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UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL EVIDENCE To be published as HC 264-ii

House of COMMONS

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

TAKEN BEFORE

TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

THE GOVERNMENT'S MOTORCYCLING STRATEGY

Wednesday 7 February 2007

MR DAVID GRIFFIN and MR PHIL EDWARDS

MR KEVIN CLINTON, MR DON MATTHEW and MR STEPHEN PLOWDEN

DR STEPHEN LADYMAN MP and MR ANDREW COLSKI

Evidence heard in Public Questions 106 - 277

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Oral Evidence

Taken before the Transport Committee

on Wednesday 7 February 2007

Members present

Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody, in the Chair

Clive Efford

Mrs Louise Ellman

Mr Eric Martlew

Mr Lee Scott

Graham Stringer

Witnesses: **Mr David Griffin**, Deputy Chief Constable, Humberside Police, and **Mr Phil Edwards**, National BikeSafe Co-ordinator, Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), gave evidence.

Q106 Chairman: Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, and we very appreciate your co-operation, but we felt, since we wanted to talk to you, you would forgive us if we started a bit early.

Mr Griffin: Of course, Chairman.

Chairman: We do have one bit of housekeeping to perform, Members having an interest to declare.

Mr Martlew: Member of the Transport and General Workers' Union and GMB.

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

Chairman: Member of ASLEF.

Mrs Ellman: Member of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Graham Stringer: Member of Amicus.

Q107 Chairman: I am going to ask you, firstly, to identify yourselves for the record. I think, possibly, the acoustics in here are better than in some of the other rooms, but, if you remember, we are going to need to ask you to project your voices slightly. Can I ask you, after you have identified yourselves, whether you wanted to make an opening statement? Let us start by asking you to identify yourselves for the record.

Mr Edwards: Good afternoon, my name is Phil Edwards. I work in Cheshire Police as a representative of National BikeSafe Co-ordination.

Mr Griffin: I am David Griffin. I am a Deputy Chief Constable in Humberside Police and I represent the Association of Chief Police Officers, Road Business Policing Area in relation to motorcycle safety.

Q108 Chairman: Thank you very much. Deputy Chief Constable, did you want to say something on behalf of ACPO, or may we proceed to questions?

Mr Griffin: You may proceed, Chairman, but can I check one thing. I do apologise, I was not aware of the requirement for the submission for 18 December. I did make a written submission yesterday. I just wanted to check that you and your colleagues have had sight of that.

Q109 Chairman: That is what we have got, Deputy Chief Constable, so please do not worry about it, and if you miss anything out, we give you full permission to come back and tell us all the rest as well.

Mr Griffin: Thank you.

Q110 Chairman: Do we know how many dangerous bikes and riders there are on the roads?

Mr Griffin: In terms of absolute numbers, no, it would be impossible to say. The only comment I would make is that it is a minority of motorcyclists. The difficulty always with motorcycling is, because of its very nature, a small number of motorcyclists give the whole motorcycling image a tarnished reputation - things like, for example, noisy exhausts, anti-social riding - because they have a significant presence, and, obviously, they can affect a community significantly. Similarly, I know one of the things you want to come on to is illegal off-road riding. Again, a small number of people create a tarnished reputation for motorcycling overall, but, I would emphasise, the majority of motorcyclists use it as a form of transport, either for commuting or for leisure, so I would say it is a small number, but I cannot give you an absolute number.

Q111 Chairman: So you could not really tell us whether there are more or fewer?

Mr Griffin: My professional judgment is that it is about the same. It does ebb and flow. For example, one of the phenomena you are looking at at the moment is the mini motos, the miniature motorcycles.

Q112 Chairman: We will come on to that in a minute. As far as you are concerned, do you have a subjective impression of whether there are more cases of dangerous riding or there are more prosecutions? Is there any indication to you that things are getting worse, given the fact that there are obviously more people riding motorbikes in cities where there are congestion charges at the moment?

Mr Griffin: Yes. What I would say is obviously the number of motorcycles on the road has increased, so, consequently, there are more reports, and it is very localised. In some of our towns and cities there is a specific local problem, but that does move from place to place. In the overall picture, I would say, it does ebb and flow. There were difficulties in the early 1980s, and we are probably back at around about that point in the sense of reports to the police.

Q113 Chairman: Your motorcycle enforcement strategy has two main priorities: to reduce accidents and deaths caused by motorcycling and to reduce anti-social motorcycling generally.

Mr Griffin: Yes.

Q114 Chairman: Do you decide on which of those is the real priority, or how do you make your judgments?

Mr Griffin: It is very much a balance, but I would say our primary priority is for safety. We do recognise that motorcycling can be dangerous for those doing it, for a small number, and obviously the toll, in the sense of casualties and deaths, is something we want to see reduced significantly; but we also recognise the wider community issue, which is around the tiny minority of motorcyclists who use them anti-socially, and for them that is a big issue; so I would say we have sought to achieve a balance. In relation to the strategy, what I sought to do was to achieve consistency around England and Wales. One of the things that the motorcycling community was quite concerned about was significant differences of police enforcement in different counties in the country: a motorcyclist might be stopped for something in one county and not in another and dealt with in a different way. What I sought to achieve by that was some consistency. I brought practitioners together, and the idea was to provide guidance, the essence being, dealing with the lower level issues (for example, the use of dark visors in daylight hours, number plates that are slightly smaller than they should be) by way of advice, but focusing enforcement on the things that really matter - the very noisy exhausts, the anti-social riding, those sorts of things - so that actually police resources are targeted.

Q115 Chairman: When you say, "Enforcement should be proportionate to the risk to an individual's property and the degree of seriousness of the offence", what did you actually mean?

Mr Griffin: Obviously, the notion, in essence, intrinsically, is policing by consent, and we want to make sure that we embody the support of the vast majority of law-abiding motorcyclists. It was a concern that somebody wearing or using a tinted visor in one police force area might be stopped and potentially summonsed for that and in another would not be. Intrinsically, that is not a dangerous thing to do in daylight hours; at night-time it would be. It is actually to get that consistency and say, "This would be a hazard to you at night", and deal with it verbally. So, it was to enlist the support of the wider motorcycling community but still draw a line in the sand and say what is acceptable and what is absolutely unacceptable. It is not about the police not enforcing - we would still stop and deal with somebody doing those sorts of things and provide advice - but for the more serious things use the full force of the law, summonsing, if necessary, issuing fixed penalty tickets, that kind of thing.

Q116 Chairman: My colleagues want to come in, but I wanted to ask you how effective rider improvements schemes were in cutting motorcycle crime?

Mr Griffin: They are still very much at the nascent stage. We are piloting two schemes, one in Devon and Cornwall and one in Lancashire. They have yet to be evaluated.

Q117 Chairman: Where are they centred?

Mr Griffin: I could not tell you. One in Exeter, I believe, I think one around Preston, in Lancashire, and we have actually just pulled together a framework for evaluating the two. They are slightly different. One is just a

classroom-based session, the other involves a practical riding session, because we are getting conflicting advice from behavioural psychologists about whether or not it is a good thing to train a motorcyclist to ride their machine more skilfully as a consequence of having, if you like, broken the law. What we plan to do is assess the two schemes, but we are looking for support from the Department for Transport to do that. They have indicated tentatively that they will help us with the evaluation of that, and some firm commitment to that effect would be very useful.

Q118 Chairman: What kind of timescale are we talking about? You have only just started, you say.

Mr Griffin: We will be fully-fledged in April of this year. I think we are talking probably about a 12-month timescale. What I would say is that obviously we draw a parallel with driver improvement schemes. There seems to be significant research to suggest that it is an appropriate way of dealing with lower level offending behaviour. I have no reason to think that motorcycling will be any different.

Q119 Mrs Ellman: The ACPO Strategy defines "targeting" as "more than simply focusing on those whose behaviour poses the greatest risk". How would you define that?

Mr Griffin: I think it is around targeting. It is that combination of those issues that would create the greatest risk to the individual. For example, someone pulls a wheelie on a motorcycle - intrinsically dangerous for them and for other road users - and also recognising that, for example, around an estate in an urban area just riding up and down noisily would be a major issue for that community. So the idea would be to focus targeting on those two issues, one might be in a rural area, one might be in an urban area, whereas a simple riding up and down a road a few times in a rural area would not particularly be an issue meriting targeting. So the notion is being selective based, on the balance of risk to the individual and the wider community concerned.

Q120 Mrs Ellman: How do you identify complaints that come from the local community?

Mr Griffin: Principally utilising the police intelligence systems. Members of the public do telephone us and make reports around motorcycling - that is one avenue - and that lets us identify patterns normally about those issues where we have got focused anti-social behaviour. The other is where we have targeted enforcement campaigns. We try to balance education with enforcement. We do realise that one of the patterns of fatalities and serious crashes is about high-speed riding and improper skills being used negotiating left-hand bends, that kind of thing, and the police forces target that specifically in the summer months on those roads. Normally, the faster rural roads are the ones that appear to pose the greatest risk for motorcyclists.

Q121 Chairman: Mr Edwards, is that your experience in Cheshire?

Mr Edwards: In Cheshire that is reflected. The majority of motorcyclists do crash through lack of skills. It is not normally an excess speed, exceeding the speed limit issue, it is inappropriate speed in the given circumstances, their skill level does not allow them to ride at the given speed for the circumstances.

Q122 Mrs Ellman: How successful are the campaigns on training and education? Do you need the support of other organisations and are there any problems getting it?

Mr Griffin: We are very pleased with the BikeSafe initiative, which is an initiative for police forces around the country to take members of the public, assess their riding and provide some tips for the future and very much to hand them on to further organisations for further training. We would like to build upon that, and it would be helpful to have the formal support of the Department for Transport to do that. They have been really helpful. We have produced a national curriculum DVD, which we are launching this spring, but it has been a source of concern for me about trying to achieve national co-ordination. Phil Edwards is my national co-ordinator. He is funded by Humberside Police Authority, which seems to me something slightly iniquitous for the council tax payers of Humberside, and we have found ourselves balanced between two stools, the Department for Transport saying, "We believe it is a Home Office issue. This is about policing", and the Home Office saying, "This is a road safety issue, therefore it is over to the Department for Transport", and find myself in a catch-22 on occasions. You will see, I have sought a pragmatic solution. I think the important thing is that we get it up and running and it happens. As I say, we now have 5,000 people a year coming through BikeSafe assessments. What we are seeking to do is to capitalise on the Post Test Training Register, which, coincidentally, is being launched today at a venue nearby. The idea is that we assess people, provide an individual assessment of them and then refer them on to the accredited training providers, the notion being that we believe intrinsically that, if we can make our motorcyclists better trained, their chances of being in a crash a reduced. One of our frustrations is that we are told all the time the evidence base must be based on casualty reduction. I cannot prove, and I do not think I will ever prove, an intrinsic link between the activity that Phil and his team do with BikeSafe and casualty reduction, but I believe *per se*, if we can refer people and they take further training, that has to be intrinsically a good thing, but it is quite a frustration.

Q123 Mrs Ellman: What changes do you need locally or nationally to make your training and education more effective?

Mr Griffin: I think it is recognising that the benefits of something like BikeSafe cannot just be measured in terms of absolute casualty reduction figures. I do not think a one-day assessment and coaching session can hope to do that. It is recognising there are benefits. What we hope to do is change our targeting and say that the number of people who then go on to take accredited further training is our measure of success, and it would be helpful to

have the endorsement of the Department for Transport to recognise that in itself as of value.

Q124 Mrs Ellman: Are motorcyclists getting away with crimes because technology, such as speed cameras and automatic number plate recognition, is not being registered?

Mr Griffin: I would say, again, a small minority are, and that is recognised as a problem. For example, a number of fixed camera sites are forward facing. Obviously a motorcycle does not have a number plate on the front, so *per se* that cannot be detected. That has been recognised. Of course, if we identify an area where we think a lot of motorcyclists are speeding and that is creating a hazard to them and the wider community, we then, for example, put a mobile camera enforcement team on it. Another issue is the use of very small number plates, which can be of concern. That is dealt with in my strategy. If the plates are legible, that is fine, the technology can read them. If they are very small, that can be an issue. Again, we are talking here about a small minority; this is not a major problem.

Q125 Chairman: Before you leave that, I am sorry to ask idiot questions, but I am not clear. Is there a specific size that the number plate has to be?

Mr Griffin: Yes, regulations stipulate a certain size, and that is based on being able to read it from a certain distance. Forgive me, I cannot remember my inspector's traffic exam.

Mr Edwards: 20.5 metres.

Mr Griffin: I knew Phil would know.

Q126 Chairman: I see why you are funded by Humberside!

Mr Griffin: So, yes, there is a stipulated size to make them legible, but, you will probably realise yourselves as you go around, some are very small indeed, and you can see the obvious intent there is that it is not legible. Others have the margins slightly cut off or are slightly decorative.

Q127 Chairman: That is what I want to know about. Are you saying that they can consciously do that and get away with it?

Mr Griffin: That is the point: they cannot.

Q128 Chairman: Is there something in road traffic law that says the actual number plate must be of a certain size?

Mr Griffin: Yes.

Q129 Chairman: There is with motorcars, so why is it not with motorbikes?

Mr Griffin: It is exactly the same for motorcyclists. The characters on motorcycles can be slightly smaller, and that is merely a consequence of the size of the machine and the size of the number plate - it has to be proportionate to the size of the mud guard - but there is a minimum and, obviously, beneath that we can apply enforcement.

Q130 Mrs Ellman: How much of your work is concentrated on construction and use violations - things like exhausts, coloured headlamps and things of that nature?

Mr Griffin: That is recognised as one of the key issues in the sense of anti-social behaviour, and the Government Strategy talks about noisy exhausts. The industry, I think, has been quite helpful and has woken up to the notion that it must do something about this, and we have seen a more responsible attitude in the wider motorcycling press and amongst more reputable wholesalers and distributors, but the reality is, certainly with a small number of sports machines, we do know people are buying these after market exhausts, putting them on and, by merely glancing at it, it is not possible to tell it is an after market exhaust, and that continues to be a problem. The solution, I think, is around the responsibility selling of it. There may be some technical solution around making it easier to identify. Obviously, usually the machine is moving and one of my colleagues would not be able to spot it at a distance, but they might hear its noise and stop it and check it. So, that is an issue. Beyond that, looking at tyres and general brakes and that sort of thing is an issue. Automated braking systems are referred to in the Strategy. It would be helpful to see more of an emphasis on manufacturers making that standard fitment, in my personal view. At the moment, if you buy a motorcycle, it is between £500 and £1,000 extra to have ABS fitted. For most us, when we buy a car, even a small economical car, it is included in the price, and that might be as much as ten or 15 per cent extra, and somebody thinks, they hesitate. The other point is that linked braking systems also contribute to safety. I would like to see more emphasis on making these potentially standard fitments.

Q131 Graham Stringer: I was very interested, in reading your written evidence, not only to understand what the definition of "more unlawful" was but the conclusion you come to about many bikes that there may be benefit in a registration system over the medium term. Would you care to expand on that?

Mr Griffin: It is a difficult one. There may be benefit. The benefit alluded to there is actually controlling the supply, but at its heart our overall opinion as ACPO is that we do not believe an off-road registration scheme will be viable in tackling this problem. I have been in the police service 20 years and I could take you to police stations in and around Hull, for example, with back-yards full of stripped down motorcycles that are not mini motos, they have had the registration plate removed, they have the engine number scraped off, the chassis number removed, and that has been a problem for many years. That is the reason, in essence, why we do not believe it will actually solve the problem, because the sorts of individuals who are going to ride them illegally, even with a registration scheme, would simply remove the identifying markings.

Q132 Graham Stringer: If you make it unlawful, or even more unlawful than it is at the present time, to drive a motorbike, any motorbike, without a registration number and if the consequence of that is that the bike gets crunched when the police find it without a number, would that not be helpful?

Mr Griffin: Intrinsically, yes, you could say that, but normally the circumstances in which the mini moto is being used would constitute something anti-social. We can use the provisions that are already in place in relation to that. The machine does need insurance; if it is outside of somebody's cartilage it might need an MOT; so all those provision are there. We are in a position to be able to enforce already, and so additional legislation, I do not think, will help the problem.

Q133 Graham Stringer: Is not one of the problems you suffer generally throughout the country when you find somebody riding one of these small machines without the permission of the private land owner that you have to give them a warning and take the bike off them, or the police officer involved takes the bike off them, and their mate comes along and says, "You cannot touch that bike because it is mine, not my mate's", whereas a registration scheme for the vehicle and keeper would stop that as well, would it not?

Mr Griffin: I accept that, and that is right. I go back to the point that the vast majority of the unlawful riding in those cases, people strip down things that are not mini motos and just remove the identifying markings, so we would have the same problem.

Q134 Graham Stringer: Again, if you happened to be the registered owner and keeper, it would enable you to deal with that. You are making concessions on each one of these, I think. Thirdly, if you had to have a registration plate on all motorised two-wheelers, three-wheelers, four-wheelers ---- One of your problems is that, for health and safety reasons, a lot of police forces will not chase kids who are driving these bikes: it is dangerous to the youths, it is dangerous to the police officer, but if you could identify it and if other people could identify that bike which was being driven unlawfully or as a nuisance, again, you could deal with it, could you not?

Mr Griffin: *Per se* that is true, but I would argue again that, in the circumstances in which that machine is being ridden, almost invariably the person would remove the registration plate, so you would not have the ability to do that.

Q135 Graham Stringer: Then you can use the legislation, can you not?

Mr Griffin: Yes, you would, but actually those powers exist already.

Q136 Graham Stringer: What I am trying to get at is that the ACPO line is the powers exist - in 2002 the Police Reform Act and the 1988 Road Traffic Act - and yet 40 per cent of complaints about anti-social behaviour are related to mini motos. So, if the law is adequate, why are there so many complaints?

Mr Griffin: It is hard. Again, I said in my submission, we have to spread our police resources where we can, and I do not think it can purely be regarded as a policing problem; it has to be dealt with in partnership. We do have targeted enforcement campaigns, and where we have them they have success at that particular location for a period of time. What I cannot do, and what I would say my chief officer colleagues cannot do, is have significant police resources dedicated to this problem 24 hours a day. What we have to do is establish where it is a particular issue, we will do some targeted enforcement and then move on, and that would continue to be the case even if a registration scheme were in place.

Q137 Graham Stringer: You are being fair in saying that when you target an area the problem goes away for a short period and then it reappears. Do you not think a registration scheme would explain to parents and potential riders that they cannot do this; it would have a self-enforcing role on some of the nuisance?

Mr Griffin: It would, but, equally, I think one of the things that is an issue is that some parents still believe these things are toys and I think, quite innocently, in some senses think they are buying their child a toy. There are other ways in which they can be educated in that respect.

Q138 Graham Stringer: But if they had to register it, it would show that it was not a toy, would it not?

Mr Griffin: Yes, it would. My candid view is that, as with the phenomena of skate boarding, in terms of the problem that arises, I sense it is on the ebb now, it is starting to decline, and it is a phase that will pass to an extent. In my own force area in Humberside we have had quite a positive scheme in Hull of using diversionary tactics in association with the local authority, a provided facility, and the incidents of nuisance that you have

referred to have fallen significantly by allowing people to lawfully ride the machines, bring them along, have the basic safety checks done, and that is now extending through the East Riding. I would suggest, in the sense of a long-term solution to this problem, much as was the case with skate board parks and BMX parks, that is probably the more appropriate approach to solve the problem once and for all.

Q139 Graham Stringer: A final question, I do not want to pursue it too much. I find it a very difficult argument to accept that there is a similarity between the skate board, which is really a big roller skate, is it not, and a small motorbike, which is a motorbike. The fundamental question is: if you have got a motorbike, why should you not have to register it? To put the question the other way round: why should we be permissive and allow these bikes to be used without both registering the bike and the keeper?

Mr Griffin: I accept that, but I suppose my response would be: what is intrinsically the problem we are trying to solve? I suspect from your post bags it is around the notion of anti-social behaviour, these machines being used irresponsibly in some places, and I honestly believe the most profitable way of actually stopping that being the case is a combination of responsible importing, working with the industry - and it does tend to be on the margins of the mainstream motorcycle industry - making parents aware of their responsibilities and some form of diversionary activities: because actually it can be turned into something positive. The experience in Hull, a very difficult area in some respects, is that the scheme has reduced the anti-social behaviour in some of the most deprived parts of the city significantly and local people look forward their children being able to participate in the scheme. You have to remember also, from the industry's perspective we would like to promote motorcycling positively, and this could be a promising start to potentially starting motorcycling.

Q140 Mr Martlew: Going up from the small bikes to the bigger ones, I have a problem in my constituency and, tragically, two young men were very badly injured, but is it not a problem of perception to the extent that the public see the police doing nothing about it? You will see two lads obviously not 17, no crash helmets on, driving along the pavement, no silencer on. They are obviously breaking the law.

Mr Griffin: Yes.

Q141 Mr Martlew: There is a difficulty. People phone the police up and the police do not respond, or they respond late, and they do not catch them. I do not think the public think if you go chasing them they might crash, which is a very serious issue, but it is an anti-social problem that we have got in many parts of the country. How are you going to tackle that? How do you stop that happening without endangering your police or the youngsters?

Mr Griffin: That is one of the difficulties. A conventional police response in sending a police patrol is, generally speaking, ineffective and of too high a risk to that kind of situation, but not always, and we have to deploy very specialist patrols. For example, Phil was telling me on the way in that you have to use advanced motorcyclists, special machines, et cetera, to be able to stop them safely and deal with it. That is why I make the point about trying to deal with it more in a partnership framework and deal with the problem long-term. That is not to say the police should not do their part, clearly we should, and we do. We do use specially trained officers to do it, but they require a very high degree of training to do so safely. I think where we miss a trick is that members of the public feel let down in the sense that they do not know what is going to happen, and what, of course, we do is make a record of that and establish when we have got a pattern of offending and then we will deploy those special resources. Generally speaking, they are not available there and then to deal with that particular issue; it has to be pre-planned.

Q142 Mr Martlew: These bikes are ridden for an hour or a so at a time. They are actually stored somewhere?

Mr Griffin: Yes.

Q143 Mr Martlew: Surely that is the time to pick it up. You need the intelligence. You perhaps need the community to tell you.

Mr Griffin: Yes.

Q144 Mr Martlew: That does not seem to happen.

Mr Griffin: Obviously, I cannot comment about the individual cases you refer to. In my own force, we would endeavour to send a police patrol to see the person and establish what is going on, because they can sometimes deal with it - the people have got off the machine, they can stop, talk with them and deal with it. When they hare off into the distance across parkland or down the footpaths, that is when there is a difficulty, and, quite clearly, police officers are often not in a position safely to deal with that; so it is that difficulty. Just because that is a possibility, I do not think should mean the police should not respond at all. They need to assess it and look at each individual case on its merits.

Q145 Mr Martlew: Finally on this, I think it has been mentioned with regard to the mini motos, the situation about providing a facility for these barely young men to practise what they would call a sport.

Mr Griffin: Yes.

Q146 Mr Martlew: Is that, in your opinion, an advantage? The public would see that you are actually giving in to them, but you think that would be an advantage, do you?

Mr Griffin: I think if it is managed in a controlled way, you can manage where it is, it can be properly supervised, the machines can be safe, we can verify they are not stolen. In my experience, not in Humberside but in other parts of the country where this has been tried, generally speaking, it has been successful. We see a direct correlation when, as a scheme starts, we see a tail-off in the calls to the police about what are called nuisance motorcyclists riding off road in particular.

Q147 Mr Martlew: There is positive evidence of that?

Mr Griffin: There is positive evidence to suggest that is the case.

Q148 Clive Efford: I did not hear your answer to Mr Stringer about advice to police about pursuit. Is there a general advice or is that at a local level?

Mr Griffin: There is general advice. Phil, can you deal more generally with that?

Mr Edwards: Certainly liveried motorcycles are not generally regarded, certainly within Cheshire, as pursuit vehicles. They can monitor pursuits in the early stages and be an early ground commander, but they are certainly not regarded as a pursuit vehicle, for obvious reasons - they are a very vulnerable patrol officer if you like. With regard to off-road usage, I can give you personal experience of off-road motorcycling issues; I am an off-road trained motorcyclist; I am an off-road instructor. There are huge training implications for the police to resource an off-road capability 24/7, as Mr Griffin has alluded to. An officer has to be on a full advanced motorcycle training path for liveried bikes before they can be considered for off-road training. There is then a week's training at off-road level and a yearly refresher just so they can use off-road motorcycles safely in urban and suburban environments. They have to patrol in pairs for health and safety reasons, so this is why they cannot be deployed as an immediate response to these sorts of calls. It has to be intelligence led, we have to find a pattern of offending before we can put together an operational plan to deal with these repeat offenders, and that would incorporate resources such as the air-support unit, the off-road trained officers and potentially liveried vehicles as well. My experience is that very few times do offenders make off from off-road police motorcycles because they know the high level of training that is involved, they know the machines that we use are competent and capable to be used in that environment. Very often the types of bikes that the offenders are using are stolen motorcycles that have had their number plates removed, their identification removed; their tyres, the suspension are unsuitable for that environment. Mini motos cannot be used very effectively on fields and public areas other than roads and car parks. So, my experience is that very few try to elude the police once the off-road bikes turn up; they just stay and are dealt with. I think we have one in Cheshire in the years that we have been doing off-road operations, but it is not a quick fix that we will just call the off-road bikes, because invariably they only work set shifts in accordance with intelligence-led police initiatives.

Q149 Clive Efford: If young people are using bikes in a dangerous manner, am I right in assuming that the advice would be not to pursue, even if you had a suitable bike, because of the danger?

Mr Edwards: Certainly within Cheshire that would be a dynamic risk assessment on the day. It would depend entirely on the environment and the time of day, et cetera. If it was an estate where they were riding at speed down back alleys, we would then have to consider the risk to the public. It would be a case of trying to identify the offender, either visually or through intelligence means, and targeting them in another way.

Q150 Clive Efford: There is no general advice given out by ACPO, it is at local level then?

Mr Griffin: There are national guidelines in relation to pursuit generally, and, of course, in relation to two-wheelers intrinsically there is a high risk in two-wheeled pursuit. That is contained in national guidelines, but there is obviously some local interpretation of it. The general one is a very cautious notion, because obviously a two-wheeled machine potentially is unstable and if you get into a pursuit situation the risks are very high indeed.

Q151 Clive Efford: Do you have any idea how much the whole scheme cost?

Mr Griffin: I am afraid I do not, offhand. Clearly that is information we can get for you, if it would help.

Chairman: You might give us a little précis of exactly what it comprises as well, because you have talked about it but you have not made it clear exactly what it is.

Q152 Clive Efford: I have got several problems in different parts of my constituency alone. I was wondering how realistically we could reproduce the whole scheme in every community.

Mr Edwards: Sir, there has been some guidance produced very recently by the Autocycle Union, who deal with these sorts of off-road type issues. They have got a guidance document which, I believe, is designed to allow local authorities to have some guidance about how they can set up and manage these schemes. For your information, I have had some personal contact with a community social worker from Elsmere Port who runs these types of schemes for the underprivileged and offenders within the Elsmere Port area. His take on the subject is, if we can give these offending types some ownership of the scheme that they enjoy coming to and

that they feel they are getting benefit out of, then their offending outside of that scheme does diminish because they feel that their position within the scheme will be jeopardised if they are caught offending outside, and that is the sort of ethos that is engendered. If you want to stay within the scheme that you are enjoying, that you are getting benefit out of, if we find you riding an off-road bike elsewhere, or whatever, then you will be removed from the scheme - and it has social benefits.

Q153 Clive Efford: I have got a similar scheme in my constituency, but it is on one particular estate. There would be a great deal of difficulty in reproducing it on every estate.

Mr Griffin: Oh, yes, and we have to be realistic.

Q154 Clive Efford: Is it a solution, is the question?

Mr Griffin: I think it is certainly part of a solution. It would be unrealistic to suggest that this could be on every street corner, but just as we did in relation to BMX bikes and to skate boards, with the local community initiative and local authority support it is possible. We will obviously supply you with information around the whole scheme to try and assist.

Q155 Clive Efford: Can you take us through the section 59 notice? If a bike is being ridden on the road, a section 59 notice can be issued. Can the bike be taken away immediately and disposed of?

Mr Griffin: I defer to my legislative expert.

Mr Edwards: As far as I am aware, section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 requires the vehicle to be used contrary to section 3 of the Road Traffic Act, which is a driving or riding without due care and attention type of offence, or in respect of section 34 of the Road Traffic Act, which is in respect of its use on common land. The section 34 offence must be accompanied by the vehicle being used in a manner which creates alarm, distress or annoyance, or is likely to so cause. At that point the police officer can issue a warning notice to the rider of the motorcycle that, if they continue, or if within 12 months from that date the vehicle is stopped again being used in this manner, then it can be seized.

Q156 Clive Efford: If it is a bike that does not require a registration, how do you know it is the same bike the second time?

Mr Edwards: This is absolutely the problem, and, as Mr Griffin has alluded to previously, this problem is not new because mini-bikes are on the scene; this problem, even prior to section 59, has been an issue for many years. I have been in the Police Force 26 years and I can remember stolen motorcycles, Honda C90s, with all their identification marks taken off, being ridden anti-socially 20 years ago, so it is not a new problem.

Q157 Clive Efford: If it is a registered bike and it has had its chassis number and everything filed away, you would confiscate that bike because you would suspect a crime anyway, would you not?

Mr Edwards: We do have powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act to seize whatever we feel is evidence.

Q158 Clive Efford: So if we have a registration scheme that requires the chassis number and everything to be registered, if you stop that bike on common land and it is being ridden in a way that is causing a disturbance, it breaches section 59. If it has those numbers removed then, presumably, if it has breached the registration as well, that is two notices simultaneously and you can confiscate the bike immediately?

Mr Edwards: As far as I am aware the removal of the bike does not solve the core problem though, because these people generally will not own the motorcycle in any event - this is my personal experience - it will be almost a pool vehicle that is being used by a number of people from a given area. No-one will admit to owning it. So, you can take it off them, you can deal with them for whatever offences are apparent at the time, but to crush a £60 mini moto that they do not own in any event has very little deterrent effect.

Mr Griffin: In reality, in that kind of scenario, we would almost certainly seize the machine because clearly we would need to verify whether or not it is stolen; so the practical reality is that we would still seize it.

Q159 Mr Scott: In my own area shops have opened up which are purely selling mini motos. Invariably they are quite close to areas that are experiencing the highest number of problems. Do you not think that if there were some way of licensing these shops and stopping them being sold, as you said yourself, as toys, this would go some way? You also mentioned areas - such as we have skate board parks, et cetera - possibly for mini motos, but that is not going to really stop the kids who are just riding round estates causing problem and, in many cases, endangering their own lives on a regular basis.

Mr Griffin: I wholeheartedly concur with you in that sense. There clearly must be a responsible way in which these machines are sold and distributed. In my conversations with the industry this is regarded very much as outside the mainstream industry without the consequent code of conduct, et cetera. In terms of solutions legislatively to deal with that, I am not sure, but from a police perspective certainly we need to see prime

responsibility being at the point of sale.

Q160 Chairman: What is the response of the industry when you say these sorts of things? We have taken evidence that people are importing these bicycles from China for as little as £50?

Mr Griffin: Indeed.

Q161 Chairman: That is going to aggravate the situation. In fact we took evidence last week that people are actually giving them away as a promotion.

Mr Griffin: Indeed.

Q162 Chairman: What is the response of the industry?

Mr Griffin: The industry regard it is being very much outside their mainstream remit. Certainly responsible manufacturers and importers do not do this kind of business. It is a concern for them, because actually you are not, in a sense, talking about the mainstream industry, you are talking about a peripheral part of it. People have set up very quickly, et cetera. How long it will endure I do not know. I suspect it will be a non-lasting phenomenon, but it is a difficulty for them because they do not actually speak on behalf of the importers.

Q163 Chairman: A non-elastic phenomenon. Is that an ACPO phrase?

Mr Griffin: Non-lasting phenomenon.

Q164 Chairman: I am sorry, I thought it was some new police term? I think that is very helpful, gentleman. I do not know that you have convinced us that registration would not be something to discuss seriously, but it has been very helpful. If you would just give us a précis of any extra information you have got, that would be extremely helpful. Thank you very much indeed.

Witnesses: **Mr Kevin Clinton**, Head of Road Safety, Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents; **Mr Don Matthew**, Policy Advisor, Sustrans, and **Mr Stephen Plowden**, Transport Planner and Author, gave evidence.

Q165 Chairman: Gentlemen, good afternoon. May I ask you, first of all, to identify yourselves for the record?

Mr Clinton: I am Kevin Clinton. I am the Road Safety Adviser at the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

Mr Plowden: I am Steven Plowden. I am a Technical Adviser to the Slower Speeds Initiative, but I am here on my own account today.

Mr Matthew: Don Matthew, Police Adviser to Sustrans.

Q166 Chairman: Thank you. Did anybody want to make a statement before we move to questioning?

Mr Matthew: Could I say, Chairman, Sustrans is short for Sustainable Transport. We are a practical, environmental charity that does projects to aid cyclists and pedestrians. We have put all our work within the context of a carbon constrained future, and it is that that has caused us to stand back a little and think about what the Motorcycling Strategy is for. I know you have just had a session on illegal use with the police, but since I put in my written submission our field staff have deluged me with points to raise, but perhaps I can do that very briefly.

Q167 Chairman: I think we will ask the three of you: do we need a National Motorcycling Strategy. What do you think, Mr Clinton?

Mr Clinton: Yes, I think it is a very useful document. It is very comprehensive, and I think it draws a lot of focus to, and co-ordination on, all of the different issues for motorcycling. It is clearly a form of transport that carries quite a high level of risk and it is important that we try to reduce that.

Mr Plowden: Obviously, I do not agree with the Strategy, but even people who take a more favourable view of it

than I do, I think some of them at least, would be inclined to say that the power of motorcycles should be reduced, and also that there are some streets or areas, like city centres where motorcyclists are not appropriate. The argument that to do anything effective about that would be inimical to liberty I believe is completely mistaken; other people have liberties which are threatened by motorcycles. I would like to say, I think an important part of the Strategy should really be to improve alternatives. Public transport is an obvious alternative that should be improved. I have also mentioned electrically assisted bicycles and new forms of car and, lastly, on the question of the efficacy of road safety, the evidence is that after basic skills have been acquired further training does not do any good, and I can lend the Committee this book, which gives all the reference, if you would like to have it.

Q168 Chairman: Would you like to read us its title so we can get it in the record?

Mr Plowden: It is called *Traffic Safety*, it is by Leonard Evans, who is the leading American expert, and it is published by Science Serving Society, which is his own organisation. You will get it much cheaper if you order it from the States than if you order it through the British publishers.

Q169 Chairman: I think we will not have too many advertisements, if you do not mind! You did say that people were effectively forced into using motorcycles because public transport is so bad. What did you mean by that?

Mr Plowden: I do not think I put it quite as strongly as that, but there is some evidence of a correlation between poor public transport and the propensity to have motorcycles. Do you remember the experiment about 30 years ago in Yorkshire about very cheap public transport? I think Nicholas Ridley put a stop to it. In that case it was found that people did not buy as many motorcycles as elsewhere.

Q170 Graham Stringer: That does not apply in London. It is one of the best public transport systems in the world, an amazing bus system, and yet I see more motorbikes, mopeds, scooters in London than in any other city in the UK?

Mr Plowden: Indeed. I think the exemption from the congestion charge is largely to do with that.

Q171 Graham Stringer: Do you have evidence of that? I agree with you that the congestion charge has increased that tendency, but there were a lot of two-wheeled motorised vehicles about before the congestion charge.

Mr Plowden: I think it is fairly clear it did increase it, and there were ads in the papers before the congestion charge came in saying, "Buy a motorbike and beat the congestion charge", but I do not have statistical evidence. I imagine TfL do.

Q172 Graham Stringer: It is on the increase. What I am saying is that even before the congestion charge, London, which has an excellent public transport system, had a lot of motorised two-wheelers, and so that is evidence against the original point you were making. It is not a change.

Mr Plowden: I did not put it very strongly in the first place. I think there is some evidence of this correlation.

Q173 Mrs Ellman: Sustrans has said that motorcycles are not suitable for residential areas. Do you think motorcycles can be banned from residential areas? Have there been any attempts to do that?

Mr Matthew: I think a lot of this debate is to do with banning regulation or not to ban, et cetera. If you look briefly at the experience of Holland, powered two-wheelers, particularly mopeds, went into considerable decline for quite a while and there has been a noticeable improvement, not in overall road safety records, but in the attempt at improving residential areas. It is not just the famous *woonerf* but the wider residential areas. As we move much more towards 20 miles an hour in this country as the standard norm, one has to say that most motorbikes do not really fit in with that ambience, which is what I was trying to say. In fact, the amount of high powered machines is becoming, in a sense, quite out of sync with what we are trying to achieve with sustainable communities. Can they be banned? Probably not, but I defer to the expertise of some of the people in the room on this one.

Q174 Mrs Ellman: Have there been any local attempts to ban them?

Mr Matthew: On residential streets?

Q175 Mrs Ellman: Yes.

Mr Matthew: I think not, and I would be very doubtful under what legal process that could be done at the moment, but it is certainly a thought for one of our future campaigns.

Q176 Chairman: Do you have any views on that, gentlemen?

Mr Clinton: If by "residential street" you mean normal roads which cars also use, I do not see any reason why

one would want to ban motorcyclists if cars are allowed. If you are talking about home zone type roads where the aim is to try and get all motorised traffic out so that people can use them as living space, then, yes, but I think the principle would apply to cars as much as to motorcycles.

Mr Matthew: I do not know under what legislation car-free developments and the famous BedZED experiment is taking place, which is a car-free development and the parking is outside. We might have to check under what housing regulations that has been achieved.

Mr Plowden: I think there are situations where it would make good sense to ban motorcycles. They are much more dangerous to pedestrians than cars are. I quoted the figure of 3.7 in my evidence. There are 3.7 as many pedestrians killed or seriously injured by motorcyclists per mile driven than cars. In London the figure is rather higher. It is 5.2 based on the years 1999 and 2000. So in areas where you are trying to encourage walking and where pedestrians should be king, I think it makes very good sense to ban motorcycles, but there, as I tried to say, the substitute would be a vehicle which had a little bit of power but was entirely compatible with a pushbike.

Q177 Mr Martlew: On the general usage of motorbikes, I can understand the concern of high-powered motorbikes, because it is very often fairly affluent middle-aged men who have not grown up, but the reality is that a lot of people who use motorbikes do so because they are cheap and they cannot afford the alternative of a car, and, while we have a very good transport in London, it is so cheap compared to the public transport system. So really are you saying we should punish people because they cannot afford a motorcar or they cannot afford to use expensive public transport?

Mr Plowden: Not at all. What I was suggesting was that I do not quite see why anybody needs a motorcycle more powerful than the learner machines, which have a top speed, commonly, of 60 or 65 miles an hour.

Q178 Chairman: You would find it very difficult, Mr Plowden, to differentiate in that way. You can imagine the screams of constraints on trade and discrimination. I agree with you, but then I do not know why people need motorcycles at all, so my view is not exactly unbiased.

Mr Plowden: In London I am not sure that anybody does really, particularly if these power-assisted bicycles were around, or more of them, but in the country I think they certainly do. I think lots of young people would be very much handicapped if they could not get to night-school or to their employment, but I do not see why they need anything more than low-powered machines.

Q179 Mrs Ellman: Do you think there should be some legal restriction?

Mr Plowden: Yes, I think it should be a matter of the construction of new regulations. I have applied the same principles to cars incidentally, the principle that no vehicle should be more dangerous, or consume more fuel, or cause more pollution than it has to for it to do its job.

Q180 Mrs Ellman: If you wanted some kind of regulation to advanced machines being made, would that be on safety grounds?

Mr Plowden: Safety and pollution. I notice that it is mentioned even in the Government Strategy that some motorcycles emit more CO₂ than cars do. It is absurd, they are only carrying one person, and I think for other gaseous emissions I am right in saying they are actually worse than cars.

Mr Matthew: They are considerably worse. I took the precaution of bringing *Transport Statistics Great Britain 2006* and things like the hydrocarbons, even modern motorcycles are extremely polluting, and there has been in the news over the last few days the issue of particulates and the health of young children. For particulates motorcycles are worse than cars. It was this sort of nagging worry that made me pose the question you started with, Chairman: what is The Motorcycling Strategy for? The DfT brought some claims about environmental benefits that even three or four years ago were perhaps slightly dodgy and now look even less well-founded.

Q181 Mrs Ellman: Does that mean that there is a general view here that there should be a legal restriction on manufacturing?

Mr Clinton: I think I would have to distance myself and RoSPA from that somewhat. We regard motorcycling as a perfectly legitimate form of transport which people ought to be free to use. Our approach is not to try and prevent people from motorcycling but to try and find ways of helping people do it more safely.

Q182 Clive Efford: Surely you have a view on the excessive speed side of it?

Mr Clinton: Yes, I have a lot of sympathy with having a top limit on the speed and power of motorcycles and cars, although when the EC, I think some ten years ago, proposed a 100 brake horsepower limit on motorcycles, they were not able to get it through because they could not show any real reduction in risk from that. I think a top limit, yes, but I would not go as far as having all motorcycles only at the power of 125cc.

Q183 Mrs Ellman: Mr Plowden, you have said that the Government is standing in the way of European regulation?

Mr Plowden: No, I suggested the Committee might like to follow up that suggestion. It was made to me some years ago. The idea of restricting power was raised in the Commission, and the British spoke against it. It is hearsay, I cannot vouch for it at all, but I do suggest you might like to pursue the suggestion.

Q184 Mrs Ellman: Is a restriction something you would like to see happen?

Mr Plowden: Yes, I would. As I say, I think all Vehicle Construction and Use Registrations should be based on the principle I have just said, that they should not be more dangerous, consume more fuel or emit more pollution, or noise if it comes to that, than they have to for the performance of their job.

Q185 Chairman: Is there any evidence about the monitoring of particulates, Mr Matthews?

Mr Matthew: As I say, I am quoting from *Transport Statistics Great Britain 2006*, table 3.6, and this does show improvements for petrol cars, diesel cars and motorcycles. Clearly there are certain cut-off points, and they differ at varying years, but looking at even the better motorcycles at the bottom of this column on page 54, they still compare quite badly with cars, and, to repeat myself, at the time the Motorcycling Strategy was adopted, I am rather surprised some of these figures did not worry the DfT more.

Q186 Graham Stringer: This is sort of a serious question. From where you are starting, Mr Matthew, you are saying there is really no future for motorbikes, because if you produced a hydrogen motorbike, I believe one was demonstrated recently (I think that is the scariest thing I have ever seen - an absolutely silent motorbike), it would be knocking people all over. You are saying that they are heavily polluting and are putting out lots of particulates. You really do not think there is much use for them, do you?

Mr Matthew: I think that there is an incredible future for clean vehicle technology in this country, and, indeed, there has to be. This is the first time this Committee has, presumably, met since the latest IPCC Report about climate change. You have had the Stern Report. Friends of mine who have knowledge of fossil fuel dependency go around groaning daily at our dependency on fossil fuel. Our transport system is 99 per cent dependent at the moment on fossil fuel, and the vision of Sustrans and the other NGOs with whom we work very closely, as I said at the beginning, is of a carbon constrained future where even the DfT says we have to get our CO₂ emissions down 60 per cent by 2050. We go along with the very interesting report on reducing carbon emissions from the Environmental Audit Committee that came out three or four months ago, and we go along with the lines of the BIBAT research for the DfT that said you need to reduce carbon emissions by 60 per cent by 2030. We think that we need to look at everything: how we move around, how sustainable our communities are and what kinds of vehicles we are using, and this is where Stephen Plowden's comments about enviro-friendly cars or enviro-friendly vehicles come in. It just seems that under a number of these headings motorbikes do not currently perform particularly well and meet the needs that we increasingly seem to think we are going to have.

Q187 Graham Stringer: This inquiry is about motorbikes. Do you agree with me that a hydrogen-fuelled motorbike, if it is more or less completely silent, would be a pretty scary vehicle?

Mr Matthew: It might well be a scary vehicle; so might be the cost of moving towards a hydrogen fuelled infrastructure as well. What scares you: the fact that it is entirely quiet?

Q188 Graham Stringer: Yes. We have heard that motorbikes are responsible per mile for more accidents than cars, and that is partly because they are smaller, they are less visible. If you also make them silent ---- I think Mr Plowden wanted to comment on that.

Mr Matthew: Before he does, can I very quickly say, and it is probably linked to what he was going to say, this motorcycle ought to have intelligent speed adaptation, some sort of speed limiter to it, and, again, that does not seem to be in the current motorcycle debate. Over to you, Stephen.

Mr Plowden: I entirely agree that a quiet motorcycle would be even more dangerous than the motorcycles that we have got at the moment, so that seems to be another argument for making them much less powerful and for fitting them with speed limiters. I am not sure what the position is on the technical feasibility of speed limiters for motorcycles, they are certainly feasible for cars. Research goes on very, very slowly. May I make another comment on the speed?

Q189 Chairman: Yes, please.

Mr Plowden: I think your last witnesses said that the motorcyclists who broke the law are a small minority. Of course, with cars, as with motorcycles, most people do speed. We have the Annual Speed Surveys which show us very clearly that the Government's Strategy on paragraph 6.13 is slightly misleading about this. They say, on speed, generally motorcyclists' propensity to speed is not so very different to car drivers. If you look at the distribution of speeds it is quite clear that what you have got with motorcyclists is, in fact, two distributions combined. What you have got is more people driving at very low speeds than cars do and more people driving at very higher speeds than cars do, and, clearly, they combine in one distribution the small machines, the mopeds and low-powered machines, with the fast ones, but, in any case, speeding (which is a crime) is very common indeed.

Q190 Mr Martlew: On the hydrogen motorcycle, I suspect what will happen is that they will invent an artificial

noise so you will hear it. I do not know if anyone can remember when we went up to North Sea Gas. North Sea gas has no smell whatsoever; so they had to put the smell into it. I am sure that would satisfy Mr Stringer. The point being made about the pollution by motorcycles, I am not sure I accept it because I pull up at the garage in my car and I fill up 60 litres, or whatever; a motorcyclist comes alongside and is lucky to get ten in and he probably does maybe 80, 90, 100 miles to a gallon, so how can it be more polluting than a motorcar?

Mr Matthew: Partly because of propensity to speed, I suspect.

Q191 Mr Martlew: It does not use as much fuel?

Mr Matthew: Under some circumstances, but we have been talking about the growing share of the market with the more powerful models, have we not, and I think that is where the greater polluting effect comes.

Q192 Mr Martlew: If I have got a standard motorbike and a standard car, the car uses a lot more fuel than the motorbike. Am I correct?

Mr Matthew: Certainly not a lot more. If you compare it with a moped, yes, but, again, if we are talking about a modern improved car with a three-way catalyst, I am not absolutely certain.

Mr Plowden: May I quote The Government's Strategy on this. Paragraph 3.4 says: "However, larger motorcycles can emit more CO₂ than some cars kilometre by kilometre because they offer far poorer fuel economy." That is CO₂. I think with other gases there is not such a close relationship between fuel consumption and emissions anyway, so it could well be the case, and Don tells us it is the case, that they are more polluting than cars.

Mr Matthew: I also have a strong suspicion, partly linked to some of the anti-social element we have been speaking about, that they may be far less well maintained, and there is quite a market in second, third and fourth-hand motorbikes that probably are not maintained at all.

Chairman: That is very interesting.

Q193 Clive Efford: Mr Clinton, you said in your evidence that you think better advice should be given to parents about mini motos or small motorbikes. Exactly what do you recommend that parents should be told about them?

Mr Clinton: I think they should be asked questions: why are they buying the mini moto? Where do they expect their youngster to be using it? If there are no safe places of the type that the two ACPO gentlemen were talking about, what is the point of buying a mini moto for a youngster who is going to use it in a dangerous and illegal fashion? It is that sort of thinking and awareness. I think the discussion in the earlier session about people regarding these as toys, rather than vehicles, is absolutely crucial. If parents are regarding mini motos as a toy and are buying them under that impression, then they are not going to be thinking about the safety issues. I think one of the advantages of a registration scheme is to put down this marker that these are vehicles and not toys.

Q194 Clive Efford: Do you find it extraordinary that a parent would not consider one of these very small mini motos, only a few inches high, to be extremely dangerous?

Mr Clinton: I am surprised that parents buy these and allow children to use them, but I think this really is an issue of what they understand these vehicles to be, and I do not think they are understanding them to be vehicles.

Q195 Clive Efford: How should these vehicles be regulated to improve safety?

Mr Clinton: I think there are a number of approaches. I am attracted to the idea of a registration scheme, although I take on board the comments from the police about whether it would actually affect the behaviour of people who use them illegally anyway, but having them marked as vehicles because they have to be licensed and registered I think makes a lot of sense. I think perhaps an area that also needs to be looked at is the people and the companies who are selling these. I think in your earlier session you had an example of a company giving these away as a prize, or something. Where is their duty of care? What is that company thinking about when they are doing that? Are they giving any thought whatsoever to how that is going to be used and the risks involved? So, I think maybe there is a role for Trading Standards in here as well as the police.

Q196 Clive Efford: Do you think that the laws regarding these types of vehicles are being adequately enforced?

Mr Clinton: I think within the resources of the police their approach of high-profile, targeted campaigns makes a lot of sense and is realistic, rather than expecting it to be a constant enforcement.

Q197 Clive Efford: Mr Matthew, you said you are concerned about mini motos using cycle paths. Is there any evidence that this is having a negative effect on people using these cycle paths and what would you like to see done about it?

Mr Matthew: It is difficult to say mini motos in particular. Sustrans has a considerable problem. First of all, we have led the way for the 10,000 mile National Cycle Network. A third of that is off-road and I would have thought on about a half to a third of that we do have a mini moto and motorcycle problem. Very briefly, in order to keep motorcyclists out, we often erect barrier gates and, of course, we then find that people in wheelchairs cannot get through them, and there are disability discrimination issues, and we often find ourselves in quite a lose-lose situation with that. The one thing I wanted to say while the police were speaking was, again, according to the evidence from our field staff and the 2,000 rangers on our network, who are volunteers who just look after its well-being, there is absolutely nothing that tackles this like a bobby on a bike. The mere physical presence of an officer cycling down a route, or a community warden, I am told, reduces incidents by about 90 per cent. The other thing I wanted to say is that high-profile and targeted campaigns working in partnership with all sections of the community do seem to work. If I may very briefly read from this evidence I was sent about Kent, who had had a campaign last summer just on mini motos, they received 264 complaints and the police seized and crushed 104 mini motos, issued 123 warnings, made 20 arrests, spoke to 12 parents and recovered 17 stolen vehicles. That does suggest that high-profile targeted campaigns certainly do work.

Clive Efford: In my experience the police officer has 100 per cent impact on reducing the incidence of crimes or anti-social behaviour with motorbikes, but only while they are there?

Chairman: Not always while they are there. Having seen much of the City of London Police this week having enormous rows with all sorts of cyclists who have gone over red lights, I am not convinced of the efficacy.

Q198 Clive Efford: I was just going to ask Mr Plowden whether he has any views on mini motos?

Mr Plowden: It is a brand new problem. I do not think I had heard of them before you issued your notice.

Q199 Chairman: You will be writing reams about them?

Mr Plowden: I hope not?

Q200 Graham Stringer: Do RoSPA keep statistics nationally on mini-bikes and accidents?

Mr Clinton: What we do is collect press reports. It is not formal statistics in the way that you would get from the police recording them, but our press office collects press reports and from that we are aware of seven deaths.

Q201 Chairman: Is that in a year?

Mr Clinton: No, that is in mid 2004, or maybe September 2004. So it is not a formal statistic, but we do collect the press reports and we are aware of these seven deaths, and five of those, I think, were under 15 years of age.

Q202 Chairman: Could you give us a short note on that so that, given the caveats that you have just made, we could look at what you have picked up, because that is very helpful.

Mr Matthew: Can I make one brief point. When I spoke about the National Cycle Network, we have discovered, to our pleasant surprise, half of its users are pedestrians, mostly families with children, and it is an enormous sustainable transport facility. The relevance is that there is nothing like a couple of mini motos or a couple of illegal motorbikes to cause widespread fear and inconvenience to hundreds, if not thousands, of people and to devalue the facility that we are providing that they enjoy so much.

Chairman: Gentlemen, it is very helpful. It is been encouraging and interesting. You will not expect us to be persuaded of every single thing you have said, but thank you very much for coming. We are very grateful to you. We will adjourn the Committee temporarily. I hope that members of the public will forgive us; we have a series of three votes. The Minister is due at five o'clock when I shall reconvene the Committee.

The Committee suspended from 4.27 pm to 5.02 pm for a division in the House.

Memorandum submitted by Department for Transport

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Dr Stephen Ladyman**, a Member of the House, Minister of State for Transport and **Mr Andrew Colski**, Head of Vulnerable Road Users Branch, Department for Transport, gave evidence.

Q203 Chairman: Good afternoon, Minister, I am delighted to see you; would you be kind enough to identify yourself and your colleague?

Dr Ladyman: I am Stephen Ladyman, Minister of State for Transport and my colleague is Andrew Colski, who deals with these matters on behalf of the Department.

Q204 Chairman: You are both most warmly welcomed this afternoon. Did you have something you wanted to say to us first?

Dr Ladyman: No, we can just answer your questions on this occasion.

Q205 Chairman: That would be an improvement; we are going to break habits of a lifetime. Our previous witness, Mr Plowden, described the Motorcycling Strategy as something that might have been produced by "a dodgy PR firm, not by a Department of State". Is that fair?

Dr Ladyman: No, that is cobblers - if that is sufficient of an answer for you.

Q206 Chairman: I do not know whether "cobblers" is a Parliamentary word. Why particularly is it?

Dr Ladyman: Because it was devised with the motorcycling industry, with representatives of motorcyclists themselves; it is, I believe, a comprehensive document. It sets out to make motorcycling a mainstream transport activity as a genuine contributor to reducing CO₂ emissions and improving congestion and improving the safety of motorcyclists. If you are going to get action on motorcycling and for motorcycling to be made safer, as I am sure we would all want, you can only do that by working with motorcyclists and with the industry, and that is what the programme sets out to do. I think it does it very well by identifying what their real concerns are and setting about constructively to address them.

Q207 Chairman: You did tell us last time that 27 of the 44 actions in the strategy were going to be completed by February 2007 and then a further eight by 2010; are they going to make a real difference to motorcyclists and if so in what way?

Dr Ladyman: They are going to make a real difference to motorcyclists. It is early days yet but there is no question that the level of motorcycling fatalities has not got down in the way that fatalities in other sectors have gone down, although in the last year or so there are some signs - and as a scientist until there has been a trend over several years I am not going to say the trend is downwards - of reductions in the number of fatalities; we are also seeing a good reduction in the level of serious injuries amongst motorcyclists. The first stage of the Motorcycling Strategy has been completed in that we do now have genuine buy-in from the industry and from motorcyclists themselves. Whether in the long term it makes a real difference to motorcyclists we have yet to see, we will not know for several years, but there is good buy-in to the strategy and it is having an impact.

Q208 Chairman: There is some slight fall; they are not dramatic changes in the way of casualties by selected road user type, but there is some fall.

Dr Ladyman: Yes.

Q209 Chairman: Is there anything that you should have included that you did not include and that you now wish you had?

Dr Ladyman: I cannot think of anything.

Q210 Chairman: Mr Colski, do you want to save your Minister who is looking lost?

Dr Ladyman: I think it is perfect so why would I want to add anything to it, but Mr Colski might have some ideas.

Q211 Chairman: Mr Colski, do you have this divine belief that everything the Department does is perfect, which is sustaining the Minister?

Mr Colski: Yes, of course. What I would like to say in response to whether the actions are appropriate, we have the structure through the National Motorcycle Council and working with industry colleagues to consider how we are implementing all of the actions. Part of that process includes not just the actions as listed in 2005 but what it is appropriate for us to consider now. One example is the whole area of diesel spillage, which is a concern for motorcyclists, and that is something that is being looked at in more detail than was anticipated in the strategy because people have become more aware of it.

Q212 Chairman: From what point of view; from having a go at the road freight industry? What do you mean by that?

Mr Colski: In part, yes, working with the freight industry and petrol retailers in terms of getting the message

across to the users of diesel vehicles that they need to be careful not to spill because it does create problems for other road users, in particular motorcyclists.

Dr Ladyman: Actually, there is a good example of that from the recent Council that was held where it was brought to my attention that a number of diesel users are driving away from forecourts without even filler caps on, as a contributor to diesel on the roads. That is something we can do something about, and one of the things that I have asked my officials to investigate in respect of that, as a result of that feedback at Council, was that maybe we can do something with the diesel retailers that would prevent people from overfilling their tanks - some technology on the pumps that would stop it. The pump cuts out when the pump is full, but usually you can pull the nozzle out a bit and carry on filling if you are inclined to do it. If there was a longer period before the nozzle was reactivated you would not be able to do that and so I have asked people to investigate whether that would be a technical improvement that might help.

Q213 Chairman: Just as a matter of interest, are you really talking about people who are just forgetful and forget to put the cap back on, or are you talking about a conscious attempt to drive away in the hope of a full tank?

Dr Ladyman: There are two things. There are people who want to see their tank full to the very brim because they are trying to maximise the distance they can travel before they have to stop again, and do not realise that as a consequence of that they can cause spills, and there are people who are genuinely forgetful. There are some people out on the road there, let us face it, who just do not care; they may be filling their tank at somebody else's expense and the fact that they have not got a cap on their tank is neither here nor there to them.

Q214 Chairman: This Committee is persuaded that there are some people on our roads who are not exactly good citizens. Are there any specific actions that will not be completed by this month, February 2007?

Dr Ladyman: I will let Mr Colski give you chapter and verse.

Mr Colski: We explain in our memorandum where we are on each of the actions in turn; not all of them will be completed exactly by February 2007, some of them well before, some of them, inevitably, things change and they have been delayed a bit. Most of them will be completed, if not by February 2007 then soon afterwards.

Q215 Chairman: What concerns us are the areas where possibly things are not progressing as they really ought to. Is there something specific, is there a reason why certain of your actions are not progressing in the way that you think they should?

Mr Colski: I cannot remember all 44 in detail, but one thing that springs to mind is, for example, things on driver training that relate to the third EU Driving Licence Directive, which I know you are interested in, but of course we could not take those forward until the Directive was adopted, and that process in Europe took rather longer than was anticipated back in 2005.

Chairman: Yes, some time we must have an audit of how much of your time is taken up with the more brilliant ideas of the European Union. Mr Stringer?

Q216 Graham Stringer: Following these questions up if I may, you dismiss Mr Plowden's comments as "cobblers". He makes at least two rather important points which I would be interested in your response to. One is that the strategy does not make enough comment or analysis of the dangers that motorcycles are to other people, which is not surprising really if you draw the document up in consultation with the industry itself. Do you think that is a fair comment or is it cobblers?

Dr Ladyman: I called his comments "cobblers" because it struck me from the approach that the Chairman gave us that he was being deliberately provocative and generalising about the document. Had he identified a specific issue that he was concerned about I would have been more considered in my response to it; but is that particular issue cobblers? It was a strategy that was intended to mainstream motorcycling; if he is arguing we should not be mainstreaming motorcycling, if he is arguing that he could perform some analysis that suggests that motorcycling is a danger to other road users, therefore we should be working to eliminate motorcycling, that was an argument that was eliminated before we wrote the Motorcycling Strategy. The strategy is predicated on the idea that it is a good thing to mainstream motorcycling.

Q217 Chairman: What is "mainstreaming"? It is a new verb to me.

Dr Ladyman: What I mean by that is that it should be seen not as an anarchic activity that rebellious teenagers engage in and therefore we should be trying to discourage it.

Q218 Chairman: Or only inadequate males over 35.

Dr Ladyman: What it is intended to convey is that we see it as a legitimate form of road transport that we actively want to encourage and we want people to considerate it as an alternative to the motor car as a contributor to tackling congestion and reducing carbon emissions.

Q219 Graham Stringer: Just on that, you say that motorcycling is going to continue and it is going to be an important part of transport, but can you answer the specific point that Mr Plowden makes about why you do not analyse and say what your response is to the fact that motorcycles do a considerable amount of damage to pedestrians, at about three and a half times the rate per kilometre that cars do.

Dr Ladyman: I am not aware of the figures that show that and I will certainly have a look at them, but one of the reasons that we need to take this activity is to identify those things which are a threat to motorcyclists or where motorcyclists are a threat to others and make sure that we are dealing with them, and if we need to keep pedestrians and motorcyclists separate in some way that we are not at the moment then we will look at it and that can be part of the Motorcycling Strategy, but to suggest that the whole strategy should not have been engaged in on the basis that motorcycles are a dangerous thing is not something ----

Q220 Graham Stringer: I am asking very specifically whether that should not have been taken into account in the strategy.

Dr Ladyman: I was not around when the strategy was adopted so I do not know whether it was or not, but I can certainly investigate that and let you know whether it was.

Q221 Graham Stringer: Thank you. The other point Mr Plowden makes, which is rather surprising but again I would have thought it worth investigation, is that evidence from the University of Salford in the 1970s showed that after training sessions organised by the RAC and others the accident rate went up, and he says that the reason motorcyclists have accidents is not to do with their skill level but to do with their attitude. Was that considered as part of the response?

Dr Ladyman: You mean did we take account of 1970s research when deciding on a strategy in the late 1990s? I suspect we probably did not take too much of a concern. What I do agree with - and the Committee will know I made this very clear to the Committee when we had an informal session about road safety and driver training - is that attitude amongst certain types of road users is the key to improving road safety, whether that is young drivers of motor cars or young men riding motorcycles. If they think they are immortal, if they think they are in complete control of their machine, whether it is a car or a motorcycle, then they will make mistakes and they will hurt people, and one of the key things we have to do in reviewing the way we train drivers and riders, one of the key things we have to do in our review of road safety strategy, is to make sure that we are fundamentally trying to address attitudes of drivers so to that extent I entirely agree, but I do not think that is something that is specific to motorcyclists, you could say exactly the same thing about young men driving cars.

Mr Colski: It is certainly something we are very much aware of as part of our work on motorcycling, the need to address attitudes and how skills are used as well as the mechanical skills themselves.

Q222 Graham Stringer: Did you take evidence from any academic or practical studies at all that looked at the impact of training on accidents?

Mr Colski: Yes.

Q223 Graham Stringer: Which studies did you use?

Mr Colski: We have our own research project underway at the moment on motorcycle training - it is one of the actions in the strategy - that is being conducted for us by TRL and is due to report later this year. That is something that is very much underway.

Q224 Chairman: You have actually asked TRL to undertake this research on your behalf?

Mr Colski: Into good practice in motorcycle training, yes.

Q225 Chairman: How long do you expect that experiment to continue?

Mr Colski: I believe it is due to report some time later this year. Again, the dates are in the memorandum itself.

Q226 Graham Stringer: This is not just about good practice in training motorcyclists, it is about assessing whether, when they are trained and their skill levels go up, they have more accidents than they did before.

Mr Colski: It does not go as far as to actually link it to their subsequent accident record; that would be a much longer term project.

Q227 Graham Stringer: I accept it would be longer term, but it is rather important, is it not, to know whether training works or not? There is an assumption that it works and I accept most people would say it is a prima facie case that training helps, but if there has been previous evidence, even 35 years old, Minister, that training has the reverse effect ----

Dr Ladyman: I do not know where you are going with this line of questioning; are you suggesting that we should

abandon training because it improves people's confidence and they start causing accidents?

Q228 Graham Stringer: I am suggesting - as is Government policy as I understand - that the bases of policies that you pursue are related to the evidence and I am trying to find out what your evidence base was in coming to some of the conclusions you came to.

Dr Ladyman: As I say, I was not around when the Motorcycling Strategy was adopted but I can certainly get you a reading list of the things that were considered at the time. Would a 1970s piece of research have figured largely in my predecessor's decision-making, I suspect not.

Q229 Mr Martlew: Just on the points that you have made, Minister, I can understand you having a strategy that says people will ride motorcycles so we have to make it safer for them and we must accommodate them.

Dr Ladyman: And safer for everybody else.

Q230 Mr Martlew: Yes, safer for everybody else, that is fine, but from what you have said today, what you are really saying is you want more people to ride motorcycles and with another hat on you are probably saying you want less people to drive motor cars. Is that your strategy?

Dr Ladyman: It is slightly more nuanced than that. I want people for whom motorcycles are a valid option ----

Q231 Chairman: What is the nuance between fewer and less?

Dr Ladyman: I want people for whom riding motorcycles is an option to consider seriously whether using a motorcycle to go to work, to commute, is a way that they could contribute to reducing congestion on the roads and the efficiency of their travel. Whether that leads to more people using motorcycles or fewer people using motorcycles is probably not my key priority. Clearly, the reason why the motorcycling industry is involved in the Motorcycling Strategy is they are hoping that more people will make that choice and decide to use motorcycles.

Q232 Mr Martlew: But you would bear in mind that riding a motorcycle is probably three times more dangerous than driving a car, therefore you would not recommend it over driving a car.

Dr Ladyman: I rode a motorcycle myself for many years and I still occasionally get on a bike when it is necessary in my ministerial capacity, although I do not have a bike any more, and a properly-trained, responsible motorcyclist can be as safe as any other road user but you have to get people into that position where they have a responsible mindset and proper training.

Q233 Mr Martlew: I am going to push you on this. Do you believe it would be better for people to give up their cars and ride motorcycles, is that what you are saying?

Dr Ladyman: I believe for some people it would be better to give up their motor car and ride motorcycles, yes.

Q234 Clive Efford: Why?

Dr Ladyman: They would get to work quicker, they would cut down on CO₂ emissions, they would take up less space on the road and they would save money because they are cheaper than cars.

Q235 Clive Efford: But are they? Have you taken evidence that demonstrates that motor bikes across the board are greener and more efficient than cars?

Dr Ladyman: We will have to dig you out the exact figures, but yes they are.

Clive Efford: We had evidence earlier on that demonstrated that that is not true, they are less efficient in some cases.

Q236 Chairman: Mr Colski, you want to quote something to us. Is it in relation to particulates and what we are talking about? We are talking about particulates here.

Mr Colski: Stephen Plowden mentioned table 3.6 of *Transport Statistics for Great Britain*. I have that here which does show the per kilometre emissions for motorcycles against cars for various forms of pollution. For particulates, yes, motorcycles are higher than cars, for nitrogen oxide and carbon dioxide cars are higher than motorcycles, so it does vary with individual pollutants.

Q237 Clive Efford: Is that per vehicle kilometre or is that per passenger kilometre?

Mr Colski: Per vehicle kilometre.

Q238 Clive Efford: We are talking about vehicles that invariably just carry one person; you seldom see people travelling to work and riding pillion on motorcycles.

Dr Ladyman: You seldom see people travelling to work in cars with more than one person in the car.

Q239 Clive Efford: I do not think that is as prevalent as it is with a motorcycle. We cannot just make that assumption, can we, that they are greener?

Mr Colski: I suspect that somewhere in this there are also the figures for average vehicle occupancy as well. I have not got them immediately to hand but the figure for cars is one point something.

Q240 Chairman: Is there any estimate within those statistics of the relative dangers of particulates versus the ones that you were quoting?

Mr Colski: That is not in this publication.

Chairman: It is actually quite relevant. Mr Efford.

Q241 Clive Efford: One can understand the argument about road space and the speed of travel, so are we looking at regulations then to green-up motorcycles?

Dr Ladyman: I do not know the answer to that question actually because of course the European Union is currently reviewing its stance in respect of emissions from motor cars and fuel consumption and has published a document in the last day or so, but I have not had time to read it in detail yet so I do not know whether it includes motorcycles.

Q242 Clive Efford: If we are looking at them as an alternative, which I accept is a legitimate position to take, we would be wrong, would we not, to ignore the aspect of emissions from motorcycles if that is a strategy we are going to adopt.

Dr Ladyman: Of course we would be wrong to avoid it and in terms of reducing CO₂ emissions we have to look at every form of transport right across the board; even those which we consider to be very green forms of transport like the train can do better and whether it is more efficient than a car or less efficient than a car we have to look at that for every modality.

Q243 Clive Efford: So we would be looking to Europe to negotiate those sorts of things.

Dr Ladyman: Clearly European level action on things like this is more effective than UK unilateral action, but would I rule out UK unilateral action if we do not get sufficient progress at an international level then, no, I would not rule it out but you probably need to engage in discussions around the energy White Paper when it comes out to determine the Government's policy on that.

Q244 Clive Efford: Can I just move on then? Do you think that the current offences for motorcyclists are adequate in terms of ensuring safety on our roads and that vehicles are not abused off road?

Dr Ladyman: Generally, once the Road Safety Act has been completely implemented the levels of offences in general are adequate. We could probably all decide that there are some areas where we would like them to be stiffer or to be changed, and that is a debate we will have over the coming years. One of the key things now is to get enforcement to a level where everybody is complying with the existing body of law.

Q245 Clive Efford: Do you think that we need a registration scheme for some bikes that currently are not required to have registration?

Dr Ladyman: No, I do not; it would be expensive and unnecessary. Mr Stringer's private bill will come to the House in the not too distant future and we will have this debate in full at second reading, but my thinking is that the registration system, particularly for things like mini motos, would be very difficult to enforce, probably quite expensive to set up and, actually, most of the bikes that cause a nuisance or are involved in antisocial behaviour are already covered by existing legislation and the police have all the powers they need to deal with them when they are used on the road.

Q246 Clive Efford: Is it not the problem though that when you issue a section 59 notice the first one is a warning and then the bike is ridden off or whatever and then when they stop it the next time they cannot identify it?

Dr Ladyman: If that was the case how would the registration system help that? What would make the body of people who have got mini motos out there at the moment register their mini motos? Are you talking about a retrospective registration system or just a registration system on new bikes? The reason that registration works on official vehicles, cars and motorbikes, is largely because they are sold through a proper dealer network that engages in the registration process and tells us when they are selling them. Mini motos by and large are not sold

through the reputable dealership networks; in my constituency up until fairly recently they were sold by a couple of shops that usually sell second-hand washing machines and sell them as a sideline. I do not believe those would be registered at first sale even if we had a registration system in place. More importantly, the police are telling me they do not need and do not want a registration system and, whilst they are telling me that, why would I disagree with them.

Q247 Clive Efford: If we are talking about bikes that are just given away as a promotion rather than things people go out and buy, why do we not just stop that?

Dr Ladyman: You cannot stop people giving things away. I would hope that any reputable company would reconsider any future schemes to give away mini motos. What we are doing though, and what the DTI have been doing - and I think they have given you a submission to this effect - they are clamping down on those, on the import of those machines which are unsafe and which are poorly made. They are working very hard to try and discourage their import in the first place, and after a number of years where the levels of imports of these bikes soared, actually the latest year shows a reduction in sales for the first time. DTI are sounding very optimistic, therefore, that they may have actually got on top of this problem by stopping unfit vehicles from getting into the country, and I hope that turns out to be the case. There is only one of the mini motos which can get a certificate of conformity and which could be road legal, but even if it is road legal if you choose to use it on the road you would need a motorcycling licence, you would need a crash helmet, you would need insurance and all the other things. Do I think that a particular bike is actually being ridden by people who have gone through all of those stages? No, I do not and the police do not either, so wherever these things are seen and used on the road they can be stopped and they can be dealt with.

Q248 Clive Efford: You mentioned the DTI; is there any activity at European level to try and deal with the substandard vehicles that you have described?

Dr Ladyman: There is indeed and if we have not given it to you already I will arrange to have you sent information of other countries from around Europe who also try to tackle this problem with us and seem to be having some success.

Q249 Mrs Ellman: You said that the police have all the powers they need to deal with mini motos or other vehicles; do you think they are using those powers?

Dr Ladyman: I obviously cannot speak for every constabulary in the country but my instinct would be, given my postbag and the comments that are made to me by colleagues in the House, no, not all constabularies are using those powers. Some of them misunderstand the powers, some of them understand the powers but are not using them, many are rigorously trying to enforce them and that is one of the reasons why I recently circulated to all members of the House a document that actually sets out what the powers are to tell Members of Parliament that you should go and see your local constabulary and make sure they know what these powers are, know what can be done and who do they need to go to for further advice so that if a Member of Parliament thinks that these bikes are a nuisance in their constituency and they are not being dealt with properly, the local police can be brought up to speed and encouraged to do something about it.

Q250 Mrs Ellman: What can the Department do to encourage the use of these powers?

Dr Ladyman: I work very closely with my colleague in the Home Office who deals with police matters; we both of us talk to the Association of Chief Police Officers to encourage them to encourage their members to take appropriate action. At the end of the day chief constables, as we know, are independent of governments and they decide for themselves how resources are to be deployed in their constabulary, so although I can take the horse to water I cannot make it drink; however, Members of Parliament in their constituencies can put pressure on the local chief constable.

Q251 Mrs Ellman: Which would be the lead department, the Department for Transport or the Home Office?

Dr Ladyman: For policing matters the lead department is the Home Office.

Q252 Mrs Ellman: Do you think that the current offences for motorcyclists are adequate?

Dr Ladyman: Yes, broadly speaking. We would always have debates about whether they are or they are not and whether they need to be increased or decreased but I have not received many representations that they are completely out of line with other offences or that they are not a sufficient deterrent.

Q253 Mrs Ellman: Do you think that motorcyclists are getting away with crimes because technology like speed cameras and automatic number plate recognition is unable to register them?

Dr Ladyman: Of course, 20 years ago we took away the requirement for motorcycles to have a number plate on the front of the vehicle because those number plates on the front of the vehicle were a danger both to the motorcyclist and to other road users who were involved in accidents. We have no intention of reconsidering that, it is absolutely right that there is no number plate on the front of a motorcycle, but that does mean therefore that if an offence is detected by a front-facing camera it is not going to pick up a registration number; however, most speed camera now photograph you from the rear and automatic number plate recognition systems in police

cars photograph you from the rear, so even if there was an argument that a few years ago motorcyclists were able to get away with things, it is becoming less and less relevant and I would encourage that process.

Q254 Mrs Ellman: What about evasion of Vehicle Excise Duty?

Dr Ladyman: Clearly we want to clamp down on that for everybody, that is why we have introduced the statutory off-road notification system and why we now have a process of continuous taxation. I am hoping that that does clamp down, not only on VED evasion amongst motorcyclists but VED evasion generally over the next year or two. Clearly, there is a role here for the police. At the end of the day, as your Committee has already commented in the past, the more roads policing that there is the more we will catch people and the more we will stop them evading their responsibilities. I am doing my best through ACPO to encourage chief constables to put more resources into enforcing these things across the board.

Q255 Mrs Ellman: Is there any dispute going on in the European Union about tougher standards for the construction and use of motorcycles where we are opposing that?

Dr Ladyman: Construction and use tougher standards - I am not aware of any debate that has been raised with me.

Q256 Mrs Ellman: There is nothing that you are aware of.

Dr Ladyman: No, there has certainly not been at ministerial level or at the Transport Council. The main things that I, in my nearly two years in this job, have discussed at European level, particularly at the Transport Council, have been the issues of the third European Driving Licence Directive and daytime running lights; those are the main things that have impacted on motorcyclists although there have been discussions about motorcycling safety at the Verona Road Safety Conference.

Q257 Mrs Ellman: What is the Government's view on daylight running lights?

Dr Ladyman: We are strongly opposed to mandatory daytime running lights because we have a strong feeling that motorcyclists in the daytime are able to make their vehicles more conspicuous by keeping their light on. If everybody had their lights on it would be less easy for motorcyclists to stand out in the daytime. I have to say I was very pessimistic six months ago that we were winning that argument in Europe, and I actually told the House I was very pessimistic, I thought we were once again standing alone and that everybody else was in favour of daytime running lights. I have to say we have worked very hard as a Government over the last six months and the industry and motorcycling groups have helped by organising campaigns all around Europe to get over to my colleague ministers that the issues are not clear cut. We have provided further evidence to the Commission to make it clear to them that perhaps they have not looked at the evidence as thoroughly as they ought to have done, and there has now been an acceptance by the Commission that they have to look at this again and a number of my ministerial colleagues have now started to make noises which I am much happier about. I do not think we are out of the woods yet, I still think the odds are in the long term that there will be mandatory daytime running lights but I am a lot more optimistic than

I was six months ago that we may succeed on this one.

Q258 Graham Stringer: You mentioned Vehicle Excise Duty evasion; do you have figures or estimates of the number of motorcyclists on the road without insurance?

Dr Ladyman: We do have those estimates. I do not know whether they are in our memorandum, but if they are not we can write to you.

Q259 Graham Stringer: Do you know off the top of your head - and you can write to us if you do not - whether it is a higher or lower percentage than the estimates of uninsured car drivers?

Dr Ladyman: A higher estimate.

Q260 Graham Stringer: A higher estimate; thank you. Going back to your previous answers on the cost of a registration scheme for off road bikes, I know you have told me in a written answer that you do not know what the costs are but can you speculate as to why it would cost a lot when the DVLA run a voluntary scheme?

Dr Ladyman: Clearly I have had the DVLA starting to do some figures because I am aware that when we get to the second reading of your Private Member's Bill you are going to expect for me to be in a position to give you some idea of the costs.

Q261 Graham Stringer: I am preparing now.

Dr Ladyman: At this stage I am only able to give you a ballpark indication and I do not want to be held to this cost, but initially we think that it would probably cost something around about £10 million to set up and probably £2 to £3 million a year to run. It would probably take us at least 12 months and maybe two years to actually get it running; that is our initial feeling but I do not put it any stronger than that feeling at the moment.

Q262 Graham Stringer: That is really helpful, but do you not find that a bit surprising, the set-up costs, when they are already running a voluntary scheme?

Dr Ladyman: That is one of the reasons why I have said that these are ballpark estimates at this stage because I need to challenge all the assumptions that these figures have been based on and I have not had the opportunity to do that yet. I am simply trying to aid discussion by being helpful here.

Q263 Graham Stringer: It is genuinely helpful.

Dr Ladyman: By the time we get to your Bill I certainly hope to have been able to challenge those sorts of issues and give you chapter and verse.

Q264 Chairman: I just want to ask you one or two things. Did the Government in fact abstain when it came to the final vote on the third European Driving Licence Directive?

Dr Ladyman: We did, and the reason for that was we considered voting against but all the other aspects of the Directive were broadly positive or at least neutral. There were some major steps forward in terms of tightening up the licensing regime around Europe in the third Directive that would be a positive benefit for road safety. The only thing that we had serious issue with was the staged access to motorcycles for older motorcyclists that we just did not think were evidence-based and, frankly, we thought that our existing regime in the UK which is much tighter than that in most European countries already, would serve its purpose in this country without us needing to change it. That was the reason why we abstained, but as you will know, Mrs Dunwoody, because you are experienced in European matters, although we abstained since the qualifying majority vote has to be a positive vote for something, abstaining is as near as damn it the same thing as voting against.

Q265 Chairman: The only difficulty is what is the Department going to do about the recommendations that have been carried?

Dr Ladyman: What we are going to do is we are going to work very closely with the motorcycle industry and the representatives of motorcyclists themselves to try and implement the new arrangements in as motorcycling-friendly a way as we can, maintain our existing safety standards but without doing it in a way which will put people off motorcycling. Will we be able to succeed entirely in that endeavour, given the Directive; no we will not, there will be changes, but we think we can go as far as we can to mitigate them by working with the industry and with motorcyclists themselves.

Q266 Chairman: Why is the Department so much against a register for motorcycling instructors?

Dr Ladyman: I have to say I am prepared to review this and I would be interested in the Committee's views as to whether a register of instructors would be useful or not. Of course we have the steps that are in the Road Safety Act and I am prepared to keep an open mind. I would like to hear your views when you have considered the evidence.

Q267 Chairman: Good. What is your view about limiters? A lot of people feel that one way you can deal with more and more powerful bikes is to fit them with limiters and it would not be beyond the technical prowess of the industry; what is your view of that?

Dr Ladyman: I am not sure that I understand where they would be of benefit. When we are talking about younger motorcyclists anyway we have power restrictions on what they can ride. If you are talking about limiters for high-powered vehicles for adults ----

Q268 Chairman: It is not comparable in one way but you are prepared to accept limiters on powerful coaches so that they do not go above a certain speed, and you know that speed actually is a real element in accidents. Why have you not been prepared to consider limiters on very, very powerful bikes which are getting bigger and more powerful by the day?

Dr Ladyman: The philosophical argument there would then have to apply also to motor cars. I am prepared to engage in a debate about that but not just for motorcycles; why would we limit the speed of motorcycles but allow people to buy an Aston Martin that can probably do nearly 200 miles an hour? What would be right for one sector would have to be applied to the other sector. What we have looked at - and to be frank with you it is probably a longer term issue about speed and there are no immediate plans - is whether intelligent speed adaptation would work on motorcycles and we have done some research on cars as well. We did that research, not because we have any intention of introducing ISA on cars or on motorbikes, we are not in a position to introduce it because we do not yet have a digital map of speed limits around the country that it could use to determine what the speed limit is in any particular area, but we did that research because there is a body of opinion starting to grow that ISA has a future in road transport and should the political debate ever move towards that we want to be in a position to be able to inform that debate with some evidence. We did some research, largely using motorcars, but we did fit a motorbike with ISA to see whether ISA can be operated safely on a motorbike, because you have to remember that on a motorbike of course when you are going around a bend what you do with power in order to remain stable is very different than what you do with a motor car when you are going around a bend. The last thing you would need when you are taking a bend at speed on a motorcycle is for the engine to cut out because it is detecting that you are going too fast. We needed to know, therefore, whether ISA is technically possible on a motorbike and we did some experiments and, broadly

speaking, it probably is technically possible, but we have no plans for introducing it. As I say, we may face that debate at some point in the future.

Q269 Chairman: Is that evidence published anywhere?

Dr Ladyman: I believe so.

Mr Colski: I do not know if it has been published yet.

Q270 Chairman: Would you be kind enough to give us a note; if it is published tell us where it is. It looks like you might be getting a nod from the oracle.

Dr Ladyman: I am being told it should be ready for publication in the very near future. It has been well-publicised that we have done those experiments.

Q271 Chairman: It would be interesting for the Committee just to see, on the same basis, and if it has been published we would like to read it. Did you have a look at the results of the London Study about bus lanes?

Dr Ladyman: Motorcycles in bus lanes. I did, and I found the comments of some of the people who commented on them divergent from the evidence. The evidence showed no increase in accidents where motorcycles were in bus lanes, but the conclusions seemed to be that we still do not like them in bus lanes and I was less than convinced by that. As a scientist my view has always been that you should follow the evidence and anything else is prejudice.

Q272 Chairman: Is that evidence going to be published at some point so we can all see it because there must be safety implications, must there not?

Dr Ladyman: There may be safety implications and what we are going to do, on the basis of the evidence that we have, is that we are going to publish a new advisory leaflet about motorcycles in bus lanes; it is in draft form at the moment. What it is going to do is move away from the position that the assumption should be that motorcycles should not be in bus lanes, to take a position that says it is up to local authorities to look at local conditions and make a decision. Motorcycles are perfectly safe in bus lanes in certain places and they are entirely inappropriate in certain other places, and the people who design bus lanes should have an open mind to making that decision when they design the bus lanes.

Q273 Chairman: Before we leave the question of mini motos have you discussed with the Department of Trade whether or not they have raised with the trade commissioner the question of low quality imports from the Far East?

Dr Ladyman: They have been raising those issues and I can get the DTI to give you a note on that if they have not done so already.

Q274 Chairman: That would be extremely helpful, Minister. Can I say that as always you have been very open and very helpful, but can I just ask you one other thing? You will know as a Committee that we are very concerned about the whole question of training; is there any work going on between your department and the Department of Education on the extension of training schemes, any discussion with them about the inclusion in the existing curriculum?

Dr Ladyman: There is. You may have seen an interview that I did at Christmas in *The Times* where one of the ideas I did float was that we may need - for exactly the reasons Mr Stringer identified about responsibility - to engage with young people much earlier in all issues to do with road safety, and maybe that is going to have to start at school. The Department for Education of course is always, rightly, concerned about things that suggest we are going to put even more in the curriculum and be even more prescriptive about what goes in the curriculum but we are having those discussions with them to see what is practical and what is not practical and I have had conversations with ministerial colleagues on that. We are a long way from making any decisions yet, but purely in terms of road safety if we did not have to consider the educational impact and the impact on the school calendar and things like that, it seems to me that there is a strong argument for getting kids thinking about these things as early as possible.

Q275 Chairman: Finally, Minister, most of us are quite impressed with the road safety campaigns the Department has been running because I think that they do have an impact and they are generally very impressive, but has there been any consideration of running a road safety campaign in relation to, for example, mini motos, because after all we are talking about education and if you get people who really do not know these are dangerous, is it not a subject that should be seriously considered by the Department for inclusion in the road safety campaigns?

Dr Ladyman: I am happy to consider it. It is not part of the Think! campaign and I will explain that in a minute, but we have as a department worked with the Home Office to run a campaign about mini motos and the fact that they are not safe. We did that prior to Christmas to get the message over do not buy your kids one, they are not safe and you cannot use them on the road. It was not a TV campaign or a paid campaign, we tried to use public relations techniques and press releases to get the message over. Should we include it in the Think! campaign?

The issue I would have there - and I am happy to think about it if the Committee thinks it would be a good idea - is that the Think! campaign has to be carefully focused, we do not have tonnes and tonnes of money, we have a limited budget as all Government departments do and so we need to target it on very focused messages in order to make sure that we get our message over. The key messages we have been choosing in recent years are speed kills - it is 30 for a reason - and drink driving, trying to reach in particular young people who may have not heard the drink driving message. That has been very much where our key focus is and if we start piling more into that then we lose focus on those key messages.

Q276 Chairman: That is a very justifiable argument, Minister, and none of us wish to dilute what you are doing on the Think! campaign which is really very impressive. Finally, can I leave you with one other thought: would it be possible, having heard the exchanges on certainly the BBC at lunchtime with people who openly declare "All we do is go around wrecking speed cameras", it might be rather nice if the Department had some means of rapidly rebutting the suggestion that this is simply a question of dealing with the mechanics, and actually make it very clear to people who are so irresponsible that they can be contributing to road deaths in a particular blackspot and they should be aware of the impacts of what they are doing?

Dr Ladyman: I am happy to take that on board. We do try our best but of course there is nothing the media likes better than a negative story or somebody taking a provocative attitude like that and they sometimes do not come to us and give us the opportunity to rebut it. One of the big frustrations of my job is that I am often asked to rebut these things two days after the original story when it is no longer hot news any more.

Q277 Chairman: Minister, we do not really think your job is necessarily easy but on the other hand we do not altogether sympathise with you because we think that is why you are paid. We are grateful to you for coming and I hope you will continue to not only do what you are doing but keep us very closely informed and involved because this Committee does have a role to play.

Dr Ladyman: It certainly does.

Chairman: The Committee now stands adjourned and the Deputy Chairman may now leave.