

Y Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu

The Enterprise and Learning Committee

Dydd Iau, 29 Ionawr 2009

Thursday, 29 January 2009

Cynnwys

Contents

[Cyflwyniad ac Ymddiheuriadau](#)

[Introduction and Apologies](#)

['Plismona'r Ffyrdd yng Nghymru—Y Maniffesto, 2009'](#)

['Road Policing in Wales—Y Maniffesto, 2009'](#)

[Adroddiad Drafft y Pwyllgor ar Gytundeb Llwyth Gwaith Athrawon](#)

[The Draft Committee Report on the Teachers' Workload Agreement](#)

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg. Mae hon yn fersiwn ddrafft o'r cofnod. Cyhoeddir fersiwn derfynol ymhen pum diwrnod gwaith.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included. This is a draft version of the record. The final version will be published within five working days.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol

Committee members in attendance

Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Andrew R.T. Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Nerys Evans	Plaid Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Janet Ryder) The Party of Wales (substitute for Janet Ryder)
Gareth Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
David Melding	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Sandy Mewies	Llafur Labour
Jenny Randerson	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

Eraill yn bresennol

Others in attendance

Kevin Barry	Prif Swyddog Tân Cynorthwyol, Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub De Cymru Assistant Chief Officer, South Wales Fire and Rescue
Richard Brunstrom	Prif Gwnstabl, Heddlu Gogledd Cymru Chief Constable, North Wales Police
David Collings	Rheolwr Ardal Cymru, Yr Asiantaeth Gwasanaethau Cerbydau a Gweithredwyr (VOSA) Area Manager Wales, Vehicle and Operators Services Agency (VOSA)
Mark Warden	Pennaeth Ymgysylltu â Rhanddeiliaid a Chyfarwyddwr y Rhaglen Orfodi, Yr Asiantaeth Gwasanaethau Cerbydau a Gweithredwyr (VOSA) Head of Stakeholder Engagement, Enforcement Programme Director, Vehicle and Operations Services Agency (VOSA)

Swyddogion Gwasanaeth Seneddol y Cynulliad yn bresennol
Assembly Parliamentary Service officials in attendance

Dan Collier	Dirprwy Clerc Deputy Clerk
Dr Kathryn Jenkins	Clerc Clerk

"Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.02 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.02 a.m."

Cyflwyniad ac Ymddiheuriadau
Introduction and Apologies

<p>Gareth Jones: Bore da, bawb. Estynnaf groeso cynnes iawn i Aelodau, tystion ac aelodau'r cyhoedd. Fe'ch atgoffaf i ddiffodd eich ffonau symudol neu unrhyw ddyfais electronig arall. Fel y gwyrddoch, ni ddylech gyffwrdd â'r meicroffonau. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân, felly os bydd unrhyw fath o larwm, rhaid inni symud o'r ystafell ac o bosibl o'r adeilad dan gyfarwyddiadau'r tywyswyr. Mae'r cyfarfod yn ddwyieithog, ac mae clustffonau ar gael i glywed y cyfieithiad ar y pryd o'r Gymraeg i'r Saesneg ar sianel 1, a gellir chwyddleisio'r sain ar sianel 0. Bydd Cofnod o'r cyfan a ddywedir yn gyhoeddus. Derbyniwyd ymddiheuriad gan Huw Lewis. Estynnwn groeso cynnes i Nerys Evans a fydd yn ymuno â ni ar ran Plaid Cymru fel aelod o'r pwyllgor hwn. Edrychwn ymlaen yn arw at ei chyfraniad i'r pwyllgor.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: Good morning, everyone. I extend a very warm welcome to Members, witnesses and members of the public. I remind you to switch off mobile phones or any other electronic device. As you will be aware, you do not need to touch the microphones. No fire drill is scheduled, so if any alarm sounds we must evacuate the room and possibly the building under the ushers' instructions. The meeting is bilingual, and headphones are available to hear the simultaneous translation from Welsh to English on channel 1, and to amplify the sound on channel 0. There will be a Record of all that is said in public. An apology has been received from Huw Lewis. We extend a warm welcome to Nerys Evans, who will join us as a member of this committee on behalf of Plaid Cymru. We look forward very much to her contribution to the committee.</p>
<p>Wrth groesawu Nerys, gwyrddom fod newid i'n haelodaeth ac nad yw Janet Ryder yn aelod o'r pwyllgor hwn mwyach. Nid wyf am ymhelaethu ar hynny, ond yr wyf yn siŵr y byddai'n ddyfyniad gan aelodau'r pwyllgor ddatgan a chofnodi ein diolch diffuant i Janet am y gwaith a'r cyfraniad arbennig a wnaeth i'n trafodaethau ac i weithgarwch y pwyllgor. Gyda'ch caniatâd, byddaf yn cysylltu â Janet ar ein rhan i ddiolch iddi. A yw hynny'n dderbyniol? Gwelaf ei fod. Diolch yn fawr ichi.</p>	<p>In welcoming Nerys, we know that there has been a change in our membership and that Janet Ryder is no longer a member of this committee. I will not expand on that, but I am sure that it would be the committee's wish to state and place on record our sincere thanks to Janet for her special contribution and work to the committee's deliberations and activities. With your permission, I will contact Janet on our behalf to thank her. Is that acceptable? I see that it is. Thank you very much.</p>

'Plismona'r Ffyrdd yng Nghymru—Y Maniffesto, 2009'
'Road Policing in Wales—Y Maniffesto, 2009'

<p>Gareth Jones: I roi gair bach o gefndir i'r eitem hon, cafwyd tystiolaeth gan brif gwnstabl Heddlu Gogledd Cymru ym mis Tachwedd am faterion sy'n ymwneud â diogelwch ffyrdd.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: To give a brief word of background to this item, we received evidence from the chief constable of North Wales Police in November on issues relating to road safety.</p>
<p>Cododd hynny, fel y cofiwch, o ganlyniad i waith grŵp rapporteur y pwyllgor ar brisiau tanwydd ym mis Tachwedd. Cyfeiriodd y prif gwnstabl bryd hynny at y maniffesto drafft, sef dogfen bolisi am blismona'r ffyrdd yng Nghymru, a dymuniad yr Aelodau oedd i gynnal ymchwiliad byr er mwyn dylanwadu, pe bai'n bosibl, ar y ddogfen derfynol. Felly, dyna lle'r ydym ar hyn o bryd.</p>	<p>That arose, as you will remember, as a result of the work of the committee's rapporteur group on fuel prices in November. At that time, the chief constable referred to the draft manifesto, which is a policy document on road policing in Wales, and it was the wish of Members to hold a brief inquiry to influence, if possible, the final document. So, that is where we are at the moment.</p>
<p>Estynnaf groeso cynnes i brif gwnstabl Heddlu Gogledd Cymru, Richard Brunstrom, sy'n ymuno â ni drwy'r system fideogynadledda. Bore da, brif gwnstabl, a chroeso cynnes.</p>	<p>I extend a warm welcome to the chief constable of North Wales Police, Richard Brunstrom, who joins us through the videoconferencing facility. Good morning, chief constable, and a warm welcome to you.</p>
<p>Mr Brunstrom: Bore da, syr, a diolch am y croeso.</p>	<p>Mr Brunstrom: Good morning, sir, and thank you for the welcome.</p>
<p>Gareth Jones: Deallaf ei fod yn iawn imi siarad ychydig eiriau yn Gymraeg â chi ond eich dymuniad yw ateb cwestiynau yn Saesneg.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: As I understand, it is fine for me to speak a few words in Welsh with you but your wish is to respond to questions in English.</p>
<p>Mae'r hyn yr ydym am ei drafod heddiw wedi cael ychydig o sylw yn y cyfryngau. Da o beth fyddai ichi wneud cyflwyniad byr o ryw bum i 10 munud i ganolbwyntio ar rai o'r prif elfennau sydd yn y maniffesto drafft, ac wedyn cawn gyfle i ofyn cwestiynau i chi.</p>	<p>What we are going to discuss today has received some attention in the media. It would be useful if you were to give a brief presentation of five to 10 minutes concentrating on some of the main elements of the draft manifesto, and then we will have a chance to ask you questions.</p>

<p>Mr Brunstrom: Thank you, Chair; I will be brief. I have circulated a paper, which I hope is largely self-explanatory. The real purpose is to seek your opinion on our plans to collaborate more closely within the police service across Wales to improve what we are doing on road policing in a way that fits in with the Wales transport strategy, which is the Welsh Assembly Government's policy. That will give us a degree of synergy, through joint working and the sharing of our powers, responsibility, capability and expertise, to deliver better road management, particularly on the strategic road network in Wales.</p>
<p>Road policing has been a bit of a poor relation of the police service in the past 20 years or so; that really needs to, and can, change. We have here an exciting development for the future. The only other point that I want to make is that things are a little different in Wales. Some of these ideas are already being tried out in England; some of them are not. However, the big difference for policing in Wales is the difficulty caused by our geography. We have two major strategic road corridors: the M4 corridor running to the west coast, and the A55 running to Holyhead. Those roads are extremely vulnerable to congestion, caused by incidents, traffic volume or crashes, and the closure of either of those roads has a much bigger impact on our society and economy in Wales than an equivalent incident would in England, simply because we have no alternative routes. So, we in the police service recognise that, uniquely in Wales, we need to pay more attention to reducing congestion than our colleagues in England do. That is all that I want to say in opening.</p>

Gareth Jones: Diolch, brif gwnstabl. Dylwn fod wedi diolch ichi am eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig yr ydym eisoes wedi'i derbyn ac am y copi o'r manifesto drafft. Yr ydym wedi cael cyfle i'w darllen. Trof yn awr at Sandy Mewies, sydd â'r cwestiwn cyntaf.

Gareth Jones: Thank you, chief constable. I should have thanked you for your written evidence, which we have received, and for a copy of the draft manifesto. We have had an opportunity to read through them. I now turn to Sandy Mewies, who has the first question.

Sandy Mewies: Thank you, Chair, and good morning, chief constable. I was interested to see this paper, which demonstrates your exemplar joint working and partnership, particularly when considered with the other paper that we received from the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

I regularly use the M4 and the A55, which are the two arterial corridors that you are talking about, and I recognise all the problems outlined in your paper. I am extremely interested in the plans to work with the trunk road agencies on reflecting the system that is now being operated in England, where the Highways Agency has powers over traffic enforcement. Could you elaborate on that?

9.10 a.m.

I was also eager to see the outcomes that you have identified, which would be of benefit to the economy, given the problems that hold-ups can cause. Getting a throughput as quickly as possible has to be good. There would also be a possible reduction in crime and an additional safety watch for terrorism as well as a reduction in the number of road accidents, which have a human and a monetary cost. Therefore, I fully support this manifesto, but how long will it take to get everyone on board? I know that you are looking to publish it in draft form soon after this committee meeting.

You also suggest in your paper that perhaps a simpler version should be made available to the public, so that it knows what is going on. That is a really good idea. Are you hoping that your partners, such as the Welsh Assembly Government, would help you with the publicity campaign to get that across to the public? It is important that the public knows why these changes are happening.

Finally, I have two points. You have identified that one of the big problems on the A55 is that there is nowhere to 'hide', as it were, if there is an accident or a breakdown of any sort. It causes real problems. I have problems, and I hear people in north Wales saying that the slip roads are quite dangerous, such as the Mold slip road. Do you envisage holding talks with the North Wales Trunk Road Agency to seek improvements in that regard? I know that you said that no resource implications are involved, and we are all pretty glad to hear that you have looked at this in the round, to see how existing facilities can be made better. So, perhaps in the longer term, do you envisage identifying the pinch points and having an input into deciding where improvements can be made?

My very final point is that you have made the point that we need to clear up traffic restrictions quickly, and that we need to work on holiday areas when there is no holiday traffic, but I see no mention of the fact that, sometimes, temporary traffic restrictions are put on the A55 and the M4, but they are not taken away when there is no longer any need for them. As a result, drivers like me will be thinking, 'Why is this coned off, and why is there a speed restriction here when it is evident that nothing is happening?'.

Mr Brunstrom: There were a number of points there, and I will try to pick up on all of them, but, if I forget any, perhaps you would remind me. First, on traffic officers, the legislation exists for the Assembly to create the post of a traffic officer. It has not been activated in Wales, but the primary legislation has been passed through Parliament, so it is within your power to create secondary legislation to allow that to happen. In England, a significant injection of cash was given to the Highways Agency by the Treasury, which has not been given to Wales. I am glad that you picked up on my point that we—namely me, our partner agencies and WAG—do not intend for this to cost extra money. We live in the real world, and the situation has changed dramatically. However, we are looking to make the best use of existing resources and existing capabilities, and it would be possible to bring traffic officers into Wales by re-training and upskilling existing staff and giving them those powers.

The particular issue with those powers is the ability to stop, control and direct traffic, which, at the moment, rests only with police officers in Wales, but, in England, it rests with the highways manager, the Highways Agency. It would be the Department for the Economy and Transport here. That is so important for efficient network management. Our roads are increasingly congested, and traffic flow—to pick up on your last point about redundant cones—is enormously important. So, the power is already vested in the Assembly to do this if you wish, and if you and WAG think that it is a sensible idea.

You touched on the economy, and closing the M4 or the A55 has a huge economic impact. I forget the figures, but I think that it is in the order of millions of pounds an hour when any carriageway of the M4 is closed. That is the direct impact on our economy. Those of you who have been caught in these huge, incident-based traffic jams will also know about the huge frustration that they cause.

As for how long it will take to get this started, some of it has already started; we are doing a pilot programme on the A55 in the Conwy area, which was chosen with the Welsh Assembly Government because its road infrastructure is particularly vulnerable due to the tunnels—all tunnels are inherently dangerous—and the specific European legislation. We are already looking, with the Deputy First Minister, to extend that pilot programme to the Gwent area of south-east Wales, for similar reasons. I will touch in a moment on some of the immediate benefits. We are starting already, but I must stress that this is a pilot programme, and one of the reasons that I am here today is because your opinion will be valuable." ["Inaudible."] Yes, absolutely, in my view. I will be extremely keen for the National Assembly for Wales or the Welsh Assembly Government to take that on board. The real message must be one of partnership, with all the public agencies in Wales fitting in to the Wales transport strategy. It is a good strategy, and this is one limb of its implementation.

On improvement, I will not stray off my own ground—I am simply a police officer. However, there is no doubt that there is a need to improve some aspects of the road infrastructure in Wales. That is on our agenda and there is a timetable for that. On the A55, you will have noticed the new cycle bridges going in around the Conwy area, particularly to take a section of the national cycle network off the pavement of a high-speed Euro route. That sort of thing will happen; there are slip road problems, but my role in this as a police officer is to be party to the design and management of such developments. Some of our road engineering work in Wales has not taken sufficient account of the congestion consequences, and to take the very point that you raised, Mrs Mewies, we all have experience of driving past an apparently abandoned set of roadworks after waiting in a queue for half an hour. We must do better—first, in reducing such occurrences, and secondly, in explaining to the public why it is happening. All of us in the public sector can do that. Very often, there is a good reason, but it is not immediately apparent, and sometimes, I have to say, there is not a very good reason.

I think that I have caught most of your points there. Did I miss anything?

Sandy Mewies: I do not think so. Thank you.

Gareth Jones: Diolch yn fawr, brif gwnstabl. Trown yn awr at David Melding.

Gareth Jones: Thank you, chief constable. We now turn to David Melding.

David Melding: I want to talk a bit about something that is not adequately covered, in my view, in the draft manifesto. I appreciate that it is a draft, so perhaps it will receive more attention after our discussion, if Members agree with the points that I will make.

Chief constable, I have a genuine respect for what you have done in getting people to understand that speed kills. You have taken a lot of flak for that, and had withering criticism in the UK press, let alone within Wales. However, the simple truth is that, if you drive too fast, you are engaging in highly risky behaviour. There has been a culture of people believing that you can drive at speed safely. I have never been able to define this, but there are people out there who behave in this manner—somehow they feel that they can regard speed limits as advisory. The stance that you have taken has led to great improvement in enforcement of speed limits, at least. People realise that, over the past 10 years, they have become much more likely to be caught if they speed.

However, most casualties on roads occur in urban areas. The vast majority of casualties or serious injuries occur not on trunk roads, but in urban settings. We still have a culture in urban areas that the car is king, and if a pedestrian sets foot on a road, he or she has to look out. On the continent, the presumption is often the other way around—it is for the driver of a motor vehicle with huge force behind it to take as many precautions as possible. It is much more difficult to police effective driving in urban areas, because when people drive at speed down rat-runs and disobey the laws of the road and so on, it is somewhat difficult to apprehend them. Speed cameras and similar equipment is not so appropriate or effective. That kind of equipment can be used in some urban areas, but I am talking about the places where most accidents involving children occur within urban areas—not necessarily on the main roads, but the back streets.

9.20 a.m.

What should we do to increase the enforcement of law in these areas? Do you agree that perhaps we need a culture shift, where people should not assume that they can drive down any road so that we have rat runs within towns and cities? Some charities have called for a zoning approach to cities, which is used on the continent, so that you cannot get from A to B on a straight line, necessarily, through a residential neighbourhood—you would have to go right around, which is much more inconvenient on being able to get from A to B very quickly. There is a culture that, if you get into a car, the norm is that your rights are almost infringed if you are held in traffic, cannot take the most direct route, or if there are children playing on the street and you have to slow down and so on. Is that not part of what we need to do? Should we not try to shift the culture to ensure that driving a motor car involves great responsibility, and that it does not mean that we have a right to arrive at our destination in the quickest possible time?

Mr Brunstrom: I guess that it will be of no surprise to you to learn that I agree with every word that you have said. The manifesto is intended to direct police officers' attention to their primary tasks, one of which is reducing road casualties. I am interested in your comments as to whether we should expand that—it is there as a draft, as you quite properly say, and we are here to seek your opinion to make it a stronger draft before we go live with it. There will be an all-Wales casualty reduction partnership involving all 22 local authorities, all four police forces, and the Welsh Assembly Government starting on 1 April 2009. It is long overdue. It will enable a Wales-level focus. I believe that it is the Welsh Assembly Government's intention to re-state casualty reduction targets. You are quite right in saying, sir, that our trunk road network is inherently safer rather than being more dangerous. We have a much bigger problem, particularly with child casualties, in built-up areas.

This manifesto will help us, from our side—the police service—to focus on what needs to be done. It has to be a partnership. For example, we do not use play zones and street zoning in the way that you suggest, which is commonplace in much of northern Europe. We scarcely use 20 mph limits. If you go to Scotland, you will see that there are 20 mph limits everywhere, and they work. Slower traffic kills fewer people. The law is exactly the same in Wales but we do not seem to make quite as much use of it yet. I hope that the casualty reduction partnership now working on an all-Wales level with the Welsh Assembly Government will enable that debate to develop over the next few years. The purpose of the manifesto is to say to police officers, 'You must focus on this—it matters; there is little more important in policing than saving human life'. As I said to Mrs Mewies, I entirely agree that a public-facing version of that, with more explanation coming from the casualty reduction partnership as to what that might mean to our life here in Wales, is one of the next steps.

David Melding: Thank you, chief constable, for that full and satisfactory answer.

Gareth Jones: Diolch, brif gwnstabl.

Gareth Jones: Thank you, chief constable.

Christine Chapman would like to pursue one further item on that point.

Christine Chapman: To follow on from David Melding's point, I wanted to talk some more about the education. We have talked about partnership working with local authorities. I just wonder whether there is scope within the manifesto to look more at education before you actually get onto the road. Like many of us, I am very concerned about the loss of life, particularly among young drivers. There is very much a sort of macho culture about speed. I agree entirely with David Melding on this. Jeremy Clarkson programmes instil a sense that speed is king and that this is the appropriate way forward. I do not think that this helps at all. I would like to see much more work done, for example, through partnerships with local authorities to see whether we can try to understand this a little more. Despite all the speed cameras that you have, we need to understand why people think that it is appropriate to drive faster than is necessary. I would welcome your comments on that.

Mr Brunstrom: Again, I agree with everything that you say. My purpose in being here is to receive exactly those comments. I touched upon that expansion of the education concept in the section on road casualty reduction and the casualty reduction partnership, but I will expand on that. Having listened to you and Mr Melding, it occurs to me that it might be useful, Chair, if I were to come back to the committee at some point during the summer to talk, perhaps with some partners, about what the casualty reduction partnership is doing. Education is fundamental to changing our philosophy about and approach to driving, to get rid of that appalling macho image, which I must say is not restricted only to young men, although that is our biggest problem.

We need a different approach to road safety and road driving, and education is fundamental to that. We cannot do that on our own and we would not want to. It needs to be built into our national curriculum, into the way in which we enforce the law, and into the alternatives to prosecution, one of which I touch upon briefly in the manifesto. Therefore, I am delighted to take the point on board, and I will insert a suitable sentence that at least indicates the bigger role that education has to play. However, I must stress that this is intended in the first instance to brief police officers, and secondly to try to trigger a more proactive partnership with other agencies, including the Welsh Assembly Government, to really go at things such as casualty reduction through education rather than talking about it. We need to implement this, and your support in doing so is extremely welcome.

Gareth Jones: Thank you, chief constable. Your offer of a follow-up meeting in the summer is greatly appreciated. It is obviously a very important topic for us.

Jenny Randerson: Good morning, chief constable. I want to return to the issue of the strategic trunk road network and the frustration that I feel that, as you point out, because of our geography, the situation is worse than in England. However, we have been slow to react to it, and I am deeply concerned that, because the Highways Agency does not have the same role in Wales, the same things have not been done here so far, on a general basis, that have happened in England. I note that the manifesto has not yet been adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government, and I would be interested in your comments on why this has not happened, and whether the signs are good. Are you able to give us an idea of the timescale? I ask because, once these pilot projects are completed and the lessons have been learned, we must have the resources in place at this end to ensure that this series of measures is rolled out throughout Wales.

I want to move on to a second issue related to this, to take up the theme that Sandy Mewies raised earlier, namely the issue of the two major routes. I have never had the misfortune to suffer a serious delay on the A55, but I have frequently suffered serious delays on the M4. Only yesterday, there was a major crash that closed the M4 eastbound near Newport and led to people being hours late for work, in addition to the obvious impact on those people involved in the crash. It is an obviously dangerous piece of road. A crash occurring at the wrong time of day can lead to delays as far back as the Heads of the Valleys road. It has amazed me for years that nothing has been done to make that section of road safer. There is the issue of redundant roadworks, which cause congestion and frustration, which in turn lead to bad driving. It always amazes me that we cannot clear our roadworks away as quickly as they do in France, for example, where, the moment they finish working, the bollards are gone.

However, there is another issue, which is the delay in changing the electronic signs that leads people to being so cynical about the electronic signs on major roads that they ignore them. Can you give us some practical information as to how you might speed up that response? It might have been bright and sunny for hours, but the signs still warn you of fog. People ignore the fog signs even when it is foggy. That is obviously dangerous.

9.30 a.m.

I am delighted to hear about the Gwent pilot. Might your camera partnership lead to more cameras on that dangerous section of road? I will have every speed freak in Wales coming down on my head now, but I can never understand why we do not have a phalanx of cameras along there to ensure that people are not speeding. I would like to know in detail why adopting traffic officers in Wales—and why have we not done so—would ensure that things like the road signs and the electronic signs would quickly change, that the road works were cleared away more quickly, as well as ensuring that bad driving is tackled more directly and visibly?

Mr Brunstrom: There are a number of significant and important points there. I will try to start at the beginning and work through them. The Deputy First Minister and I are in close contact with regard to the timescale. We have held back from progressing the manifesto formally because we wanted to give the National Assembly a chance to comment upon it and, I hope, to improve it, as you and a couple of your colleagues have done. So, it will be a slightly different document, following this meeting, than it would have been had we produced it before the meeting. That is rather the purpose. The Deputy First Minister and I will be looking to finalise this document within the next month or so, having received your comments, and have a version available around March. It may be launched formally early in the summer. The reason for this launch date touches upon a couple of the other points that you made. Two traffic management sensors are being developed in Wales at the moment: one at Coryton on the M4, and the other in a brand new building of a very high standard next to the A55 in Conwy, which, if I remember correctly, will be opened formally in May. We may launch the manifesto and the pilot management of the A55 on that occasion. We need to be confident that what we are piloting will work.

I feel that I must jump to the defence of the Welsh Assembly Government by saying that a number of things that the Highways Agency is doing in England are already being done in Wales. This is not just a case of us trying to catch up with England. There is some very good practice already in Wales. We are not looking to copy everything that is being done in England; we are looking to do things better in our context. We are ahead in some things and behind in others. I guess that that is the nature of life. I do not think that we should be ashamed. This is looking at improving an existing system that is already fairly good.

You touched upon two other vitally important things. On incident management, we have not been as good across the whole of the UK at joining up decision making and incident management. As an example, my colleague from the fire service, who I think is speaking to you later on this morning, may touch upon the sort of thing that we could now do in the event of a fatal incident. A road death is always tragic, but, in England and Wales the traditional ways of dealing with a situation where someone has died in a car is to close the road and then spend as much time as we need clearing up: cutting the roof off the car to extricate the person who has, tragically, died. Throughout this time, the road is closed. An alternative method, which employs a bit of lateral thinking, is to put the vehicle on a low-loader, take it to a fire station, where we can do what we need to with some dignity and in privacy, and it means that the road is reopened perhaps an hour earlier than it would otherwise have been. We could think differently while getting the evidence that we need, giving dignity to the deceased and their family, and getting the economy moving again. This can be done by talking more cleverly to each other, taking decisions as a group rather than individually, and working towards a common purpose. There is a huge gain to be made from that.

The advent of the traffic management centres, our pilot scheme for road management and, I hope, the Welsh Assembly Government's decision—with your support—to bring in traffic officers by nominating existing Welsh Assembly Government staff to have these powers will offer those benefits.

Your last point related to speeding, which is a subject dear to my own heart. I agree with you; I know what the situation is like in Gwent. The trunk road network in Northern Ireland is covered by speed-over-distance cameras, which are placed on gantries so that your time is not measured at an instant, as it is with the cameras that we use in Wales, but over a stretch of road that is sometimes up to 20 km long. That is in widespread use in Northern Ireland and in England. We do not use them in Wales, but we should. It is particularly important in fragile areas of the network, such as the M4 in south-east Wales. That is an area on which I have already opened discussions with the Deputy First Minister and it is an area for development. These things are not cheap, but, on the other hand, the consequences of not having them are worse. The impact that it has on driver behaviour is quite astonishing. Those of you who have driven on the motorway network in England will know that everyone drives at the speed that has been set, because they know that they will be caught if they do not. So, the whole thing calms down. The purpose of the calming down is to make the road flow better. Ironically, it works better at 50 mph than it does at 70 mph; there is less risk of congestion. That is an area that we need to explore in more detail in Wales.

Did I catch all of your points, Mrs Randerson?

Jenny Randerson: Yes. Thank you very much.

Gareth Jones: Thank you very much, chief constable. Before I invite Nerys Evans to ask the next question, you raised in response to Jenny's question the point about Welsh Assembly Government involvement with the draft manifesto and the way in which that relates to the workings of this particular committee. You kindly offered to pass on our recommendations or suggestions. I will now invite the clerk to explain the possible options as far as this committee is concerned and how we can relate those to you on finalising the manifesto.

Dr Jenkins: The officials supporting the committee are extremely grateful to the chief constable for his assistance, advice and co-operation in planning and managing this particular session this morning. The committee had an opportunity to influence the draft strategy by making recommendations to the chief constable and to the Welsh Assembly Government with regard to future policies and the form of the final manifesto. As always, we are in the hands of Members as to how they wish to proceed. However, if Members are content, following this scrutiny session, a short report will be drafted quickly. I have already noted a handful of recommendations that could usefully be made to both the chief constable and the Welsh Assembly Government. We will possibly table those for the meeting that will be held a fortnight today. This will then be sent to the chief constable and the Deputy First Minister as soon as possible if Members are content.

Gareth Jones: Diolch yn fawr iawn am hynny, Kath.

Gareth Jones: Thank you very much for that, Kath.

That is the situation as far as we are concerned, chief constable. We hope to communicate further with you in the near future.

Mr Brunstrom: That is helpful; thank you.

<p>Nerys Evans: Diolch yn fawr am y cyflwyniad a'r papurau; yr oeddent yn hynod ddiddorol. Mae nifer o bwyntiau pwysig wedi cael eu gwneud yn barod ynglŷn ag addysg, ac edrychaf ymlaen at glywed mwy gennyh ar hynny.</p>	<p>Nerys Evans: Thank you very much for the presentation and the papers; they were extremely interesting. A number of important points have already been made with regard to education, and I look forward to hearing more from you on that.</p>
<p>Mae gennyf ychydig gwestiynau. Sut bydd y bartneriaeth camerâu diogelwch i Gymru gyfan a fydd yn dechrau ar 1 Ebrill yn arwain y ffordd er mwyn cyrraedd y targed o leihau nifer y damweiniau ar y ffyrdd?</p>	<p>I have a couple of questions. How will the all-Wales partnership on safety cameras that will begin on 1 April take the lead in meeting the target of reducing the number of accidents on the roads?</p>
<p>Yn ail, mae'n amlwg mai rhan annatod o'r manifesto yw cydweithio gyda Llywodraeth y Cynulliad. A fyddwch yn wynebu rhwystrau gan nad yw cyfrifoldeb dros yr heddlu wedi ei ddatganoli i Lywodraeth y Cynulliad? A fyddai'n haws pe bai hynny'n digwydd? Sut fyddwch yn goresgyn unrhyw broblemau a ddaw yn sgil hynny?</p>	<p>Secondly, it is obvious that an integral part of the manifesto will be co-operation with the Welsh Assembly Government. Will there be difficulties as responsibility for the police is not devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government? Would it be easier if that were the case? How will you overcome any problems that arise as a result?</p>

Mr Brunstrom: I will answer in English, if I may. I may ask you to clarify the second question.

The partnership for casualty reduction is a non-statutory one. Wales is receiving a grant of around £8 million or so from the Treasury to support partnership working. With the knowledge and the support of the Welsh Assembly Government, we have created an all-Wales partnership between the 22 local authorities and the police service, because we have a huge amount of joint working to do here.

9.40 a.m.

As I said to Mrs Chapman, much of the local authority side of that is based on an education programme to try to change behaviour. This is not just about enforcement and speed cameras; it is a casualty reduction partnership, which involves the voluntary collaboration of the various partners. It does not have statutory backing. We are working to targets set in London by the Department for Transport, which will run out in 2010. The power to set targets is now devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government and the Deputy First Minister has made clear in writing his intention to set new targets for the years following 2010.

That process has scarcely started and I cannot say with confidence how the Welsh Assembly Government or the Assembly will handle it. We are keen to see it and we are fully engaged in the process, but it is early days. As we say, it is only the beginning of 2009 and our current targets will not expire until next year, but there is a real opportunity here to do something different in Wales. As Mr Melding said, there is the potential to change how we look at driving in urban areas through the target-setting approach, which is tried and tested and is extremely successful internationally. We do not have to do what they are doing in England; the Scots are already ploughing their own furrow. The concept works and the idea of collaboration in Wales will work extremely well and there is an exciting opportunity here to set some inspirational—and not just aspirational—targets to reduce road deaths. Does that answer your first question sufficiently?

Nerys Evans: Yes, that is great. Policing has not been devolved to the Assembly and co-operation of the Assembly Government is a central theme of the manifesto, so my second question was whether the fact that policing has not been devolved creates any problems on accountability or effectiveness of the manifesto?

Mr Brunstrom: I am pleased to say that I understood your question the first time, but thank you for repeating it. I thought I might have missed a point, but I had not. However, I will continue to answer in English if I may.

I do not think that it causes any problems to us, but it might cause problems to you as an Assembly if we decided to do something different that did not fit in with your views or with the views of the Welsh Assembly Government. Given that we are a non-devolved agency, it is theoretically possible for us to decide not to co-operate with the Assembly. There would then be some kind of constitutional log-jam, if not a crisis. We are keen to avoid that and, at the moment, we see no cause for constitutional difficulties. Our working relationship with the Welsh Assembly Government, and I hope with the Assembly, is extremely well thought of on our side, as I hope it is on both sides. It is very powerful and I think that it is delivering. However, underneath it, there is a risk of us saying, 'We do not agree with you, so we are going to go and do our own thing'. Clearly, that would not be helpful and nor would it be good news for Wales. However, that risk is there and chief constables in law are quite independent people. The four chiefs in Wales are all determined to collaborate in this way, but you could conceive of a situation where we had four chief constables who did not want to collaborate. We would then be in a different situation. However, the simple answer to your question is that there is no problem here at all because things are working smoothly.

Jeff Cuthbert: Good morning, chief constable, and thank you very much for your written submission and for what you have said this morning. I agree absolutely that education is crucial in this regard. With some of the new formal educational initiatives such as the foundation phase and the 14-19 learning pathways, why should we not look to incorporate good practice on defensive driving in projects in a structured way so that children, as they grow up and become adolescents and then adults, can be imbued with better practices than their parents, by and large? It is also true that if you encourage more people to use public transport and take part in car sharing, you are bound to reduce the number of incidents on the road. However, that may be a separate matter.

I listened to you on the radio as I was driving in this morning, just after 7 a.m. You were being interviewed about tackling anti-social behaviour on the road—item 5 in your written submission—and you were asked a question about the issuing of anti-social behaviour orders to poor drivers. Naturally, I was concentrating on my driving so I did not hear the interview too closely, but you seemed to be rebutting that suggestion. Could clarify whether you see a role for ASBOs in that regard?

The final point that I want to make is that, on joined-up thinking, you are aware of the draft proposal for an LCO on traffic-free routes that the committee is considering and I wonder whether you see that as integral to the achievement of what you have outlined in your manifesto. Do you think that the two are clearly linked?

Mr Brunstrom: I pick up again, loud and clear, the need to expand our comments on education here and I am grateful to you for the opportunity to reinforce them. I was very disappointed with the BBC this morning. Its approach was negative. I kept getting asked the question, 'Whose fault is it?' and I do not want to work with fault, I want to work with improvement, so I found that disappointing. We have never talked about using ASBOs on the road, although the legislation does apply. Our intention, which I may need to clarify as a result of your question, was to tackle anti-social behaviour such as close following, aggressive driving, stupid and dangerous driving, and behaviour that relates to what we call 'observed due care', such as people who are driving while using a mobile telephone—all sorts of anti-social behaviour. There is a lot of legislation to deal with that. We can now seize vehicles from people who persistently drive in an anti-social manner, for instance, and theoretically at least we could use an anti-social behaviour order. I do not think that one has ever been granted for bad driving, but there is no reason why it could not be. However, we were not trying to create the impression that we were going to be throwing anti-social behaviour orders around the country and if I have given that impression, I apologise, because that is not the impression we wanted to give. We recognise that there is a real call from the public for live police officers to tackle bad behaviour on the roads—not everything can be done via a road sign, a cone or a speed camera. There is a need for human beings to interact with each other and for us to be visibly present to provide reassurance. All of that is part of tackling anti-social behaviour.

Your last point was on the proposal for an LCO. I had picked up the Deputy First Minister's recent comments in the press and, in fact, I have discussed the issue with him. I remain firmly of the view, in line with the evidence that I gave you previously, that the proposals for traffic-free routes are valuable and should be pursued in one way or another. On your particular point, I would want to use the word 'deconfliction'. There is still a problem with mixing our traffic in a way that causes danger. I mentioned earlier the rather odd arrangement whereby one of the national cycle routes goes down the pavement of a high-speed European route in Conwy. If any of you tried to use it, I can assure you that you will not feel reassured. There are other such examples; I will keep to north Wales as that is the area that I know best. Around Capel Curig, on the A5, we are forcing pedestrians and horse riders down a trunk road without a pavement because simple things have not been done to join together traffic-free routes to keep pedestrians, children and horses out of the way of heavy-goods vehicles from Spain. I think that the concept of deconfliction, which is alive and well in much of western Europe, has not really taken root in the UK, as we were discussing with Mr Melding previously. So, yes, I think that there is a connection between the traffic-free routes concept and things that we ought to do to improve road safety. I remain convinced that Wales will be better off with an organised network of traffic-free routes for several reasons, one of which is road safety.

<p>Gareth Jones: Diolch yn fawr, brif gwnstabl. Yr ydym yn dod yn awr at derfyn y rhan hon o'r sesiwn graffu ac, ar ran y pwyllgor, diolchaf yn arbennig i chi am eich cyfraniad. Bu yn hynod ddefnyddiol i ni fel pwyllgor. Yr wyf hefyd yn ddiolchgar i'r clerc am egluro'r sefyllfa o ran lle yr ydym ar hyn o bryd a'r hyn y byddwn yn ei wneud mewn perthynas â'r maniffesto.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: Thank you very much, chief constable. We are now approaching the end of this part of the scrutiny session and, on behalf of the committee, I thank you for your contribution. It has been extremely useful to us as a committee. I am also grateful to the clerk for explaining the situation with regard to where we are at the moment and what we will be doing in relation to the manifesto.</p>
<p>9.50 a.m.</p>	
<p>Byddwn yn cysylltu â chi gyda'n hawgrymiadau, ac mae'n bosibl y bydd yr adroddiad a'r awgrymiadau, yn unol â dymuniad yr Aelodau, yn cael eu trafod yn y Senedd hefyd. Bydd sylw ac amlygrwydd pellach i'r materion pwysig yr ydym wedi eu trafod y bore yma.</p>	<p>We will contact you about our suggestions, and it is possible that the report and the suggestions, in accordance with Members' wishes, will also be discussed in the Senedd. The important issues that we have discussed here this morning will receive further attention and prominence</p>

On behalf of the Members, I thank you very much indeed for your contribution. It has been particularly useful to us and interesting. We look forward to the follow-up meeting some time in the summer.

Mr Brunstrom: Thank you very much, sir. We will have a better manifesto as a result of this meeting. I look forward to your comments. Thank you for your time and for this opportunity.

<p>Gareth Jones: Symudwn ymlaen i groesawu cynrychiolwyr yr Asiantaeth Gwasanaethau Cerbydau a Gweithredwyr. Croeso cynnes iawn, Mark Warden, pennaeth ymgysylltu â rhanddeiliaid a chyfarwyddwr y rhaglen ofodi.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: Let us now welcome the representatives from the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency. We extend a warm welcome to Mark Warden, the head of stakeholder engagement, and enforcement programme director.</p>
--	--

I also welcome David Collings, who is area manager Wales for the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency.

Thank you for the written evidence that you have presented to us. We will not seek a presentation from you this morning as we have read the written evidence. Instead, we will go straight to Members for their questions. Sandy Mewies has the first question.

Sandy Mewies: Mine is a brief question. I am pleased to see co-operation between the agencies; it is excellent. Something that has caused me and others concern in recent times is the fact that, on the A55, which goes through my patch, we are stopping lorries from abroad that are showing signs of serious problems, but there is little that we can do. I know that an on-the-spot penalty system will be introduced, but how easy will it be to operate? I am concerned for the safety of the people who will have to operate the system, given some anecdotal evidence. How easy will it be to operate, and will it deter this?

We must also not forget that chief constable Brunstrom told us on a previous occasion that it is not just lorry drivers from abroad who are causing problems. This is extra work for you, but I am assuming that there will be no detriment effect on the checks that are already done on heavy goods vehicles on the M4 and the A55 in particular, although problems are caused in other areas, too. In north Wales, I see a lot of HGVs—I am sure that the Chair does, too—using roads that are totally unsuitable.

Mr Warden: I will give you the background to why we are going down the fixed penalty route for truck drivers. Within Britain, we have an operator compliance risk score, and every truck operator has a red, an amber or a green marking. That helps VOSA operatives to target their work, as we know which ones to stop at roadside inspections.

For non-domestic vehicles that come in to GB, we do not have any records. I have supplied some pictures for you to look at. We can put up prohibition notices which effectively take these vehicles off the road, but in reality what tends to happen is that drivers will wait until VOSA officers have finished their work and then drive off again—it is not uncommon for them to drive off with the defect. Fixed penalties should overcome that. They are a deterrent. The work that we currently do focuses on the symptoms, and a large part of my work within the enforcement synergy programme focuses around prevention. It is about what we can do with operators that are ignorant of the rules, and what we can do in partnership with organisations such as the Highways Agency, Traffic Wales, the police and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to explain what the GB experience is when these vehicles come here. It is about educating the red-rated operators to be green-rated operators.

So, that is where the enforcement programmes have taken us, and I particularly welcome the opportunity to speak to the committee because my work focuses on partnership arrangements. Agencies that have the same targets as we do are looking for the same benefits. For example, the Highways Agency runs the network and we are responsible for the trucks and buses that use that network. Most of our work focuses on what happens when we find defects or what happens after an accident. To me, that is the wrong way round. If there are operators out there that are ignorant of the rules, or new to the business or have new drivers that have just received vocational licences, we should be helping them as much as we can to get them up to speed with what is expected when they drive on our network.

We have been in this game for about 40 years, and we know that non-compliant operators will always exist. A hard core of operators will remain red—they will never try to become green, and they will always look for the opportunity to bend the rules. I have gone a long way around to get there, but to come back to the point, fixed penalties will help us. If it gets all of the truck drivers talking about the money coming out of their pockets, whereas before they would just wait until we disappeared and drive off, then that is something. Fixed penalties are not meant to be used for everyone—they are for the serial non-compliant operator that disregards the rules.

Christine Chapman: To add to Sandy's point, we have talked about drivers from other countries, and I am not saying that this is true for all countries, but I have been told that other countries may deal differently with those drivers. For example, we could be quite strict in the UK but other countries may not be so strict. It is a concern that has been expressed to me by the industry. Is any work being done internationally on this, because it is a huge concern?

Mr Warden: The enforcement synergy programme works primarily with the Highways Agency, because it is on highways that the highest levels of people are killed and seriously injured. Therefore, we are working with it. We have spoken to Traffic Wales and Transport Scotland about being part of the enforcement programme. I was in France last week to discuss how defective vehicles from the eastern bloc, for example, can travel so far without being picked up, and why it is Britain that is picking up these defective vehicles. Why are we seeing these vehicles have accidents on our network? Enforcement on mainland Europe is a bit fragmented—different member states do different things. Within Great Britain, we will look for mechanical defects, for instance, and our examiners are trained heavy goods vehicle mechanics, whereas on the continent the function is normally left to police officers who are not trained in construction and use regulations.

10.00 a.m.

You will see four different pictures of mechanical defects, but when people looked at those vehicles, perhaps they would not see that they have no brakes, for instance. A police officer who had not received sufficient training would look at that vehicle at the side of the road and not know that it had no brakes. Our examiners are trained to look for that type of thing, but, on the continent, they look for offences relating to drivers' hours, and on-the-spot fines are issued for tachograph offences. So, it does happen there, but perhaps it is not as rigid or as good as our record. We have a good road-safety record, and we should bear that in mind.

Gareth Jones: Do you want to come in on any of the points so far, David?

Mr Collings: We fully support the road policing manifesto and its range. We look forward to developing our special working relationship with the police and other partner agencies. Mark touched briefly on the fact that we have just been given £24 million as part of the highways traffic initiative, but what does that mean for Wales? It means that we will have two dedicated teams on the A55: one based at Ewloe, and one at Holyhead. High-visibility vehicles will police those roads in conjunction with the North Wales Police. In south Wales, on the M4, we are looking to base a permanent team on a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week shift rota at Coldra in Newport. We realise the part that we must play on the strategic road network to tackle the problems with these large goods vehicles. We often see them broken down on the side of the road, and that causes massive congestion for all other road users. If we can focus on those vehicles and stop them from breaking down on the road, hopefully, we can alleviate matters for the general public.

Gareth Jones: We now turn to David Melding for the next question.

David Melding: I have a question on the data. I am surprised to see—if I have read it correctly—that the number of checks carried out over the past three years for which there are figures has gone down from 112,000 to 96,000. Why is that, when the prohibition rate has increased significantly, not only for international drivers, but also for UK vehicles?

Mr Warden: Earlier, I touched on the fact that, over the past few years, we have developed an operator compliance risk score. Before we had the risk score, we were reliant on examiners' local knowledge about which vehicles to stop, namely those that they had stopped in the past and that had had defects. The compliance risk score is on the database for all our examiners at roadside checks. We can flag up the vehicles that are using the network, and we know which ones we want to target. In the past, we might have pulled in 10 trucks and got one; now, we are pulling in just the vehicles that we want to see, although there will always be additional checks on green operators to keep them green. Therefore, the rate of our overall inspections has come down, but the rate of our overall prohibition notices has gone up. VOSA is trying to let the good operators operate and target the non-compliant operators and make it difficult for them until they comply, too.

David Melding: Are there any Welsh data?

Mr Warden: We can pull out Welsh-only data, but I do not have them with me, as I was not asked to bring them. However, I can—

David Melding: It would be useful if you could send us a note.

Mr Warden: My colleague, Dave Collings, may have a spreadsheet with him about road checks in Wales, from our statistics analysis unit, so I will pass you over to him.

Mr Collings: I can get some data, and I do have some figures here on the checks that we have been carrying out. In 2007, say, for the A494 at Ewloe, we carried out 107 HGV checks and roadworthiness checks. This year, we carried out 357 checks, which is a significant increase for the high-risk road network. The prohibition rate has also gone up: in the past, it was 33 per cent, but it has now gone up to 50 per cent. That is down to the better targeting that Mark touched on. So, we are trying to increase the number of checks that we are carrying out both on the M4 corridor, and on the A55 corridor up here in north Wales.

Gareth Jones: Thank you, David. Will you pass that information on to the committee?

Mr Collings: Yes, we can submit that information to you.

Jeff Cuthbert: You may have heard my questions to the chief constable a few minutes ago. There is just one thing that I would like to lift out from that discussion. Unless I have missed it, you do not appear to have mentioned in your written submission—for which I am very grateful—whether your organisation has a role to play in educating this and the next generation of drivers, or whether, together with the police and the fire service, in a partnership arrangement, you have a role to play in improving attitudes.

Mr Warden: I can give you an example of something that we did in Edinburgh a few years ago. An area manager and his team ran an education package for 16 and 17-year-olds at school, focusing particularly on young boys—and we all know the reputation of young male drivers, and the statistics that sit behind that. We ran a two-hour session with them covering the deepest joy of passing your test, buying your first car, and all the fancy kit that you can get, and then we started talking about the conditions of vehicles, the effects of speeding, and the effects of accidents. Some of the slides that we showed them were quite graphic. It was not meant to alarm or terrify them; it was just to make them think. We did so using quite a light touch; it was quite a humorous two hours. We really interacted with the young lads, and I think that that got the message home; it was well received. VOSA has never run that nationally. I think that it comes down to the fact that we do not have a budget and that we are not paid to do that. Someone else is probably paid to do that, and it was not a core function of VOSA's. I would love to have the opportunity to deliver that education, or at least to play a part in any education programme that we can roll out.

Jeff Cuthbert: Clearly, from what you say, your organisation does not offer it here in Wales. You said that someone else might offer it. It would be useful for us to know whether something similar is offered in Wales, because it seems highly relevant, to me.

Mr Warden: Perhaps Dave Collings can pick up on that.

Mr Collings: Yes, could I come in on that? First, with drivers' hours, we produce DVDs in loads of different languages, and we hand them out on ferries and include them with the trade press, and so forth. We are trying to educate the drivers of large goods vehicles. Secondly, as for what we do with young car drivers, we work in conjunction with the local councils. We go to speak to pupils in schools, trying to tell them about modifying a car and what effect it has. We do that on a slightly ad-hoc basis, but we seem to be getting into that more and more in Wales. We are trying to play that role more actively, where we can, with the councils.

Gareth Jones: Thank you, David. Does that cover your question, Jeff?

Jeff Cuthbert: Yes.

Gareth Jones: It is a very important point. On the manifesto, I think that we can make a significant contribution in respect of that point pertaining to education in general. We certainly need to bear that in mind. Thank you for that.

Jenny Randerson: My question relates to the statistics. I am very pleased to hear about the new centres at Coryton and Holyhead. I have always been particularly concerned about the A55 because it is such a major international route. Your statistics show the particular dangers of some of the foreign vehicles. When you gave us the absolute numbers of vehicles checked, I noted that the numbers were very low as a percentage of the total. In other words, if you are a lorry driver travelling along the M4, the A55, or any other road in Wales, you know that you have a very low chance of being stopped. Given that you are talking about your targeting strategy, and that you basically know which vehicles are the dangerous ones if you are putting a prohibition notice on such a high percentage of them, you must be very good at knowing which the dangerous vehicles are. Are you aware of a significant numbers of dangerous vehicles that you do not have the resources to stop and deal with? Is there a significant lack of resources?

10.10 a.m.

Mr Warden: Last year, we received £24 million from the Treasury following a pilot initiative in the south east, which looked at high-risk vehicles on international journeys. We made a good case that we needed more examiners to deal with the amount of non-compliance that there is. That £24 million pays for stopping vehicles and check sites, but, in the main, it paid for an additional 120 to 140 enforcement staff. A lot of those have been trained and are now working in and around the ports and also on the network. We can forever get more staff if we intend always to focus on the symptoms, but if we intend to focus on looking for defective vehicles, we would need a lot more staff.

The enforcement programme that we are considering is to try to get a technical solution to the examination of vehicles. A full examination could take up to an hour, particularly when dealing with a defective truck. However, to get to the really non-compliant vehicles, we need to churn through quite a lot, because, even though we have the compliance risk score for GB operators, we do not have a risk score for non-domestic vehicles. We are looking to introduce a technical solution at each port, which would include video-camera technology—a bit like that used at embassies—to undertake under-vehicle examinations, where cameras flash up the sides of a vehicle to look for insecure loads. We have also sourced some heat-sensing equipment that fits into this solution, and which looks out for overheated or cold brakes. The overheated brakes would not be such a great problem for us, but cold brakes would, because it would indicate to us that there is nothing happening with the brakes. Drivers' tachograph recording equipment can also be downloaded very quickly. So, we are trying to get a technological solution rather than a resource solution, and the key to that are the prevention and education packages. Prevention will always come first, with technical solutions, and then the resource solution will be required for the non-compliant.

Andrew R.T. Davies: First, you were talking about some very sophisticated equipment there. Will that be made available across the country at all your inspection points, or will it be gradually rolled out, and will it take a considerable time for Wales to receive the benefit of such equipment? Secondly, given the competitive nature of business during any recession—and Jenny mentioned resources pressure on costs and so on—I presume that you will see more infringements because, sadly, one thing that falls by the wayside at such a time is investment in plant and machinery, and safety.

Mr Warden: I will address your first point first. This enforcement programme is now at business-case level and should go to the department by April. The department will then decide whether it is worthwhile going ahead with, or whether we should stay with what we already have. The department will make the call on that.

Andrew R.T. Davies: You say that you have sourced the equipment, so, for a business case, you have identified this equipment but you have not had the go-ahead to bring it to front-line usage. Is that right?

Mr Warden: Yes. I was at a meeting at the Home Office yesterday with the UK Border Agency and the ports' stakeholders, and so ports such as Holyhead were represented. We want to work in partnership with those stakeholders to ensure that the programme takes account of everyone, and Dave is very well aware of the press coverage that we get when we enforce at a port. It has an impact on local communities and on local businesses, and we need to be proportionate about what we do and where we do it. Holyhead is the key to our enforcement work, and to achieve a reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured on the English and Welsh network.

A lot of transit traffic comes from Dover across to Holyhead and exits to Ireland, and vice versa. Enforcement is going well at Holyhead, but we are aware that we could do better in south Wales. These vehicles are either travelling up through Wales to get to Holyhead, or they are going up the M6 and coming across. So, there are some things that we need to look at, but Wales is part of the UK synergy programme. We would be looking to put the technology into every port. If we did not do so, then we would simply shift the non-compliance elsewhere. If we fitted the technology in Holyhead but not in Liverpool, the non-compliant operators—or perhaps all operators—might go to Liverpool, which would affect Holyhead. We simply cannot do that kind of thing. We must be fair to all the ports that take goods vehicles.

Andrew R.T. Davies: If the business case is accepted, would this be rolled out across the UK, rather than introduced on a staged basis? As you rightly say, if the technology is not installed at all ports, then you will just be shifting the problem around. Does the business case envisage the technology being installed at all ports simultaneously? What is the timeframe for implementation?

Mr Warden: What we need to do is to chop this piece of work up. We would be looking for the Highways Agency to pick up some of the capital funding for this equipment, so we would be looking for a high throughput. However, the first stage would involve Dover and the Eurotunnel. I have spoken to colleagues at Traffic Wales about being part of the programme. Those that do not have the funding for this equipment are seeking partnership arrangements with other stakeholders and agencies, so that we can work together to supply some capital funding to allow us to put this technical solution in place. However, the first stage would involve implementation at the high-volume English ports, and we would then look to develop our relationship and get into partnership with Traffic Wales. We have also had discussions with Transport Scotland and colleagues over in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland could do a lot more to stop these vehicles coming into Wales and Scotland in the first place. So, after this goes for approval in April, the first stage would address the English ports.

Andrew R.T. Davies: When would Wales come on board?

Mr Warden: We would need our Welsh colleagues to buy into what we are trying to do. We would need Traffic Wales to say, 'Yes, that is a good enforcement programme, we want to be part of it, and we are interested in these reductions'. For the Highways Agency and Traffic Wales, the benefits would be seen in the form of reduced average vehicle delay and congestion on the network. For us, the benefits are around the reductions towards the killed and seriously injured targets. We are working in partnership to meet both aims.

Gareth Jones: Thank you, Mark. That was the final question from Members. David, do you have any further comments?

Mr Collings: I wanted to pick up on one point. You touched on what the highways traffic initiative means for Wales. North Wales has two teams out on the A55, working 24 hours a day, seven days a week. South Wales has a team at the Coldra junction of the M4. Over the next few years, we are looking to increase staffing, and there will be a high presence at both locations, which is a deterrent factor on those strategic roads.

Gareth Jones: On that note, I thank you both on behalf of the committee for your time this morning, and for the evidence that you have presented to us. It has been very useful. I believe that I am right in saying that things are becoming clearer on how we relate to this manifesto and its objectives here in Wales. So, many thanks, and best wishes for the important work that you undertake on a daily basis.

10.20 a.m.

Trof yn awr at drydedd rhan y sesiwn graffu. Mae prif swyddog tân cynorthwyol Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub De Cymru, Kevin Barry, yn ymuno â ni. Croeso, Kevin. Diolch am eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig—yr ydym wedi cael cyfle i'w darllen. Ni fyddwn yn gofyn am gyflwyniad gennych, ond gallwch ymhelaethu ar unrhyw agwedd ar gwestiynau'r Aelodau. Jeff Cuthbert sydd am ofyn y cwestiwn cyntaf.

I now turn to the third part of our evidence session. South Wales Fire and Rescue Service's assistant chief fire officer, Kevin Barry, joins us. Welcome, Kevin. Thank you for your written evidence, which we have had a chance to read. We will not ask you to give a presentation, but you may expand if you wish on any aspect of Members' questions. Jeff Cuthbert has the first question.

Jeff Cuthbert: Good morning and thank you for the written evidence. The points that I want to concentrate on are in the section marked 'Enforce the law'. You talk about education as being perhaps the first step in enforcement, and I can see the logic in that. In your second paragraph, you refer to things like providing dedicated youth services, children services and partnership officers to support the aims of the manifesto. Could you expand a little on that? What type of education do you provide in schools? Children are the next generation of drivers, if you like. Is this education provided in a structured way or is it a bit ad hoc? What scope do you see, perhaps in partnership with others, for improving understanding and encouraging better habits as those younger people become adults and drivers in their own right?

Mr Barry: First, I would like to thank you for the invitation. For the fire and rescue service to be involved in a committee like this on the subject of road safety indicates how far we have come in this field, moving beyond our traditional rescue response role in accidents.

Until very recently, the answer to that question would have been that it is extremely ad hoc. The three fire and rescue services in Wales had adopted educational programmes with a great deal of passion and commitment, and in the belief that people were doing the right thing. However, few of those were very well evaluated and the targeting of individuals was left to people with local knowledge. A little while ago, I took the lead on the Chief Fire Officers Association's road safety work stream in Wales, and, as a group involving the three fire and rescue services, we tried to bring some strategic guidance to what we were trying to do. Late last year we wrote a fire service educational strategy, which the three fire and rescue services signed up to. That has given us the impetus to look outside and inside Wales to find good practice and to see what we could adopt on an all-Wales basis.

We have identified one of those programmes. It was originally designed and delivered in Merseyside, but it has gone through a full evaluation by the University of Liverpool. Just last week, my colleagues from that group and I presented our idea about how the fire and rescue service could deliver that programme. It is a structured programme, and it has undergone a degree of redesign to make it useful in Wales, because our research and evidence show that educational programmes are best received if they are delivered with a regional bias. I am glad to say that the road safety officers of all 22 unitary authorities have signed up and committed to work in partnership on that. We are now at the stage where we can present a business case to the Assembly—as the fire and rescue service is a devolved matter—in order to create the funding capacity to develop that programme. With a very small number of dedicated staff, we will be in a position to deliver to all year 11 students across Wales. As the programme is designed to be flexible, we will also have the capacity to use the programme for compliant and non-compliant audiences, by taking away some of the elements of the programme for compliant audiences and by adding elements for non-compliant audiences. So, it is a suitable programme to take into schools, because the first stage of this education is about understanding the consequences of inappropriate road behaviour, and you could also then take it into young offenders' institutions or to use with people who have a disturbing driver history.

I think that we are on the cusp of moving from good intentions to well thought out strategy and delivery. The manifesto gives us an opportunity to ensure that we develop that further in future, so it is a positive outlook on road safety. There are plenty of people in Wales who are committed to it, plenty of people with high levels of knowledge and understanding and massive enthusiasm, and there is a huge recognition that road safety is an issue for us. I do not think that we need legislation to force us into collaborative working. I think that there is a desire to do that. In the true sense of collaboration, there are partnerships coming together and recognising what they can commit.

One thing that concerns me as a relative newcomer to the road safety business—we have certainly not been around as long as road safety officers in this arena—is that the last thing we need is get into an arm wrestle over curriculum time. Earlier, I noticed that my colleagues from VOSA were asked whether they were involved in road safety education. Almost every organisation involved in road safety would like to be part of an education strategy. However, what we need to recognise is that there is not an opportunity for every organisation to get curriculum time, and that there are certainly not enough opportunities for every organisation to deliver its preferred package on road safety. From the perspective of a relatively fresh pair of eyes, the real benefit will be all of the organisations that have done such good work in the past coming together to deliver one evaluated, high-quality package that all partnerships sign up to and support. That is the way that we should go in Wales.

Jeff Cuthbert: That is extremely encouraging, and we would certainly want to be kept informed of progress. I take your point about finding a slot in the curriculum. With some of the ways in which we are developing education in Wales you may not be able to teach road safety, but thinking of the key skills of problem-solving, improving upon learning and performance and team working, it cannot be beyond our wit to design projects that could incorporate these things and provide evidence of the achievement of the key skills, for example. So I think that what you are saying is very encouraging.

Mr Barry: Thank you.

Christine Chapman: On the education side, we have talked a great deal about speed today, but there is also the issue of understanding your vehicle. I am thinking of things such as defective tyres and MOTs not being done. I am concerned, because we are in a recession, about whether there could be an increase in the numbers of people driving about in defective vehicles because of finance as well as other factors. Again, I am not addressing this particularly to young drivers; this goes across the board. While we are on the subject of education and thinking of the point that Jeff was making, should there be more of a campaign to get people to understand the potential hazards of driving a vehicle. To be honest, most people who drive cars do not really understand how they work and there are more and more cars on the roads, so that also heighten the dangers. Is there scope for a wider campaign on people taking responsibility for their vehicles, because their not doing so is another factor that could lead to accidents?

Mr Barry: The short answer to that is definitely 'yes', although the statistics always bring us back to the profile of drivers among whom accidents generally occur. Drivers aged between 17 and 25 hold 10 per cent of the driving licences held in this country, but account for something like 30 per cent of the killed and seriously injured statistics. Those accidents generally do not come down to the driver's knowledge or skill with regard to their vehicle. It is important not to demonise everyone in that age group—not everyone is out there racing around and behaving in an anti-social way—and we were all young once and we all held a licence for the first year once. However, there is a gap in knowledge and experience at that age about how a car behaves differently in different conditions, when its tyres are not correctly inflated or when it is loaded or overloaded with passengers, as well as about their own reactions when they are tired. There is a definite gap in the education programme on that.

10.30 a.m.

From a fire and rescue services point of a view, compared with probably no more than 10 years ago, there is a definite concern among the senior management teams of the three fire services in Wales that the recession will lead to an increase in business, not only around road safety but around deliberate fire setting and arson. As economic circumstances impact on people and leaves them unable to spend the money that they would have spent a few months ago keeping vehicles up to scratch, there will be a definite need to do this. Smart thinking would mean getting in front of that problem, rather than waiting for it to happen.

Sandy Mewies: Most of my questioning is around this subject. I am extremely impressed, as I am sure is everybody else, with the way in which organisations are co-operating on this. You have made an excellent point. It is difficult to get into a curriculum, whatever the curriculum is and whatever age group it is, and it would make sense for a package to be delivered through the different age groups by agencies co-operating and coming up with the best package, as that will save resources as well as anything else. I assume that you would use expertise from all the agencies to produce that. I have seen prison officers showing pictures and describing to young people in sixth forms—and indeed younger people than that—what a prison cell is like, and I can tell you that it put me off, and I have managed to stay out of prison until now. ["Laughter".] Showing people the consequences of actions is an effective way of doing things. Do you think that there are going to be any difficulties in getting that package put together, and is this excellent co-operation going to continue?

I am not going to demonise young drivers, so let us talk about people in all age groups who have just passed their test, and who have never been on the motorway. My son has been looking at passing his test, and when you look at "The Highway Code", it does not look anything like it did when I passed my test many years ago. Some counties such as Flintshire run courses for people who have just passed their test, and there is an insurance benefit in that. Is there any mileage in looking to insurance companies, for example, for sponsorship and so on? I believe that these courses are very valuable for inexperienced drivers. I bet that we all remember the first time we were on the road on our own, having passed the test. It was a scary experience for me then; I cannot imagine what it must be like for people now. Are you doing any work looking at the incentives that there could be for people to build extra safety into their experience?

Mr Barry: On the difficulty in getting the package put together and delivering it in schools, over the last four or five years, colleagues from the fire and rescue services have been building up a very trusted and supportive relationship with local authority road safety officers. Having come in and looked at this over the last couple of years, I can see that there is a definite benefit to bringing some sort of structure to what the road safety officers are delivering. At the moment, they are delivering packages, in some cases, very locally, and some packages have been adapted to meet local need, and that has been a brilliant starting point—there is no doubt about that. Road safety officers already have excellent connections with schools. Most of their projects and programmes are delivered through schools. The value of what the fire service can bring is that it can enhance that programme. We have a huge amount of experience, which has been gained rather quickly, on how fire officers engage with younger people. Nobody has sat down and thought about how we do it, but it happens.

We want to play to our strengths in that area. We already do fire-setter interventions with people who have very difficult habits to break and inappropriate behaviour. Those cognitive behavioural therapy programmes are very resource intensive, but they have a massive impact on individuals and, obviously, one or two people going around doing those sorts of things will have a huge impact on a community. So, targeting our approach at the people who have the greatest impact on a community is something that we can bring to the party, but there has to be recognition that this is not our primary role.

The fire and rescue services have not got to the bottom of home fire safety. Sadly, around 30 people a year die in their homes in Wales as a result of fire. This is something that we can contribute to, but it is not an area that we are looking to take over. It is not where our primary responsibility is, but it is an area that we can contribute to. We have a network in Wales that just needs a little bit more co-ordination. We can do it, but we have to have a high-quality consistent product that people will buy into. They must trust us to deliver it on time, when we say that we are going to do it, and to a high standard, and that we will evaluate the outcome. As I said earlier, if you had asked me that question a year ago, I would probably have sat here scratching my head, saying, 'It is really difficult', but in the last month or so, having worked with Mr Brunstrom's senior traffic group and road safety officers in Wales, I have come to think that the opportunities are there.

In fact, the situation has never looked rosier, with the recognition that we can do something, that the way to do it is through partnership, and that there is buy-in as regards our strength in engaging with young people. Our ability is enhanced, in fact, with people who display difficult behaviour. We are taking a range of educational programmes into schools where children are on the point of exclusion, but not yet excluded. Those programmes are funded by the Assembly. We bring the children to the fire and rescue service and introduce them to the disciplined-team approach. We receive absolutely fantastic feedback from there. If you attend any of the graduation programmes, you will hear parents saying that it was the first time that they had seen their young boy or girl willingly getting out of bed in the morning because it was their day with the fire and rescue service. On hearing that, you realise that the potential is there.

Resources are an issue, obviously, but there is massive potential there. I think that we can do it. In fact, I do not think that there is an option to fail—we have to do it. On the roads of Wales last year, 161 people died and 12,000 people were seriously injured. There is a massive economic and personal impact if we do not do it. So, we are definitely there with it. Sponsorship has always been difficult. We have looked for sponsorship to support fire safety activities in the past, through insurance companies and the like. While there are some insurance companies that see the benefit—and there are actually some private companies that see the benefit of being involved with us—they tend not to be the ones at the cheaper end of the market in any case. So, where there are opportunities to access lower insurance premiums through holding a Pass Plus Cymru qualification, the mass insurance market will offer either a very small discount or no discount at all, which is very disappointing because, apart from anything else, the people who attend those programmes tend to be the ones who want to build their experience quickly, who will be compliant drivers, and who have come to close the experience gap that driving lessons do not fill. The people who attend the course are the most responsible ones and you would hope that the insurance companies would recognise that.

Christine Chapman: May I just clarify something? I know that, a few years ago, the Welsh Assembly Government had a scheme to subsidise young drivers if they did a course—was that the Pass Plus test?

Mr Barry: That was Pass Plus Cymru.

Christine Chapman: Is that scheme still open?

Mr Barry: Yes. It is still open to young drivers up to the age of 24, or it may be 25. The Welsh Assembly Government funded the vast majority of that programme and I believe that it costs around £20 to attend. The idea was that that sum could be recouped from insurance policies. It has been taken up across all unitary authorities, but in some unitary authorities more than others. Again, there is a capacity issue regarding the level of resource that has to be put into it to attract people onto the scheme. I do not think that the committee has time for discussing things like graduated licence schemes and the fact that licences in this country are given away very cheaply. In fact, you can pass your test at 10 a.m. and by 10.05 a.m. you can be in the outside lane of a motorway doing 70 mph despite your lack of experience. That is a bigger issue.

10.40 a.m.	
<p>Nerys Evans: Diolch am eich tystiolaeth. Hoffwn ofyn cwestiynau am fanylder y manifesto. Mae'n amlwg bod y manifesto yn bartneriaeth rhwng Llywodraeth y Cynulliad a'r heddlu yng Nghymru, ond beth oedd eich rôl chi, ac a gawsoch chi ddigon o fewnbwn yn y broses o greu'r manifesto?</p>	<p>Nerys Evans: Thank you for your evidence. I would like to ask questions on the detail of the manifesto. It is clear that the manifesto is a partnership between the Welsh Assembly Government and the police in Wales, but what was your role in this and did you have sufficient input in the process of creating the manifesto?</p>
<p>A gredwch fod fframwaith cenedlaethol Llywodraeth y Cynulliad yn rhoi digon o flaenoriaeth i'r ardaloedd tactegol a gododd yn y manifesto i sicrhau eich bod yn gallu gweithredu yn yr ardaloedd hynny?</p>	<p>Do you think that the national framework of the Welsh Assembly Government sufficiently prioritises the tactical areas noted in the manifesto to ensure that you can act in those areas?</p>

Mr Barry: Recently, the fire and rescue services have had a seat at the senior traffic management officers' board, chaired by Mr Brunstrom. That is a welcome opportunity. So, while the manifesto was already drafted before we took up that position, I personally discussed it with Mr Brunstrom and in his evidence he alluded to a couple of things that we had already started to discuss. So, while we are pretty new to the table, I think that there is an opportunity there. Although it is deliberately written to encourage police officers to give road safety a greater priority, I am encouraged by the wording of the document because I think that in almost every section, there is mention of partnership and new thinking being brought to the table.

However, I think that we need to further develop room for new thinking in operational response and in operational tactics. We already operate to a nationally agreed code of practice when dealing with incidents and emergencies, and the priority is to save lives and get people away from the scene and to accident-and-emergency trauma care as quickly as possible. However, I think that, at times, our tactics could be reviewed. I do some work with the UK element of road safety, which is supported by the Chief Fire Officers' Association, and it is interesting to see some new thinking on using private sector involvement in the clearing of roads and in the operational response to accidents on major roads. One of the most interesting partnerships is that used in Staffordshire where, using the camera network on the motorway, an instant assessment of the needs of an incident is made by the management suite, which dispatches a private sector company to assist in heavy lifting. Lives have been saved by getting heavy lifting units there quickly rather than by waiting for the emergency services to arrive and then to request them. So, that delay is reduced; it would be interesting to develop that in Wales.

Mr Brunstrom spoke about the delay in removing fatalities from vehicles. He mentioned that we could do that at fire stations. However, none of our fire stations is currently equipped to do that, but we could definitely arrange extrication from the scene in a smarter and quicker way with the correct degree of dignity for the deceased and for onlookers. It is also an extremely traumatic event for emergency workers in attendance. So, there is definitely a route to doing that better, which would be of benefit to everyone involved. However, there would be an impact on resources. At the moment, extrication from the scene is definitely something that we should seriously think about, but fire stations are different from what they were a few years ago. They are places where young people interact with our firefighters and where community groups meet, so we would have to consider which fire stations could accommodate that procedure. I would say that, at this stage, even at the end of such a procedure, the vehicle and the casualty would need to be removed from the fire station, so there is probably a more appropriate place to do that. Obviously, evidence would need to be collected when that was going on. So, there is plenty of room for fresh thinking in that context.

The manifesto gives us an opportunity, and I am encouraged by its wording and the recognition from the police services in Wales that an element of making the road safer is down to enforcement. However, there is a world of partnership initiatives in education, in having a different strategy for removing broken-down vehicles, in stopping unsafe loads and in dealing with the serious end of the scale where people are killed or seriously injured. You probably got the gist, which is that we are really excited and willing to help and support this.

Gareth Jones: Nerys had a second point.

Nerys Evans: Mae am y fframwaith cenedlaethol i'ch galluogi i ymgymryd â'r gwaith.

Nerys Evans: It is to do with the national framework to enable you to take up the work.

Mr Barry: The framework recognises the fire and rescue service as a partner in the road safety strategy, and it indicates that we should remain a member of Road Safety Wales. The framework gives us an indication of where we need to go. The framework is written in light of evidence that has been presented over time, and the producers of the framework recognise the extent of our work now. The number of fires in homes has fallen, but for every fire rescue, we do 25 road casualty rescues, so the balance of the fire service's work has shifted considerably.

I said earlier that the war has not yet been won against arson and accidental fires in the home, but there is a fantastic opportunity to make an impact. The framework gives us what we need to work to that end. It is probably not for the committee to discuss or consider, but there are resource implications. The three fire and rescue services would need additional resources to take on road safety education. Operationally, though, we are well equipped in Wales. There has been huge investment in extrication equipment, and the Assembly Government has supported two major events in extrication. Our extrication skills are right up there with the best in the world—we have won extrication challenges across the world on numerous occasions. On our operational activity, we do not need any more help, but to have dedicated staff to deliver high-quality education packages would require more resources, although that would be a minor investment.

Jenny Randerson: I will start with an observation about the driving test. It has always amazed me that, as just about the most safety conscious nation—we are obsessed with safety—we have allowed the driving test to continue unchanged. It is the most lethal thing I can think of. It must be terrifying, as Sandy said.

On the issue of clearing up after traffic accidents and major incidents, Richard Brunstrom and you have outlined ways to speed up the process. I agree totally that it needs to be speeded up, but these are very much operational issues. You have just said that you had a major investment in extrication equipment; what else can the Welsh Assembly Government do to ensure that those aspirations to speed up the removal of vehicles are put into practice?

Mr Barry: The major impact on what we can bring under the manifesto would be to think differently about how we manage the operational aspects. At the moment, our focus is on arriving at the scene as quickly as we can and extricating the casualty as quickly as we can, after which operations tend to slow down. Looking at it more holistically, it should be recognised that from the time of the call to the time of clearance, clearance is what we are really employed to do, and, without losing sight of the humanitarian aspects, there is plenty of room to think differently. I am not sure where the Assembly's powers lie in creating additional roles and responsibilities on the Welsh network, but from my work with colleagues in England, I know that there is a huge amount of support for the highways officers who could co-ordinate some of that work very quickly, which would free-up that responsibility on some occasions from fire officers and police officers at major incidents—they could almost jointly manage every aspect of it. It would be a welcome addition to the holistic view of how we deal with it all.

10.50 a.m.

There has been some difficulty in Wales in the past in awarding contracts to private companies to remove vehicles—there have been some high-profile cases which have caused some difficulty. My personal opinion from a public servant's point of view is that we should not let that get in the way of doing the job properly—it is not beyond our wit to get over that by competitive tendering and by establishing a memorandum of understanding and service delivery standards for those policies to operate now.

We know what we need to deal with the incident—we do not need to go into years of research on it. We need the roadway to be managed so that emergency service workers and other road workers are safe. We need operational intervention from police officers, fire service staff, ambulance staff and paramedic staff to remove the casualties quickly and get them to an accident and emergency department. The final phase of the recovery phase would benefit from private sector involvement. There is an issue about how that would be funded and where the funding would come from, but what I have seen working in a very busy area in England is immediate mobilisation of a company which is involved in training, and which has the right equipment that the fire and rescue service, police force or any other agency does not. It not only has an impact on driver survivability, but it is also there already to clear the roadway. In some cases, it is almost a consecutive activity because some elements of the crash can be cleaned up and removed, while extraction and managing the movement of traffic can be done at the same time. So, there is a gap to be filled, and how it could be filled is an interesting debate.

I would very much doubt that the private sector would be able to fund it on a voluntary basis—some funding would need to be made available. However, it is probably the missing link in Wales at the moment to ensure that we clear things away quickly at the end.

Andrew R.T. Davies: Most of my points have been covered, but I wanted to seek some clarification on a point that Christine made about the recession—I also talked to VOSA about this. I know that you did not throw it in as a glib remark, but you are in the recovery business and you said that you envisaged an increase in business. We have had recessions before—motor cars have been there before. What type of increase do you envisage based on historical patterns and current traffic management? All of that has budgetary implications and implications for disruption and you are bound to have factored an element of increase in the business with which are you involved in your forward planning. As I drive round my region, I do not know whether I just notice it more now, but there seem to be more outlets offering part-worn tyres, which is a typical sign that the financial squeeze is on and that people are looking to reduce costs.

Mr Barry: It is not a long time in the past—we do not have to go back decades to remember what the scrap values for vehicles were. Although we have done a huge amount of work with local authorities to clear abandoned vehicles so that they do not become arson targets, and so on, I believe that the majority of the downturn in that part of the fire and rescue services' operational requirement is because there is a high scrap value and people are not abandoning cars—they are taking them to the scrap yard because they are getting £45 to £50 a car. If that is not an outlet for vehicles, they will be left around and taken and driven away, and they will be abandoned and set on fire. We will get back to that very disturbing cycle very quickly. It was only two or three years ago when we were attending to thousands of car fires, so there is an issue there about whether the cost to society of not clearing those vehicles becomes prohibitive. Investment in removing vehicles and not creating an atmosphere where people feel that they can only dump them is something on which we would look to work in partnership, and there are some interesting worldwide social markets where the value of scrap vehicles is kept artificially high with registered disposal companies paying and getting some subsidy from the Government to keep them off the road. That would be an interesting concept.

I do not think that we have seen it happen yet, but, in the past and globally, when recession hits, we have seen the incidence of deliberate fire-setting rise. It is a criminal activity and misguided, but people will set fire to businesses that are not making profits. Another concern is how much spare money people have in their household income to replace defective goods such as blankets, kettles and toasters. If people do not have the money to replace them, they will repair them themselves as an odd job. We need to engage in the community-safety aspect of not only abandoned vehicles, but home fire safety, and we are already gearing up to do that. Sadly, most of the people in the service remember what it was like not so long ago, so we are ready to do that. It is, again, something that needs to be delivered in partnership with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents on home safety initiatives and the like. So, it is an issue that the fire and rescue service has recognised, and we will do what we need to do to respond to it, but the recession is a concern.

Andrew R.T. Davies: I was trying to get at the figures. In an economic downturn, do you get a 20 per cent increase in calls, say? You have highlighted various aspects, but I was thinking more about car maintenance rather than household matters, because one area where people will pull back expenditure is car maintenance, because most parts are quite expensive. Across the board, what level of increase in demand do you see for your services, going forward, because that will be a resource issue that will affect the ability to respond to much of what this manifesto is proposing to make best practice?

Mr Barry: I do not have the exact figures to hand, but on our response to vehicle fires, we are on the way to something like a 40 per cent reduction over three years. If that 40 per cent is added back on, because those vehicles are not taken to scrap yards, there is an increase. As to whether poorly maintained vehicles increase our operational activity at road traffic accidents, that is not information that we would collect. It is Stats 19—cause of accident—data that would be collected by the police force. However, for a range of reasons, the number of vehicle accidents has fallen. That is probably due to engineering solutions, with roadways being designed better and traffic or camera partnerships being used better. My professional point of view is that obviously dangerous vehicles do not seem to be around now. It was not so long ago that you would drive along and see vehicles missing wing mirrors and with the lights hanging out. They seem to have been managed off the road. Whether that is a result of the pleasant economic rise of the last few years and whether they will return is probably more of a policing matter than a fire and rescue service matter. It will definitely impact upon our response, although, because of other things that we are doing to lower our response in other areas, where we are managing false alarms and the like better, there is capacity for that. We do not want to do that, but the capacity is there, so we will not be leaving the public short in our operational response. However, it is an area that we should probably look at more closely, and start to do more preparatory work to stop that type of things from reoccurring.

Gareth Jones: Thank you very much, Mr Barry. That concludes our scrutiny session, but before you leave, on behalf of the Members, I thank you very much for your informative and helpful contribution. It has been quite revealing; you have highlighted the changes that there have been in the fire and rescue services, and how you look forward to co-operating with the other agencies and with police authorities. So, there are good times ahead, as far as I can make out. Thank you for your time. We wish you all the best in the important work that you are undertaking on behalf of the people of Wales.

10.59 a.m.

Adroddiad Drafft y Pwyllgor ar Gytundeb Llwyth Gwaith Athrawon The Draft Committee Report on the Teachers' Workload Agreement

Gareth Jones: Yr ydym wedi cynnal tair sesiwn graffu ar y cytundeb hwn. Mae'r adroddiad sydd ger ein bron heddiw yn ceisio crynhoi prif bwyntiau'r dystiolaeth a archwiliwyd, ac mae'n cynnig argymhellion drafft. Felly, gan fod argymhellion a'r adroddiad ger ein bron, estynnaf wahoddiad i chi wneud unrhyw sylwadau sydd gennych. A ydych yn dymuno ceisio dadl mewn Cyfarfod Llawn am y pwnc hwn?

Gareth Jones: We have held three scrutiny sessions on this agreement. The report before us today aims to summarise the main points of the evidence that was examined, and it suggests some draft recommendations. Therefore, as we have the recommendations and the report before us, I invite any comments that you may have. Would you like to request a Plenary debate on this matter?

Andrew R.T. Davies: I am content with the report, Chair, and I would like to have a debate.

Gareth Jones: A yw pawb yn weddol gytûn?

Gareth Jones: Are we all pretty much in agreement?

I see that we are unanimous on that point.

Diolch yn fawr i chi, unwaith eto. Dyna ddiwedd y cyfarfod.

Thank you, once again. That concludes the meeting.

"Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11 a.m.
The meeting ended at 11 a.m."