

Motorists Forum

Minutes of meeting 29th January 2013

Attendees:

Paul Everitt(Chair)	SMMT
Edmund King	AA
Dave Jones	ACPO
Christopher Macgowan	Centre for Automotive Management
David Quarmby	RAC Foundation
Stephen Joseph	CBT
David Davies	PACTS
Nick Starling	ABI
John Lewis	BVRLA
Garrett Emmerson	TfL
David Bizley	RAC Motoring
Steve Fowler	Auto Express
Chas Hallett	What Car?
Tricia Hayes	DfT
Graham Dalton	Highways Agency
Paul O'Sullivan	DfT
Jessica Matthew	DfT
Miriam Lea	DfT
Michael Dnes	DfT
Lucy Jewitt	DfT (Item 5)

Apologies:

Suzette Davenport
Theo de Pencier

1. Introduction and minutes

Paul Everitt opened the meeting, welcoming David Davies to the Forum. The members agreed the minutes of the previous meeting.

2. Forum Chairmanship

Paul Everitt noted with regret that he was stepping down as chairman of the Forum following this meeting. Tricia Hayes led the Forum in thanking Paul for his chairmanship, and wishing him the best of luck in his new role.

Tricia Hayes reported the results of her canvass of members over who should be the next chair. Edmund King was the only candidate to put his name forward, and received the unanimous support of the Forum members.

In the process, several members had suggested that a deputy chair would be useful to help with the resilience of the Forum. Further discussion suggested this view was widely held. There was discussion of whether the role should go to a former chair, or whether the deputy should be chosen with an eye to future leadership, with the latter view prevailing. John Lewis was proposed for deputy, and received the support of the Forum.

Ministers will be informed of the Forum's decision ahead of the next meeting, and the Forum revalidated.

3. DfT Oral Update

Tricia Hayes began by summarising the reorganisation of DfT's roads teams since the last meeting. Two directorates would now cover the main roads brief – Motoring & Freight under Tricia and Strategic Roads under John Dowie – with local roads matters being handled by Local directorate under Graham Pendlebury. Steve Gooding would serve as Director General for the whole group.

Tricia Hayes recapped the results of the autumn statement investment package, which had included further capital spending on transport and greater investment in local maintenance. She also noted that Peter Adams at the Highways Agency had led significant work to accelerate the delivery of road schemes. She thanked members of the Forum who had been involved in last year's logistics growth review, and signposted a December update on progress with implementing recommendations, including on motorway incident clearance, strategic rail freight interchanges and the longer lorry semi-trailer trial.

Stephen Joseph asked about the further spending identified in the Autumn Statement for pipeline schemes, and asked how these schemes had been selected. Graham Dalton replied that the schemes in question were mainly managed motorways which had been identified at the Spending Review as priorities for post-2015 funding. In the longer term scheme identification would be supported by the new programme of route based strategies. Stephen Joseph asked that the RBS programme should offer more scope than currently for involving statutory environmental bodies and local groups, Action – Graham Dalton.

On the new regulatory regime for private parking, this had only been in place for three months and data was not yet available on the performance of the new regime. However, the structures for the appeals process were in place and seemed to be working. Tricia Hayes noted that the appeals service would be providing data to the Department following its first six months in operation and offered to share this with the Forum. Edmund King commented that while it was too early to draw conclusions on the new model, from a consumer perspective it seemed to be a clear improvement on wheel clamping. John Lewis noted that operators were expressing concerns about the viability of some business models. It was agreed to come back to this topic at a future meeting. Action – secretariat.

Paul O'Sullivan updated the Forum on EU proposals for greater integration around charging and tolling. The Commission had announced that it was keen to see greater interoperability of tolling technology under the EETS directive, with plans to strengthen compliance. There were also wider plans to push for Europe-wide distance-based charging of the road network, with some funds hypothecated to support further development of the TEN-T network. While Ministers could see the potential business benefits of interoperability (though individual operators had had little appetite for this in the past) the plans to roll out a pan-EU scheme were likely to raise wider concerns. Forum members noted that this was likely to be problematic and controversial, and encouraged

Ministers and officials to engage energetically with their European counterparts as the proposals evolved.

4. Roads Reform and Strategy

Paul O'Sullivan summarised the progress across the wider roads reform agenda. Good progress had been made in developing a new performance specification for the Agency (though this was not yet complete) and three pilot Route Based Strategies had been delivered, and would be rolled out to the remainder of the network over the next year or two. Work was also ongoing on the roads strategy and feasibility study into new ownership and financing models. Key themes in the strategy would include long term planning (covering the full suite of large scale capital investment, investment and operations).

Stephen Joseph expressed concern that the focus of the reform programme was exclusively on strategic roads, rather than including local road networks. Tricia Hayes noted that the Autumn Statement package had included £170m into local road maintenance as well as a new programme of local pinch point schemes. Many members of the Forum agreed that maintenance was an important priority for motorists.

Stephen Joseph asked whether forecasts were being updated as part of the roads strategy work. Paul O'Sullivan reiterated that the strategy would be supported by a range of forecast scenarios including incorporation of TfL forecasts for London.

5. Road Safety

Jessica Matthew provided an update on progress to introduce new legislation creating a new drug-driving offence, which would make drug-driving easier to prosecute by having a biological definition. The bill was currently in parliament, but, while this would set out the high level framework for the new offence, the detail of the enforcement regime would be set out in subsequent secondary legislation. This would need to achieve the goal of not inadvertently penalising or inconveniencing those on prescription medication.

Garrett Emerson questioned whether it was correct to make a distinction between prescription medication and other sorts, if the result was still dangerous driving. Jessica Matthew and David Quarmby clarified that this was about improving enforcement by defining an offence around the presence of certain drugs in the bloodstream, and that people on prescription medication causing road safety risks would continue to be caught by the current impairment-based offence.

Jessica Matthew also explained the changes being made to drink drive offences under the forthcoming deregulation bill. She reminded the Forum of the plans in Scotland to lower the drink drive limit and there was a brief discussion of some of the practical issues this would raise.

Lucy Jewitt ran through the Department's work on the THINK campaign over the past year. She thanked members of the Forum for their support,

particularly around the Christmas drink-drive campaign. Looking to the year ahead, the focus of the campaign would be on vulnerable groups – motorcyclists, cyclists, drink drivers and child/teen pedestrians. She stressed the THINK team's wish to maximise support and partnership working, and provided contact details for those running specific elements of the campaign.

Tricia Hayes offered to provide updates on other key items of business with the minutes of the meeting.

6. Views from the motoring trade press

The Chair welcomed Steve Fowler of Auto Express and Chas Hallett of What Car? to the forum. He said he had been keen to invite them both to help understand the issues that ordinary motorists felt were of greatest importance.

Steve Fowler shared the results of a recent Auto Express survey of motorists' views. Both he and Chas Hallett agreed that the issue of greatest sensitivity to motorists at the moment was fuel duty, partly as a result of it being the most visible and regular cost of running a car, as well as the one over which the motorist felt they had least control. Motorists were keen to see more transparency in the way that motoring taxation was used and were not convinced by arguments that motoring taxes were key to the delivery of core public services.

Christopher Macgowan asked whether the roll out of green car technologies was an issue which featured on the radar of their readership, and John Lewis wanted to know whether there was any evidence of the impact of fuel economy labelling. Chas Hallett said that in making car purchasing decisions motorists were principally concerned about cost. However environmentally efficient cars were increasingly becoming the norm for most manufacturers offering a much stronger environmental offer to motorists. Steve Fowler noted that buyers were much better informed thanks to the internet, and were less likely to make a decision in the showroom. This meant that CO₂/fuel efficiency labelling in showrooms might not be a major factor in shaping purchasing decisions, though he noted that the NCAP safety rating scheme had been initially resisted by motor retailers and then rolled out comprehensively.

Stephen Joseph asked how important motorists thought it was to build new roads compared to improving existing ones. Steve Fowler thought that generally existing roads were a bigger concern; and he was not convinced that motorists would pay more to see the road network expanded.

Graham Dalton noted that driving standards featured as a top ten issue for the readership and Auto Express and wondered what motorists thought should be done on this issue. Chas Hallett and Steve Fowler noted that this was a particularly big issue on social networking sites, but without a clear sense of what action needed to be taken.

The Chair thanked them both for their time.