

Transport Select Committee inquiry: motoring of the future

Response from Brake, the road safety charity

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About Brake

[Brake](#) is a road safety charity that exists to stop the needless deaths and serious injuries that happen on roads every day, make streets and communities safer for everyone, and care for families bereaved and injured in road crashes. Brake promotes road safety awareness, safe and sustainable road use, and effective road safety policies. We do this through national [campaigns](#), [community education](#), [services for road safety professionals and employers](#), and by coordinating the UK's flagship road safety event every November, [Road Safety Week](#). Brake is a national, government-funded provider of [support](#) to families and individuals devastated by road death and serious injury, including through a helpline and support packs.

Brake was founded in the UK in 1995, and now has domestic operations in the UK and [New Zealand](#), and works globally to promote action on road safety.

Response summary

- Any strategy for motoring must include or be inherently tied to a clear strategy for road safety and sustainable travel. Brake believes this is lacking, with the government failing to provide long-term vision or leadership for road safety, particularly in the form of national casualty reduction targets. These targets and wider strategy should include a strong focus on improving the safety of people on foot and bicycle, in order to facilitate delivery of the wide-ranging social and economic benefits of increased active and sustainable travel.
- Brake supports a safe systems approach to road safety, and therefore encourages the government to facilitate and promote the use of new motoring and road technologies with the potential to minimise human error and its tragic consequences. Specifically, Brake is optimistic about the potential of driverless cars and smart motorways to dramatically reduce casualties and promote sustainable travel, and is urging government to ensure a strong focus on these aims in the development of such technologies. Conversely, Brake is concerned by the increasing prevalence of in-built car 'infotainment' systems and their implications for safety, and urges the government to act now to regulate them.
- Although car ownership among young people is declining, young drivers are still involved in a disproportionate number of road crashes, and many, particularly in rural areas, are still under pressure to learn to drive at an early age due to a lack of adequate alternative transport options. The government needs to invest more in public transport, walking and cycling routes, and introduce a 20mph urban default speed limit, to make sustainable and active travel an attractive alternative.
- Any strategy for motoring must do all it can to encourage more active, sustainable travel and reduce car dependency. This is critical if the country is to avert health, energy and climate crises.
- The UK is out of step and falling behind international best practice on a number of key road safety issues, both within the EU and beyond, including casualty reduction targets, driver eyesight regulations, drink drive limits, 20mph/30kmph speed limits and graduated driver licensing.
- The government needs to do more to encourage the use of life-saving motoring technologies among UK businesses. This includes telematics and blind spot devices on commercial vehicles, and the provision of a national digital speed limit map to facilitate the roll-out of intelligent speed adaptation (ISA).

Response

1. **Strategy:** *has the government articulated a clear strategy for motoring?*

- a. Any strategy for motoring must include or be inherently tied to a clear strategy for road safety, and on this the government is failing to provide a robust long-term strategy, vision or leadership. Brake believes it is critical that clear leadership is provided from central government for road safety policy and delivery, and that ultimate responsibility lies with central government for making our roads as safe as possible. See Brake's previous [response to the Transport Select Committee's enquiry on the government's road safety strategy](#).

- b. This failure is encapsulated by the present lack of national road casualty reduction targets. Brake believes such challenging targets are urgently needed (broken down into road user groups, age groups, and casualty severity), working towards a '[vision zero](#)' style vision that means we ultimately work towards no deaths or serious injuries on UK roads. There is [international evidence that setting casualty reduction targets in itself accelerates and aids casualty reduction](#). From Brake's experience, there also appears to be widespread consensus among road safety practitioners that targets are valued and welcomed within the sector.
- c. Any strategy for motoring must also include a strong focus on improving the safety of people on foot and bicycle, enabling more people to walk and cycle in safety, and encouraging modal shift away from motor vehicle use towards sustainable and active means. This is crucial given the vulnerability of these road users, their level of casualty involvement, and the [wide-ranging social and economic benefits](#) that can be delivered through improving their safety and enabling more people to use sustainable, active travel. Improving the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, including through 20mph limits and safe routes, provides a key example of how road safety goals can and should be aligned with other transport and wider political objectives such as reducing car use and fossil fuel dependency, tackling inactivity and obesity, and creating more sustainable, active and healthy communities. *Read more at www.brake.org.uk/go20.*

2. **Technological developments:** *will current research and development in, for example, alternative fuels, safety systems or driver aids, make a significant impact on mass-market vehicles by 2040, and how likely are changes that would make motoring of the future profoundly different from motoring today?*

- a. Brake subscribes to a safe system approach to road safety, whereby the inevitability of human error is accepted, and all possible measures must be taken to ensure that these errors do not result in casualties. As such, any current and future technological developments that minimise the potential for human error to cause crashes are welcomed and encouraged by Brake, as are any that may encourage wider use of sustainable and active travel and reduce environmental damage from motor vehicles.
- b. A key example of technology that Brake believes has the potential to impact significantly on road use and road safety by 2040 is autonomous driving technology. Brake is optimistic that – subject to rigorous testing – this will become commonplace in vehicles (private, public and fleet owned) before 2040, and have a key part to play in reducing casualties caused by human error as well as improving public transport and reducing emissions. Brake is keen to highlight to policy-makers the scope for using this technology to firstly move towards a 'vision zero', by reducing and eventually eliminating driver error and risk-taking, and secondly to develop public transport access and affordability and reduce unnecessary and polluting personal motor vehicle use. Brake is aware that, alongside testing, work needs to be done to raise public awareness and increase acceptability of such technology to pave the way for mass use. Brake is hoping to play a major role in this as the UK's national road safety charity, which makes us well placed to emphasise the potential, benefits and importance of such technology in casualty prevention particularly.
- c. However, Brake views with concern certain other trends in vehicle technology, namely the increasing prevalence of in-built 'infotainment' systems that allow drivers to access social media, and other functions unrelated and detrimental to driving, from their dashboard. These devices are actively promoted by car manufacturers as a convenient aid to driving, but in fact pose a serious and growing safety risk. There is a strong [academic consensus that performing any secondary activity at the wheel increases crash risk](#). The government has been slow to react to the safety implications of these devices and needs to act to regulate them, as well as extending the mobile phone ban to hands-free technology given the evidence on the risks. *Read more at www.brake.org.uk/drivesmart.*
- d. Developments in road engineering and highway management technology provide another promising opportunity to improve road safety, in particular the use of smart motorways, where the joined-up use of CCTV, sensors and variable speed limits can improve both safety and traffic flow by creating a more controlled environment. However, Brake is concerned that the manner in which smart motorways are currently being implemented could be wasting this potential by focusing predominantly on traffic flow and including elements detrimental to safety,

most notably all-lane running. Brake is concerned this undermines, and could even cancel out the safety gains to be made through traffic monitoring and control (especially the ability to lower speed limits temporarily). Read Brake's [policy briefing on smart motorways](#).

3. **Motoring trends:** how might trends in motoring and patterns of vehicle ownership shape transport planning, policy making and provision?

- a. Decades of underinvestment in alternative transport provision has traditionally contributed to pressure on young people in the UK to learn to drive at an early age. Brake surveyed 8,110 15-25 year olds on their reasons for learning to drive in 2011, finding that about half thought public transport in their area was unreliable (54%) or too expensive (47%). Young and inexperienced drivers are at much higher risk on the road than any other group, and are involved in a [disproportionately high number of fatal and serious injury crashes](#). Brake has consistently highlighted young driver crashes through its [too young to die campaign](#), calling for graduated driver licensing to tackle the problem, on which the government has continually failed to deliver in spite of mounting [evidence of its potential to prevent casualties](#).
- b. Brake's [too young to die campaign](#) also calls for better access to affordable public transport and safe walking and cycling routes for young people to help alleviate the need for young people to start driving in their teens. In recent years, the [numbers of young people driving has declined](#) as running a vehicle has become more expensive, making it all the more pressing that government invests in adequate alternatives to maintain mobility for this group. As well as investing in better and wider public transport (which may be bolstered by the development of autonomous driving technology), the government needs to do more to make walking and cycling safe options for everyone, particularly through the introduction of [20mph limits](#) (see below) and traffic free routes linking residential areas with places of work and education, and linking rural communities. It should also be noted that while driving among young people has fallen overall, young people in rural areas are still often reliant on cars to get about due to a lack of alternatives, and are [more likely to be involved in serious crashes](#). Brake calls for more regular and affordable rural bus services, and greater provision of traffic-free routes for walking and cycling between rural communities, to ensure people in rural areas are not left behind.

4. **Transport planning:** are current transport planning, policy making and provision taking likely future developments into account and how might planning, policy making and provision need to change in the future?

- a. There exists in the UK a clearly expressed desire for people to walk and cycle more, both recreationally and as a sustainable means of transport, as [consistently shown through Brake's surveys](#). There is a desire to build on the legacy of events such as the London Olympics and Tour de France, and wave of enthusiasm for cycling in particular, posing an opportunity to bolster active travel. [London, in particular, has seen an increase in cycling rates, mirrored to a lesser degree in other cities](#). There is a need to enable more people to live healthier, more active lifestyles, with [one in four adults in England now obese](#) and an ageing population. There is also a pressing need to reduce vehicle emissions and fossil fuel dependency – [road transport accounts for 22% of total UK emissions of carbon dioxide](#), a major contributor to climate change. Any government motoring strategy needs to play a major part in averting climate, energy and health crises, by reducing car dependency.
- b. Any government motoring strategy needs to not only acknowledge, facilitate, and be responsive to this need to increase active, sustainable travel, but make it a key priority. Many local authorities across the country have taken progressive action by implementing widespread 20mph limits – [more than 12 million people in the UK are estimated to now live in areas that are implementing, or have committed to, widespread 20mph limits](#). The overwhelming majority of people who do not yet live in 20mph limits want them – [eight in ten people in the UK want 20mph speed limits where people live](#). Brake has [welcomed government moves to encourage local authorities to implement them](#).
- c. However, through its [GO 20 campaign](#), Brake calls for 20mph to replace 30mph as the national default urban speed limit. Brake believes this is a question of 'when', not 'if' – we are on the verge of a tipping point, where it makes most sense to change the national default rather than

requiring local authorities to implement the change piecemeal. Not only will this save local authorities significantly on implementation costs, it will end the postcode lottery whereby many communities are reaping the benefits of 20mph limits, but many are not. Similarly, there is a need for greater investment in safe walking and cycling routes nationwide, not just in London – the [All Party Parliamentary Cycling group has recommended a cycling budget](#) of at least £10 per person per year, rising to £20.

5. **International cooperation:** *What evidence is there to show that the government is co-ordinating its policy making with other governments and the European Union to achieve joined-up transport outcomes and to establish universal standards?*

- a. Brake is concerned that on road safety policy, the government is out of step with both the European Union and other EU governments, and behind on global best practice, on several key issues, including:
 1. Casualty reduction targets: as mentioned above, Brake is critical of the government's refusal to adopt casualty reduction targets. This is discordant with initiatives at international level, such as [European Commission targets to halve road deaths by 2020](#), and [UN and World Health Organisation has targets to cut projected road deaths globally by 50% by 2020](#) as part of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety.
 2. Drink drive limit: the [European Commission recommends a maximum drink drive limit of 50mg alcohol per 100ml blood](#). The UK limit of 80mg/100ml is the highest in Europe, alongside Malta. [Scotland](#) and Northern Ireland have already moved to lower their drink drive limits to 50mg/100ml (20mg/100ml for novice and at-work drivers in Northern Ireland). Brake has long called for a zero-tolerance limit of 20mg/100ml, in line with [evidence that any amount of alcohol affects driving](#), through its [not a drop, not a drag campaign](#).
 3. Driver eyesight: the [European Directives on Driving Licences](#) contain eyesight standards drivers must meet to be considered fit to drive. Brake argues the UK's distance number plate test is not an accurate way of checking drivers meet these requirements as it [does not test for peripheral vision](#) and is not an accurate, scientific measure of vehicle acuity. However, the government has [rejected calls](#) to introduce a requirement for driver eye tests to be carried out by qualified optometrists or medical practitioners using a scientifically-recognised method. *Read more about Brake's [sharpen up campaign](#).*
 4. Graduated driver licensing: the UK government is falling behind a growing number of countries where graduated licensing systems are in place and successfully reducing casualties, in the EU and beyond, including [Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Norway, Finland, France, Northern Ireland, and several states of the USA](#). It is [estimated such a system could prevent 4,471 casualties and save £224 million in the UK annually](#). Graduated driver licensing is also being promoted by the UN as part of its [Decade of Action for Road Safety](#).
 5. 20mph/30kmph limits: another measure promoted by the UN as part of the [Decade of Action for Road Safety](#), and by the [World Health Organisation to cut pedestrian casualties](#), and one on which the UK is falling behind other EU countries where 30kmph urban limits are often and increasingly becoming the norm. In Germany, for instance, they are [nearly universal for roads in residential, shopping and other 'mixed use' areas](#).
- b. The government could also do more to facilitate cross border enforcement of driving offences within the European Union. [Brake urges the government to support a European Commission proposal to this end](#).

6. **Business:** *what steps is the government taking to help UK business exploit new motoring technologies and is there scope for it to do more?*

- a. Brake engages proactively with businesses that employ drivers through its [Fleet Safety Forum](#) to promote and advise on the adoption of technological safety features such as telematics and blind spot devices on their vehicles to help minimise their road risk. Brake does this through

services such as guidance reports, case studies seminars. We have seen an increase in the use of such devices over the years, and have collected many examples of operators reporting significant safety and cost-saving benefits as a result. However, uptake is still low nationally – Brake’s latest survey of fleets containing large commercial vehicles (due for publication 15 October 2014) found eight in 10 don’t use blind spot sensors, seven in 10 don’t use blind spot cameras, and almost two thirds don’t fit under-run guards. [Only two in five \(38%\) use telematics to monitor driver behaviour](#). The government could be stepping up its support of work by Brake and others to promote and support the use of evidenced safety devices and technology like this, and to help get the message across to businesses about the benefits (especially cost-savings) to be gained from effective road risk management.

- b. The government should also be exploiting the potential of intelligent speed adaption (ISA) technology to prevent speeding both within the fleet industry and the wider driving population. To enable fleet operators and others to take advantage of ISA, it is necessary for the government to produce a national digital speed limit map – as a number of other European countries already have – and [Brake urges the government to do so](#).
- c. The government should do more in terms of regulation to encourage the use of such life-saving safety features. Currently, the lack of such regulation is leaving a void that is having to be filled (or not) by the individual safety requirements of organisations that contract vehicle operators. For instance, [Crossrail sets strict vehicle safety requirements](#) for contractors working on its sites, and ‘Crossrail-compliance’ is helping drive up safety standards across the industry in London – a positive development, but one not mirrored across the rest of the country. *Read more about Brake’s [safer fleets campaign](#).*