

About the Road Safety Foundation

The Road Safety Foundation (RSF) was established with the support of the AA and major insurers more than 25 years ago. The essential objects of the charity are to pursue safety on public roads. The current chairman is former Roads Minister, Lord Whitty.

The charity has raised and invested many millions in research and development in safer vehicles, safer driving and safer road infrastructure. With government support, it is currently leading an Older Drivers Task Force as the number of drivers over 70 increases by 50% by 2030.

The RSF played a key role, alongside the British Swedish and Dutch government and autoclub and charities, in the establishment of Euro NCAP (European New Car Assessment Programme). Euro NCAP independently crash tests new cars and awards a Star Rating for Safety.

Similarly, the RSF was a founder member of EuroRAP (European Road Assessment Programme). This is now a global programme (iRAP) with infrastructure safety assessments now available for 70 countries worldwide.

The RSF's Interest in ORR's Enforcement

To put the ORR's new role in context, substantially more people are killed annually travelling on Highways England's network than in all British workplaces combined. In other words, in terms of raw deaths alone, ORR's new safety oversight is more significant than that of HSE.

We broadly share a 'Towards Zero' vision with Highways England that, within a generation, it should be as safe to travel on their network as it is by rail. This is achievable through the adoption of the 'safe system' approach adopted by other leading countries.

The RSF supported the establishment of Highways England, and ORR's role, as a means to address death and injury on the road in the systematic and disciplined way required by 'safe system' design. The tightening of the enabling Act to include safety explicitly followed Parliamentary intervention by the charity.

Comments on ORR's Consultation

We would like to support the ORR's enforcement role on safety in relation to the specific and immediate goals that Highways England has been set.

- We agree with the forward-looking approach (1.14 bullet 2)
- We are sympathetic to ensuring that the new monitoring and metrics are fair and realistic during the first RIS.
- We agree with the content of paragraph 5.15 which considers the extent to which the contravention is considered to be within the control of Highways England management.
- We believe fines would be appropriate in the unexpected event that Highways England management failed to deliver the improvements in safety available from risk based performance management

The Focus of Road Safety Foundation in the RIS

The rate of death and serious injury on the Highways England network is not wholly under the management control of Highways England. In particular:

- total exposure to risk is dependent on economic growth and traffic volumes.
- The single largest improvement in safety on British roads in the last decade has come from safer vehicles: the likelihood of death and injury safety depends on the purchase and scrapping rates of safer new vehicles and their use on the network (eg newer cars tend to be more used on the SRN).

In short, Highways England can only influence many of the components in the safe system eg the way vehicles are driven on its network. Its desire to do so is to be applauded and the goal to reduce the number of deaths and seriously injured by 40% is similarly to be welcomed. But such goals have been achieved or not achieved in the past depending on factors outside road management control.

The RSF therefore wishes to focus on the management of infrastructure safety performance in the first RIS which is wholly under the control of Highways England. The inheritance from the Highways Agency is capable of quick and significant improvement. The management challenge is to embed the risk based safety culture of oil, mining, aviation and rail into the new Highways England.

The RSF therefore will focus on the welcome commitment in the delivery plan that:

“through the wholesale investment and modernisation of the network we will ensure that by the end of 2020 more than 90% of travel on the strategic road network is on roads with a EuroRAP 3 (or equivalent). We will also ensure that the majority of those roads with 1* and 2* safety rating have improved to 3*”*

The RSF welcomes the contract let by Highways England with TRL so that its network will be inspected, assessed and tracked on an internationally comparable basis. The RSF welcomes the role that Highways England are taking in re-establishing a leading UK presence amongst global peers in managing network safety performance.

The Star Rating inspections will assess the in-built safety of the network at 100 metre intervals and record up to 50 attributes known to effect risk. Over 0.5 million kms worldwide of major road have been assessed in this way.

The Achilles heel on the SRN is single carriageways: a road user faces a death and serious injury rate on SRN single carriageways some 6 times greater than an average motorway.

Pilot surveys have also shown that only 50% of SRN motorway achieved 4-star, substantially less than, for example, French autoroutes. The main motorway issue is run-off protection. SRN dual carriageways additionally have junctions and lay-bys with known high risks and serious crash rates, on average, are more than twice as high as on motorways.

International Comparators

The commitments by Highways England's peers internationally is to raise Star Rating performance. The Dutch network is expected to achieve 100% of travel at 3-star or better before the committed date of 2020. The Swedes, with a vigorous Safer Road Investment Plan (SRIP) is upgrading safety on thousands of kms of rural road: this is expected to achieve 100% at 3-star or better in 2025 with 75% by 2020. Countries such as New Zealand are targeting 4-star for roads of national significance.

Key Weakness in Current Approach to be Monitored

The international Ministerial level conference in London on 15th September, *A World Free of High Risk Roads*, identified that specific budgets are needed for SRIPs. Otherwise high return network safety investment is inadequately addressed: management attention remains focused on a small number of large schemes where safety improvement is incidental.

For example, the state of Victoria (population 5.8m) has a \$1bn budget for its SRIP (Safer Road Investment Programme). Its well evaluated programme of safer roadsides and junctions has delivered high returns and substantially reduced the type and nature of bodily injury settlements: some 97% of travel is at 3-star or better and 48% at 4-star or better on Victorian national roads.

The RSF therefore recommends ORR examines specifically how the strategic goal to raise network infrastructure safety performance is or is not being impeded by the need to work through a plethora of other budgets for capital and current maintenance, major projects, minor schemes etc.

Risk Maps for Fatal and Serious Injury Crashes on the SRN

For 14 years, with widespread stakeholder support, the RSF has published annual EuroRAP risk maps showing the colour coded risk of death and serious injury on all motorways and 'A' roads in Britain.

To help monitor safety performance on the SRN, the new Highways England network has been separately mapped and tracked. The economic costs of death and serious injury alone on the Highways England Network excluding traffic hold-ups is estimated by the RSF at £2.1bn in the 3-year period 2011-2013.

The 14th annual report and the specific Risk Map for the SRN can be downloaded at:

<http://roadsafetyfoundation.org/news/2015/9/15/how-much-do-road-crashes-cost-where-you-live.aspx>