

Vision Zero Merseyside

Proposals to eradicate fatal and serious injuries to
Merseyside pedestrians and cyclists

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Wirral Pedestrians Association
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Merseyside is not a safe place for children or adults to walk or cycle.

The reason is the danger to children and adults from motor vehicles, which is particularly bad in Merseyside.

Are serious injuries to pedestrians and cyclist acceptable?

Around 300 Merseyside children are injured by motor vehicles each year, as pedestrians or cyclists. That is nearly one each day. Some 60 of these injuries to children are classed as serious - more than one each week. In addition, 800 adult pedestrians or cyclists are injured every year.

For children injured by dangerous dogs, gang violence, parental abuse or sexual abuse, society does not regard any number other than zero as acceptable - and yet 300 children injured by motor vehicles attracts little attention.

Many road safety professionals now argue for a Vision Zero approach - where the only acceptable number of fatalities or serious injuries is zero. This has driven the Swedish road safety programme for some time [1], is supported by the OECD [2], and is the basis of London's 2013 *Safe Streets* plan [3].

A key part of Vision Zero is a Safe System approach where it is recognised that all road users - pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicle drivers - will make mistakes from time to time, and provision is made to minimise the consequences of these mistakes.

What are the health impacts of unconstrained road dangers in Merseyside?

- the 2012 pedestrian casualty rate (deaths or serious injuries) was the worst in Great Britain [note 4]
- the 2012 cyclist total of deaths or serious injuries was at a 16-year high [note 5]
- 52% of deaths or serious road injuries in Merseyside occur in pedestrians or cyclists [note 6]
- independent mobility for those without a car is compromised
- the fear of vehicles deters many adults from cycling
- parents prohibit primary school children from walking or cycling independently
- children and adults take limited exercise, increasing diabetes, adult heart disease, and cancer
- Liverpool and Birkenhead fail to meet EU legal air quality standards.

What are the economic effects?

- an unhealthy workforce, from lack of exercise, which increases sickness absence
- poor workforce mobility since most job-seekers do not own a car, and road conditions limit access to the cheapest (i.e. active) travel modes
- added costs to health and social services of injury, chronic ill-health and disability.

Action needed

Every day, as pedestrians and cyclists, we see dangers to vulnerable road users that are not being addressed. When these dangers have been reported to those in authority, responses have too often shown indifference, prevarication and inaction. Yet simple solutions exist that are far more straightforward than providing 24-hour care to just one of the pedestrians or cyclists rendered brain-damaged or paraplegic by motor vehicles.

We therefore present a range of measures that, had they been already implemented, would have avoided many deaths and much ill health. Continued inaction in the face of this epidemic on our roads can only result in further avoidable deaths and disability. We do not think that this is acceptable.

We welcome

- comments on how this vision can be improved
- expressions of support or of a willingness to work in partnership
- commitments to take action.

Outline proposals to eradicate fatal and serious injuries to Merseyside pedestrians and cyclists

MPs and Ministers should

- allocate spending of £10 per person per year on each of walking and cycling immediately, increasing to £20 per person per year. Funding could be diverted from or shared with other transport funding, by reappraising current priorities
- introduce presumed liability (increased legal protection for pedestrians and cyclists) [7]
- facilitate enforcement of road safety laws by returning fines to the enforcement agencies
- outlaw satnav speed camera location warnings which undermine compliance with the law

The Department for Transport should

- base policies and strategies on evidence
- commission research to define and improve best practice, with emphasis on known risks such as lack of compliance with speed limits and use of phones

The Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner should

- acknowledge in the Merseyside Police and Crime Plan that Merseyside is not a safe and secure environment for children or adults to walk or cycle and include appropriate measures

The Association of Chief Police Officers should

- place the highest priority on a commitment to reducing dangers to pedestrians and cyclists

Merseyside Police should

- obey speed limits and other road safety laws, except in emergencies
- properly enforce speed limits and other road safety laws, including parking prohibitions [note 8]

Police collision investigators and the Merseyside Crown Prosecution Service should

- reconsider the standards of behaviour that are expected from drivers
- apply appropriate penalties to address and deter dangerous driving

Merseyside councillors and council officers should

- prioritise safety measures for pedestrians and cyclists since these are the most vulnerable road users
- adopt a Safe System approach in road design that accepts that road users will make mistakes
- collaborate with related organisations, including the achievement of Public Health targets through improving transport infrastructure

All decision-makers should

- view the dangers to pedestrians and cyclists at first hand by personally walking and/or cycling through high risk road infrastructure

Media and motoring organisations should

- provide robust and accurate information that avoids sensationalism and bias
- acknowledge the equality of pedestrians', cyclists', and car users' rights to road safety

Companies (including bus and taxi operators and parcel delivery services) should

- commit to employees obeying speed limits and other road safety laws
- sign up to a Legal Driving code of conduct
- address the added risk of HGVs by implementing educational, technical and strategic measures

Individuals should

- commit to obeying speed limits and other road safety laws
- view car crime ('routine' speeding, close passing of cyclists, red-light running, phone use, etc) as a risk to pedestrians and cyclists with the same gravity as they view shoplifting or assault

Wirral Pedestrians Association and Merseyside Cycle Campaign are very willing to assist with these measures.

References and notes

[1] *Vision Zero: Adopting a Target of Zero for Road Traffic Fatalities and Serious Injuries* (2006) John Whitelegg and Gary Haq for the Stockholm Environment Institute, produced under a contract with the Department for Transport

http://sei-international.org/mediamanager/documents/Publications/Future/vision_zero_FinalReportMarch06.pdf

[2] *Towards Zero: Ambitious Road Safety Targets and the Safe System Approach* (2008) Joint Transport Research Centre of the OECD and the International Transport Forum

<http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/jtrc/safety/targets/08TargetsSummary.pdf>

[3] *Safe Streets for London* (June 2013) Transport for London

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/corporate/safe-streets-for-london.pdf>

[4] There was a total of 211 reported serious injuries or deaths, giving a rate of 15.6 per 100,000 population. This is 58% above the national average. See <http://www.travelindependent.org.uk>

[5] Reported serious or fatal injuries to cyclists increased by 16% to a total of 85 in 2012. See <http://www.travelindependent.org.uk/merseyside.html>

[6] This proportion of 52% is considerably more than the national average of 38%.

[7] <http://www.ctc.org.uk/category/tags/liability>

[8] This includes legislation against parking on street corners, on pavements, and in bike lanes; and against mobile phone use.

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An electronic version of this document is available from both websites.

Front cover images are from Denmark (left), London (right) and the Netherlands (bottom).

The image, right, is from outside a school in Merseyside.

