

Motorists Forum

Minutes of meeting 4th July 2012

Attendees:

David Quarmby (Chair)	RAC Foundation
Mike Penning MP	Roads Minister (items 7 & 8)
Edmund King	AA
Dave Jones	ACPO
Christopher Macgowan	Centre for Automotive Management
Stephen Joseph	CBT
Theo de Pencier	FTA
Nick Starling	ABI
John Lewis	BVRLA
Robert Gifford	PACTS
Paul Everitt	SMMT
Graham Dalton	Highways Agency
Tricia Hayes	DfT
Mark Magee	DSA
Charlotte Ellis	DfT (items 1 & 2)

Apologies:

Garrett Emmerson
DCC Suzette
Davenport

1. Introduction & Minutes

David Quarmby invited members to comment on the minutes of the last session. He noted that minutes from all sessions since August 2011 would be going online shortly. The secretariat confirmed that minutes would be re-circulated ahead of publication.

2. DfT Oral Update

Tricia Hayes introduced Charlotte Ellis, who explained the recent statistical releases by the Department. She noted that traffic had been stable over 2011, with car and LGV traffic up and HGV and bus/coach numbers down. The percentage of cars obeying speed limits was stable or slightly worse than the previous year, but still better than in 2001. The number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents increased by 2% in 2011, the first annual increase since 1994, but the numbers remain below those reported in 2009.

The Forum discussed whether the change could be attributed to the effects of heavy snows the previous year suppressing traffic demand, and Charlotte Ellis agreed to provide more information in September once more detailed analysis of the 2011 data was complete.

A DfT official updated the group on the transport strategy. He mentioned that the Secretary of State was looking to talk about supporting economic growth and competitiveness through targeted investment, adopting technology to allow for smart and sustainable transport and placing the travelling public and business at the heart of the Department's thinking. The project was very much a work in progress, and the Department will be engaging further with stakeholders (including several members of the Forum).

Tricia Hayes explained ongoing work on roads reform, which several of the members had been involved in, and work on speed limits. In addition to ongoing work on 80mph, work was underway on a new Speed Circular and Speed Limit Toolkit for local authorities.

3. Garage Customer Experience

Christopher Macgowan summarised progress on the Forum's report on the Garage Customer Experience. He noted the background to the work, in particular the sense among consumers that their experience to date had not been satisfactory. He noted that the sub-group dealing with the Garage Customer Experience had decided against suggesting new legislation, but instead focused on three broad recommendations building on existing best practice:

- Urging the wider adoption of Codes, developed by the industry and backed by the OFT and Trading Standards.
- Developing ways to help consumers find good garages through consumer feedback websites.
- Encourage investment in training for garage staff.

Ultimately, the report recommended that adoption of an OFT-backed Code was made a condition for VOSA's recognition of new MOT stations. Christopher Macgowan recognised that this had led to some disagreement amongst members of the sub-group, with some members feeling unable to sign up to all elements of the draft report. However he noted that a majority of members supported all conclusions.

Edmund King and Paul Everitt, who were both members of the sub-group, agreed with Christopher's analysis, recognising in particular the lack of information available to consumers compared with other sectors. John Lewis, who had also sat on the group, said that BVRLA were happy with a majority of the recommendations, but had concerns about any system which appeared to be de facto regulation. He also questioned the readiness of the sector to adopt Codes on the scale proposed.

The Forum discussed the merits of having a single code for operators. Examples for and against were cited from different sectors. Tricia Hayes noted that it was Trading Standards Institute policy to recommend one code for each sector, rather than allowing a patchwork of different codes. The members of the Forum were broadly in favour of consistent standards.

David Quarmby, noting the concern from John Lewis and others, suggested that the Forum agree that they were minded to adopt the findings of the report. Before formal adoption, he and Christopher Macgowan, together with Theo de Pencier, would meet with those who did not wish to sign up to the report. The results of this meeting would be circulated to the Forum and resolved via email.

The Chair thanked Christopher Macgowan for all of the work that had gone in to producing the report in the past six months.

4. Motorists' Representation

David Quarmby summarised his paper laying out the case for a representative body for all road users, following on from the Cook Review. This would include representatives of particular organisations and independent members.

Stephen Joseph expanded on where the boundaries of such an organisation's remit would sit, and argued that an administratively defined remit (e.g. the strategic road network) would not be immediately understandable to motorists. Rob Gifford noted that there was a practical angle, as localism meant that DfT could only take action on particular roads.

There was further discussion on whether such an organisation should be representation-led (i.e. based on members' concerns) or research-led. This noted strengths for both approaches, and David Quarmby argued that passion and data were not mutually exclusive.

5. Arrangements for Next Year

David Quarmby noted that the Forum was rapidly approaching the point at which it would need to be reauthorised. Should ministers choose to reauthorise the Forum, he announced that his recommended successor would be Paul Everitt of SMMT. Paul said that he would be happy to accept.

Tricia Hayes led the Forum in thanking David for his chairmanship over the previous year, and in particular for making the Forum a place of vigorous and engaged debate.

6. Parking on Private Land

David Quarmby reiterated the Forum's interest in forthcoming reforms to parking on private land, in particular over how effective the new arrangements would be for controlling operators who were not BPA members. He hoped that government would remain open to re-examining the situation in light of the first year's data.

A DfT official agreed that the department would be assessing arrangements based on experience, and was working with consumer groups to raise public awareness of the reforms. He pointed out that the new regime, based around giving accredited access to DVLA data only to those parking companies who were following the BPA code, would effectively prevent non-compliant operators from enforcing penalty charges – which would act as an effective restraint.

David Quarmby agreed with Tricia Hayes and other members of the Forum that the new regime was a great step forward from the previous, unregulated environment – and that the restrictions on clamping and towing without lawful

authority, as well as the introduction of an appeals process, marked a significant step forward for motorists.

7. Managed Motorways

Edmund King began by praising the introduction of managed motorways, and agreeing that the Highways Agency's efforts to streamline the original M42 design was sensible and timely. However, he asked for reassurance that safety was being properly considered around the design of new managed motorways, particularly in relation to refuge areas. Dave Jones supported this request, particularly in relation to all-lane running.

Graham Dalton made clear that the new design for managed motorways reflected several years of experience, both from building several different schemes, and from operating the system in the West Midlands. He also said that the Agency were aware that some people encountering managed motorways were doing so for the first time, and that public education was an important part of any new scheme. Safety was critical to all designs, and was rigorously assessed against the standards of a regular three-lane motorway.

Mike Penning noted that initially he had been highly sceptical of the technology. However based on the evidence from the Highways Agency's work to date, he was firmly convinced that this was a technology that worked. Rob Gifford supported this analysis.

8. Young Drivers

David Quarmby noted the discussion at the previous session of the Forum on young driver safety. Nick Starling supported this, saying that there was international evidence in support of the introduction of graduated driver licensing, and wanted to see more evidence and analysis in the UK context.

Mike Penning responded by saying that young drivers remained a priority for the Government. However he had strong concerns about graduated licensing. Firstly on an evidential basis, and on the difficulty of finding something to compare with the situation in the UK; and secondly on the grounds of fairness and the impact that regulation would have on young people. Young people continue to need to drive for work, especially in sectors such as nursing and farming, as well as to take advantage of education. Overall, it seemed preferable to focus on better training and testing.

Mark Magee outlined the ways in which the Department and DSA were continuing to improve the training and testing regime, underpinned by the new national standards. Partly designed by insurers, a trial of a new approach to learning to drive is just concluding and results should be available around September. Follow-up research into the new independent driving section of the test would also be available in this timescale; and efforts were underway to provide better information on driving instructors. He said that DSA was also looking to consult later this year on proposals to modernise the driver training industry.

David Quarmby welcomed the actions that were being taken. He would also welcome, at some stage, evidence on whether these are proving effective.

9. AOB

Mike Penning thanked David Quarmby for his chairmanship of the Forum, and said that he was pleased to reauthorise the Forum for the following year. He approved the appointment of Paul Everitt as chair, as well as an invitation to allow RAC Motoring Services to join the Forum.

Motorists Forum

11th July 2012