

18/10/2018

**Ministers, please stop punishing those who obey the law, find creative solutions to punish those who really are at fault and let us help improve road safety together!**

After reading The Department of Infrastructure & Deputy Lewis' latest intentions to clamp down speeding offenders through reducing speed limits in Jersey yet again, I have managed to stop rolling my eyes for long enough to type up my thoughts on this – please accept this as my open letter to the Infrastructure Minister and Department;



**Context:**

First, may I ask, compared to the numbers stated in the Jersey Road Safety Action Plan 2017-2019, what are the stats for accidents looking like now? Because if the media is to be believed (and what locals are seeing on the roads), the plan has not been as effective as hoped so far.

Between returning to Jersey on the 11<sup>th</sup> September and when I originally wrote this letter (28<sup>th</sup> September), I've read about 4 RTC's in the media and drove past the aftermath of another 2. Not too dissimilar chain of events in the same time period from when I left a few years back, although hearing BBC Radio report of 11 RTC's in one day during the recent bad weather was a very impressive feat! So having read the latest idea on how to improve road safety, my first thoughts was a comparison to a scene in "BlackAdder goes Forth" where BlackAdder successfully guessed (much to the shock of the commanders) General Melchett's top secret tactics to win the war by "climbing out of the trench and walking towards the enemy very slowly", only for it to transpire that Blackadder guessed correctly because this was the exact same plan the leaders had used the previous 17 times, yet according to the leaders, apparently it was now a cunning plan "because this is exactly the last thing the enemy will be expecting this time!" .... And we all know how that ended.

In the latest spate of "accidents", it has been suggested these were possibly caused by loss of control in the rain, potential drink driving, driving without due care and attention, too busy watching the ducks on the side of the road (really?!) or other factors not directly related to speeding, so why does the department believe that the very same plan which has been implemented in recent years will work this time to "stop the bad guys"?

Apparently 95% of accidents are caused by driver error (read on to find out where I quote this stat from, you'll be surprised!) .... Can we really keep calling them "accidents"? To me, an accident is a "one-off", happened by chance, an honest mistake which we can learn from. But there will likely be another incident tomorrow where someone has slid off the road in the wet, a cyclist has been run over, or a jay-walker played chicken with the traffic. Cars are designed to cope with roads ranging from cities to highways, speeds in excess of 70mph – so why is the island still experiencing many "accidents", especially in areas that have already reduced their speed limits to help solve the problem? At 20mph, this shouldn't be happening and I'm worried there is something fundamentally wrong elsewhere which

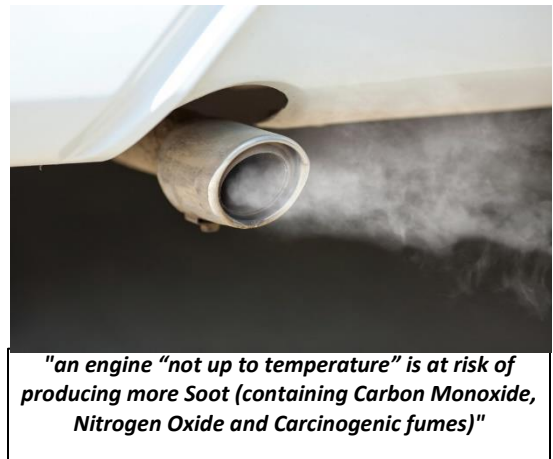
contributes towards this. I don't have access to all the data so I can only speculate and relay day-to-day driving standards I see on the roads, which seems to be a similar story to what others have witnessed as well!

### **Pro's and Con's of reducing speed limits:**

Please don't think this letter is all negative, because in some areas of the Island, I fully agree with the reduction in speed, especially for built up residential areas, or narrow pavements (which can't be widened) on a busy road – a reduction in speed will give drivers more time to react to an unfolding situation and hopefully allow pedestrians to feel more at ease when walking on the side of a road. But this was not the only tactic pledged in the Jersey Road Safety Action Plan 2017-2019 (I'll talk more about this later) and reducing the speed limit will not work everywhere - I'm concerned we're now at a point where it's starting to target the wrong groups and have a detriment to those who were unaffected in the first place.

For a start, how can this style of driving now even be comparable to the British Highway Code? Imagine a driver (whose only experience of driving came from Jersey roads) decides to go on a road trip to England (typically getting the ferry to Portsmouth). Their only real experience has come from a majority of 20/30 mph roads, yet within a ¼ mile of leaving the ship they'll be thrown straight onto a Motorway doing 70mph! I appreciate this is not a new problem, but further speed reductions will leave newer drivers even more disconnected from the "reality of the roads" and given we are still seeing incidents happen in 20/30mph zones, I do worry about how some drivers will cope having never driven or even been assessed anywhere near these speeds before – even though we have all been legally declared capable of it! Is this a situation we're willing to accept?

Secondly, reducing speed limits will have a negative impact on the Island's emission targets as cars cannot perform correctly, contradicting your commitment to lowering Jersey's carbon footprint. Modern cars are designed for fuel economy so tend to have longer gearing, for example, driving my 2015 Fiesta Ecoboost in 20/30mph zones will only just achieve 3<sup>rd</sup> gear without the engine labouring, the net result being an engine running outside of its efficiency range and lowering the fuel mpg. Engines will also not get up to temperature which leaves them running rich, increasing the amount of emissions and pollution being emitted. For a diesel engine in particular, this is potentially dangerous for pedestrians as an engine "not up to temperature" is at risk of producing more Soot (containing Carbon Monoxide, Nitrogen Oxide and Carcinogenic fumes), thankfully modern Diesel engines are fitted with Diesel Particulate Filters (DPF) to collect this, but many diesel cars in cities are suffering clogged DPF's as a result of slow driving, damaging the engine and leaving users with hefty repair bills. I would not be surprised to see modern Jersey diesel cars suffer a similar problem given how comparable our style of driving is to a city.



I get the feeling we're being pushed into using alternative transport such as buses, bikes or walking. I enjoy cycling into town as this can be faster than driving so I have no personal objection, but not everyone will feel the same way about it, many cyclists will not be (and quite rightly) confident to use their bike on a road given how busy they can get - if you do want to encourage people to cycle or walk, then let's give the cyclists and pedestrians the opportunity and develop more designated track/paths to separate their journey from the cars and mitigate this danger!



*Would developing more cycle tracks help mitigate danger and encourage more cyclists to commute?*

**My observation:**

I must add that on my return to the Island, I was very glad to see the cycle path at the airport has now been tarmacked and a designated cycle track has been put in place through St Peters Valley – brilliant! Let's have more of these please and where possible, wider pavements for pedestrians! Everyone has a right to safety and I think these measures will have far greater impact in improving it without the need to reduce the speed limit, a positive scenario for both cyclists and motorists!

I understand we have one of the highest car:people ratios in the world - this is very telling with how congested Jersey roads can get and like I said earlier, I fully agree that some of these speed reductions are warranted to improve road safety. But, we also have many good quality roads in Jersey which are capable of supporting road traffic at much higher speeds than what they are currently regulated to. I also agree that traffic flow/congestion should influence the speed limit of that route – however Jersey has such an erratic pattern of traffic flow, that I believe a permanent speed limit is not viable.

Take Victoria Avenue for example where during Rush Hour, the constant lane jumping and cutting out at junctions makes me feel that the road should actually be a 30mph zone! But in the evening/night, once this very same road is quiet, I feel it is more suitable to being a 50mph zone! Ditto 5 mile road, the Airport road and many others...



*The same road at different times of the day, which one looks more appealing to drive at 40mph?*

## Solution?

**SMART Highways:** The M25 uses technology to monitor both the speed of a car + the density of traffic flow, the drivers are updated of the road's conditions with LCD screens acting as the road signs. When all is clear, the screen states the national speed limit, however when heavy congestion hits (let's say Heathrow Airport at 5PM for example), the signs will reduce the speeds, sometimes dropping the speed limit to as low as 30/40mph – on a motorway!! Then once the congestion/danger has been passed, the next set of LCD screens state a national speed limit again. Of course, not everyone obeys this change in speed limit, but that's not a problem either, the speed cameras installed in these signs have just handed that offender an automatic hefty fine and points on their licence – whilst the majority of road users who obeyed the reduction in speed, have been rewarded with a safe, less stressful journey to their destination – and at the soonest opportunity, a return to the national speed limit is reinstated to continue their journey in a swift, efficient manner!



**SMART Motorways have been so successful that many other Motorways, A-Roads, country lanes and streets in cities are being fitted with the system!**

It's been so successful that many other Motorways, A-Roads, country lanes and streets in cities are being fitted with the system. Why not implement technology like this in the Island? We already use a very simple system in school areas "20 mph when the lights flash" and this seems to work very well! Let's develop it further! Here's an opportunity to monitor the flow of traffic and a driver's speed at the same time - Two birds one stone! The data will also help to develop more efficient routes in the future.



**We already use a very simple system in school areas, this seems to work very well! Let's develop it further!**

**Vehicle Maintenance/MOT's:** I read in the media that 50% of vehicles in a recent road check in Jersey were classified as having defects! Hardly surprising as the average age of the island's cars is much older compared to the UK – not to mention how competitive the second hand car market is! This however is by no means a bad thing as some cars will work perfectly for many years to come. But it's dangerous to assume that a car with low mileage will always mean a perfectly reliable car! How did the previous owner treat and drive it? Oils will congeal if not serviced regularly (even if it's only done 3000 miles a year), the salty air will affect metal work overtime and old tyres will still perish even though there is plenty of tread left on them. How many of you have noticed something as daft as a blown brake-light bulb on a car? That's enough to fail an MOT. Sadly there are many cars on the road that would fail for much worse reasons! I appreciate MOT's have a stigma to them, but their purpose is to identify whether your car is still able to offer you the same level of protection and road worthiness as it did when it was new and potentially save you from an accident by highlighting a fault with the car you may not have been aware of because no symptoms had emerged yet, imagine finding out your brakes have failed whilst going down a hill, it's happened to me and I don't recommend it! If this could help to remove the £50 bangers with the leaky engine, fuel tank and squeaky brakes, all being held together with duct-tape, then I'm in favour of seeing MOT's introduced to the island! Look after your car, and your car will look after you.



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**Improve Driver Education & Training:** I see the DVS have revised the driving test standards recently by increasing the amount of questions in the theory test and introduced a hazard awareness assessment – a welcome addition to bring Jersey up to the same level as a UK/DVLA test, however this does leave a gap in knowledge for each generation of drivers as the standards keep changing. In theory, younger drivers are now better educated on the rules of the road but their exuberance and lack of experience will catch them out, likewise an older generation will have a vast amount of driving experience that should help them out in tricky situations, but may have picked up bad habits in the process and not be aware of changes to the highway code, new types of road signs etc... Hence, this confusion can contribute towards the stresses we deal on the road everyday. It's been 10 years since I passed my test, and whilst I'm confident I should still be able to pass today's type of test if I were to retake it, I question how many minor infringements I'd pick up just through bad habits creeping in!



**Have we really stopped learning once the plates come off?**

Is the Renault Clio that I was taught to drive in comparable to the cars I drive today? Likewise for my parents' generation who now drive SUV's, but were most likely taught to drive in a little Metro? How many cars do you see braking around a corner, or driving whilst holding a phone? Did you know that using a SatNav will make up part of the driving test in the near future? How many could comfortably use one, and know when is the appropriate time to use it? I personally think that instead of people over the age of 70 being reassessed, we should all be reassessed every 10 years to make sure we have kept up to date with the changes to the law (which the law assumes we will do anyway) and perhaps make us aware of any bad habits that we were oblivious to.



**Using a SatNav will be included in a driving assessment in the near future**

Lastly, who has lost control of their car? (This is not a trick question). Naturally we all expect to be driving well within our limits, but black ice, aquaplaning, oil-spillages, punctures or even a vehicle jumping out of a junction and leading to evasive action can catch even the most experienced of drivers out, even when driving well within the speed limit!



**Would you know how to regain control of a car if this happened to you?**

Would you know how to react if this happened to you? Some countries have utilized skid-pan facilities as part of their driving

assessment as a driver must prove they can regain control of their vehicle. Although we do not like to see it this way, a car is a lethal 2 tonne weapon, loaded with fuel and can still cause serious injuries, we as drivers are liable for the safety of our passengers, other road users and pedestrians – if further driver training can prevent an accident from occurring through recovering control of the vehicle, then I would be in favour of seeing this type of training introduced.

## My Concern:

From an outsiders perspective, the pattern goes as follows... the Media shows a number of high profile accidents in a short succession of time, typically an official will respond in a later story confirming the cause of accident and suggest "current conditions are not acceptable and more options are being looked at to improve road safety", this news is typically followed up soon after by the department, announcing that "more roads will have their speed reduced as part of an ongoing project to help combat speeding and improve road safety" – But then another accident happens shortly after and the circle starts again! With respect, this pattern does give the impression of knee jerk reactions to a high profile cases by saying "no, you can't do that anymore!", but with the end result looking like a half-baked, half arsed, grey-area compromise... and comments such as Deputy Lewis recently saying that implementing speed cameras in town "is not on the table" do not help the matter either!

You go to so much effort to change the regulations but then publicly state there are no intentions to monitor them and see if they're actually helping?! How do the ministers expect road users to take the law seriously when it's portrayed in the media that the law does not take itself or road users seriously? The technology is readily available and affordable, I can't understand why the minister would agree to change such legislation without making sure people are obeying it. Sure, it would be very nice to change something and hope that **everyone** will obey it, but society does not work that way and ultimately the police have to use their precious resources to combat the issue.

But even if the police officer caught and booked that "hooligan" for doing 23mph in a 20 zone, has it really dealt with the root cause of the problem? Statistically speaking, yes, that's another "speeder combated", but the reality in the UK is that 1 in 3 speeders do re-offend, at much higher speeds, and that's only a number for those who were caught! Will dropping the speed limits further really stop this kind of stuff from happening? Or is it affecting those who obey the law (the silent majority) who weren't causing the problem in the first place? If someone wants to speed in a 40 mph zone, they'll still do it even though it's changed to 30 and I'll put money on them doing it again once it is set at 20.

I'm not arguing that we should increase speed limits instead, nor am I going to say "Speed cameras save lives", these are far too simplistic and vague statements to make. But I will state that speed camera technology has proven around Europe for the last 20 years to reduce the rate of speeding and in highly monitored areas (built up areas for example), change the attitudes of drivers who now drive in a less erratic, more consistent manner. Combined with clearer, designated areas for pedestrians to walk and cross, this has contributed towards the reduction in the rate of accidents (typically 17-39% depending on the area) – freeing up the emergency service's resources to focus on other, potentially more severe matters. It's also worth noting that drivers who obey the law, have never had a reason to be worried about cameras, frankly they don't even realise their presence!

I believe the department needs to dig much deeper if they are serious about improving road safety.

## Road Safety Action Plan 2017-2019:

How are your other targets coming along? Apart from reducing speed limits, I recall the plan pledged to Lower drink-drive levels, introduce a penalty points system for disqualification of driver licences and promote education of Road Safety for all users. How many hits is your Jersey Road Safety Panel's website, "jerseysaferoads.com" getting? It's a got some good information on it and is potentially a great tool for getting the message out, but it's not often updated nor have many people heard about it... Why?!? To encourage education, you must promote education! Perhaps do a "road tour" to compliment the cycling proficiency assessments, use social media, attend well supported events like the motorsport festival? Please don't just place a .pdf report in the back pages of a website for someone to stumble upon – you'll never get the message across otherwise! But if there has been progress on the other aspects as well, it would be great to see the updates and give the media some positive news instead of focusing on a single matter.

**JERSEY ROAD SAFETY** Tests About Facts & Stats Campaigns Seat belts 2 Wheels News Feedback Contact

**Shared Space – Tuesday 19 June 2018**  
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Take the Test

**Take the Test**

**Road Safety within the Island Community**

Our Objectives:  
Promote road safety within the Island community, in line with the strategic plan on road safety

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## Education:

Have some free facts on other factors which have also improved road safety! Did you know;

- Based on stats from Cambridgeshire police, the age group guiltiest of driving whilst using a phone was 30-39. Out of 430 drivers who were caught during 2017, 141 people inside this age group were caught whilst only 2 drivers under the age of 20 were caught.





- A tyre over 5 years old with sufficient tread can be just as dangerous as a 2 year old tyre below the 1.6mm legal limit. As tyres age, the rubber will harden and perish, reducing the grip when making contact with the surface – the inner metal bands which make the construction of a tyre will start to separate, leaving it vulnerable to failure when loaded through a corner. Keep a close eye on your tyres if they are over 5 years old and seek replacements if the rubber shows signs of cracking/aging.



An example of an old tyre with good tread but with signs of cracking and deforming.



To identify the age of your tyre, look at the sidewall and identify the number as highlighted. Check each tyre as vehicles may have unique tyres on each corner!

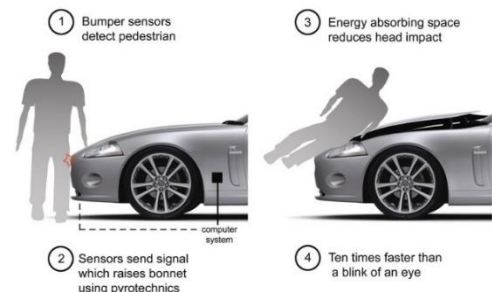
Format: ww/yy

e.g. 18/14 = Week 14, 2014

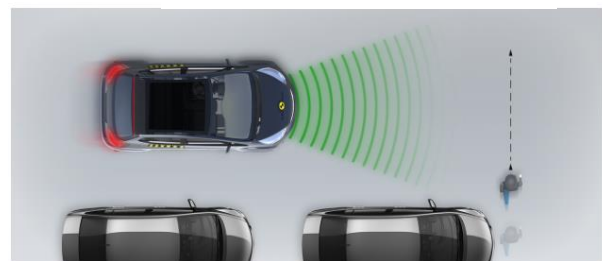
- Campaigns such as Euro NCAP have had a massive impact in promoting road safety since its inception in 1997? With each update of the rule book comes another higher standard for the engineers to achieve, its powerful status gave car manufacturers a marketing opportunity to brag about their 5 star safety record, which has kept pushing the standards even further as each company wants to outperform their competitor to gain the customers trust! I encourage everyone to look at a video on YouTube called “Euro NCAP 20 years of crash testing” to see how far road safety has come!



- Modern vehicles are designed with curved edges, wider wheel arches and sloping bonnets to prevent a pedestrian from going under the car by either pushing them away, or rolling them over the bonnet and simultaneously launching an external airbag to cushion their fall – all of these methods have managed to reduce the severity of injury from a blunt trauma impact, this must be assessed for a car to achieve its 5 star safety status.



- It would appear Jersey is not the only place to suffer with low speed accidents. The most common type of road accident is car to car, rear end impact at 25mph or less, making up 38% of collisions in the UK. Other common types of incidents include collisions at T-Junctions, roundabouts and car to pedestrians/cyclists.
- Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) has been the latest progression in car technology to improve road safety for all users! Systems such as Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB), which use Lidar, Radars, Cameras or a mixture of all 3 systems to monitor the roads for any hazards, have already contributed towards reducing car to car rear end accidents by 38%, the latest generation of systems are now mitigating car to pedestrian accidents, whilst Lane Keep Assist (LKA) have helped reduce incidents where the driver has drifted out of lane, or into a hard shoulder. Again, these scenarios are assessed and count towards a car achieving its 5 star safety status!



Once upon a time, a 5 star safety rating on a car meant you were likely to walk away from an accident uninjured. Today, that 5 star standard is only achieved if the accident is prevented. I am confident that advances in engineering and technology have massively improved road safety and reduced fatalities, these will only continue to improve and we should be embracing them as part of our drive (pun intended) to improve the safety on Jersey roads.

Lastly, I'm aware my friends are probably reading this and feel I'm being very hypocritical – to clarify, I don't think I'm a perfect driver and I certainly do not think I'm a saint, but no one is, we're all human, mistakes & learning are part of life. However I've watched friends who thought they were Colin McRae or Paul Walker meet the same fate as their idols, sometimes taking innocent bystanders with them - so as part of my career as an Automotive Engineer, I've been working within a Motor Research company as a crash test engineer to do my part to help improve road & vehicle safety. Sorry guys, I've had enough of going to funerals, I enjoy hanging out with you on a weekend!

I genuinely believe no one wants to cause a crash on purpose and I have faith that the majority want to contribute where possible in making things better in life. We all use the roads, so instead of telling people what we can't do which leads to frustration and tempts some into rebelling, let's encourage people by telling them what we can do to help. This attitude could be used for a multitude of the Island's ongoing problems, but that's a story for another day!

Oh yeah, **that stat about 95% of accidents caused by driver error?** I found it on the very website I mentioned earlier, it's a question on an online Road Safety Test on your panel's website "jerseysaferoads.com" .... See? You have already supplied the information! But instead of promoting this, it took a grumpy person with too much spare time on his hands to type up a very long ramble stating his two pennies worth to re-quote it all!

Ministers, we voted you in because we believed in your stances, I ask you to please stop punishing those who obey the law, instead, work with them and combined with the technology now available, find creative solutions to punish those who really are at fault and let us help improve road safety together!

Yours Faithfully,

James Montgomery, St Brelade.

Reference:

95% of crashes are caused by .... (Randomly generated question on quiz) -

<http://jerseysaferoads.com/take-the-test/>

Deputy Lewis “not on the table” - <https://jerseyeveningpost.com/news/2018/09/26/mobile-speed-trackers-should-be-considered-for-town-says-constable>

Speeders Re-Offend - <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/nearly-one-three-speeding-drivers-5566319>

Driving with phones - <https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/driving-mobiles-age-crackdown-police-14312368>

Driving on old tyres - <https://www.edmunds.com/car-maintenance/how-old-and-dangerous-are-your-tires.html>

Does Speed Cameras help? - <http://www.lse.ac.uk/News/Latest-news-from-LSE/2017/10-October-2017/Speed-cameras-reduce-road-accidents-and-traffic-deaths-according-to-new-study>

Jersey Road Safety Action Plan 2017 – 2019 -

<https://statesassembly.gov.je/AssemblyReports/2016/R.132-2016.pdf>

Types of crashes - <https://www.businessmotoring.co.uk/what-are-the-uks-most-common-road-accidents/>

AEB Crash Reduction - <https://www.thatcham.org/car-safety/what-car-safety-award/>

Euro Ncap 20 years video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwGgRUkrnng>

Blackadder reference - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rblfKREj50o>