



AVZ Blog: New Home Office Strategic Policing Requirements: Roads policing is included (but only in order to tackle other crime)

3rd March 2023

Key points

- Roads Policing has now been included in the Home Office's national Strategic Policing Requirements¹.
- But this is in a supporting role to tackle the critical national threats which include terrorism and public disorder AND
- The priority is on detecting and deterring organised crime - not reducing danger posed to people walking and cycling.

The Home Office has published its updated [Strategic Policing Requirement](#). And it does include Road Policing - not as a national threat but in a supporting role with tackling organised crime using the roads.

Background

Road danger reduction campaigners had long called for roads policing to be included in the new 78-page Home Office Strategic Policing Requirements, given that:

- More people are killed by road crime than any other type of crime.
- Road deaths not seen any significant decline for over a decade.
- Road danger has to be reduced if more people are to walk and cycle.

We believe that roads policing deserved to be added on its own merits; not to prevent other types of crime.

Even Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) had advocated its inclusion. In their May 2020 report [Roads Policing—Not Optional](#), their recommendations included: *By 1 August 2021, the Home Office should revise the Strategic Policing Requirement to include an explicit reference to roads policing. Any revision should also include guidance on which bodies the requirement to collaborate with extends to.*

PACTS (Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety) also called for this in their report [Roads policing and its contribution to road safety](#) (June 2020). The report's first recommendation stated: *The Government should recognise that the loss of life resulting from road users who break the law is one of the biggest causes of traumatic deaths from law breaking and requires a nationally-coordinated response. Roads policing should be in the strategic policing requirement set by the Home Secretary.*

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1137398/20230217_Strategic_Policing_Requirement__FINAL__-_OS__002_.pdf

The Police Foundation agreed. Their February 2022 report [The Future of Roads Policing](#) also had its first recommendation as:

The Home Office should include roads policing in the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) in order to ensure that roads policing is sustained as a core policing capability throughout the country. This should sit alongside a strengthening of what fulfilling the SPR entails for local forces. To comply with the SPR, PCCs should be required to set out a road safety and roads policing plan for their area, working in partnership with community groups, local authorities, businesses, schools, and other public services to identify road safety goals, set out how they will be achieved and measure progress toward achieving them.

What difference would it make?

Being included in the Strategic Policing Requirement was supposed to result in roads policing being given more priority and scrutiny. What is included in the Strategic Police Requirement is to be included in the Police and Crime Commissioner police and crime plans, to show how it is being addressed. But as our [2020 review of police and crime plans](#) showed, road safety is already in 77% of plans, with seven having it as a specific priority. Our upcoming review of the current plans found road safety is now in 95% of police and crime plans.

What is included - Critical National Threats (CNT)

A [national threat](#) is defined by the Police Act as:

- a. A threat to national security, public safety, public order or public confidence that is of such gravity as to be of national importance; or
- b. A threat which can be countered effectively or efficiently only by national policing capabilities to counter the threat.

The new Strategic Policing Requirement refers to seven CNTs:

- Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)
- Terrorism
- Serious and Organised Harm
- National Cyber Event
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Public Disorder
- Civil Emergencies.

VAWG was the only new addition and had been recommended by the HMICFRS for inclusion.

Another CNT, Public Disorder, was said to be “substantially updated” to “*prevent dangerous and highly disruptive tactics used by organised protesters that wreak havoc to the lives of the law-abiding majority and draws police officers away from their local communities*”.

Cross-Cutting Capabilities and Roads Policing

Roads Policing was included under the section on Cross-Cutting Capabilities. Along with Armed Policing, and Digital Forensics, Roads Policing was referred to as one of the “*specialist capabilities that are not exclusively deployed in response to a single threat but may be required to respond to at least three of the threats listed in the SPR*”.

See below for the section on Roads Policing in the Strategic Policing Requirement. It highlights the “locally-maintained capabilities” as well as the equipment and technology roads policing units should have.

[The Strategic Policing Requirement](#)

Roads Policing

165. Roads policing is responsible for the enforcement of traffic laws, detection, deterrence and the response to illegal or dangerous activity on the roads. The UK Road network is the primary transportation method for people carrying out a range of illegal and high-risk activities and is an enabler of the threats outlined in the SPR.

166. Roads policing capabilities play an essential role in tackling the use of the roads network by terrorist threats and serious and organised criminals involved in county lines drug transportation, modern slavery and human trafficking. They are also essential in managing incidents caused by public disorder or civil emergencies.

167. The NPCC has developed the [National Roads Policing Strategy \(2022/25\)](#)⁷⁵ which has four key pillars of activity, based around the key principle of ‘Policing our roads together’. These are to; prevent harm and save lives, tackle criminality, drive innovation and technology and change minds. The strategy has been widely consulted upon prior to publication. There is a degree of national coordination of roads policing enforcement activity through the NPCC calendar of National Roads Policing Operations, such as tackling drink and drug driving, however most coordination is locally driven.

168. The road network is an element of CNT. Forces should have, or have access to, sufficient roads policing capabilities to protect against, or respond to, threats against this infrastructure. There is no singular model for roads policing units in police forces. Roads policing roles range from dual role officers to dedicated specialists, and there are varying roles within roads policing, such as commercial vehicle units.

169. Locally-maintained capabilities have an important role to play in effective roads policing and officers and staff should have the requisite procedural knowledge and training to meet these objectives including:

- a. advanced driving capabilities including pursuit management, tactical pursuit and containment tactics (TPAC), and police motorcyclist capability;
- b. management of incidents including large scale collisions, public disorder, and civil emergencies;
- c. forensic collision investigative capabilities (accredited to Forensic Science Regulator standards) to provide valuable technical assistance to investigations. Examples include interpreting vehicle data and laser scanning crime scenes;
- d. legislative knowledge relating to commercial vehicles, including HGVs and the transportation of dangerous goods. Increasingly forces are seeing a link between organised crime, including the transportation of drugs and human trafficking, and the use of commercial vehicles; and
- e. roads enforcement skills such as the ability to understand tachograph data on driving time, speed and distance which can inform criminal investigations and identify significant locations of interest.

170. Forces should also have, or have access to, relevant technology, software, and equipment to execute roads policing capabilities including:

- a. protective equipment, such as clothing, signage, and the appropriate vehicles for fast roads response and pursuits; and
- b. Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) infrastructure through the National ANPR Service (NAS) to help detect, deter and disrupt criminality at a local, regional and national level. Enhanced data analysis using ANPR enables police to proactively target vehicles suspected of being used in criminality particularly when detecting and preventing cross-border criminality such as county lines activity.

171. Intelligence gathered from ANPR will be supplemented by a high level of routine operational activity, including through traffic stops which provide an opportunity to gather intelligence through overt activity.

172. Aggregating specialist enforcement skills, such as expertise in dangerous goods, within collaborations and collaborating with other agencies such as National Highways, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) or the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has enabled some forces to effectively tackle organised crime and terrorism threats.

[\(Home Office, 2023\)](#)

As shown above, the need is for pursuit capacity and crime detection. And whilst forensic collision investigation is important, there is no mention of improving the investigations into the vast majority of serious injury collisions which do not receive a forensic investigation, as these are restricted to fatal and some life threatening crashes.

What next:

Action Vision Zero will continue to make the case for roads policing to be based on reducing road danger. As identified in our joint [2021 PCC Manifesto](#), this includes the key areas of:

- Harm reduction with careless driving a priority and road crime treated as real crime.
- Increasing transparency and accountability so that it is possible to know what police are doing and what good looks like.
- Tackling speeding—an offence that causes more harm than any other.
- Working with the community—including with online reporting and working groups.
- Improving the post-crash response, especially with collision investigation

Want to know help or know more? Contact: Amy@ActionVisionZero.org