



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Infrastructure

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Road Safety and Driver and Vehicle
Regulation: Department for Infrastructure

12 February 2020

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Miss Michelle McIlveen (Chairperson)
Mr David Hilditch (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Mr Cathal Boylan
Mr Keith Buchanan
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Ms Liz Kimmins
Mr Andrew Muir

Witnesses:

Mr Alex Boyle	Department for Infrastructure
Mrs Beverley Cowan	Department for Infrastructure
Mrs Lynda Hurley	Department for Infrastructure
Mr Donald Starritt	Department for Infrastructure

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): We have with us Alex Boyle, who is head of vehicle policy branch; Beverly Cowan, who is head of driving policy branch; Donald Starritt, who is head of the Brexit preparation team — he is back again; he has not had enough of us *[Laughter]* — and Lynda Hurley, who is head of promotion and outreach branch. Thank you very much. You are all welcome. Does one of you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Donald Starritt (Department for Infrastructure): I will, Chair, if that is OK.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): It has fallen to you this time.

Mr Starritt: Just basically to set the scene, our director, Chris Hughes, is unable to be with us today, so, hopefully, the four of us will cover all your questions, if we can. I will start by giving a very brief overview of the division. After that, I will be happy to take questions. There may be issues that we are not able to cover today, and we will come back to you in writing.

Our title is the "safe and accessible travel division". The Committee already has a short paper that gives an overview. I will not go through that in any detail now, but the paper shows our key areas: road safety, vehicle policy, driving policy, road user behaviour and freight and bus policy. We also license and regulate heavy goods vehicles through our transport regulation unit. As well as that, as we touched on in the last session, we had a small unit within the team that looked specifically at our EU exit legislation, and I headed up that team. We covered some of that work already. It is worth emphasising that, while we have a unit that deals specifically with road safety — Lynda covers that area — road safety really runs through everything that we do. We are looking to have safe vehicles.

We are looking to have well-trained drivers, an effective regulatory framework and policies that promote care on the roads and responsible road users. Road safety really runs throughout the division.

I know that the Minister spoke to the Committee about departmental priorities, some of which relate directly to areas within our remit — for example, the Minister announced her intention to introduce legislation on e-bikes. She has spoken of her concern about the spike in drink-driving detections over the Christmas period and indicated that she has sought a meeting with the Chief Constable to consider what can be done. Both those issues fall within our remit.

That is all that I have to say at the outset. We are happy to take questions.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): Thank you. There is a very live issue today on the 43 people in Northern Ireland who have over 12 points on their licence but still have their licence; one individual has over 21 points on their licence. Most of us would assume that, once you get to 12 points — or maybe not even as high as that — you should not have your licence. Have you any comment on that story?

Mr Starritt: We are aware of the story. As you know, the legislation provides that 12 points normally leads to automatic disqualification. However, the courts have discretion. The courts can take account of mitigating circumstances in individual cases. I assume that that is why those drivers are on the roads. It is not possible for us to comment on any of those issues because it is really down to the discretion of the judiciary.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): I appreciate that, but you have a remit for road safety. The indication is that, if someone has in excess of 12 points on their licence, perhaps they are not safe to be on the road.

Mr Starritt: I understand that. As I say, that is why automatic disqualification is provided for in our legislation. That is the case UK-wide, but there is this discretion for the courts, which is also UK-wide. It is really not possible for us to say what is taken into account in individual circumstances. I appreciate that it sounds like a high figure, but I do not know the circumstances.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): Can you give us an idea of what exceptional circumstances might be?

Mr Starritt: Unfortunately, we cannot do that either. There are no guidelines laid down that I am aware of for what a court will take into consideration. I am not sure whether the Department of Justice would be able to provide more clarity, but we are not aware of that. I am conscious, as you say, that we have responsibility for road safety. It seems to be an issue for concern, but, without knowing the specific circumstances, we cannot really comment.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): OK. You have a road safety strategy that expires in December 2020. I understand that you are in the early stages of developing that. Will a new road safety strategy be launched as the current one expires, or will we have to wait some time for that?

Mrs Lynda Hurley (Department for Infrastructure): As you say, we are in the very early stages of gathering information on the possible options for the replacement of the current strategy when it expires. The Minister is aware that we are at that early stage, and she said that she wants to be as informed as possible before she makes a decision on the way forward following the expiry of the current strategy. She also said that she expects to be in a position to make that decision later in the year. We have had no further conversations with the Minister on the strategy.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): So we may be in a situation where we do not have a strategy for a time.

Mrs Hurley: I cannot comment on that.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): You cannot comment on that, OK.

Mrs Hurley: We expect to be able to give our Minister all the available information so that she can make a decision.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): We all understand as drivers — I am guessing that most of us around the table are drivers — that, when we get behind the wheel of a car, we have a responsibility to make sure that our car is roadworthy and that we are in a condition to drive. However, we are also mindful that people are irresponsible and do not take into consideration other road users, be they pedestrians, cyclists or other drivers. Certainly, speed is a factor in all that. There have been calls, and I am guessing that colleagues have all asked for a reduction in the speed limit on various roads around their constituencies. What discussion has the Department had on lowering speed limits, particularly on B-class roads and other rural roads where there have been a number of fatalities?

Mr Starritt: Our division does not deal specifically with the lowering of speed limits. There has been a conversation about lowering the speed limit, particularly around schools.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): I appreciate what you are saying, but, at the same time, your remit of road safety is very much tied in with speed.

Mr Starritt: Yes.

Mrs Hurley: There are pilot schemes going on in the Department, and there is a school of thought that that improves safety on roads. However, it is not speed limits that pose the problem on many occasions, rather the fact that drivers do not reduce their speed in accordance with road conditions.

Speed limits are the maximum speed that you can drive on any particular road. However, there will be circumstances — weather conditions and other things — that may mean that you should reduce your speed so that it is below the speed limit. Quite often, when there is a road traffic collision involving serious injury or a fatality, it is due to excessive speed for the conditions as well as those who are willing to exceed speed limits.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): I accept that, but, again, to go back to the point, in the drafting of any road safety strategy, is consideration being given to the need to reduce the advised speed limit on particular roads?

Mrs Hurley: We will speak to all stakeholders on the options for any successor to the current strategy. People such as engineers and road designers will also be involved in that. Road safety stakeholder groups will be involved in giving us information that allows us to inform the Minister on the possible options. I would not rule out or rule in a reduction in speed limits; it will be in the mix along with everything else, but we could not prejudge what will go into the strategy.

Mr Beggs: In your briefing regarding licensing and regulation for heavy goods vehicles, you indicated that you are in difficulties in curtailing or removing licences for non-compliance by operators and that you are experiencing a backlog. How big is the backlog? How many people are involved?

Mr Starritt: In terms of the big inquiries, the figure that I am aware of is some 50 or 52.

Mr Beggs: With all those different operators, how many HGVs does that involve?

Mr Starritt: I understand the question, but I do not know how many HGVs that equates to.

Mr Beggs: Why would you seek to remove operator licences? Can you give an example of why you are concerned that those people are not fit to operate heavy goods vehicles?

Mr Starritt: In giving licences in the first place, there is a requirement for good repute and sound financial standing — that sort of thing. If there is reason to believe that that is in question, that is where investigations would start and possibly culminate in a public inquiry.

It is probably also worth saying that, although public inquiries have not been active for longer than we would like, other activity has been going on around the issuing of licences and even the suspension of licences. There has been other activity but not with the public inquiry aspect.

Mr Beggs: I assume that some of the reasons might include failure to maintain vehicles to required standards. There could be road safety implications for that. Heavy goods vehicles are frequently used to transport stolen goods, so there could be people who are not trustworthy or have come into contact

with the law. We are aware through the media that unscrupulous drivers and operators have been involved in people trafficking, so even people's lives are being put at risk. I am really shocked to see that one of the reasons that you have not been able to do this is because of the lack of a venue. Can you explain what you need?

Mr Starritt: I do not have the detail on this, but I know that that is one of the issues. There have been resourcing issues as well. I think that the question about the venue is that certain facilities are needed. That is not the sole reason that there have not been public inquiries or other more fundamental reasons. We are trying to ensure that we have appropriately trained staff because staff have to conduct public inquiries, and before they are allowed to do that, they have to do quite extensive training. We are trying to get that sorted. We are working through the problems. It is maybe not as quick as we would like, but we will engage with the Minister. I should also say that we have not yet had an opportunity to discuss these issues in detail with the Minister.

Mr Beggs: You indicated that you have staffing, resourcing and training issues. Do you accept that failure to require good standards of all operators means that unfair advantage is being given to those who do not comply against operators who ensure that their vehicles are roadworthy and brought up to a good standard? By not enforcing it, those who do not comply are at an advantage. Indeed, additional costs will fall on other Departments if, for instance, someone is involved in illegal activity. Police may have to spend large resources trying to track vehicles down instead of the operator just being taken off the road.

Mr Starritt: Yes, we have to accept those points. The public inquiries are there for a reason. That is why the Department is trying as hard as it can to work to a situation where it can clear the backlog and stop one developing in the future.

Mr Beggs: Madam Chair, I think we should press this issue with the Minister because I do not think that it is acceptable.

Mr K Buchanan: My colleague to my right seems to have stolen my thunder on this one, but anyway. Just on that, it would be good to get a bit of clarity. I have a specific question for you. You referred to 50-odd operators. Is that right?

Mr Starritt: Yes.

Mr K Buchanan: Those operators, I presume, technically, still have a licence?

Mr Starritt: Yes, to the best of my knowledge.

Mr K Buchanan: If he or she still has a licence, he or she is still insured to be on the road. There is no query on that.

Mr Starritt: I do not think so. As I mentioned, we do not have anyone with us today who specialises in that area, but I am happy to come back on it if there is a question there.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): It might be useful if a member of that unit could come to the Committee to go through those issues and give members clarity.

Mr K Buchanan: Yes, about numbers of vehicles on the road etc. There are a range of questions that we could dig out of that, but there is no point in going any further today, if you are happy.

Mr Starritt: The other issue, as we said, is that we need to have a discussion with the Minister. Once that happens and we have the Minister's mind on this, it will be easier to come back at that stage.

Mr K Buchanan: I am happy enough with that. Thank you.

Mr Hilditch: Welcome back, Donald. My question is on road safety. I declare an interest as the chairman of the Carrickfergus road safety committee — Mr Beggs is on it as well. There used to be road safety committees across the Province before the review or reorganisation of local government.

We in Carrick kept it on, despite it being dropped on a Province-wide basis. It is run by volunteers and people who are ploughing a lone furrow in the field of road safety at a local level, although the support from the Department locally has been very good. We have a 20 mph speed restriction, for instance, at the Model Primary School on the Belfast Road; there are issues over lines and signage and all that sort of thing. There is a good working relationship, and I can see the real benefits of local road safety committees. I know that it was a different Department previously but, if the Department is looking to have a new strategy in place, will it consider including the re-establishment of those local committees that have local knowledge on road safety issues? They work with primary schools, with children at a very early age and have an annual poster competition, quizzes and that sort of thing. That still goes on in my area, but it is driven by that committee. There is no government input to that sort of thing. It is support for those people as well.

Mrs Hurley: I am aware of the background to this issue and why funding was removed from the committees in the first place. A previous Minister in the former Department of the Environment made that decision, and the funding was removed. You now work under the banner of — or work with — Road Safe NI. In my role relating to road safety behavioural change, I am responsible for activities that influence people to have better behaviours when they use the road.

Mr Hilditch: Although we are supposed to, I cannot remember the last time we heard from Road Safe NI, to be honest.

Mrs Hurley: Right. I have worked with Road Safe NI, and I cooperate with them. I thought that it was working with the majority of road safety groups, but perhaps not. Whether the road safety committees are to be re-established and, I presume, funded through the Department is a question for the Minister. The Minister, not officials in the Department, will have to address the issue. It was a ministerial decision to take away the funding in the first instance, based on certain reports etc, and whether funding should be re-established would obviously be a ministerial decision. I am not in a position to answer any more than that, but I agree that very good work is being done at a local level through committees and voluntary groups.

Mr Hilditch: Yes, it is all voluntary. I am not sure whether you are a sponsor of the Risk Avoidance and Danger Awareness Resource (RADAR). What is your assessment of its work with young drivers? Obviously, there is a threat there as well.

Mrs Hurley: I have been involved in the RADAR project as a representative of the former DOE and the Department for Infrastructure, so I have been involved from the get-go and am aware of its difficulties with funding etc. It is an extremely good tool in a supporting role for activities that other organisations are doing on road safety. The former DOE supported and funded it with a capital injection, initially of £125,000, I think. The driving simulator, which targets young drivers, was purchased with that money. The Department was also supposed to fund the project. It was a pilot for three years thereon, but it took some time for the RADAR centre to get established, by which time public-sector funding had been squeezed considerably. The Minister at that time felt that funding RADAR was not one of their priorities, given the budgetary constraints. The PSNI then agreed to fund the centre to get it up and running, and that was in, I think — I am not 100% sure — January 2016. It was supposed to be for the initial year only. RADAR continued to struggle to get funding, and the PSNI funded it right up until its own budgetary difficulties meant that it had to withdraw funding. It closed in December 2019. As a tool to support other activities, it was used to embed road safety knowledge gained elsewhere. Every little activity that happens on road safety helps to improve the position. Nobody ever knows what one thing makes that difference. The collective actions of the many make the difference.

Mr Hilditch: I raise those issues given that work is coming up on the new strategy. Hopefully, some of them are resonating with the Department.

Ms Kimmins: Thank you for the report. I appreciate that you said that speed reduction is not within your remit — Mr Hilditch talked about the recommendations for the new strategy, and the Chair touched on this as well — but there is a particular issue with roads outside schools. In my constituency, I can think of one example in particular where there are rural roads so the national speed limit applies, and it is a death trap; it really is dangerous. I have had officials out, and I appreciate that they are very limited in what they can do through traffic calming and all that because of the speed limit. I have also had the PSNI out about managing road users or whatever but, as you said, if they are within the speed limit, there is very little that the police can do, and it is down to the motorists themselves. Going forward, I am very aware of the pilot programme, and I engaged with

Simon Richardson in the southern division about the potential for rolling out the 20 mph limit to the roads around all schools. I know that this is a question for the Minister — I will take this up with her directly — but is it possible to put that forward in the recommendations: that we should look at reducing the speed limit to 20 mph outside schools?

Mrs Hurley: Everything is possible in the recommendations, but, as I say, it is at such an early stage that I would not be in a position to second-guess what might go in any briefing to the Minister. What I will say is that it is very clear that, when a road traffic collision happens and speed is involved, the outcome is more likely to be a serious injury or a fatality. The other thing to be mindful of is that, if a driver is not wearing a seat belt, a fatality or serious injury is more likely. We know that children are very vulnerable road users, and if they come into contact with a moving vehicle, the outcome is likely to be more serious. The lower the speed at which a collision happens, the greater the chance of somebody surviving. There is no doubt about that. That is what the evidence suggests.

Ms Kimmins: On that point, the example that I am thinking of is a very rural school, and the field adjacent to it is used for breaks, so very young children, with supervision, obviously, cross the road frequently throughout the day. That was raised as an issue in its inspection report. Unfortunately, when I contacted the Department, it said that there was nothing that it could do at that time. There is signage and things like that warning drivers, but we, the school and some of the parents felt that reducing the limit would give other bodies more power to try to take action. That is only one example; I am sure that a lot of members here are able to give others. For me, that is a critical one. That is why it needs to be a key issue that we look at in any strategy.

Another school recently got the limit reduced, but it was 40 mph. The road is quite good and is not very rural, and I can tell you that a lot of the drivers are doing that speed and more. It needs to be looked at holistically and with all agencies.

Mrs Hurley: Yes. When it comes to road safety, one of the key issues is road user behaviour. When we look at the statistics for road traffic collisions where somebody is killed or seriously injured, nine out of 10 — in fact, the average is more than nine out of 10 — are down to human error. That means that somebody has made an erroneous decision somewhere. It could be something as deliberate as getting in behind the wheel of a car after having alcohol, breaking the speed limit or not paying attention to the conditions. Alternatively, it could mean that a person's attention has been diverted, including using mobile phones, changing radio stations and so forth. A lot of things fall into that category. We can have great engineering and the best roads in the world, but human behaviour is usually at the core of those collisions.

Mr Boylan: Thank you very much for your presentation. As I listened to Mr Hilditch, I remember when money was taken off a number of road safety groups. I would like to expand on that, because I see the bigger issue. The Chair mentioned it, as did my colleague. As part of the road safety strategy, we should look at traffic calming measures.

Other members mentioned schools and, for the benefit of those who have never heard of the following schools, I want to mention Foley Primary School in Ballymacnab and St John's Eglisish Primary School in the small townland of Tartaraghan, which is close to Annaghmore, which have been fighting hard for those things for years. There was an overall strategy and budget, but the budget for traffic calming schemes was cut. Members talked about working with kids in schools and everything else. I am sure that, if a child came out and saw the physical structure outside the school, he or she would get a better understanding of what that structure was about as opposed to people coming in and teaching them.

I mention that context in the hope that, after the discussions today, you will go back and look at those issues. That is part and parcel of all this. I recognise that, sadly, up until 4 February, nine people have died on the roads compared with six this time last year. There is factual evidence and we are reacting to things, but we need to be proactive as well. I would appreciate it if, as part of the strategy, you would take some of that stuff back to the Department.

Mrs Hurley: When we look at what possibly could inform the successor to the current strategy, we will be talking to road engineers, planners, enforcement, the Ambulance Service and the Fire and Rescue Service, all of which have an input into the current road safety strategy and are all key players in improving road safety, as well as engaging with stakeholders, who all have an interest in road safety. I would expect engineering interactions to be in the strategy as well as behavioural change and enforcement actions. We need to address what we call the three Es that affect road safety — engineering, enforcement and education — because those are the keys to improving road safety.

Whatever form the successor to the strategy takes, it has to include those types of areas, but it is the Minister's decision as to what she wants that to look like.

Mr Boylan: I will make a play for the engineering solution to go to the top of the list.

There are a couple of other things. Members of the road cycling fraternity mentioned to me that the central reservations on some roads have wire ropes instead of barriers, which they feel can be quite dangerous. I also want to bring up the issue of quad bikes and helmets. I am from a rural area — there may be other farming people here — and it seems strange to me that you have to put on a helmet to cross a road that is 20 feet wide from one field to the other.

I brought this issue up at a previous meeting. Is it possible to give some consideration to the need to wear a helmet all the time? I understand that there is legislation and the question of whose responsibility it is, but, as part of the conversation on the road safety strategy, I do not think that it is a difficult one. At the moment, someone using a quad bike puts on a helmet, throws it off in the field, puts it back on and drives back and forward across the road. A bit of common sense is needed. We are a legislative body, and members have mentioned some things already. I have had meetings, as other members have, out on the road about speed limits. You hear, "We cannot do this on A-class roads. We cannot do that". Ultimately, the safety feature is the most important thing. My colleagues mentioned some of the schools. I know some of the roads, and some of the villages are main arterial routes — legacy routes — but cannot get traffic calming, so we need to look at that as well.

I have one other point about the road freight. In the paper, Donald, there is a point about freight policy:

"The Branch also contributes to the development of UK wide policy and legislation to ensure that it is fit for purpose".

How does that now tie in with Brexit? Does it still apply?

Mr Starritt: We will still continue to tie in with DfT. There is regular engagement with DfT, and I expect that to step up over the next few months.

Mr Boylan: It is just part of the policy. OK.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): A couple of members mentioned reductions in funding for road safety committees or other aspects. What is your current budget for road safety?

Mrs Hurley: For road safety behavioural change, my current budget is £700,000 in the current financial year. It was £700,000 for 2018-19, which is a 30% reduction on the previous year, when it was £1 million. That said, there are budgetary constraints across everywhere in our Department and in other Departments. That is the current position. To mitigate that reduction, we have looked at some of the campaigns we air on TV. We have reduced them in length so that we can still get the maximum number of campaigns out for the money available.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): So, the immediate consequence of the reduction was the length of the media campaigns.

Mrs Hurley: Yes, it was. A lot of those campaigns may have been 50 seconds or 60 seconds long, and they may have had certain music as a baseline, which really did help to emphasise the message. We reduced the campaigns — some are 30 seconds, and some are 40 seconds — and we have removed the music that was behind them and put in some library music, which does not cost the same amount of money to air. The core messages of those campaigns are still there.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): Was there a reduction before you got to the £1 million as well?

Mrs Hurley: Yes, there was. Over the years, the budget has fluctuated considerably. The maximum budget we ever received was almost £3 million, and that was in 2013. That sort of coincided with probably the lowest number of road deaths we had on record, which was in 2012, but they started to rise again in 2013. In 2012, 48 people died on our roads. We started to see a gradual change in 2013 and in 2014, when the figure rose to 79. Since 2015, we have seen a steady reduction, and, in 2018, 55 people died. At the end of 2019, 56 people had died; one person died within the three-month period

after the road-traffic collision and was counted in the 2019 statistics. We are on a downward trend, although, obviously, it is not ideal that anybody loses their life.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): That is a considerable budget reduction from £3 million down to £700,000.

Mrs Hurley: Yes, £3 million is the highest it has ever been. It was normally in and around £1.5 million to £2 million. It has never been as high as £3 million in quite a considerable amount of time; certainly, not in my time doing road safety.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): OK. What have you requested in this budget round?

Mrs Hurley: We have not had the information on the budget line, but my understanding is that it will be similar to what it was this financial year.

Mrs D Kelly: Thanks for your presentation. It will probably come as no surprise to hear that I also want to pick up on some of the road safety issues. A large number of fatalities are on rural roads, and I know a lot of that is to do with driver behaviour and the use of mobile phones. That has been the case over the past two years in my constituency.

Whilst we talk about the number of fatalities, there are also those who have been seriously injured to consider. We do not have the figures, and I wondered about that. The police tell me that the specification of vehicles is now so high that that and the use of seat belts have greatly contributed to a reduction in the number of deaths but that serious injuries are another matter entirely.

Mrs Hurley: They did not start to keep statistics for serious injuries until 1971. Since then, there have been almost 80,000 serious injuries. As with fatalities, over the past number of years, we have seen a downward trend in the number of serious injuries. We did see a period where there was a spike and the figures went up. They had been on a continuous downward trend until 2009. We saw a spike in 2016. We now see the number of serious injuries is reducing again, but that has not yet got back to the low figure of 2009. All the indications are that the figures continue to go the right way. There is always a three-month lag at the end of the year for serious injuries. That is simply because if someone dies within that three-month period, unfortunately, they convert from a serious injury to a fatality. We would expect the figures for serious injuries to come out by the end of March or the beginning of April.

Mrs D Kelly: Will those be shared?

Mrs Hurley: Yes, they are always shared. They are always published and made available on the PSNI website.

Mrs D Kelly: Do the insurance companies not have an obligation to contribute to road safety campaigns never mind an interest in them? Do they?

Mrs Hurley: In the past when we made a road safety campaign, we tended to be quite successful in getting some sponsorship from the insurance industry. The last one I am aware of that sponsored a road safety campaign was AXA. We also had a campaign sponsored by MIS Group, which is a recovery group.

In recent years, we have found it difficult to get insurance companies to sponsor the campaigns. The bottom line on that tends to be that they want payback for their sponsorship. They want a guarantee of airtime and of how frequently the campaigns will be on TV and what the dividend will be for them. If they sponsor, that goes on the end of the campaign and will say, "Sponsored by AXA" or some other company. It would have the name of the sponsor, and that gets them PR. They probably do it more from the point of view of it raising their profile, in that they are connected with government advertising on road safety.

In the past number of years, when we have commissioned new campaigns and tried to get sponsorship from insurance companies, we have been unsuccessful. There is no legal obligation on them to contribute. They do so usually because they understand they will get some form of payback out of it.

Mrs D Kelly: Was there any impediment from the Department to them working in partnership and allowing their brand, if you like, to be part of the ad campaign?

Mrs Hurley: No, from the point of view that they had no input into the campaigns at all. The campaigns are always made in advance; only when they are completed is sponsorship sought, so they have no influence on what the campaign says. The only benefit they get is that it raises their profile with potential insurers. I will just clarify that we do not pick an insurance company to approach; we go out to the whole industry and invite them to apply for sponsorship.

Mrs D Kelly: Is that done year on year?

Mrs Hurley: It is done only when we make a campaign that we think that an insurance company may be interested in. The last one an insurance company was interested in was our 'Phone Shame' campaign, which was about driving. A few insurance companies were interested, but, unfortunately, when it came to sponsorship, none of them saw it through.

Mrs D Kelly: There is no legal or moral obligation to, it would appear.

Mrs Hurley: It is unfortunate, because it is funded but can then be fed in to enable us to put the campaigns on more frequently.

Mrs D Kelly: You might want to look at that a bit more with insurance companies.

Your paper includes a section entitled 'Implications of the budget'. It is around enforcement. I found out that, where there are street lights, for example, there is a 40 mph speed limit unless there is a derogation from that by the Department. I found that out recently; not many people know that. The police did not even know that, actually, when we had the site meeting. The paper refers to:

"on-the-ground enforcement by PSNI and DVA."

What enforcement does DVA do?

Mrs Hurley: It is more to do with heavy vehicles as opposed to normal motorists. It is about the transport of goods etc.

Mrs D Kelly: Just picking up on this point, there have been a number of accidents involving farm vehicles, particularly tractors. It might not be popular to say this, but we can look at the size and scale of farm vehicles nowadays compared with those a number of years ago, when you had — I am giving ages away here — open cabs and all the rest of it. Will there be any review of the licensing requirements in the policy for farm vehicles and the age of users? There were some tragedies, I think, recently, that involved quite young drivers.

Mr Alex Boyle (Department for Infrastructure): Not that I am aware of; there is certainly no intention at the moment to have a review. Obviously, DVA colleagues continually look at that, and they could recommend to us on the policy side that perhaps that is something we need to consider. I take your point; some of the tractors now that are using our roads are substantial —

Mrs D Kelly: Gigantic. They take up the whole road.

Mr Boyle: — to say the least. Of course, if they are used on the public road, they have to comply with the correct requirements around things like lighting, braking and so on, so they are, if you like, within a legal framework —

Mrs D Kelly: I understand that, yes.

Mr Boyle: It is a bit like quads; if they are used just on a farm or private land, it is at the discretion of the owner as to how roadworthy or otherwise the vehicles are. Certainly, we continually look to see what we might need to do. A lot of the regulation around those heavy tractors derives from EU regulation. Obviously, that will change; I know you had a session on Brexit earlier. All I can say is that, if required, we could seek the Minister's view on any alterations that might come forward.

Mrs D Kelly: I have personal experience of some tractors carrying a piece of machinery behind them, and some go at 50 mph or 60 mph. I also know that accidents have occurred because a tractor was driving so slowly that somebody tried to overtake. So, in terms of the analysis and the findings from accidents over the term of the strategy, will there be some discussion in the policy of the situation with farm vehicles?

Mr Boyle: As Lynda said about the strategy, nothing is ruled out or in, because it is a review coming to the end of the current 10-year strategy. That is something that would be considered, and many groups will undoubtedly come forward with ideas and suggestions about what a future strategy should look at. In turn, that is something our Minister will consider in due course.

Mrs D Kelly: You might not be the right officials, but I want to ask about bus policy and the licensing of bus operators. Have any of you responsibility for that?

Mr Boyle: No. It is not an area anyone sitting here is directly involved with —

Mr Starritt: None of us deal directly with that.

Mr Boyle: — at the moment, but again —.

Mrs D Kelly: I am told that is the next briefing. That is OK; I can save it for later. Chair, I recognise that road safety is very much a partnership around education, the police and all sorts of interests. I hope there is collaboration. When you look at the number of deaths and serious injuries, you see that it should concern us all, and it does.

Mrs Hurley: That is one of the key things the Minister has said. She is keen to work with partners in moving on road safety.

Mr Muir: Just for the record, I declare that I was previously an employee of Translink, and I was a councillor on the Ards and North Down Borough Council. I am like a broken record on that one.

There are personal stories behind every single person involved in the fatalities, and it is important we recognise that and the work that is being done. You talked about enforcement, engineering and education. They are fundamental. If there is going to be a new strategy, engaging with all the different partners, whether statutory or non-statutory, is essential. Could I get an outline of the timescale of that? Obviously, the current strategy expires at the end of this year, and it is important that time is spent working with all those different bodies and engaging with them, because that is the only way the strategy is going to be effective in the context of the budgetary situation you outlined.

Mrs Hurley: I would not be in a position to give a timeline because the conversation has not yet been held with *[Inaudible.]* The Minister would be the one who would make *[Inaudible]* the way forward.

Mr Muir: For the previous strategy, what was the consultation and engagement?

Mrs Hurley: The previous strategy was post-10 years ago, so I am not really familiar with the detail on the length of time it took.

Mr Muir: I think it is important that the Minister also comes forward to tell us the plan for this. Time is not on our side in that regard.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): Does any other member wish to ask a brief further question? Thank you. Beverley, you had a very easy time this morning.

Mrs Beverley Cowan (Department for Infrastructure): I did. Definitely.

The Chairperson (Miss McIlveen): And Alex as well. Thank you very much.

Mr Boyle: Thank you.