Mr Carey-Clinch: We do not have any evidence or statistics on quality standards. All the bikes, as I say, are imported and sold outside of the mainstream industry, but we are concerned about quality standards on things like chain guards, brakes and things like that, and we are actually looking with the Department at how we can evaluate what is coming in and whether any other action should be taken with regard to that, so there are concerns, yes.

**Q22 Graham Stringer:** You mentioned that the law was enforced in Coventry; do you think that generally the law is being enforced sufficiently?

Mr Short: May I pick that up, Madam Chairman? There is sufficient legislation there to deal with this problem, which is antisocial behaviour, entry-level criminality, call it what you like. Under the existing crime and disorder reduction partnership approach, whereby you have got multi-agency meetings involving police, probation, local authorities, looking at specific problems in specific areas because, if we are honest about this, this is not a blanket UK-wide problem, this is localised in certain areas.

**Q23 Chairman:** Was that what happened in Coventry?

Mr Short: Yes.

**Q24 Chairman:** They targeted specific areas with the multi-agency group.

Mr Short: That is correct, Madam Chairman, and what you get then is the enforcement side, you get targeted police in to actually crack down in those particular problem areas, which allows us to seize them under section 59 of the Police Act 2002 to actually crush them if they are not insured, which is a very effective way. Also, the other side in terms of diversionary schemes, is actually looking at opportunities where these things can be ridden legitimately in a safe environment which is properly risk-managed. I do not think the problem is that dissimilar to what we had some years ago with youngsters on skateboards everywhere, and we now see in areas skateboard parks being set up which are properly managed and where the youngsters can go. It is the same with youth shelters where youngsters can go and congregate. It is that problem-solving approach which is the police national intelligence model which is nationwide now which can actually look at the problem, if it is identified, and deal with it, given the existing legislation procedures which are already there.

**Q25 Graham Stringer:** Do you have national statistics on complaints, deaths on these bikes?

Mr Short: The only national statistic which I have to hand at the moment is that in some police basic command units there have been in excess of 4,000 complaints in the last 12 months, and in certain areas more than 40 per cent of calls to police basic command units have been about mini-motos. I have not got any data on death or serious injury.

**Q26 Graham Stringer:** Do you think it would be helpful and make policing more effective if, like other motor vehicles, both the vehicle and the owner and driver were licensed?

Mr Short: The problem there is that just as we have at present with motor vehicles which should be licensed, there are still those people who will not license them and will not have a driving licence. They are the same people who would actually tend to criminally use these types of machines. I am not sure, therefore, that by making it a blanket requisite for some sort of registration scheme it would actually catch those people who are causing problems.

Mr Carey-Clinch: It is also important to look at the context and where the problem came from. Before the rise of the £50 mini-moto we still had complaints about young people using worn out or stolen machines which the number plates and identification were erased from, causing whatever local mayhem they did. Our concern about a registration scheme, although it is an idea that would be well-motivated, is that I do believe that number plates and suchlike would simply be removed. There are problems of identification that come from that or numbers are erased or changed, and the knock-on effects, the unintended effects for instance on legitimate off-road motor sport are another factor, and also to include in the scheme the hundreds of thousands of machines that are already out there, it would be a bureaucratic nightmare.

Mr Brown: If I may add something, it is self-evident that the people who are riding these bikes are breaking a number of established regulations in what they are doing. They are mostly under-aged, unlicensed, ridden without insurance, riding in areas where they do not have permission to ride, using these bikes on footpaths and public paths and the highway without lighting. I agree with my colleagues that if those people were asked to display a number plate - whether or not the bike was registered - the number plate would not last very long. My concern at this, speaking as an angry resident who has had to put up with this in my local area, when I have spoken to my local police to find out what sort of intelligence base they are using, they are not able to tell me how many of these bikes are owned by the people they are talking to and how many have been stolen; how many are mini-bikes and how many are stolen road bikes, whether the people who are causing the problem are already known to them for other reasons or whether they are people who simply do not understand the law. My fear as a resident is that although there was a very, very effective crackdown in my local area which got rid of the problem for a year, they would have to repeat that resource-intensive thing time and time again until they understand the nature of the problem.

Graham Stringer: Is that not really making the argument for a licensing scheme, because at the moment these vehicles do not have to have a registration number, a lot of the chassis have the numbers filed off them, but would it not make it a good deal easier for the police if they could just say "you have not got a number plate on there, you have got no number on the chassis or wherever, we are going to crunch the bike." If people knew that, that would stop well-meaning parents, who do not understand the rules, buying these machines for their children, would it?

**Q27 Chairman:** Mr Short, do you want to comment on that?

Mr Short: If I may, Madam Chairman, the existing powers are there already. If antisocial behaviour is borne out by these motorcycles, mini-motos, then providing warning is given they can be seized and, if they have not got insurance - and these things will never have insurance because they will never meet all the other stringent standards - they can be crushed.

**Q28 Clive Efford:** When you say, Mr Short, "if a warning has been issued", can you explain how the warning is issued before the bike is seized?

Mr Short: Under the Police Reform Act 2002, section 59, if antisocial behaviour emanates from the use of a motor vehicle, that individual can be given a warning and within 12 months if that behaviour is once again demonstrated then the police can seize and crush the machine. They do not have to wait the full 12 months, it might be the following day.

**Q29 Clive Efford:** But we are talking about stopping and identifying the same bike twice.

Mr Short: Not necessarily. That is one element of it, but the other element is - there are more strings to the bow - the use of insurance. If the machine does not have insurance - and it will not have - and an officer reasonably suspects that it will not have insurance, then it can be seized immediately.

**Q30 Clive Efford:** And crushed?

Mr Short: Absolutely. This is happening very effectively around the country. We used it in North Yorkshire when I was the area commander, very effectively, on cars, and it has been used around the country. There is a very good practice guide on the Together, Crime Reduction Toolkits website, which gives a guide on good practice on how to do this.

**Q31 Clive Efford:** The problem that the police describe to me in my area in dealing with this is that because quite often these are very young and very reckless people that ride these bikes, they do not pursue them. Therefore, because there is no number plate, no identifying plate, it is very difficult for them to identify the bike quickly and deal with the problem.

Mr Short: It is the identification of the individual rider that is the real issue that matters, and if you are using the intelligence-led approach you are probably using CCTV and you probably have a profile on these particular individuals because experience suggests that they are also breaching the law in other areas as well. If you target the individual and find the individual then it is not usually as problematic to find the machine as well.

Mr Carey-Clinch: This is where targeted local enforcement in particular problem areas and gathering police intelligence is always very useful. At the end of the day I strongly feel that the number plates would simply be removed and you still have this problem of who is riding the bike at any particular time because these things tend to get handed around. If you have got the intelligence then the police are aware of movements and activities, this was certainly one of the success factors behind the targeted schemes in Coventry and near Glasgow as well.

**Q32 Clive Efford:** I just want to get my head round why do we have them at all? Why are we making these tiny little bikes?

Mr Brown: We do not; we do not make them in the UK. It is really that young people, just by nature of being young people, are always looking for a new fad, a new form of excitement.

**Q33 Chairman:** Somebody is importing them, Mr Brown, and they are probably British, do you not think?

Mr Brown: Yes, absolutely. As I said before there was an established trade of about 7,000 units a year of the major manufacturers, with very well-built, well-designed bikes being distributed through motorcycle dealerships, mostly specialising in sporting bikes. The difference now is that these things get given away with mobile phones, they can be sold by a newsagent's shop or the local off licence and because they have been imported at such a low price from China there has effectively been a flooding of the market. That has opened up the prospect of buying one of these things to a lot of people who would not otherwise have been serious enough to afford to buy one.

**Q34 Clive Efford:** You have not answered my question; why do we not just set a minimum specification for a motorised two-wheeled bike which bans them completely?

Mr Brown: There is already a British standard, which is somewhat out of date, which is being looked at again - we are involved with the British standards people to try to beef that standard up. That is precisely the approach that we think is likely to work.

**Q35 Clive Efford:** Mr Carey-Clinch, earlier on you said that if we were to ban them completely it would stop other things or stop people importing them which would restrict the import of other machines. What did you mean?

Mr Carey-Clinch: Unfortunately, it is impossible to give a comprehensive answer but I would imagine that by banning one particular product there are implications in international trade agreements.

Chairman: There must be protection and safety rules. Mr Leech.

**Q36 Mr Leech:** We have spent quite a lot of time talking about mini motorcycles and if we have people coming here from the car manufacturing organisations we would not start having long discussions with them about people group riding, but unfortunately people within the motorcycling organisations are often seen as though in

some way they are defending mini motorcycles. Do you not think you would actually benefit from distancing yourselves from these sorts of activities, by taking a much firmer line along the lines of some of the questions you have had here this afternoon, because I think that is partly why motorcycling gets a bad reputation because you do not seem to be taking a hard line against mini motorcycles or off-road biking.

Mr Short: Actually, the stance from the Motorcycle Action Group, as a rider interest group, is that we actually want to distance ourselves from these things, they are no more a nuisance than motorised skateboards or any other mechanical device but these happen to look like motorbikes. That is one side of it. Having said that, the problem is there and we do not want to just wash our hands and say it is somebody else's problem, we want to assist and help in trying to find a solution under the current regime. As I have already alluded to earlier, there are opportunities for looking at diversion schemes to get these things used in a legitimate and a safe environment and certainly members of the Motorcycle Action Group are engaging with local authorities around the country where this is being considered. I take your point and you make it well, but we would rather they were not about. Having said that, they are about and we will engage and try to help solve the problem within the existing framework.

Mr Carey-Clinch: Defending the activities of the legally ridden motorcycles I do not think has ever been the business of any responsible motorcycling organisation. Our concern is that in order to crack a nut we may be in the process of discussing the biggest sledgehammer ever. Illegal riding is already illegal; we do not condone it, we very strongly supported what seemed at the time the extreme grab and crush actions very eloquently proposed by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, but we supported that approach. It is quite clear that there is a massive problem here, but we seek to look for ways that tackle the problem without having unintended or knock-on effects on the wider world of motorcycling, something which of course we are very keen to detach this problem from.

**Q37 Mr Clelland:** Going back to conventional motorcycling, do you think the current level of training for motorcyclists is adequate?

Mr Brown: The interesting thing is that motorcycle training over the last 25 years or so has gone through a revolution that I would say that car driver training has not gone through. It is interesting that when the 1981 Transport Act effectively dissuaded a whole generation of people from taking up motorcycling as soon as they could, what we see subsequent to that is a growth in casualties amongst car users. This illustrates that really when we are talking about casualties amongst young people we are talking about casualties that are derived from their attitudes to road use, the way that they use vehicles, not necessarily the vehicles themselves. Having said all that, the reason why motorcycle training has been through that revolution and why we have compulsory basic training standards which must be met before a motorcyclist is allowed out as a learner, why there is effectively almost universal professional training before a motorcyclist takes their test and why organisations like the Institute of Advanced Motorists see more people coming to them for motorcycle training once they have passed their test than before is because riders are understanding the value of gaining from other people's experience and learning how to use a motorcycle responsibly and safely. The bottom line here is that you do not need to ride a motorcycle for very long to understand that the flip side of all the positive experiences of being directly connected with the environment is that you really do not want to be too directly connected with the environment and that falling off or crashing or somebody crashing into you is something that you want to avoid at all costs. Despite common perceptions on this, riders are actually at great pains to make sure that they do not cause themselves or the bikes damage by crashing.

**Q38 Mr Clelland:** Do you think there should be any changes under the current regime?

Mr Carey-Clinch: We are about to see a major shake-up in 2008 when there will be an additional half an hour's testing before a rider is allowed onto the road to take their licence test. This testing will take place off-road, it will need to take place on a relatively large area of land controlled by the DSA and this will reduce the number of test centres available to motorcyclists from over 220 to around about 65 for the whole of the UK. That has a number of implications for the availability of testing. I believe that the content of that testing will show that a motorcyclist's ability to brake or to steer sharply to avoid somebody crossing into their path, for instance, will be very much better tested than it is now. What I am concerned about is that if tests are not readily available because the super centres where the tests take place are so few and far between, we may see an increase in the trend we are already seeing amongst all classes of vehicle driver for not just bothering to take a test at all, not bothering to obtain a licence. That would be my concern. I have no evidence to show me that motorcycling takes place in that unlicensed state to any great extent, but my fear would be that if we do not have enough opportunities for people to take the test and take the training we may see that after 2008.

**Q39 Mr Clelland:** Can I refer to the proposed European Third Directive which is suggesting a staged access to motorcycles; do you think that is a good idea?

Mr Carey-Clinch: In principle progressive access to motorcycling does make some sense, but again it has to be compared and contrasted to the regime that other road users do face. We see a complete revision of the motorcycle test approximately every ten to fifteen years; the car test, apart from a few add-ons, has not been fundamentally revised since about 1937. Our concern is that the accessibility to such training, as Nich Brown has just pointed out, is an issue for this. There is the cost to the rider and again it will knock-on in an unintended way but, more importantly, lessons from the 1981 Transport Act were never really learned. Making access more difficult, particularly when there has been no supportive research in the previous regime to put it into place - simply making it more difficult to get on a bike does not tackle the extremely important issue of in-use motorcycle safety and our concern with the European approach on the third directive is that the results of the second directive changes in 1997 were never evaluated in terms of their impact on safety, and we strongly suspect that the thing that is being missed once again is reducing the vulnerability and improving the safety of

users with the machines that you use,

**Q40 Mr Clelland:** How do you intend to deal with this lack of enforcement of the directive? Once this comes in, how do you deal with it?

Mr Brown: We have been working closely with both the Department for Transport and the Driver Standards Agency. We have focused mostly on what is happening in two areas: the run-up to the 2008 extra test and also the creation by DSA of a register for post-test trainers, so the adoption of voluntary standards for people who train riders who have a licence and who wish to extend their skills beyond that. Really we are talking here about positioning skills, observation skills, the kinds of things that keep riders out of harm's way. Once the 2008 changes are in place and we can see the effect of the reduction in the number of test centres, that is the time when those big issues have been removed, or at least we know what we are dealing with, that is the time when we should be looking at how the third driving licence directive is implemented. The window between 2008 and 2013 is big enough, I think, for the job to be done right.

**Q41 Mr Clelland:** Do you think the UK Government is doing enough to mitigate the effects of these changes when they come in?

Mr Carey-Clinch: We were particularly grateful to ministers for abstaining on the vote in Europe on this. We did not feel that the third directive approach was necessarily the right one to take, but we have what we have and it is the responsibility of ministers now, particularly working with the DSA, to ensure that the implementation is done in a way that is most effective in terms of real-time improvements in safety and, unfortunately, it has to be said in this case with the lightest touch possible to go alongside the improvements that the DSA are already making to motorcycle training.

Mr Short: One of the potential consequences which I fear the new proposed regime might have is a knock-on effect in terms of suppression of the motorcycle market. Every time we see a new change in legislation there has always been a dip in motorcycle registrations. That may be, to some people, a desirable position, but my concern is that it actually dissuades people from taking part in a form of transport which does give people a better appreciation of the rural environment and the potential dangers of having respect for everybody else, which does in turn make you a better driver. I am absolutely convinced about that. My fear is that by making it more difficult to gain a motorcycle licence, certainly at a younger age, it will simply divert people directly into cars. One of the problems that I see, which is a real problem for society at the moment, is the number of deaths of young people - multi-occupancy, youngsters in cars at two or three o'clock in the morning. We are not seeing just one death, we are seeing two or three in one accident with a single vehicle, no other vehicles involved. My fear is that we are putting people into a situation where they could be better equipped, had they taken the motorcycle route. We are also increasing, potentially, the amount of road space taken up by vehicles when congestion really is a problem, and the other knock-on effects in terms of environmental pollution. There is a big picture, therefore, which we need to consider very carefully in terms of the nuances of the third driving licence directive.

**Q42 Mr Clelland:** If they do go into cars they will not be allowed to use bus lanes; should motorcycles be allowed to use bus lanes?

Mr Short: Again, picking up the point that was mentioned, that road space is at a premium and becoming more so, I think that if we can separate out the vulnerable road users and minimise the potential conflict then it has got to be a good step for road safety.

**Q43 Mr Clelland:** Does that mean that they should be allowed to use bus lanes?

Mr Short: In answer, yes, they should be.

**Q44 Chairman:** It is better to have a conflict with a bus than with a car?

Mr Short: No, but the bus lane would not have as many buses as the car lane would have cars, one would hope, and it is a simple effective means of actually minimising conflict between road users. Yes, there are the concerns that people would have about cyclists, pedestrians stepping out into the road because they do not see a bus and not realising there is a motorbike there or a car there, but again that is about education and awareness. It has been successful in some places, local authorities have that power, and all I would say is that as a motorcycling interest group we would readily engage with local authorities when they are putting together their local transport plans to look at the potential benefits of motorcycles in the bus lane.

**Q45 Mr Clelland:** You talked about the possible hazards but they exist in any case, people stepping out and cyclists. Are there any particular hazards that might arise out of motorcycles using bus lanes?

Mr Short: I am sure that Mr Brown, who was a former safety officer, might have more to say.

**Q46 Chairman:** Mr Brown, is it safe for motorcyclists in bus lanes?

Mr Brown: In my experience, yes, absolutely. We need to bear in mind the benefits of road users being able to see each other, and I think the experience in the London congestion charging zone, whereby dissuading cars from being on the road we have seen an increase in pedestrian activity, pedal cyclist activity and motorcycle

activity. All those groups have reduced their casualties and the casualties from conflicts between those groups also reduced - from the figures that I have seen from Transport for London - and there is a very clear lesson there. I was involved, when I worked for Avon County Council, in the scheme which booked motorcycles into bus lanes in Bristol. I was a resident of a street that bordered onto a bus lane, so I have used them by cycle and motorcycle and my personal experience is that it works extremely well. Where the deliberation to date and the studies to date have perhaps been lacking is that the studies always focus on what might be happening within the bus lane and there has been no benchmark study to look at the problems motorcyclists face when they are not allowed to use bus lanes. Motorcycles having to make progress through congested traffic, by overtaking traffic in the face of oncoming vehicles is something that simply has not been taken into account.

**Q47 Chairman:** Mr Brown, before you get away from that, how long has the scheme in Bristol run?

Mr Brown: 1996 was when we introduced it.

**Q48 Chairman:** Would they have access to information of the effect on motorcycles and the extent of injuries before that and after that?

Mr Brown: An 18-months before and after survey was carried out and there was an 18-month experimental period. The casualty figures before the experimental period were compared to the casualty figures after it, and the result was that the county council agreed that it was a safety benefit for motorcyclists in particular but with knock-on safety benefits for other people.

**Q49 Chairman:** Could I ask you to give us a note with those figures?

Mr Brown: Yes.

**Q50 Clive Efford:** Can I come back on something that was just said about motorcyclists being forced to drive on the wrong side of the road in order to overtake. As a former professional driver I have lost count of the number of times I have been blinded by headlights coming towards me on the wrong side of the road; what gives a motorcyclist the right to assume that they can overtake people by driving up the wrong side of the road?

Mr Brown: We all have to overtake on the wrong side of the road depending on whether there are enough lanes available. Unless there is a solid line then it is permissible in law.

**Q51 Clive Efford:** I am just keen to know from somebody who represents the industry, when there is stationary traffic and it is dark, what sort of advice do you give, what do you encourage motorcyclists to do in those circumstances? In my constituency, which quite often is heavily-congested in south-east London, I see the most extraordinary risks being taken by motorcyclists. You seem to be suggesting in what you just said that that is acceptable, that they drive on the wrong side of the road when there is a traffic jam.

Mr Brown: It is acceptable to use the traffic lanes for opposing traffic if there is no solid white line, and it does not matter which vehicle, if there is an obstruction in the way and it is clear and safe to complete the overtaking manoeuvre then all classes of vehicle can do it. Our advice is - and we have several channels by which we give this advice - that if it is clear and safe to do so then it is perfectly legal, there is no problem, and if it is not clear and safe to do so then our advice is not to overtake.

Clive Efford: Can I just ask one other thing? Security: why is it so easy to nick bikes?

**Q52 Chairman:** Which one of you is an expert on nicking bikes?

Mr Short: I know a lot about nicking bikes, Madam Chairman, though I have not actually done it myself. The problem with motorcycles is that they are so easy to literally pick up by two burly blokes and sling in the back of the white Transit van - or whatever colour it might be. Since taking up the post of campaigns manager I have also taken on the role of chair of the National Motorcycle Crime Reduction Group and we are looking at a strategy to actually develop and deliver quite a number of issues. It is a problem; you can physically chain a motorcycle to a barrier and some of the efforts that councils are making to provide secure parking are to be commended, but at the end of the day no matter what size chain you put around there would be some form of bolt cropper which would crop and remove away, so the issue again is about engaging with local authorities, looking at how we can actually improve motorcycle parking and cycle parking for that matter, closed circuit television monitoring, better lighting, to actually target harder to prevent the thefts happening in the first place.

Clive Efford: The bikes that I am thinking of are not stolen by burly blokes who have a Transit van - and presumably they would have had to steal that in the first place - but they are young kids. Is there no way that we can use technology to put an immobiliser on a bike to make it less attractive to steal, and should we be looking to manufacturers to introduce something like that?

**Q53 Chairman:** Mr Brown, are you up on the technology of immobilising bikes?

Mr Brown: We do have the technology and it is fitted to the larger motorcycles, but the type of motorcycles that we are talking about are the lightweight ones, the small engine size that younger people can ride. Because they

are small they are particularly easy to carry away and in fact I know one local campaigner on motorcycle safety who got started down that track because his daughter's moped was taken away in a shopping trolley. If riders can be persuaded to use a locking device, a physical locking device, every time they park their bike, then that is a help, but if they have nothing solid to lock it too then the bike can literally be taken away. If the wheels are physically locked but the bike is not locked to something immovable, then it can be wheeled away on one wheel or it can be put on some kind of a castor and taken away relatively easily. An immobiliser is not going to prevent that from happening and, again, it is an example of where technology that has been proved on cars does not necessarily translate the same benefits directly to other vehicles.

**Q54 Mr Leech:** I would just like to come back to the issue about bus lanes if I can. Dr Ladyman was intending to write to local authorities to give them discretion to allow motorcycles in bus lanes; would you agree or disagree that it would be better for either all local authorities allowing motorcycle users to use bus lanes or no local authorities allowing it so there is no doubt between different local authorities what motorcycles could or could not do?

Mr Short: From the point of view of common standards across the country which avoid confusion then, yes, it would be ideal if you were travelling from one town to another you were not in any doubt, people were not in any confusion in terms of other road users like pedestrians or cyclists. That would be the ideal position to move towards, without a doubt.

**Q55 Mr Leech:** If that is not going to be the case and it is going to be up to different local authorities, would you prefer local authorities to have the discretion or would you prefer to say if not all local authorities are going to have them it is better to have none?

Mr Short: One of the things that has come out of the strategy is that we would like to see a greater engagement with the motorcycle interest groups in terms of informing local transport policy, and if we could get a better buy-in and greater engagement to have a reasoned argument of the benefits, then I think that is the way forward that local authorities with local motorcycle forums and other interest groups could actually develop their local transport systems suitable for their locality.

Mr Carey-Clinch: To a degree also there are local situations which may arise: for example, a bus lane going across the front of a primary school, there would have to be a different set of considerations for allowing motorcycles and I would argue cycles, access to a lane such as that compared to examples of something like the M4 bus lane which is operating very successfully. The DFT is in the process of finalising an advisory note to local authorities on bus lanes which talks about some of the considerations that need to be put in force, but it must be said that within the local transport planning context - and this links back to the aims of the national motorcycle strategy - we do need much more hands-on and decisive input from DFT in terms of advising local authorities on local transport plans, bus lanes and other issues and also working with regional offices in order to try and impress the standards which Government itself said it wanted to do in the strategy.

**Q56 Chairman:** In what sense? The difficulty, Mr Carey-Clinch is that you will realise that Government is eternally being told that it should not be too prescriptive in the demands of local government and yet you appear to be saying they should set down a series of motorcycle directives saying that before they prepare a transport plan they must automatically include these series of policy decisions, is that what you are saying?

Mr Carey-Clinch: Madam Chairman, we often hear about this in a sort of contrast between what Government feels local authority should be doing and vice versa, but it is quite interesting in the case of motorcycling policy that local authorities in one breath are saying they do not want the Government telling them what to do but also saying about the motorcycle policy that the Government is not giving us advice. When it comes to advisory notes like PPG13, traffic advisory leaflets and things like that, which are not necessarily prescriptive they do provide local authorities with the tools with which they can act.

**Q57 Chairman:** Finally, before we allow you to go, because it has been very interesting, do you really genuinely believe that the law is being sufficiently enforced in relation to motorcycles?

Mr Short: I think so. One of the good things to come out of my career was the Bikesafe Scheme which I like to lay claim to founding in North Yorkshire many years ago with the help of colleagues. What we started there in North Yorkshire was to address a specific problem. That is now a national programme with its own Association of Chief Police Officers portfolio, held by Mr Griffin in Humberside. What is heartening to see is that there is a common ACPO prosecution policy which is adopted across the country, and I think that is tremendous. All the rider groups have been able to comment on it and motorcyclists know exactly where they stand. It combines the three approaches of the enforcement fast-tracking, excessive speeders, the driver improvement scheme, opportunities and things like that. It also looks at and engaging with local authorities in terms of improving engineering on roads, signage, road surfaces and things like that, but also Bikesafe itself in terms of educating and promoting that post-test training awareness amongst the more mature riders has had a positive effect. In fact, I read in my local paper today that the North Yorkshire Police are claiming a reduction of 31 per cent in terms of killed and serious injuries amongst motorcyclists in the last year through this three-pronged approach. That is an encouraging way forward and I think it needs encouragement as well and recognising the benefits that post-test training, and police assessments can give to this.

Mr Carey-Clinch: To be a little more direct, I would say that the police are engaging where they are able to and they are definitely looking at enforcement and engagement policies and working in partnership with us all, but I do find myself somewhat at odds with this view that we can turn traffic policing into roads policing, blurring the

edges of that, reducing resources for the very real issues like the problems we are having with mini-bikes, and also when it comes to the spread of Bikesafe, having fiscal limits really put on the fact that there is simply not an investment or economic ground to take these things to a much more logical and better conclusion. In general terms, therefore, I would say that a reduction in road traffic policing and a reduction in policing generally does need to come under some scrutiny.

**Q58 Graham Stringer:** The RAC and the AA estimate that there are about two million cars driving about without insurance; do you have an equivalent figure for motorbikes?

Mr Brown: We do not have an equivalent figure. I am not aware of any organisation that has specifically taken that research to motorcyclists but I will endeavour to find an answer to that if I can.

**Q59 Graham Stringer:** Do you have any gut feelings as to whether it is more or less?

Mr Brown: In all honesty, no.

**Q60 Mr Leech:** Completely unrelated to everything that we have had so far, there seems to be an anomaly where there are still electric bikes that people can drive around without tax and insurance on the road. Do you have any views on these particular vehicles?

Mr Carey-Clinch: To give a general answer, the new technologies and alternative fuels do need to be encouraged right across both the car and the motorcycle industries. The law regarding these things is a bit unclear in terms of power and speed of the motive force used, and that is something which perhaps could be clarified.

Mr Brown: My understanding is that it is actually fairly clear that an electrically-assisted bicycle you can ride from the age of 14 with no insurance and no tax, but that is not the same as an electrically powered motorcycle. We are talking about fairly small electric motors assisting people up hills on bicycles; that is the area where there is less regulation, but for all motor vehicles, no matter what the fuel is, the road regulations are essentially the same requirement.

Mr Short: If it is a mechanically-propelled vehicle, irrespective of the motive power, then it is required to comply with the registration, licensing and insurance.

**Q61 Chairman:** Could I finally ask you one question, gentlemen? Have you in your talks, either with the Department for Transport or with the Home Office, explored the ability to offer training to young persons whilst they are at school before they can officially ride on motorcycles on the open highway?

Mr Brown: The answer to that is yes. The Department for Transport is particularly interested in this - we call it road user education, basically within the school curriculum. We have discussed it with the Home Office and tried to discuss it with the Department for Education and Skills; there are a number of tools out there which can be used and put into the schools context. I would rather hope that there is more engagement on that issue, particularly with the current emphasis on young people and driver safety.

**Q62 Chairman:** Are we to take it that there is a real drive to try and get education as a means of creating a better road safety plan for the future?

Mr Carey-Clinch: From the motorcycle industry and user side, yes, but the reciprocating support from Government is still somewhat weak.

**Q63 Chairman:** Finally, Mr Short, on enforcement. I was very glad to hear about North Yorkshire but could we honestly ask you if we were to ask of ACPO next week how many of your counties are really actively pursuing this sort of policy, what sort of honest answer would we get?

Mr Short: The answer that you would get, Madam Chairman, is that this is a national programme, an ACPO-agreed policy and yes we have adopted it. If you were to dig deeper you might find it has been adopted at different levels of energy.

**Q64 Chairman:** Is it part of HMI's responsibility to look at this area as part of the core facilities of a particular force?

Mr Short: Road safety is a responsibility of police alongside the local authority, it is a joint responsibility, and it is one area of inspection which HMI does look at. Nationally I think most of the 43 police forces are actively engaged in it, but the level would depend on what their other priorities are, I would suggest.

**Q65 Chairman:** Yes. We could assume really that in some cases if you had a chief officer who was very concerned about road safety and about improving the figures, there would be an energetic campaign, and in some others without using a pejorative word, there might be rather less energy.

Mr Short: Indeed. One of the sad incidents of this last year was not looking at the amalgamation of police forces

because we have still got this problem where we have small police forces which have big drains on their budget, the finances are finite and they have to go where their priorities are. I have been banging on about this for the last 31 years and until road casualty reduction is seen as a key policing priority I am afraid it will not attract the attention which I am sure that most of us in this room would like to see.

**Q66 Chairman:** Mr Short, you are getting a little close to home, so at that point I am going to say thank you very much to you all, it has been an extremely interesting and informative session and I am grateful to you all.

**Memoranda submitted by the British Motorcyclists' Federation  
and the RAC Foundation**

Witnesses: **Mr Trevor Magner**, Senior Government Relations Executive, British Motorcyclists' Federation, and **Ms Sheila Rainger**, Campaigns Manager, RAC Foundation, gave evidence.

**Q67 Chairman:** Good afternoon to you both. You are most warmly welcome. Would you be kind enough to identify yourselves for the record?

Ms Rainger: I am Sheila Rainger, campaigns manager for the RAC Foundation. I think you are familiar with the Foundation. We are an independent charity which campaigns on issues around the environmental, economic, mobility and safety of use of motor vehicles which includes motorcycles.

Mr Magner: I am Trevor Magner. I am the senior government relations executive of the British Motorcyclists' Federation. It is a not for profit, road riding motorcyclists' organisation, which is independent of commercial concerns and is funded primarily by membership fees and the shows that we run.

**Q68 Chairman:** Do either of you want to say anything to us before we begin?

Mr Magner: I would like to say that I am very pleased to be able to discuss the government's motorcycling strategy. I do not think we can overestimate the importance of having a national strategy on motorcycling because it puts it firmly on the transport agenda, setting the mainstream motorcycling and recognising its legitimacy as a mode of transport. We are possibly the first in the world to do that, although I am sure America has done it first somewhere. We are certainly the first in Europe.

**Q69 Chairman:** Do you want to tell us what you see as the benefits of motorcycling?

Mr Magner: Yes. In my written paper I state the benefits. The main ones are that motorcycling can address congestion because of the reduction of land that it takes up. When motorcyclists encounter congestion, they can filter between lanes of traffic and address it, not necessarily overtaking down the outside but going between lanes. They take up less space in terms of parking so you are using land less for transport. They can also address social exclusion because a motorcycle, particularly for younger people - we are talking about things like low powered scooters - can allow people where distances are too great to walk and cycle, access is not possible to a care and public transport is limited or non-existent. They can seek educational or employment opportunities which they would not otherwise be able to do.

Ms Rainger: Broadly speaking we see very similar advantages to motorcycling. We think they play a very important role in securing mobility both in urban areas for congestion reasons and also in rural areas where they provide an affordable means of transport, particularly for younger people who may not be able to afford the costs of running a car. They can use a motorcycle to get to work or for education. When you look at the statistics, they bear that out in that 65 per cent of motorcycle journeys are for business, work or education compared to one in three car journeys.

**Q70 Clive Efford:** Some people have said that motorcycling is extremely dangerous and therefore measures should be taken to curtail motorcycling as much as possible. What would you say to that?

Ms Rainger: Motorcycling is not dangerous; it is vulnerable and I think that is different. A vulnerable mode of transport is not the same as an undesirable one.

**Q71 Clive Efford:** Do you want to elaborate? What can be done to make it safer?

Ms Rainger: You touched earlier on with previous witnesses about the role of training and enforcement. There are also many things put forward in the strategy in terms of what local authorities can do to provide a safer environment for motorcycles. It is not just enforcement; it is also education and engineering. Safer road environments can tackle many of the problems which create vulnerability for motorcyclists.

**Q72 Clive Efford:** What is a safer environment?

Ms Rainger: Very often local authorities may situate utility covers - manholes as they used to be called - on the part of the road that a motorcycle uses. That causes grip problems in the wet. It is quite often a problem because someone has not thought of the special needs of a single track motorcycle or cycle vehicle. That can cause problems with grip and may cause accidents. It is a straightforward thing that can easily be resolved by using some of the guidelines which have come out from the strategy.

**Q73 Clive Efford:** Could you give us some idea of the proportion of accidents involving motorcycles that are caused by environmental issues?

Ms Rainger: Around one in five according to ROSPA.

**Q74 Clive Efford:** What actions can the government take in its strategy to improve rider safety?

Ms Rainger: There are several actions in the strategy that may improve rider safety. The issues about training and encouraging riders to take post test training are very important. Also, the DfT is proposing research on how to increase other road users' - drivers' particularly - awareness of motorcycles on the road because one of the great problems is perception. A motorist who is not familiar with motorcycles has problems looking for them at junctions. This has been proved by research. Extra research has been taking place to see if that can be dealt with in areas like driver education.

**Q75 Clive Efford:** Are you saying that the test for car drivers is not adequate in terms of preparing them for being aware of motorcycle users on the road?

Ms Rainger: The research has shown that motorists who are not familiar with motorcycles are not very good at spotting them at junctions or at potential points of conflict. That is something that is being looked at as part of the strategy. What the conclusions will be remains to be seen.

**Q76 Chairman:** I thought one of the things that a good tutor was supposed to teach you was to read the road, to take time to read the road. Are we really saying that we have a whole lot of people teaching motorists how to drive who do not teach them a right assessment of the likely hazards that they are facing?

Ms Rainger: It has been proven in some of the accident examinations that the car driver did not see the motorcyclist for whatever reason at the junction, not because their eyesight was not up to it but there was a perception problem. The perception problem is being looked at in this ongoing research from the strategy.

Mr Magner: A lot of it is about perception and whether to expect to see motorcyclists.

**Q77 Chairman:** I thought one of the things you do when you are teaching somebody to drive is not only to assess the road ahead of them, to read the road, but also to take from that road the information that will make them a safe driver. It seems both of you are suddenly saying, very interestingly in my view, that this is not being done.

Mr Magner: It is when people pass their test, but people get into bad habits. With most drivers, the last time they read the Highway Code is just before they take their test. Similarly, they tend to get into bad habits. They do not expect to see a motorcycle. Their habit in terms of scanning the road at a junction is that they do not tend to look for motorcyclists. In the congestion charge zone, where there has been an increased use of motorcycles and pedal cycles, although the number of motorcycles and pedal cycles has increased, the number of collisions has fallen quite significantly. That is a critical mass issue, where there are sufficient numbers of two wheel vehicles so that car users expect to see them.

**Q78 Clive Efford:** It is not that there are fewer cars in the congestion zone to hit them? The proportion of cars is down. Is that not affecting it?

Mr Magner: It is a question of proportion of one class of vehicle to the other in that you get a higher proportion of two wheel vehicles; hence, car users are more likely to expect to see them. You mentioned motorcycles being dangerous. Again, I would very strongly refute a statement like that. They are not dangerous; they are vulnerable. There is a concern that motorcycles tend to be treated differently to pedal cycles when very often the accident issues are very much the same and in the same order.

**Q79 Mr Hollobone:** If the government were to introduce road pricing on a wider scale, would you anticipate that would lead to a marked increase in motorcycle ownership and usage?

Ms Rainger: Experience in London has certainly suggested that that would be the case. The exemption in London for powered two wheelers did lead to an increase in use and we think that is a very sensible solution to congestion problems.

Mr Magner: On the issue of road pricing, in London there is a congestion charge which is a specific type of road pricing. Some of the road pricing schemes that are envisaged are to charge for roads according to how busy they are, to encourage people to drive at different times, to use different roads and so on. I would be seeking an exemption for motorcycles from congestion charging but if it is road pricing, not as an add on but as an

alternative to fuel duty and vehicle excise duty.

**Q80 Chairman:** The government have suggested that they want it to be revenue neutral. There may be other people who have other views but the government has specifically said any changes would be revenue neutral, which almost automatically suggests that what you are asking for would already be granted and therefore what would be your attitude if both those things were already in place?

Mr Magner: If it was revenue neutral and that would mean that motorcycles were treated equitably in terms of charging, it would not be unreasonable to levy a charge on a motorcycle which is equivalent to what they would otherwise pay in fuel duty and road tax, but since they would be cheaper to run than cars there would probably be a continuing change to motorcycles.

**Q81 Mr Hollobone:** Coming back to the London experience, was the increased number of motorcycles on the road at the level that you anticipated?

Mr Magner: We did not know what to expect. We were pleasantly surprised that the increase continued. Motorcycle use has been steadily increasing in London long before the congestion charge anyway mainly because of access issues and cost of parking which I think has tended to discourage some car use. There was not a step change, although there was an increase in motorcycle usage. It was hard to say what we would anticipate.

Ms Rainger: Some commentators suggested that any increase in motorcycle use as a result of the congestion charge would lead to a vast increase in casualty rates. In fact, we have seen the exact opposite. The increase in numbers of motorcycle and scooter riders in London has created benefits in relation to that critical mass issue we mentioned earlier on.

**Q82 Mr Hollobone:** My last question is about the gender of motorcyclists. With the introduction of the congestion charge, has there been an increase in the number of female motorcyclists?

Ms Rainger: Around 15 per cent of motorcyclists taking their test are female. Speaking personally, I have had a licence for ten years and many women prefer to use a motorcycle or a scooter to public transport for safety reasons. They feel much safer and more secure because it is not immediately obvious that they are female.

**Q83 Mr Hollobone:** Has the congestion charge led to an increase in the proportion of women motorcyclists?

Ms Rainger: In London specifically or nationally?

**Q84 Mr Hollobone:** In London specifically.

Ms Rainger: We would have to look at that.

**Q85 Mr Hollobone:** Looking at the training provided for motorcyclists, is the current level of required training doing the job? Would you recommend any changes? If you do, what would they be?

Mr Magner: Generally, the level of training is good, but you can always do better. In the strategy there are proposals to improve training. For example, the register of post test training instructors is shortly due to be launched which will ensure better quality training. There is a proposal to review direct access. We would certainly like to see a logbook training system linked to direct access for motorcycles so that rather than just taking a test riders would be subject to the sort of conditions that they would encounter when they pass their test. There are also proposals for things like improvements in compulsory, basic training. Then you have the voluntary schemes, post test training, where you have Bikesafe which David Short alluded to in which qualified riders can take an assessment and consider going further. Although the training is generally very good, we can do better and there are plans afoot to do so.

Ms Rainger: One of the great strengths of the motorcycle community is its emphasis on continuing professional training and continuing development. The RAC Foundation would like to see motorist groups taking up the same kind of positive approach. Most motorcycle magazines and media encourage readers to take further training, whether that is Bikesafe, going out with an observer or taking advantage of voluntary courses. It is very much promoted and I think that is very healthy.

**Q86 Mr Hollobone:** Staged access to motorcycles is recommended by the third EU Driving Licence Directive. Is that a good idea?

Mr Magner: The principle of staged access is a good idea and it is certainly not new. Under the existing regime, we have staged access where you can take your test on a 125, have a limited motorcycle for two years and then progress to a motorcycle of unlimited power. What the third EC Driving Licence Directive is doing is bringing in three stages for progressive access. The principle of staged access is okay but I believe the way it has been done in the third EC Driving Licence Directive is going to be bad for motorcycling in general. The safety benefits are questionable. It is going to be more expensive and more complex. It is going to make the Transport Act 1981 look like a picnic. It is going to put people off motorcycling and because of the complexity which will lead to lack of understanding and the cost you are likely to have less compliance which will possibly have the opposite effect

on safety.

**Q87 Mr Hollobone:** Are you satisfied with the efforts made by Her Majesty's government to mitigate the effects of these changes so far?

Mr Magner: A directive is a framework and consequently now that it has been agreed - because it was agreed just before Christmas - by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers it is now set in concrete. There is a certain amount of rigour in it and there will be challenges under the comitology process under the Committee for the Adaptation of Technical Progress, where they can make retrospective amendments to things like the degree of testing and training required going from one category to another in progressive access; also, the minimum test vehicle specifications which at the moment are somewhat restrictive. However, that is something that is entirely up for grabs now. When the issue was being discussed, although we appreciated the UK government abstaining at the Council of Ministers, it could have lent more support to putting forward amendments to make it more user friendly because we are stuck with a very strict age lag, where there will not be any negotiation. It will be two years between each category and an increase in the age of direct access when it is not an age group where there is a problem. It is addressing a problem that does not exist. We have to work together in looking at plans for working within the directive but in the way the directive was achieved more could have been done. More alliances could have been found. Our own opposite numbers in the European Union, the Federation of European Motorcyclists Associations, could have conducted a stronger and more aggressive lobby.

**Q88 Chairman:** But did not?

Mr Magner: No.

**Q89 Graham Stringer:** Do the RAC have figures or estimates on the number of uninsured motorbike riders there are out there?

Ms Rainger: Not currently but I can make inquiries.

**Q90 Graham Stringer:** It would be very useful to have those figures. In your evidence, you state that education is the key to reducing mini moto nuisance. Why do you believe that when there are websites out there which are called "Annoy your neighbour. Buy a mini moto"?

Ms Rainger: We believe at the moment that there are sufficient powers. Section 59 of the Police Act does give the police forces ----

**Q91 Graham Stringer:** That is a slightly different answer.

Ms Rainger: There are sufficient powers in law to tackle the nuisance but in order to work better, if people are to understand what the problems are, these bikes are not being bought by 16 year olds or 15 year olds. They are being bought by parents. It is illegal to buy petrol if you are under 16 so again petrol is being put in these bikes presumably by parents. I am an optimist. I think if parents are keen to understand the risks that they are allowing their children to face by using these machines on the public road and that they are putting their children at risk of being killed, they would not support and facilitate them in this. There are safe places to take children who want to ride motorcycles legally. The Motorcycle Union and local groups provide safe off road environments. If parents are being pestered by a child to allow them to have a mini moto, we believe that education and making parents aware of these facilities would allow that to be taken forward in a safe way.

**Q92 Graham Stringer:** Is it not the case that, when there have been 26,000 complaints in greater Manchester alone over the last 12 months, that is rather hope over experience? Yes, the powers are there but when you add up all the resources that are necessary for that extra legislation, is it not going to be difficult to get rid of this nuisance behaviour?

Ms Rainger: Additional legislation will not create additional resource. It is a question of the local police forces getting together with local agencies. We have seen some very successful enforcement campaigns in Coventry and Suffolk, using existing powers. The advantage of using existing powers is that action can be taken immediately.

**Q93 Graham Stringer:** Legislation does not create extra resources but if you restrict the imports and the sales, if you license the riders and the vehicles so that they are easy to identify, you do reduce the problem without extra resources.

Ms Rainger: The powers are sufficient and it is a question of local will and local resource.

**Q94 Graham Stringer:** Do you share the view that the problem of mini motos is making the perception of motorcycling worse?

Mr Magner: Yes, I would agree with that statement. One of the problems that we have at the moment is that there has been some fairly negative legislation aimed at the issue of off tarmac riding, meaning riding on green, unsurfaced roads where you have to prove usage and so on. It is a bit of a legal minefield which is why I never

did more than dabble in it. They are being tarred with the same brush as the mini motos because people say, "Oh yes, motorbikes. They are making a nuisance of themselves, aren't they?" That is rather unfortunate. The BMF does not have any direct dealings with the mini moto fraternity because they are not road riding motorcyclists and are very often children but I am a bit concerned at the prospect of registering all motorcycles that are used off road. When I say "off road" I mean not on green lanes because the same rules apply as would apply to using surfaced roads. The people you want to target will not put their registration plate on anyway. Consequently, all the people who flout the law will just continue in the same way and unless it is backed up by adequate enforcement more regulation is a waste of time. It just needs to be properly enforced.

**Q95 Graham Stringer:** Essentially, you agree with the previous witnesses and the RAC on these issues?

Mr Magner: Yes.

**Q96 Graham Stringer:** Do you think the minimum age for obtaining licences to drive motorbikes should be increased?

Ms Rainger: A young person who has been on a moped or motorcycle has an advantage when it comes to driving a car in terms of their understanding of the road environment and the kind of vulnerability that they face even inside a car. The current system creates disadvantages and raising the age might cause that to be reduced.

**Q97 Graham Stringer:** What if you raise the age for a motorcycle licence and a car from 16 to 17 to 17 or 18? You could still get benefits and you may well reduce the numbers of very young people who are killed in motorbike and car accidents.

Ms Rainger: We are not in favour of raising the minimum age of driving at this point.

Mr Magner: We are not in favour of raising the age for a driving licence for motorcycling. What is going to happen if the ages were raised for both classes of vehicle? The benefits of the motorcycle to address social exclusion would then be lost. There was a question in the earlier session about power assisted cycles. One way of getting round this which would effectively allow younger riders on to motorised vehicles - at the moment, the power assisted cycles that can be ridden in the same way as a pedal cycle from the age of 14 are required to be electric and 200 watts maximum. That is not very powerful. That is two light bulbs, unless you have low energy light bulbs. Some of our EU partners allow one kilowatt as a maximum power output and they can be both motorised and electric. They call them mofas or sparkmets, according to where they are. If you change the classification of a power assisted cycle, you would give people some experience on safe, low speed, motorised vehicles before they go on to mopeds. With regard to the licensing, you can ride a moped which is under 50cc with 45 kilometres per hour maximum speed capability at the age of 16 and a light motorcycle at 17. One of the things that we have been suggesting for a long time to provide an incentive for young moped users to take training and a test is that if they pass their test at 16 they may have provisional entitlement to a light motorcycle.

**Q98 Clive Efford:** On these mini motos, I take your point about some of the problems with enforcement and having registration plates but I have been overwhelmed by the number of complaints I get and I am concerned about the amount of police resources that are being diverted to deal with this. Why do we have them at all?

Ms Rainger: There is a legitimate off road sporting use for young children who want to start off in motor sport. The problem is not that legitimate market; it is with the new market.

**Q99 Clive Efford:** These mini motos are incredibly small. They are not the sort of bikes that you are talking about, are they?

Ms Rainger: I think Valentino Rossi started off on a mini moto.

Mr Magner: They vary in size. You see the ones that are used purely for competition where they are not much bigger than a roller skate but the sort of mini moto that there is concern about that is causing the problem is the slightly larger one which is, if you like, a scaled down children's bike.

Ms Rainger: A large number of complaints still come about stolen mopeds. In my area in north London, kids are out on stolen mopeds. They are legitimate mopeds which have been stolen and abused.

**Q100 Chairman:** If there were 26,000 complaints in any other field in transport do you not think there would be enormous outrage and demands that police begin to target in a very precise way people who are committing these offences?

Ms Rainger: Absolutely. The use of these small bikes on the road is illegal. We do not support it. It is just a question of dealing with it in the right way or the most effective way.

**Q101 Clive Efford:** They are so cheap and so readily available. I believe one company was giving them away with some building tools and there is a mobile phone company that will give you one if you sign up to a certain contract for a mobile phone. These things are so prevalent now and they are so cheap. On the one hand, they

seem to have solved to some degree the theft of bikes in my area because they are so readily available, but this problem has reached such an epidemic proportion that surely people within the motorbike fraternity accept that we cannot keep throwing police resources at this. We have to take out the source.

Ms Rainger: This is why we are calling for education. I do not believe that any parent will knowingly want to give their child a toy that would risk their life. We would like to get that point across very clearly and as loudly as possible.

**Q102 Chairman:** Unfortunately, history does not show that. Experience teaches us that there are a whole lot of extraordinarily stupid people around who are quite happy to buy some very dangerous toy without apparently understanding that when you crack a skull on the whole it is not to the advantage of the human frame. What do we do about them? Why do we assume that education will automatically deal with this problem? Were it the case, would we still have 26,000 complaints in one year in Manchester?

Ms Rainger: Where there has been educational enforcement we have seen positive results.

**Q103 Chairman:** Enforcement or education?

Ms Rainger: Both together, hand in hand I believe.

Mr Magner: Very often exponents of road safety will talk about the three Es: enforcement, education and engineering. They all have to work together. This is also a case in point. When it comes to the engineering side of it, it is all very well saying to people, "You cannot do this. You cannot do that", but there ought to be more provision made where people can legitimately use these in a safer environment.

**Q104 Chairman:** What you are being asked is something different. In New York there are many educational programmes encouraging people not to leave windows open above a certain height. What affected the number of admissions to A&E and the number of deaths from falls of children from windows was the imposition of a byelaw which said every window above a certain height should either be strongly barred or unable to be opened. Surely what is terribly serious is not just whether you tell people, "This is not a very good idea" but whether you need to take more active enforcement that stops people being able to have access to these particular vehicles. You would say that is not the case?

Mr Magner: I would not have a problem with more enforcement. It is the willingness and ability to conduct the enforcement. I would rather see enforcement than new regulation which people will ignore anyway.

**Q105 Clive Efford:** Do you accept that there has been such an explosion of problems caused by these mini moto bikes that there is not an infinite amount of resources out there to carry out this enforcement and deal with this problem?

Mr Magner: As David Short said, there are enough regulations and laws, not just motoring ones but antisocial behaviour laws, that can be invoked to deal with it.

Chairman: You have both been very helpful. Thank you very much indeed. We are very grateful to you.