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TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 8 February 2011

Session 3

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TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE
3rd Meeting 2011, Session 3

CONVENER

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con)
*Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)
*Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
*Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)
*Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Kathleen Braidwood (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents Scotland)
Chris Eynon (TNS-BMRB)
Dr Terry Lansdown (Heriot-Watt University)
David Leitch (Scottish Youth Parliament)
Doug Mackenzie (North of Scotland Driver Awareness Team)
Professor Frank McKenna (University of Reading)
Douglas Muir (Midlothian Council)
Chief Inspector Ian Wallace (Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

Tuesday 8 February 2011

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

Road Safety (Young Drivers)

The Convener (Patrick Harvie): Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the third meeting this year of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee. I remind members and everybody else present that all mobile devices should be switched off, not just turned to silent. I record apologies from Marlyn Glen and Jackson Carlaw.

There is just one item on the agenda: the beginning of our inquiry into road safety and young drivers. We will take evidence from two panels of witnesses. First, we will hear from academics and specialists in the field of road safety research; we will then hear from representatives of road safety organisations, councils and local authority bodies. This is the committee's first chance to ask questions on the topic and to hear about the progress that is being made towards meeting the commitments that the Government set out in "Go Safe on Scotland's Roads it's Everyone's Responsibility: Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020", specifically relating to young and new drivers, with an emphasis on rural areas.

I welcome our first panel. We are joined by Chris Eynon, who is managing director for TNS-BMRB, Dr Terry Lansdown, who is a senior lecturer in human factors at Heriot-Watt University, and Professor Frank McKenna of the University of Reading. We were due to be joined by Dr Sarah Jones from Cardiff University but, unfortunately, she has been unable to join us because of transport difficulties.

Do any witnesses want to make brief opening remarks before members ask questions?

Professor Frank McKenna (University of Reading): I would be happy to do so.

The important point that I want to make is that, if one is considering interventions on the basis of public health issues, one must determine what the criteria are for deciding on and choosing those interventions. A key need, which is, unfortunately, often absent in road safety, is that the intervention should have a clear public health benefit—in other words, the measure should be evidence based. There is no shortage of enthusiasm or motivation in the area, but I am afraid that there is a great shortage of hard facts.

The Convener: Would you briefly expand on that? Do we lack hard facts about the effectiveness of interventions rather than about the nature of the problem? Is that what you are saying?

Professor McKenna: That is correct. The nature of the problem is fairly clear cut. People often confuse a delineation of the problem with a delineation of the solution in the field. People have lots of ideas, and you will hear lots of enthusiastic and well-motivated ideas that are based on not a shred of evidence.

The Convener: That is clearer. Thank you.

As nobody else seems to want to make any other opening remarks, I will begin with what might seem to be a general question about the nature of the problem. Why are young drivers at greater risk than other drivers of being involved in road accidents?

Dr Terry Lansdown (Heriot-Watt University): A number of factors influence younger drivers in Scotland. One is that our geography is unique; another is that young people have developing habits and behaviours that lead to unique behaviours with respect to their activity later in life. Those two factors combine to provide a unique set of circumstances. The third thing that has an impact is the changing nature of communication and of the technologies that people are using, which have uniquely shifted the way in which younger drivers interact with the task.

Professor McKenna: There are clear risk factors for crash involvement. They include speed choice and driving violations such as close following, drug abuse and alcohol abuse—it is more alcohol than drugs, as it turns out—as well as level of experience. Those factors are predictive of crash involvement for everyone, but young drivers in particular are inexperienced, choose faster speeds, engage in more close following and drive at night. If we were to go through all the risk factors, we would see that young people come up higher on almost all of them.

The Convener: If we accept that, objectively, younger drivers will be less experienced than older drivers and have fewer hours behind the wheel, are there factors aside from that relating to geography, types of road or any other aspects of the situation that a younger driver might be in that lead to the disproportionate likelihood of their being involved in an accident?

Professor McKenna: Younger people are more sensation seeking and impulse driven, and that is liable to have a connection to some of the

straightforward key risk factors, such as speed choice. We can contrast speed choices made in a relatively high-risk scenario with those made in a low-risk scenario. Motorways present low-risk scenarios because we have designed and engineered safety into the types of conflict that we can expect there. We have reduced head-on collision risk and risks from merging and side impacts. Young drivers often drive in places where there is an opportunity for high speed—often on rural roads. That is a very bad combination.

Chris Eynon (TNS-BMRB): We cannot put it down to the roads. Roads are a constant for all drivers, so it is about the drivers themselves rather than about the infrastructure. I am sure that there are things that can be done to the infrastructure to improve road safety generally, but we cannot blame the roads for the difference between young drivers and older drivers. The key issue is the experience of the driver—or the lack of it—and their attitude.

The Convener: We will discuss some specific policy measures and interventions later in the meeting but, if we are considering a problem that exists, surely we will not be able to pick the right interventions unless we are specific about where the problem exists and about the kind of situations where we are trying to make a change. Is that a fair comment? Do we not need to identify the kind of situations where the risk is particularly significant?

Dr Lansdown: That relates to a point that Frank McKenna made. In order to make a targeted intervention, we need solid data about the scope of that intervention. Basically, we need more data, but the problem is complex, with individual, technical, social and environmental components that all relate to one another.

Reflecting on the progress that has been made, I think that some sensible engineering and driver education measures have been introduced, as well as sensible measures targeting the pre-driver so as to influence their behaviour. Those are all good, constructive ways forward. I am interested in how we focus meaningfully on the rest of the problem. It seems as though many of the easy wins have already been gained; the challenge lies in how we proceed with the next level of potential road safety benefits.

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): Chris Eynon said that we should not blame the roads. Professor McKenna said that one of the issues is inexperience. Rural roads are much less forgiving of mistakes than big main roads, and I think that there is a combination of factors. Does the panel think that there is a particular dangerous combination of inexperience and the problems that people face on rural roads if they take unnecessary risks? I am referring not necessarily to breaking speed limits but to driving at inappropriate speeds. Does the panel think that the fact that driving lessons take place more or less wholly in towns and cities, and rarely on rural roads, even for young people who live in rural areas, is an issue?

Chris Eynon: When I said that we should not blame the roads, I meant that we should not specifically blame the roads for the higher incidence of deaths among young drivers. The point that I was trying to make is that the roads are a constant for drivers of all ages, and there are things that we can do involving signage and what-have-you that will improve the situation for all drivers, but I thought that we were looking specifically at younger drivers. There are factors that are exclusive to the younger age group that give rise to the statistics that we see for that group. That is the point that I was trying to make, rather than talking about roads in general as a factor.

Dr Lansdown: To expand on my point that there are several factors that come together to influence things, the data that I have reliably show that younger drivers are more likely to text or use their telephone inappropriately while driving and, if we combine that with driving at night, which we know is more dangerous, and on an unpredictable rural road, that is a much more dangerous scenario than engaging in the same behaviour while driving on a motorway.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): I am particularly interested in TNS-BMRB's research into young drivers on country roads. What do you see as the key results of the research? In a sense, you might have answered that, but I want to go on to other related issues.

Chris Eynon: Frank McKenna picked up on a number of the issues that came through. There are a variety of factors. We have done work among intending drivers as well as existing drivers, but a huge amount of it comes down to lack of experience. For young drivers, getting a driving licence is a rite of passage. It represents a huge burst of freedom and independence, and they experience emotions that they have never experienced before. There is a huge sense of euphoria when they get behind the wheel, and they see it as a time to test themselves. Like all young people, young drivers have a sense of invincibility. They think, "Nothing is going to happen to me." Their self-confidence exceeds their ability, and that is a large factor in how they drive. They are not aware of either their limitations or the dangers that exist.

Cathy Peattie: Is there a gender issue here? Are we talking about young people in general or about young men?

Chris Eynon: Young men are certainly more at risk than young women.

Professor McKenna: There is also a pure experience effect. There are two groups of factors. If we look at the risk-taking factors, males are more risk taking on each of them, including speed choice—they will choose faster speeds. If we look at the hazard perception skills and match those with experience, there is no difference between men and women. If someone has low experience, whether they are male or female, they represent a higher risk. In effect, young men and women are at high risk and young men are at higher risk.

Cathy Peattie: That is interesting.

Dr Lansdown: There are other behaviours where the differences are not apparent in terms of gender. Young men engage in some dangerous behaviours whereas young women engage in other dangerous behaviours. Those behaviours are characteristically different, although they both represent an elevated risk.

Cathy Peattie: That is interesting. As I said, I am interested in the results of the research. Have they been taken on board and acted on by the Scottish Government or other organisations and bodies?

Chris Eynon: Progress is being made. We have done a lot of work with intending drivers. For example, we have seen the introduction in schools of the safer road user award, which is a pre-qualification to try to gear people up and make them more aware of the dangers and risks of driving before they reach that stage, so progress is certainly being made in that direction. I am not convinced that there has been a huge amount of progress with young drivers themselves. We are working on communications, but the issue is much wider than that, and we need to do more to achieve the desired effects.

Cathy Peattie: We heard earlier about interventions. I agree that there must be evidence for interventions and I am interested in how they can be monitored. It is all very well to say that the Government or others should intervene to do particular pieces of awareness raising, but is there any evidence that that is working, or has worked?

14:15

Professor McKenna: If we look around the world, we find that there are two interventions for young people that are evidence based and actually work. One is graduated licensing. The other is directly addressing the issue of experience, because young people's inexperience is a problem.

There is the experience paradox. We need young people to gain experience to lower their risk but, as they gain experience, they are at high risk. A way of resolving the paradox is to offer increased supervised experience, by requiring or encouraging younger drivers to gain more experience in the presence of an adult. The adult is usually a parent, which reduces the cost. The evidence is that the approach brings considerable savings in crash risk—that is well documented.

In the graduated licensing approach, a young driver's exposure to risk is graduated as their experience increases. In essence, night-time driving is restricted during the first few months. In the context of the fatality risk for young people, the first few months are key. The crash risk is very high in the first few months and decreases month by month. We need to find protective measures at the early stage, and restrictions on night-time driving and on driving with other young people in the car have been shown to be effective.

Cathy Peattie: Another member may ask about that. From what I have read of it, the research is very interesting. Will the evidence on interventions remain constant or is the research becoming dated?

Professor McKenna: It is not at all dated. The key risk factors are pretty constant. Night-time driving for young people combines a great many risk factors—that is the case across cohorts, ages, time and space. I give talks around the world and it astonishes me that, 20 miles up the road, people who have had no sleep think that they can drive without consequences. I am afraid that the human condition is fairly constant across time and location—and when a human is hit hard, it gets hurt, it gets injured and it dies.

The Convener: Chris Eynon, do you want to comment on the research?

Chris Eynon: The research is certainly not dated. Issues remain to be addressed and interventions need to be made to improve the situation, but the research is still very current.

Cathy Peattie: In the context of interventions, will you talk about the monitoring that could be done?

Chris Eynon: Frank McKenna is more aware of the international evidence than I am. My knowledge and understanding of the situation are based on talking to young drivers in Scotland. Young people are concerned about how graduated licences would be policed. I talked to Frank McKenna about that earlier and he said that it is almost a question of self-policing and parental influence, but the question is how effective that would be, because the drivers who are at higher risk are probably the ones who have the least interest in respecting the law or licence conditions.

We are very much aware that lack of policing on rural roads is a factor in driver behaviour, because that environment cannot be effectively policed, not through any fault of the police but because of the enormous size of the task. We must ask how effective a graduated licence to prevent young drivers from driving at night on rural roads would be, unless it was effectively self-policed or policed by parents, which again is open to question.

As for other interventions, we have spoken about driver training and about pass plus—which exists now but is entirely voluntary. From talking to young people, I know that they see no huge incentive to go down the pass plus route: it is quite expensive; the insurance savings are not especially worth while; and, when young people have a licence, they think, "Why do I need to do pass plus?" They are free to drive and they believe that they are good drivers.

We have to strengthen driver training and make it mandatory rather than voluntary. However, until that is put into practice and evidence is gathered, it will be hard to say whether it will work or not.

Cathy Peattie: Parental intervention cannot be measured, and we do not know how effective it is.

Chris Eynon: No—

Professor McKenna: Sadly, driver training programmes from around the world have repeatedly been shown to be ineffective. With graduated licensing, the curfews are sometimes violated but, despite that, the evidence is that fatalities are reduced.

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): What is graduated driver licensing?

Professor McKenna: The concept is that we graduate the driver's exposure to risk as their skill base increases. In essence, the idea is similar to the idea behind a pilot's licence. If you pass your pilot's license flying a little Cessna, you do not the following day fly a jumbo jet. Pretty well anywhere in the world, in any kind of high-risk scenario, that sort of thing does not happen—except with driving. On day one in a car, you have lots of supervision and you are not allowed to do all sorts of things; on day two, you can do what you like. The consequences are fatalities. With graduated driver licensing, increases in people's exposure to risk have to be matched by increases in their experience base.

The key high-risk feature is night-time driving. Fatalities around the world—here and everywhere else—happen at night. That is the time when driving is really problematic for young drivers. Therefore, in the first few months, when the risk of fatality is exceptionally high but decreasing, you say, "No, you must build up experience, in the absence of your peers in the car, in low-risk scenarios such as daytime driving. Once you have built up an experience base, you can graduate to the high-risk scenarios such as night-time driving and driving with your peers."

Charlie Gordon: The development of experience is what helps to reduce risk.

Professor McKenna: There are two elements. The first is the elimination of exposure to risk. We know that young people are at high risk during the night-time. Therefore, if we can eliminate exposure to that risk, we will get a gain.

Charlie Gordon: How would graduated driver licensing be policed? What sanctions might be available?

Professor McKenna: The key does not lie in formal sanctions. Road safety education has an important role to play here, although that is not because of a direct impact on public health, because there is little evidence to suggest that road safety education has any benefit for public health. However, considerable indirect effects can come through educating the public—the parents, the aunts and the uncles—so that a culture develops and you can have informal policing and not formal policing.

As I think Chris Eynon was suggesting, in rural areas of Scotland, it is very problematic to rely totally on formal policing and to expect it to have a big enforcement effect. The key is to have informal policing through the expectations of the driver and the parents, who have often paid for the driving lessons and have sometimes handed over the keys to the young person. That is a big power. Parents have much more power than is being used at present.

Charlie Gordon: Informal social and cultural norms would develop. Do you see those acting as a credible deterrent, if need be?

Professor McKenna: That is happening where the approach has been introduced elsewhere. Despite violations by some individuals going out at night and so on, overall there are enough informal sanctions to change the exposure to risk and the fatality risk.

Charlie Gordon: Apart from road safety education, most aspects of road safety, including licensing, are reserved to Westminster. Do the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Government and, for that matter, the Scottish road safety community generally have a role to play in advocating the introduction by Westminster of graduated driver licensing?

Professor McKenna: I would love Scotland to take a lead in public health areas of this sort. There are considerable opportunities for Scotland to lead the way in pushing for road safety.

Charlie Gordon: Do the other witnesses wish to comment?

Dr Lansdown: I am happy to add to what has been said. There is a great deal of scope for graduated licensing in relation to daytime and night-time driving for young drivers, capacity of vehicles and speed limiting of vehicles, for example. There is a raft of issues that you might choose to pursue. I suggest that you invest in developing concrete data about those.

Graduated licensing can be linked sensibly to incentives. It is not a case of saying that people cannot do this or that. We should partner meaningfully with insurance companies and so on to give young drivers strong incentives, so that, if they do a certain course, they receive a substantial insurance discount, for example. That would give them a concrete benefit from investing in improving their driving skills and gaining the mileage on the road that they need.

Chris Eynon: I am a great supporter of the Scottish Parliament taking on greater powers over road safety issues in Scotland. That is almost certainly the way forward. I am not convinced that there is a great will at Westminster to address issues relating to drink-driving limits, speed or what-have-you.

Charlie Gordon: You have answered another question, which may be more relevant to a committee meeting that is taking place across the landing.

The Convener: I should explain that colleagues elsewhere are considering the Scotland Bill.

It seems that a fairly consistent case is being made for graduated licensing, yet Chris Eynon has just told us that there seems to be no political will for that elsewhere. If there is a strong case for it, and other people are trying it and getting good results, why has it not happened here?

Professor McKenna: Most public health interventions that clearly work require legislation and regulation. Against that is the view that we should never deprive individuals of their personal liberty to do whatever they choose. That has been true historically. None of the debates on seat belt legislation was about whether seat belts would save lives—everyone agreed and knew that they would. All the debates were about deprivation of personal freedom. Debate always revolves around that issue. In my view, there is not much freedom to be gained when you are dead.

The Convener: The point of licensing is to define the limits of individual freedom. Does the rest of the panel agree that the argument about personal freedom is the reason why the issue has not moved forward?

14:30

Dr Lansdown: That is a difficult political question to resolve. The data on intelligent speed adaptation show clearly that, if you control people's speed at the top end, you can make their driving much safer. The technological solutions are relatively trivial these days and are achieved relatively easily. Defining an acceptable implementation scenario is a different, political question. We can deal with things from the research perspective and demonstrate that safety can be gained, but implementation in the political arena is a completely different question.

Chris Eynon: Frank McKenna has spoken about the evidence from abroad. However, I have reservations about the effectiveness of policing graduated licences. It comes back to personal freedom. For example, if you restrict the hours when young first-time drivers can drive on rural roads, what about someone who has just passed their test and needs to get to their place of employment for a night shift? Many factors like that would come into play. It is a difficult area to police and manage. Clearly, it has worked elsewhere and I must acknowledge Frank McKenna's evidence on that. However, the people I speak to see potential issues with the effectiveness of such restrictions.

Professor McKenna: First, the question that is always brought up is, "Oh, but what happens if I'm doing a night shift?" The answer is, "Fine. If you're doing this for work, then you're allowed to"—and the issue has gone. Secondly, there are always problems with enforcement. There are problems about enforcement for alcohol and every other issue. The point is that, despite the fact that such laws are breached in every country in which they are implemented, they are effective.

Dr Lansdown: I echo the point that any constructive steps will almost certainly produce a safety benefit. There are technological solutions that can be introduced in which people voluntarily impose measures on themselves for a measurable and real benefit. That sidesteps the political debate in some respects. You provide a facilitating mechanism by which people can engage in safer behaviour and save money.

Professor McKenna: The concrete issue is that insurance premiums can be linked to the way in which a vehicle is driven, as it is very cheap to install various forms of telematics that can measure accurately exactly how a vehicle is driven. That benefits the young person because it can reduce their insurance premium and their risk.

The Convener: I find it interesting that we are talking about the issue in public health terms and that both Parliaments have had serious debates

on issues such as smoking where public health has overridden a personal liberty argument.

Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP): My question ties into the issue of insurance that was just brought up. Could insurance come into the consideration of how to police a graduated licensing scheme? Surely it would focus the individual's mind if their insurance became null and void when they had an accident, which would mean they would get nothing. That might not prevent everyone from infringing, but people would focus on the fact that although they might not get caught by the police, their insurance would be out the window if something went wrong. Would that sort of financial risk be of some significance to parents in particular, given that they would probably pay for the write-off of a car?

Professor McKenna: I do not have any evidence on that, but I suspect that what you say is true. I place no value on this because it is anecdotal, but it is said that the people who violate such curfews often do so knowingly and do not want to bring attention to themselves—and the simplest way to do that is not to drive like a complete idiot.

Alison McInnes: I want to explore the issue of driver distraction, on which Dr Lansdown has particularly focused in his research. Are young drivers more likely to become distracted than older drivers, and if so, why?

Dr Lansdown: Yes, but it depends where you draw the cut-off point between young and old.

Charlie Gordon: Do tell us.

Dr Lansdown: Anyone under 30 is significantly more likely to engage in volitional distracting behaviours than anyone older than 30. However, according to the data that I have, such behaviour trails off as people age.

Alison McInnes: Why?

Dr Lansdown: The issue is predominantly about engagement with new technology. The big risks as far as volitional distractions are concerned are drivers using their phones or media players or generally fiddling around with things in the car.

Alison McInnes: So will the young people who are using that technology stop when they turn 30, or are you going to tell me that the next generation is simply going to carry on with such behaviour?

Dr Lansdown: I am afraid that I do not have the data to comment on that. These are new problems in driving that did not exist 20 years ago, and we simply do not know how people will habituate. There are, should you choose to engage with them, certain things that make driving safe—such as, for example, dialogue management systems that switch things off at busy times, ensuring that drivers cannot receive phone calls or play with things—but young people's cars will not be that well specified and will not have such systems. In any case, young people are inclined to text their friends.

Alison McInnes: So there is a differentiation between young and old in that respect, but you do not know whether it is going to continue.

Dr Lansdown: We do not know whether there will be a maturation effect, whether people who have become habituated will be able to carry on with those behaviours safely or whether they will simply say, "I recognise that this behaviour is dangerous and I'm not going do it any more."

Professor McKenna: I have looked at distracting effects and whether drivers' hazard perception skills are more adversely affected if they are experienced or inexperienced. People make all sorts of differential predictions and have all sorts of expectations as to whether experienced or inexperienced drivers suffer more adverse effects, but when I carried out measurements, I found that both groups are obviously adversely affected by distractions. If you use a mobile phone, for example, your crash risk goes up by a factor of four. The interesting and rather odd thing, though, is that the perception skills of experienced drivers suffer more than those of younger drivers, and that although they have more hazard perception skills to lose they pretty much lose them all when they use a mobile phone. In other words, all the advantages that experienced drivers might have simply disappear.

Alison McInnes: The distractions that you are talking about are technological but clearly drivers can be distracted by, for example, their peers carrying on in the back, having to shout at their children and so on. Have you considered all those issues or have you focused merely on technological matters?

Dr Lansdown: I have looked at all those issues, but I tend to focus on what I call volitional distractions. With things such as advertising that is external to the vehicle, the driver is a victim of their environment. I am interested in trying to influence the driver in driving safely, which raises questions about controlling the use of billboards and other forms of external advertising.

The two big contemporary problems with driver distraction are hand-held phone use and using a phone to send or receive text messages, and I am concerned that the current prohibitive measures for dealing with them simply are not working. After all, one in four drivers is happy to send or receive text messages in a typical week and one in three admits to hand-held phone use at least once a week.

Alison McInnes: So how can the problem of young driver distraction best be tackled?

Dr Lansdown: That is a good question. I would advocate a raft of measures, from education early on through to technological lock-outs and interventions, and programmes to design systems that work effectively for the user. I do not know whether my colleagues want to add to that.

Professor McKenna: We made a fundamental error in prohibiting hand-held rather than hands-free devices, because it created a distinction in the minds of drivers that is utterly wrong. It is about the distraction: the key issue is not what you are doing with your hands, but what you are doing with your head.

Dr Lansdown: That is also an issue. Using the buttons and controls is dangerous, but I completely agree with Frank McKenna that it is only one component. You can be entirely hands-free and entirely distracted.

The Convener: Is there a case for saying that we should focus on the technological solution? Most people—whatever their age or experience—may not remember to switch their phone off when they get into their car. Goodness knows, it sometimes even happens in parliamentary committees. If the phone goes, a lot of people will answer it, and if a text message bleeps, a lot of people will read it.

Dr Lansdown: We are social creatures, and we want to communicate with one another: that is at the core of the problem.

The Convener: So is there a case for a technological intervention that means that when the car is in motion, the phone will not function?

Dr Lansdown: There are implementation problems with that type of solution. I would not advocate concentrating on one mechanism: I would advocate a range of measures, from changing behaviour and what is acceptable for our children as they grow to what is acceptable in the workplace and how we control things when people use them in their vehicles. We should not concentrate on only one step, but there should be sensible investment in technological controls.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Professor McKenna, you have written a think piece for Road Safety Scotland that investigates the public health benefits of road safety education for teenagers. Do you have any views on how successful past road safety education initiatives have been, such as Road Safety Scotland's recent campaigns involving cinema and mobile phone adverts—which I hope people do not receive in the car—and Xbox Live gaming activity?

Professor McKenna: Sadly, the evidence for a great deal of road safety interventions is nil. There are all sorts of reasons for that—for example, the initiatives are often not based on theory or formal knowledge, but on enthusiasm and motivation, which is fantastic and absolutely necessary, but not sufficient for road safety.

Road safety is full of well-motivated interventions that are not based on solid evidence or formal theory. When they are assessed, they are often found to have no effects, and in some cases are counterproductive.

Rob Gibson: In what way are they counterproductive?

Professor McKenna: The presumption across public health has generally been that if you have a problem and you make a well-motivated attack on it, you will at best do no harm. Sadly, it has turned out that that is not the case. A simple example is the introduction of strengthened glass in pubs. The idea was that that would be a benefit, but it turned out that the strengthened glass caused more damage than the original glass.

14:45

When we have looked at road safety education in schools in a range of reviews, the argument has been that such education has—if anything—increased the number of casualties. The mechanism has probably been that going into schools has increased people's sensitivity to and enthusiasm for car driving. That has increased the amount of driving by younger people, which has increased the crash risk, although the motivation was to decrease it.

I do not question the motivation on road safety—the motivation is fantastic—but many programmes are based on no evidence. When they are assessed, they often have no support.

Rob Gibson: Public health interventions on smoking have undoubtedly been effective, as has been mentioned—the number of people who smoke is reducing. I would not like to create the danger of arguing by analogy. However, your main point that intervention has heightened the wish to drive seems a valid possibility.

Professor McKenna: I will take exactly your point about smoking. The educational interventions on smoking have not worked—the interventions that have worked have been those that regulate smoking in the workplace, in pubs and in other places and the price changes. Formal consideration of the educational interventions showed that they did not work. Again, some of them increased the rate of self-reported smoking.

Rob Gibson: Before this little episode, you mentioned the obvious point about evaluation. The road safety schemes do not seem to have had much evaluation. Is that because they are based

not on formal learning or theory, as you suggest, but on enthusiasm?

Professor McKenna: In relation to public health activity, what I will say applies not just to road safety, but it is particularly evident in road safety. Road safety education has operated a bit like a magic bullet. The people who design the programmes are enthusiastic about them, as are the people who receive them. Regulators and politicians are enthusiastic, because the programmes do not involve depriving people of freedoms and no legislation is necessary. Such education is absolutely fantastic, apart from one inconvenient fact—it just does not work.

Rob Gibson: If we designed road safety education whose effectiveness could be evaluated, would that help?

Professor McKenna: Absolutely. My key point is not about the specifics of recommendations; it is that the criterion should be decided on. Does hard evidence show that the measure—whatever intervention is chosen—will have a public health benefit? If no evidence exists, no evidence exists. Unfortunately, such a criterion has been absent from road safety education. That is because giving people information about risks is utterly uncontroversial. The people who do so feel that they are doing something positive and the people who receive the information feel that it is positive. Everybody is happy, but that happiness has been road safety education's downfall.

Rob Gibson: Much that you have said suggests that the safety initiatives for young drivers that the Scottish Government is pursuing contain the wish lists that we are talking about, as opposed to formal aspects. Do you have information about the Scottish Government's current schemes and which aspects of them are effective?

Professor McKenna: In the think piece that I produced, a range of interventions was examined. However, because education is regarded as an uncontroversial area, interventions are often not evaluated—or when they are evaluated they are found to be ineffective. That is not specific to Scotland; it is an issue throughout the world.

Rob Gibson: We agree that evaluation is better than no evaluation, and it appears that many educational approaches do not work and that we need to put carrots and sticks in place if we are to be able to change people's behaviour.

Professor McKenna: If we look at what works, we find that carrots and sticks, and giving people supervised, low-risk experience, work. That is not to say that education is not relevant. Most of these measures would never have been politically acceptable if there had not been education. We would not have been able to pass seat belt legislation or the smoking ban without education. Can you imagine what would have happened if we had tried to introduce the smoking ban in Scotland 30 years ago? It is almost inconceivable that we would have been able to do so. The change in cultural attitudes enabled us to regulate.

Education can go hand in hand with enforcement, general regulation and even engineering measures. There is a fantastic, important and potentially critical role for education to play, but education is not the stand-alone solution that it has historically been asked to be. It does not work that way.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: We are discussing road safety rather than constitutional issues, but given what you said it is interesting that action in the one area that is devolved does not work without action in other, reserved areas. I hope that there is something else that we can do, given the Parliament's powers. The Parliament might be able to lead the way in persuading Westminster to take the issue on in its totality, but if Westminster does not take the issue on, we do not just want to say, "Oh, well, there's nothing we can do," or, "We'll just concentrate on education, even though we're pretty sure it doesn't work, because that's the only thing we're left with."

Are we missing something else that is in the realms of what we can do up here and which might be of benefit, even if it would not be as effective as the action that we might want to take if we could consider the issue in the round?

Dr Lansdown: I do not want to paint a completely black picture on education. I agree with Frank McKenna. Education has a couple of benefits. If it is sustained, it has a long-term, cultural effect. It also has a short-term, shock effect. That is not necessarily a good benefit, but it can change behaviour. An advert that shows an horrific accident stays with us for a few days, so there is a benefit, although the advert will not ultimately be effective in changing our behaviour. My concern is that investment of a limited resource in education prevents us from investing in other things that are grounded in theory and can have meaningful, long-term effects.

People fall into common and comfortable behaviour, so it is always better to try to change the environment and the task rather than the behaviour. If we store things in a bad place, people hurt their backs when they lift them; if we store things on a table people will not hurt their backs when they lift them, because we have removed the risk. That is the solution that I recommend.

The Convener: We have a couple more supplementary questions. I ask members to be brief, because we must allow time for our second panel of witnesses.

Cathy Peattie: In my experience, politicians, Governments and others think that it is good to be able to say that they are putting in place a good campaign. I do not like pilots, whatever they are about. Is there an issue to do with Government or other people putting campaigns in place without providing mechanisms to monitor and evaluate them? Is that a British issue, or is it an issue throughout the world?

Professor McKenna: Unfortunately, in road safety education, that is problematic throughout the world, and it is probably why we have such poor road safety education results.

Cathy Peattie: If the education is so poor, why do you believe that parental intervention would improve safety for young people, if it is based on poor advice?

Professor McKenna: Well, we can see that it works. The parental interventions in Sweden that have been shown to work probably work in a number of ways. One is that the process simply gives young people experience and allows them to develop their driving skills in a safe environment so that, when they go to the high-risk activities, they have developed more skills. A second reason why that process works is that the parents probably exert a bit more of a stick element. In other words, they probably change the young person's exposure to risk. Parents are a potentially massive resource, but the issue is tying that resource in the right direction.

Charlie Gordon: I want to build on Shirley-Anne Somerville's question about what else the devolved Administration can do. To return to the role of enforcement, the point has been made that, with the best will in the world, there are not often police resources on rural roads. A reorganisation of policing in Scotland seems likely in the next parliamentary session. Other jurisdictions have dedicated highway patrols or whatever. There will be an issue about how much resource goes into traffic departments. I am from an urban region, but I do not often see the motorcycle cops of Rikki Fulton fame or other patrol vehicles that the traffic police use. In the context of the road safety debate, is it worth considering how we police our roads?

Professor McKenna: Historically, there are three principles of deterrence theory: the certainty of the punishment, the severity of the punishment and the imminence of the punishment. Those are the key factors in changing people's behaviour. It turns out that the key one is the certainty of punishment. There is not a great deal of evidence that increasing the severity or imminence of punishment works, so it is about the certainty. That is problematic if we are trying to cover rural Scotland. However, technological measures are available. The camera is a simple device and can be improved technically. We can monitor people's speeds in all sorts of ways, both internally and externally to vehicles. We have to consider increasing the use of technology. We can do that, although it is absolutely key that we take the public with us. There is a big role for education in taking the public with us on that.

Rob Gibson: I was interested in how you defined the public health elements. As this is the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, we are also interested in changing public perceptions about driving because of the carbon effects. We might well be able to use that in an educative way. Should that issue be part of the road safety debate? Some of us have done better driving activity.

Dr Lansdown: Effective work has been done with the haulage industry to encourage that change, and fuel-efficient behaviours are frequently coincident with safe driving. I encourage the Parliament to invest in voluntary measures that have meaningful benefits for the end user. You should provide the frameworks for such measures to work in a way that allows people to see the benefit.

15:00

Chris Eynon: To be honest, I do not think that that approach will influence our key target group of young drivers. It is more for the older, more mature population. Young drivers have more to think about than how much fuel they put in their tank when they are out for a burn-up.

Professor McKenna: That is true but, because they have less money, they suffer more from the consequences of the fuel price increases.

Dr Lansdown: And the cost of insurance.

Professor McKenna: The cost of insurance is phenomenally high. We can make a link, because vehicles with telematics can tell drivers how much fuel they are using as well as their speed. I think that we should be looking to make links between the environment and safety because, as Rob Gibson and Terry Lansdown point out, there are important synergies to be developed.

Alison McInnes: You said that parents are a massive resource, yet all our road safety education is directed directly at young people. Is there a case to be made for flipping that and targeting parents with the messages?

Professor McKenna: I realise that time is vanishing, so let me give you a specific proposal. We have talked about a legislative approach for graduated licensing. We can make the same intervention through parents. If we target parents, we can get them to implement the same types of measures. Such an approach would have all sorts

of benefits. One is that the research evidence shows that we could expect a translation into public health benefits, but it would also facilitate the legitimacy of formal legislation.

Alison McInnes: That is helpful—thank you.

The Convener: Before we finish, I want to ask you about the progress that the Government is making on the targets that it set in the road safety framework and its commitments on reducing the number of accidents. In purely objective, factual terms, is progress being made on achieving those targets?

Professor McKenna: Overall, considerable progress is being made. I have not looked specifically at the Scottish data, but I have looked at data for the United Kingdom as a whole, which show that considerable progress is being made. Unfortunately, much less progress is being made with young people, and that is a major source of concern.

Dr Lansdown: I largely agree. Activity is going on. As far as the framework document is concerned, progress is being made, but whether the questions and answers are accurately framed to address the worst problems on our roads today is a different matter.

Cathy Peattie: You say that things are improving, but how do you know? How is that measured?

Chris Eynon: Through statistics on the number of serious accidents and deaths on the roads, in which there has been a steady decline over the years.

Cathy Peattie: Do you measure the situation on a year-to-year basis?

Chris Eynon: Yes.

Cathy Peattie: Is measurement of the number of young people involved, and their age and gender, part of that process?

Chris Eynon: From the overall statistics, as Frank McKenna said, the decline in relation to young people is not nearly as marked as the decline in relation to the population as a whole. That is the problem. The number of incidents involving young people is increasing as a proportion of the total, but there has been a steady decline in the number of deaths and serious injuries on the roads.

Professor McKenna: We can also measure intermediate factors such as the percentage of people who break speed limits, which has been declining considerably.

The Convener: I have one, brief final question. I want to check out my reaction to the evidence that we have heard. At the beginning of the session, you seemed to make the argument that there was a lack of information and that, in public health terms, there were not enough data to be sure what would work. Towards the end of the session, you seemed to say that there were some measures that you knew would work but that there had been a political barrier to getting them implemented.

Dr Lansdown: I think that that reflects the questions that you asked us. You asked us about education earlier on and then you asked us about the things that we know about and work on, which we can talk about in more detail and provide more substance on. Sorry.

The Convener: Okay. That is fine—it was our fault. I will read the *Official Report* in detail to see whether I understood your answers properly.

As there are no final supplementaries, I thank all the panellists for their time. We will continue to take evidence as part of our inquiry. We hope to produce our report well in advance of dissolution so that we can influence debate for the future. Thank you very much.

I suspend the meeting briefly to allow for a changeover of witnesses.

15:05

Meeting suspended.

15:08

On resuming—

The Convener: We continue with item 1, taking evidence on road safety and young drivers. Our second panel of witnesses comprises Kathleen Braidwood, road safety officer for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents Scotland; Chief Inspector Ian Wallace of Grampian Police and the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland; Douglas Muir, transportation policy manager at Midlothian Council; Doug Mackenzie, campaign co-ordinator for the north of Scotland driver awareness team; and David Leitch, vice-chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament. I welcome you all to the Parliament to answer questions on this topic. If any of you wishes to make some brief opening remarks, you may do so.

If not, we will go straight to questions. I began the earlier evidence session with a very general question to the witnesses about why they believed that younger drivers were at greater risk of being involved in road accidents compared with other drivers. I put the same question to you.

Chief Inspector Ian Wallace (Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland): The police service is well experienced in attending incidents, and our deep-down opinion is that it is down to inexperience. When it comes to the level of

severity of collisions, often a minor issue has had a disproportionate outcome.

Kathleen Braidwood (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents Scotland): I have been a road safety officer for a number of years. I agree with Chief Inspector Wallace that it is a matter of inexperience. We know that if someone is involved in an accident in their first six months of driving, they are more likely to be involved in an accident—and in a similar sort of accident—in the following six months. Young drivers are at high risk, because of their age and inexperience.

Because the risk of being involved in accidents is so high during the very short period after someone has passed their driving test, ROSPA is left to conclude that the training and testing that people receive while learning to drive is not effective enough. There is a clear need for post-test or even alternative testing and training at that early stage of driving, just to give younger people a bit more encouragement and to help them become safer, more competent drivers.

As someone who has been involved in road safety education for more than eight years, I think that such education has the potential to influence people's attitudes, including those of family and of peers. I am all in favour of education when it comes to road safety.

Douglas Muir (Midlothian Council): I support my colleagues regarding inexperience being the main reason. Young drivers are difficult to target and to get anything over to—interacting with them is quite a challenge in itself.

Doug Mackenzie (North of Scotland Driver Awareness Team): I go along with what my colleagues have said. It is down to inexperience. I spent 31 years as a police officer—now retired—although I have not done road policing, like my colleague Mr Wallace. I am now the co-ordinator for the north of Scotland driver awareness team. We found that the reasons are inexperience, attitude and behaviour. Peer pressure particularly affects the young driver.

Ms Braidwood mentioned training. I wonder whether we have considered e-learning over a space of three years—when someone is 16, before they take the test; at 17; and completing the training at the age of 18, when they could get a Business and Technology Education Council qualification.

David Leitch (Scottish Youth Parliament): I agree with what everybody else says. Unfortunately, I am a lay person and I have absolutely no background in road safety, so I will take the rest of the panel's word about the inexperience thing. However, that does not fully explain why young people are disproportionately affected. Anybody who has just learned to drive is inexperienced. That covers not just young people, and that point should be explored further. Other factors are definitely involved, including the development of the brain among younger people, and how people under the age of 26 perceive distances.

I agree that peer pressure is a factor, but when it comes to the severity of accidents involving young people, the fact that a younger person is much less likely than a more experienced driver to be driving around in a vehicle that is newer and which is more able to deal with things needs to be highlighted. A younger person is more likely to buy an older car when they first drive. That factor needs to be investigated, too.

15:15

The Convener: Thank you all for that. There seems to be strong consensus that inexperience is relevant, but I wonder whether we can go beyond that and consider the driving situations in which people might find themselves. Peer pressure and type of vehicle have been mentioned, but are there any other factors that might help to explain why younger drivers are at disproportionate risk of being involved in an accident? Might other geographical factors such as the type of road add to that risk?

Kathleen Braidwood: Young people might well pass their test, but there are a number of other components that they are not taught and which they should be learning in tandem. For example, given that most learning situations take place in town, they should be taught how to drive on rural roads; they should also be taught how to drive on motorways, in poor weather and at night. In a survey that ROSPA carried out with a number of businesses that employ young drivers, employers indicated that they did not feel that the driving test adequately equipped young people for driving at night, on motorways or on icy roads.

When young people pass their test, they are encouraged to do a scheme called pass plus that should, in theory, equip them with night-time, motorway and other driving skills and give them a bit more experience to allow them to risk assess and deal confidently with road situations and appropriate road conditions. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that there is no quality assurance for that scheme. Councils might be offering it at a slightly discounted or subsidised price, and many see it simply as another way of getting cheap insurance. Indeed, some people are doing what amounts to six hours of learning about different situations in one day, and I am not entirely convinced that it is possible to do that. As a result, ROSPA recommends that quality assured road safety training be delivered either as part of the driving test or post-test.

The Convener: Do any of the other witnesses have views on the types of driving situations or, indeed, roads that we should be looking at?

Chief Inspector Wallace: As the statistics clearly show, rural 60mph roads are the key routes for collisions. Given that it has many such roads, Scotland lends itself to the problem under discussion.

My area in the north east covers Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray and, as a result, I have to differentiate between urban and rural areas. It will come as no surprise, but the combined problem presented in Aberdeenshire and Moray is completely different from the issues that arise in urban Aberdeen and I have to modify my road policing response to deal with each of those areas.

The Convener: Does the Government's road safety framework support the work of your respective organisations in reducing the number of accidents among younger drivers? Has adequate progress been made towards meeting the commitments in that framework?

Doug Mackenzie: The panel behind "Go Safe" is to be congratulated on pulling together a detailed and all-encompassing piece of work. However, it does not differentiate between rural and urban roads, which are, of course, two entirely different things. I also note that the panel of experts was set up to look at the issue until 2020, with a milestone at 2015. However, that is around nine years away, and many people will die or be seriously injured on our roads during that time.

I appreciate that the elephant must be eaten bite by bite, but I wonder whether the panel is aware of the research that was done over 10 years in Scotland by Dr Sarah Jones of Cardiff University, with Dr David Stone from the University of Glasgow. They established that up to 22 lives a year could be saved if a graduated licence scheme was introduced in Scotland alone and that up to £80 million could be saved in the Scottish economy.

I understand from my reading of the framework that there was no consultation with young drivers. Surely we need to interact better with young people. In our campaign in the Highlands and Islands, we are communicating with the youth councils in Moray and the Highlands and Islands. We are on Facebook and we have a web page to try to communicate better with young people. I wonder whether the Government should have taken that approach rather than have no consultation with young people.

David Leitch: I think that it has just finished consulting young people. I have not yet seen the feedback from the young driver consultation, which finished last month, I think, or the report on who was consulted. The Scottish Youth Parliament was kept up to speed with what was going on, but I am not entirely sure what groups were consulted. I know that certain groups were targeted, but I eagerly await the publication of the report.

The framework is adaptive; it goes with the times. It is not set in stone; rather, it has very much been designed to be something that can change, depending on what members of the strategic board in particular see as the most important problems. We have to give credit to that group, Transport Scotland or the road safety team. I sit on a number of strategic groups, and it is one of the few groups that I know about in which there is a lot of focus on bringing everybody together and reaching a combined solution. It is very difficult to bring together many different people in any policy area and to get them all on one page to start to discuss things, whether that is young drivers or any other subject. The framework and the road safety strategic board in particular bring together to talk all the organisations that need to talk. Such an approach is not often found in a number of Government policy areas.

Douglas Muir: We are at a very early stage with the framework, which is quite new. I welcome the political intervention that there has been. Too often, such intervention does not happen. Road safety experts sit together and decide what to do, and that is always a million miles away from the political side. Therefore, that intervention is useful. However, let us not kid ourselves: we have set some very tough targets. That said, we are quite confident that we will reach them, and everybody is working together to try to do that. With luck, we can get there.

Rob Gibson: I have done quite a bit of work on the issue in Caithness and Sutherland with the help of young people whose friends have been killed, for example, but I was never able to get a final picture of the involvement of alcohol and drugs in accidents. Perhaps the police can help us with that. We can talk about road safety frameworks and roads, which we will go on to discuss, but I would like to know about the factors that lead to accidents. There was a horrendous example in Inverness. Undoubtedly, some form of drug or drink was involved in a couple of young deaths there that have been highlighted recently. What is the picture in rural areas, or in the urban areas that the chief inspector talked about?

Chief Inspector Wallace: I cannot speak with total confidence about the national position regarding rural areas. However, in my experience, although alcohol features in fatal collisions from time to time, it does not feature regularly in fatal collisions involving young drivers. I return to my initial comments about inexperience. Our suggestion is that inexperience is a greater factor.

However, the committee should be aware of an alarming statistic, which is that fairly constantly over the past few years a quarter to a third of all my drink drivers have been young people; that is of concern to me. Everyone thinks that drink driving is a middle-age problem, but it is not. Perhaps, as Professor McKenna said, the question is whether education works. There is something wrong when young people get into motor vehicles and drive under the influence of alcohol to the extent that they do. I cannot fathom why that happens.

Rob Gibson: Are there any other comments on that point? I think that it is germane to what education should do. No? Okay.

Alison McInnes: You all highlighted the issue of inexperience. When we analyse the types of accident that happen with young people on rural roads, we find that there are a disproportionate number of single-car collisions. Why is that? Is it because the driver loses control of the car?

Chief Inspector Wallace: The police attend a significant number of single-vehicle road traffic collisions that are almost unexplainable—they should not have happened, but they have. I will be honest with you: when we look at the circumstances of some collisions, we will never get to the bottom of them and be able to say with 100 per cent certainty that the collision happened because of X. That is an unfortunate position to be in for various reasons, but particularly because of the need to deal with the next of kin and explain to them what happened. In the main, the type of accident that young people get involved in can be of that type. Recently, such accidents have been a majority of those that we have dealt with.

Alison McInnes: Many agencies and organisations have a legitimate role to play in road safety. How could the arrangements for partnership working between the Scottish Government, roads authorities, police and road safety professionals be improved?

Kathleen Braidwood: The introduction of the framework has brought together the key partners. It is also looking to identify new partners from health and occupational health and safety—the Health and Safety Executive and health boards in particular—and to see how we can work together to get over the messages and to ensure that, from an engineering point of view, there are route audits on roads and that we ask what is needed from an educational point of view.

The Scottish Government's framework to 2020 has set out the priorities and 96 commitments for the next 10 years, so I hope that we will be able to piece together a structure that will help to reduce casualties and injuries on our roads. The Government has ambitious milestones and figures for 2015, but I am sure that we would all share the ultimate vision, which is to have no casualties or fatalities on our roads. As was mentioned, that would have a huge financial benefit as well as a huge emotional benefit for families and communities.

Alison McInnes: You sound very upbeat. Are you confident that the framework is a step forward and that the partners are all on board and working well together?

Kathleen Braidwood: I am fully confident of that. Until the end of 2010, we worked towards the Department for Transport's strategic direction from "Tomorrow's roads: safer for everyone" and reached the targets that Westminster set. We now have a Government that has set out a framework for Scotland knowing that Scotland's geography is quite different from that of the rest of the country and that we have a unique education system and different legislation and police forces. That means that we can work together to reach the targets and reduce casualties.

15:30

Alison McInnes: Can Mr Muir give us the councils' view?

Douglas Muir: I support what has been said. As chair of the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland road safety and traffic management group—or what is now the transportation and traffic management group—which, over the years, has worked closely with Road Safety Scotland and the likes of Kathleen Braidwood in ROSPA, I can say that what is evident is that we are coming together much more than we ever did and that we realise that we have to share things. Last week, in fact, Transport Scotland and SCOTS held a road safety conference at Victoria Quay to get everyone together and share experiences.

Doug Mackenzie: I seem to be paddling my own canoe on this panel. Although the groups and partnerships must be congratulated on what they have achieved so far in their respective areas, what about the private sector and campaigns such as ours? We have written to the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland and community safety groups in Highland and Moray to make them aware of our campaign but, aside from thanking us, they have given us no other encouragement, nor welcomed us on board to work with them. I have to wonder what is happening with others in the private sector who might be going along the right lines with regard to road safety. Moreover, is there any national site where best practice can be stored and which would allow people like us to upload initiatives and share them with the wider world?

Kathleen Braidwood: One priority high-risk group targeted in the framework is occupational drivers, not only because of the extensive additional mileage that they have to drive but because of the shift work and long hours that they have to work, the pressure of making deliveries within time constraints and such like. ROSPA works with many private companies to make them aware of their health and safety responsibilities to their staff and make it clear that they need to assess the occupational risk of their work.

With Transport Scotland's encouragement, we are looking to develop our website further so that we can set out and share best practice and make businesses aware of what will happen to drivers who continue to use mobile phones or flout the law with regard to this, that or the next thing. We would welcome any opportunity to work in partnership with private organisations in that respect.

Douglas Muir: One of the action points that we took away from last week's conference was to set up a database of available information. After all, there is a huge amount of information out there on the internet—some of it of very doubtful quality—and we need to focus on getting the very useful stuff; the Department for Transport's website, for example, has quite a good database, but it does not cover everything. We will be developing that work over the coming months.

Chief Inspector Wallace: In fairness, the Scottish road safety website details all the interventions in the country, particularly for young drivers—all you have to do is click on the website and go through the different areas.

The previous evidence session has left me feeling a bit frustrated. Frankly, I am starting to ask seriously the stark question whether the actions that I and my colleagues across Scotland are carrying out are actually having any impact. Officers in my area—I know that the approach is replicated throughout Scotland—are going primarily to secondary schools and talking to young drivers and potential young drivers in secondary 4 to 6 about the elements of driving. We are also trying to focus on passengers in cars and explain how they can take control of the environment and situation in which they might find themselves and influence the behaviour of their peers who might be driving the car.

The question is whether we should continue to be involved in such work but, speaking as someone who has been closely and personally involved with it, I think that it would be completely wrong to distance ourselves from it and do nothing. We in the police service are not educators, but we certainly have a role—as do people in other organisations—in imparting a road safety message.

The first evidence session was quite alarming. I have brought along some statistics today, comparing this fiscal year up to now with the same period a year previously. In the bulk of Scotland, fatal road collisions and serious road collisions have increased. I have been doing road policing for a long time, and the statistics are notorious for going up and coming down with little information to give us a clue as to why that has happened. However, the stark reality as we sit here today is that the figures for young drivers being involved in fatal collisions are slightly worse than they were at this time last year.

Alison McInnes: Professor McKenna was critical and his evidence made everyone draw breath. Your answer has anticipated one of my later questions, so we might as well explore it now. I would like to hear the panel's response to the criticism that we have not properly evaluated the success of previous education initiatives. We have been keen to be motivated and enthusiastic, but we have perhaps not been as rigorous as we ought to have been. Do you accept that point of view, or do you want to challenge it?

Douglas Muir: We certainly challenge it. Much of the work that we have done through Road Safety Scotland, on the Transport Scotland side of things, has been evidence based and fully evaluated as it has gone through. I am not entirely sure, but I believe that the bidding process to the Scottish Government to get funding for any of the campaigns has to be evidence led: if people do not have the evidence, they will not get the funding to carry out any of the drink-driving campaigns or anything else. That work has been evidence based.

I am a great supporter of the three Es—education, enforcement and engineering. A combination of the three—together with a few others—works well, and it is difficult to single out any one bit. I would be horrified if we were to step back from a lot of the education that we do. Over the years, education has been proven to work. Thirty or 40 years ago, even responsible drivers would not have thought twice about having a drink and then driving; now, the bulk of them will say, "I would not do that."

So, education has worked—but so has enforcement, and everything must be considered together. I take what Professor McKenna said—we have to evaluate things. However, I do not think that the situation is quite as black and white as he perhaps made out.

Kathleen Braidwood: The framework encourages people to consider research and statistics, and to consider what other work is around before they make any interventions. As Douglas Muir has said, evaluation is now an important part of what we do; we evaluate where

we are coming from and what interventions we are making, and we seek evidence on whether things have worked. Through the Scottish Government, there is a new evaluation toolkit. Indeed, such a toolkit has been made available across the UK. It helps road safety officers and road safety practitioners to evaluate their interventions in order to inform future interventions.

Doug Mackenzie: There are avenues out there—Douglas Muir mentioned the three Es of education, enforcement and engineering. A fourth one might be more political—empowerment. We have to get the young people on board; and we have to stop telling them what they need to do, and what we think they should do. We have to ask them, and let them work with us to make changes and make a difference.

I listened to part of the first evidence session, and I have listened to this session, and I cannot get away from the fact that, if we had a graduated licence scheme in Scotland, by 2020 we could have saved up to 200 lives. Despite that, it is not mentioned in "Go Safe".

On training and education, there is the Driving Standards Agency and the pass plus training course. I have spoken to people in driving instructors associations in Moray and in the Highlands and Islands, and they say that pass plus has had its day and that we need to consider 21st century software, such as the e-learning that I mentioned earlier. There are companies that offer an e-learning package: people start it at 16, work through it at 17, and complete it at 18. In Scotland, they get a Scottish vocational qualification in driving; in England, they get a BTEC qualification. Perhaps that is the way that we want to go.

David Leitch: I am ever so slightly dubious about the whole education thing. As I have been educated almost to death in the past few years—and I have just left higher education for further education, so I have more to come—I know that people can be taught only so much. Most people know that if they get into a car after having had a drink, their risk of having an accident is much greater. Most people know that if they go too fast or are less experienced, their risk of having an accident is much greater. They cannot be educated on that a huge amount more. The focus needs to be on greater experience. Education can go only so far and can reach only so many people. Experience is much more personal and has much more impact.

Pass plus has had its day. The idea that people do pass plus because it reduces their insurance premiums is ridiculous, because it has a minimal impact on premiums—it is not worth it. When I speak to young people, the old irony always arises that the people who do pass plus tend to be interested in safety. They do pass plus not because they need to become safer but because they want to be safer drivers. People who already have a safe mentality do pass plus.

As for graduated licensing, we should consider the pilot's licence system. A pilot must pass a certain number of modules before doing certain activities. When people achieve the number of modules for flying without being able to see around them—flying on the basis of instruments alone—they are allowed to fly on instruments alone. If we transferred that to driving, people would have to pass modules for driving at night or for driving with distractions—when other people are in the vehicle—instead of having one test. That needs to be looked into when we consider graduated licensing.

We need to take into account both Professor McKenna's point about taking the public, and particularly young people, with us and the carrot-and-stick approach. The difference between insurance premiums for younger drivers and those for other drivers is ridiculous. If young people are told that their right to drive in some circumstances will be removed and that their ability to drive after passing their test will be limited, they will ask for something with that. Young people will ask whether that means that they will have a fairer deal on their insurance premiums at the end of the process. The approach cannot be all stick and no carrot—the situation must be made more equal, or young people will turn around and say, "Excuse me—you're taking our rights away, we're not particularly happy about that and we're going to stand up against it." Some leeway is needed.

Cathy Peattie: The previous panel talked about the role of parents in relation to young people and about graduated licensing. You said that the people who go through tests are those who want to be safer, which is why I want to ask my question. If young people say, "I don't want to do that," how can parents influence them and help to make them better drivers?

David Leitch: My mother has made it clear to me that if I were to start driving in the next few years, she would petrify me every time I went into a car—she is that kind of figure. However, expecting parents to have such control is a bit naive, particularly later in a young person's life, when they feel much more independent.

Many people start to drive because they are sick of being unable to get from A to B. We talked about Caithness. In many areas and particularly in rural areas, the transport system is such that people cannot reach places unless they have a car or can rely on someone else to take them. When a young person can learn to drive and achieve their independence, good luck trying to stop them going out and driving.

No parent expects their child to go out and be unsafe anywhere, in any environment or situation. However, a parent can do only so much to ensure that their child is safe. The greatest impact must be from ensuring that people have as much experience as possible before stepping into a car.

15:45

Cathy Peattie: Do you think that a parent's input can be counterproductive?

David Leitch: I am not entirely sure; it could be for some young people. It is the same with anybody: you are told to do something so many times, and you have a rebellious nature so you do the opposite. That would not happen with me, though, because I would be too petrified that when I came home I would face the wrath.

Cathy Peattie: You have a good ma, in that case.

David Leitch: I do not currently drive because I cannot afford to, so price must be taken into account, too.

Alison McInnes: You have all talked about engineering as one of the three Es. Do you think that Transport Scotland needs to make any physical alterations at accident black spots on the trunk road network to reduce accidents involving young drivers?

Douglas Muir: We have been doing that. We look at crash statistics every year, and from those we build up cluster sites where the accidents are occurring and we put in whatever intervention we can. We have been doing that very successfully for a number of years, but our problem now is that we have treated most of the accident black spots—or cluster sites, as they are now called. We are moving much more into route action plans, in which we look at the complete route rather than at an individual site.

That is not to say that there are not individual junctions that still need something done. However, we are trying to ensure that as people drive along a route it will be familiar to them and will not keep changing, and they will not keep finding something completely unexpected. That is much more difficult to do. The A7, for instance, goes from one end of Midlothian to the other, and that is just one road. To treat everything on the A7 would be extremely expensive and difficult.

Transport Scotland has in the past put in place a lot of interventions that relate to passive safety, and has changed a lot of solid poles for collapsible poles, but such things all come at quite a high price. We can do only what we can, which is why we look at cluster sites and treat those.

The most common question that I am asked is, "When are you going to do something? This is an accident waiting to happen—someone's going to get killed there tomorrow." Well, I am sorry, but I am looking at the sites where I know someone has been killed, and I am ensuring that no one else is killed there. I am not trying to second-guess where someone might get killed tomorrow, because that could be anywhere, to be perfectly honest.

Chief Inspector Wallace: This is more Douglas Muir's area of expertise, but for me, there are nowadays very few of what people would commonly call dangerous roads. There are roads that require different levels of skill, such as enhanced driving skills, and increased awareness when driving on them, but I have to agree with him: I know of one roads engineer who balks at the phrase "accident black spot", because we have moved on from those days.

The police work with local authorities fairly closely in terms of the reporting structure for collisions. Data are passed to local authorities and identified areas are worked on. That is not a perfect situation, but it is pretty good—I am fairly confident about that.

Kathleen Braidwood: There are other technologies: I am not thinking particularly of road engineering, but of technologies for vehicles. There are one or two schemes in England that have tried black box technology. You put the black box into the family car and let the young person borrow the car, and you can monitor how they have been driving. If there is not vehicle sympathy on the rural road or on the corner, or if there has been harsh braking or poor steering, it is recorded. That technology introduces the ability for the parent and the young person—David Leitch's mother will get this—and driving tutors to discuss how to negotiate a corner or to handle the vehicle better. It is assistance: it helps the young person to drive more safely, but it also enables them perhaps to borrow the car the next time. It is a partnership arrangement.

The accident that is waiting to happen may not happen if you can record how the vehicle is being driven. We know that most accidents are the result of human error: poor judgment, a momentary lapse in concentration or a slight distraction. Black box technology for young drivers can address that, although we know from some of the schemes down south that the technology is quite expensive to run.

Charlie Gordon: On Chief Inspector Wallace's point, I do not like the term "killer roads" either, but I have seen some killer drivers.

In the railway industry, when there is an accident, the investigation often has a preventive role: steps are taken to try to prevent its being

replicated. I have also seen that in road safety. The then Strathclyde Regional Council had an accident investigation and prevention team, which was made up of police officers and traffic engineers who studied accidents. The idea was to learn the lessons from an individual accident and to prevent its being replicated. Is that kind of work still going on either at trunk road level or at local roads level with the police and roads engineers?

Chief Inspector Wallace: Yes—that is happening right across the board, at both local authority road and trunk road level. After every fatal collision, and certainly in serious cases where there are potential engineering issues, site meetings are held and a full exploration of the issues is undertaken. I can say with confidence that we do that.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I have a couple of questions that are directed at ROSPA in particular. We have heard that a number of organisations and public bodies are involved in road safety. Will you detail how your work ties into that, so that we can get an idea of how effectively your organisation ties in with everybody else and how we get the most out of your expertise?

Kathleen Braidwood: Do you mean just within Scotland?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Yes.

Kathleen Braidwood: We very much make use of the head office, which is in Birmingham. It has a press office and an information centre, which is second to none in the data that it records and in its expertise. That is where policy is decided.

Within ROSPA in Scotland, we provide courses for road safety practitioners throughout Scotland, and we provide training days and seminars. At the moment we are linking them up to the framework. For example, last year we looked at cyclists, pedestrians, vulnerable road users and motorcyclists. We brought together road safety professionals from throughout Scotland and brought in expertise from researchers, education people and the police.

We are looking to develop a road safety qualification for practitioners in Scotland. We also respond to media inquiries and any other inquiries about road safety. We are currently developing a road safety practitioner forum website to assist practitioners with their training needs.

In addition, we have vast amounts of expertise both in Birmingham and in Scotland in the management of occupational road risk. In 1996, ROSPA was instrumental in bringing together a group in Westminster with the Department for Transport to identify that people who drive in the course of their work should come under the health and safety banner, just as anybody else would. They do not just come under traffic law because they are out there driving; they come under occupational health and safety law, too. ROSPA has very much promoted the management of occupational road risk.

Within ROSPA in Scotland we are developing a resource: we have developed a website and we have good contacts with businesses throughout Scotland. We are also providing an educational resource; we are currently developing a toolkit that will enable businesses to deliver road risk awareness information to management to make them aware of their responsibilities, and to staff to equip them with information about mobile phone use and company policy.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: How do you ensure that your activity links to work that is being done by the police, Transport Scotland and so on, in order to ensure that people are not working in silos and perhaps duplicating work or contradicting one another? How can we ensure seamless links, so that we can get the most out of what is being done?

Kathleen Braidwood: Our working group on the Scottish Qualifications Authority road safety qualification for practitioners includes key stakeholders, such as SCOTS. We are liaising with the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan so that we can use the police's expertise in road traffic law. We have input from Sustrans, the Chief Fire Officers Association and Road Safety Scotland, and we have the support of the transport directorate in the development of the resource.

In relation to the Scottish occupational road safety alliance website, we have a working group, which includes ACPOS, Road Safety Scotland, the Health and Safety Executive, which is proactive, the Scottish centre for healthy working lives, the Scottish Chamber of Safety, the Association of British Insurers—the list goes on for ever—

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I just want to know whether everyone is working together. You do not need to go through the whole list.

Kathleen Braidwood: As Douglas Muir said, there is a lot of information out there, but we want good practice and high-quality links. The website that we are developing will have many hyperlinks to people throughout Scotland.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: How is ROSPA trying to get its key messages across to young drivers? How do you monitor and evaluate how effective the work is?

Kathleen Braidwood: We are trying to get our message across in a number of ways. We contributed to the Scottish Government's recent consultation on interventions for young drivers, drawing on expertise from Birmingham. We are

looking to add to the ScORSA website the young driver in the workplace resource. The resource has been well researched and evaluated and it won a Prince Michael international road safety award. It was developed in Birmingham for businesses, because occupational drivers are involved in a quarter to a third of incidents on our roads and young drivers in the workplace are more at risk and more vulnerable. We will have a training day in Scotland for road safety practitioners, to make them aware of the resource, which will be free to download.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: What is in place to monitor and evaluate the approach, to ensure that you get what you want to get out of it?

Kathleen Braidwood: We have an evaluation officer, who looks at all our interventions. There must be evaluation pre-intervention and post-intervention if we are to find out whether an approach worked effectively.

Cathy Peattie: Chief Inspector Wallace, will you talk about the police's role in educating young people?

Chief Inspector Wallace: The number of staff who are allocated to the role varies across Scotland. The responsibility for road safety fundamentally lies with local authorities, although that is not about the police shifting the responsibility; we embrace the issue and deal with it fairly significantly. Throughout Scotland, young-driver education is centred on school visits, in the main. As I said, we visit secondary 4, S5 and S6, but we have deviated somewhat from the approach so that we can engage with young drivers who left school earlier and perhaps missed our later school interventions.

The approach is not uniform throughout Scotland, however. Someone who lives in Strathclyde might get a visit only in S5 or S6, whereas someone in Grampian will get interventions at S4, S5 and S6. Which approach is right and which is wrong? There is no saying. The lack of uniformity is perhaps an issue to be considered at a later date, but that takes us back to the question of evaluating what actually works.

Each force in Scotland will determine whether road casualty reduction or an equivalent is one of its priorities, and with priorities come allocations of resource. I am fortunate in that road casualty reduction is a priority in my force, so I am given resource to deal with it. I foresee no real deviation from that stance in the near future.

16:00

Cathy Peattie: Do you see opportunities for the police to be involved in running sessions for young people when they pass their test, or is that already happening? It is probably quite obvious that I am not a young person, but when I passed my driving test I attended a couple of sessions that Central Scotland Police ran in my area for new drivers, and I found them to be as useful as some of my driving lessons.

Chief Inspector Wallace: It is happening in some areas. Again, however, the issue is just the enormousness of the task, given that new drivers come on stream every day. I could not in all honesty say that that is happening everywhere.

As a slight aside—although it is connected—I say that if a young driver comes to our attention twice in a six-month period, they get a letter from me. It might be that they come to our attention for a minor matter and they might not be charged or whatever, but they will get a letter. It is a generic letter, but it tries to encourage them to be responsible on the roads. I did a little bit of checking on that before I came here today and it is currently sitting at a 22 per cent reoffending rate—that is, 22 per cent of those to whom I write come to our attention again but, more importantly, 78 per cent do not. I see that intervention as an education and I hope that it is hitting the mark.

Cathy Peattie: Given that outcome, you know that the initiative is successful.

Chief Inspector Wallace: Yes, but it is a challenging area.

Cathy Peattie: That is interesting. How do the police use road traffic enforcement powers to educate as well as punish young road traffic offenders?

Chief Inspector Wallace: "Punish" is a strong word. Way back when I was a young constable, I had a sergeant who used to say to me, "You educate through enforcement." There are rights and wrongs to that. There is a time for enforcement, but when new starts come to my department I always say to them, "Book those who need to be booked. You don't need to book everybody." That is the message to get across.

Education is important. Some drivers out there will willingly take an education and realise that they have erred. They will take corrective advice and they will not do it again. Sadly, others—the 22 per cent—get the corrective advice, whether it is at the roadside or wherever, and go on to offend again.

A few years ago, simply on the basis of a large number of fatalities in our area, we went through a phase of rigorously enforcing the law—that would be the official term for it. We set out our stall and said, "If you drive to a standard that falls below that, you can expect no hiding place and you will be dealt with."

Throughout Scotland, young drivers are seen as a key road user group. When I look at the statistics, young drivers and motorcyclists are the key groups, so we focus on them. If I could solve the problems with those two groups, it would be a huge advance in casualty reduction.

Enforcement does apply. We will go into areas and conduct specific enforcement action, and I know that that is also done in other areas of Scotland, but I emphasise again that it is not always about booking or charging people; it is also about spreading the broader message of road safety.

Cathy Peattie: Could the Scottish Government do more to support the work that you are doing to encourage road safety among young drivers?

Chief Inspector Wallace: I have already touched on the fact that different police forces in Scotland take different approaches: we do not all do the same things. That might be because some forces do not allocate the same resources to road casualty reduction or road safety, whether that is through advisers in the form of police staff or through other work. Some forces have road safety advisers and police support staff and some do not.

The more we debate the subject this afternoon, the more I think that there is a real need for something that is focused, hits the mark, is evidenced and shows a degree of commonality. If a young person in Scotland is about to become a driver—whether that is in Dumfries, Dundee or wherever—commonality should apply. They should know what to expect up to and after they pass the test. That is something to consider.

Cathy Peattie: That is interesting. Clearly, we are involved in an inquiry in which we are taking evidence from a number of people. Is there one key point that we should include in our recommendations?

Chief Inspector Wallace: That is a big question. I have been involved in this side of policing for a long time. Young drivers and the issues that surround them have existed for many years—nothing that I see at the moment tells me that anything is different, and my statistics show that. For me, there is one significant issue for the committee to consider in asking what do we do about young drivers that would have an effect right across Scotland. I cannot speak for all our partners, but from a policing point of view, there appears to be no commonality. If one thing was to come out of the committee inquiry, it should be a recommendation on commonality of approach. Without straying into the future of policing and where it may go, this could be an opportune time to consider that suggestion.

Rob Gibson: I have some questions for Doug Mackenzie. The driver awareness campaign in which you are involved includes graduated driver licensing and the education campaign that you have mentioned in previous answers. Do factors that are particular to the north of Scotland result in young drivers in the north being more likely to be involved in accidents than is the case elsewhere?

Doug Mackenzie: The member mentioned the fatal road accident in Inverness. That was the catalyst for our campaign, which is called "Sensible Driving - Always Arriving" and is led by David Stewart MSP. The key line on our education literature is:

"Deadly Mates: do you know who yours are?"

Our posters say:

"Pick up 6 penalty points within your first 2 years of driving ... you'll ... go back to being a learner".

The strapline is "The Road to L" and the graphics are red—the colour on L-plates—and black.

The accident in Inverness involved two 17-year-olds. The driver was a female learner driver who was three times over the alcohol limit. She had picked up her passenger two minutes before the crash. A year beforehand, the boyfriend of the same female driver, who drove the same car—a sports car—was killed. The girl persuaded her parents to have the car rebuilt and to put it back on the road and was driving when her and her passenger were killed.

Rob Gibson: It is possible that parents in Aberdeen, Midlothian or wherever would also re-engineer a car for someone. My question was whether factors that are particular to the north of Scotland make things more difficult for young drivers? Have you identified any such factors in your campaign?

Doug Mackenzie: We have identified rural roads as a factor. There are not many urban areas where we are; accidents happen out on our rural roads where young people exceed the 60mph speed limit. Contrary to some of what we have heard today, I believe that training and education do have an impact and we are trying shock tactics. We have a pull-up sign that shows graphic images of vehicles from genuine fatals. When we have shown it to cocky and arrogant young children, they have changed their attitude. Next week, we will launch a double-decker bus pack that has an image of a car from a fatal road collision, our logo and key lines. We hope that education will help. From our experience, there is a shock aspect and a long-term aspect to this.

Kathleen Braidwood mentioned the work of ROSPA. I appreciate that I sound like a broken record today, but I will carry on. There are companies out there in the private sector—it is probably not fair of me to mention them today—that offer an e-learning software package as part

of employers' duty of care to their business drivers, yet 1,000 of them are killed each year on our roads. ROSPA does a whole lot more, including offering a full booklet and a software package for parents, called "Does your child want to drive?" It is first class. A senior police officer from Central Scotland Police has commented that it is state of the art, it is 21st century and there is nothing like it.

Rob Gibson: We have to weigh up whether education on its own is enough. Enough has been said today to suggest that a wider picture needs to be taken into account. I am talking about more than the short-term shock tactics that you mentioned; we need to take into account the longer-term work as well. Is there scope for what you have learned to be shared with other similar groups throughout Scotland?

Doug Mackenzie: Yes, we think so and we would like to share it. That is why, at an early stage, we wrote to Grampian Police, Northern Constabulary, community safety groups in the Highland Council area and in Moray and the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. We also e-mailed ROSPA with details of our campaign.

Rob Gibson: What sort of responses have you had? Have you heard more from one body than from another? We heard earlier that you were waiting for ACPOS to respond to your correspondence.

Doug Mackenzie: In fairness to ACPOS, it acknowledged receipt of the correspondence, but we have had no response other than that. Grampian Police has been supportive and Northern Constabulary has been supportive in that it said that it would watch from a distance in the meantime—those are not its words; they are mine, but I think that that is the best way to put it.

Rob Gibson: We have been talking about education and the powers that we have to deal with road safety and young drivers. We can control education directly, but we must bear in mind that powers over driving training and testing, vehicle design and licensing, MOT testing, road signs and markings, speed limits, heavy goods vehicle and passenger-carrying vehicle operator and driver licensing are reserved. Would it be important for us to have more powers over any of those aspects?

Doug Mackenzie: The simple answer is yes. You have covered a big, wide field in your question.

Some of the committee members mentioned working in silos. I am paddling my own canoe and am probably away out in the ocean now, but I can do that because I am not part of a regulatory body or any organisation. People such as us in the private sector are paddling our own canoes. There is a closed shop among the regulatory or Government bodies, which are not really interested in what the wee man is trying to do on the outside. That is my personal opinion.

Rob Gibson: Indeed. You express a degree of frustration about the way that things have been done, hence the reason for David Stewart to set up the campaign group. To make changes, we need more collaboration. Perhaps the sticks that I talked about are to do with enforcement of some of the reserved matters that I listed. Would it help young drivers—which is the group on which we are focused—to devolve any of those in particular?

Doug Mackenzie: Yes. I am not sure whether you mentioned graduated licensing but if you had the powers to introduce such a scheme, it would save an awful lot of lives and make the road safer.

Charlie Gordon: I have a couple of quick questions for Mr Leitch. He covered the first of them in relation to the road safety framework. How could policy makers best engage with and involve young drivers when developing road safety policies and educational programmes that, supposedly, are aimed at them?

David Leitch: The road safety debate that the road safety strategic partnership board has just conducted attempts to do that. It is good that, before it even starts to talk about graduated licensing, the board has that debate.

The authorities often say to young people that they will have a debate with us but they have made the decisions before they have it. Therefore, it is good to see that the strategic partnership board is having a debate before it makes any decisions.

That debate must be continual and there must be consultation on any thoughts that are raised or any decisions that are to be made at every stage.

People can often think that they are going down the right path because they had an initial consultation. Then they get the results and decide what to do, but a young person turns round and says, "Wait a second. We had no intention of you reaching that conclusion, you know. That's not the kind of conclusion that we thought you were going to reach and we're not particularly happy with that."

I am very pleased to sit on the road safety strategic partnership board and to give from a young layperson's perspective constant advice on where things are going. Consultation with groups such as the Scottish Youth Parliament that represents young people is very important. However, there must be constant communication. There cannot be just one debate, then that is it;

there has to be a constant stream of communication.

16:15

Charlie Gordon: Apart from the personal involvement that you have just mentioned, can you tell us whether the Scottish Youth Parliament generally has done any work on, for example, the attitudes of young people to road safety? Has there been engagement between the Scottish Youth Parliament and road safety organisations?

David Leitch: Our problem is that we have so much to do. There are two members of the Youth Parliament for every constituency MSP. We organise ourselves in committees that do not necessarily reflect the Scottish Parliament committees, which change, but which we think are important. We have a transport committee that will discuss issues such as road safety. If we feel that we need to target issues such as road safety, we will do so and work with people on that. I sit on the strategic board because we have identified it as a key committee in a key area, because so many young people are killed on Scotland's roads. So, it is a key area for me to focus on. Conveners of different committees will identify certain key groups and sit on their boards.

We have not done a huge amount of wider work on road safety so far. We are working with the Scottish Government and the road safety strategic partnership board. We have a fairly new relationship in that regard, but we hope to do more. We have not done a lot with other organisations. We focus on key areas, and if other people ask us for input or to help them with their work, we will do that. However, we have not had that kind of approach from anyone so far.

The next sitting of the Youth Parliament will be in March. If motions are passed, they are put into policy and we campaign on them. Funnily enough—it had absolutely nothing to do with me—one of the members has put forward a motion that pass plus should be included in the driving licence and that in order for that to happen there should be a reduction in insurance costs. I had absolutely no input into that; it was just a member who decided to produce a motion. I am not entirely sure that that is the right direction for us to go in, because I am not sure that pass plus is up to scratch. However, it just shows you that young people out there are thinking about the issues. I will be interested to see what the membership think about that motion, and I will certainly take that back to the strategic board.

Cathy Peattie: I am pleased to hear that work is under way on road safety. Do you think that it is quite surprising that all these people from different organisations have given us evidence today but none of them spoke to the Youth Parliament? Is that an issue? Is that what you are telling us?

David Leitch: Not really. The reason for that is that we have to focus on so many different things. People consult young people, but they choose the young people concerned. So, consultation is done with a group of young people who are maybe already interested in road safety issues because they have found the website and have signed up to it. The Youth Parliament attempts to represent every young person in Scotland.

Cathy Peattie: I understand that it is not your fault. I am just interested in why the people round the table do not seem to have communicated with the Youth Parliament—maybe they can tell me why. Clearly, you are here just now as witnesses, but the same question applies to the other witnesses that we had earlier. The Youth Parliament is a captive audience, if you like, with lots of experience, but there has been no communication with it. That seems very odd to me.

Doug Mackenzie: Sorry, are you waiting for me to speak?

Cathy Peattie: I am speaking to any member of the panel. Has anyone spoken to the Youth Parliament, which has two representatives for each constituency MSP? It seems very odd if no one has.

Doug Mackenzie: We have not spoken to the Youth Parliament, but in our campaign we have spoken to the Highland Youth Voice and Moray youth council. We have a Facebook page and a web page, and we are getting young people to become part of our campaign team.

Cathy Peattie: Okay. What about ROSPA?

Kathleen Braidwood: Our involvement with young people is through businesses and organisations, so when the Scottish Government was looking to establish its focus group and research we sent out an invitation to all the businesses that employ young drivers. I have met David Leitch at the Scottish Government at Victoria Quay, so I knew that he was involved in this issue. We do not carry out research directly, but we give information to people so that they can get involved.

Cathy Peattie: Can you encourage the people with whom you work to speak to the Youth Parliament? That may be worth doing.

Kathleen Braidwood: Yes. It sounds like a good idea.

Alison McInnes: I am interested in panel members' views on whether there would be any benefit in reducing the speed limit on local rural roads to, say, 50mph.

Chief Inspector Wallace: I suppose that I am the obvious one to start off with that. We see collisions involving young drivers in which speed is involved, but it is not always excessive speed; it is inappropriate speed. There will always be high-profile cases in which somebody has driven along the road at a grossly excessive speed, which normally has only one outcome: a fatal tragedy. Such cases speak for themselves. However, in our experience, a great number of serious and fatal collisions involving young people are more down to inappropriate speed, which may be 50mph or 40mph. If you come off a road and, as somebody said earlier, there is a tree at that location, it really does not matter what your speed is because, sadly, the consequences will usually be serious or fatal.

On a general reduction of speed limits, I am reasonably content that local authorities have a robust speed limit review process and guidelines. If there is a need for a speed reduction in a particular area for a particular reason, that will be considered through existing processes.

Douglas Muir: From a local authority point of view, we are undertaking a review of all our A and B-class roads to review the speeds. One of the difficulties in doing that is that it throws up the fact that some speed limits should be raised not lowered, which in itself creates a problem that we might not follow through on. However, a wholesale dropping of a speed limit does not have the effect that you might think. Ian Wallace is right to say that quite a few crashes are due to inappropriate speed. Drivers who are going to break the speed limit will break it whether it is 30, 40, 50 or 60mph—it does not matter, they will break the speed limit. If we drop the speed limit from 60 to 57mph, somebody will not suddenly say, "Oh, I'd better drive at 50," when they have been driving at 70mph. They will continue to drive 20mph faster than the speed limit rather than 10mph faster.

The Convener: I thank all the panel for their time and for answering questions. You have raised a number of issues, some of which we will have the opportunity to put to the minister later this month.

Meeting closed at 16:23.

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