

REDUCING ROAD HARM THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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Thank you for the opportunity to present. I have a 20-minute presentation and hopefully we have time for questions.

You can see that I am mainly speaking to you from the perspective of cyclists who are campaigning to reduce road harm.

As I run through the slides, you'll immediately see that you already recognise most of the things I have to say, but they represent the views of cycling Vision Zero campaigners who work with their local forces.

We want to contribute to the important discussions this working group is undertaking, and emphasise the value of civic engagement as a keyway to achieve a reduction in road harm.



WHAT I COVER

- Reducing road harm
- Civic engagement
- What civic campaigners want
- How civic campaigns can help
- What next?

My five key sections start with a couple of obvious points about the important role road crime reporting has in reducing road harm, and the important role civic engagement has for road crime reporting.

The main chunk of this presentation is a report on research into what cycling campaigners want to see is a good road crime reporting system. Cyclists aren't the only reporters of road crime, but they usually report as victims of road crime.

While none of this will be new, the clarity of common voice here is important for you to understand.

We would also like to stretch out a helping hand to you as a committee, and to local forces, to demonstrate then value that civic cycling campaigners can offer you.

Finally, we want to suggest some positive ways in which these insights can inform action.

REDUCING ROAD HARM

- Road crime leads to road harm
- Road crime enforcement leads to road harm reduction
- Road harm reduction leads to more walking, wheeling and cycling

It is worth repeating the well-trodden mantra that road crime offending results in the deaths and serious injury of cyclist. It also leads to people who would like to cycle choosing not to cycle.

So many cyclists now carry cameras and report careless and inconsiderate driving – and especially close-passes – because we believe it is only through police action that we can reduce poor driving around cyclists. That will reduce the shocking levels of road harm we face, and encourage more people to cycle more often.

That's good for a whole number of social, environmental and cultural reasons.

MORE WALKING,
WHEELING AND
CYCLING

- Lower KSIs
- Less congestion
- Less pollution
- Healthier people
- Healthier communities

When more people feel able to cycle or walk their journeys, there are less fatal or serious collisions. That's one way we can get to zero cycling or pedestrian deaths on our roads.

There would certainly be fewer motor vehicles congesting our cities and towns. 70% of all journeys are cyclable for most people. And most people want to cycle more.

That creates a healthier urban environment for all of us to live in.

Cycling is a magic pill for much that ails us.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The process of enabling the participation of citizens and communities in policing at their chosen level, ranging from providing information and reassurance, to empowering them to identify and implement solutions to local problems and influence strategic priorities and decisions.

University of Leeds and West Yorkshire Police

https://www.n8research.org.uk/media/CommunityEngagement_EvidenceReview.pdf

I'm not telling you anything new, when I say that road crime reporting needs a high-level of civic engagement by the police. This research conclusion, from a recent piece of research, summarises it well.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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So, how exactly can you enable the participation of citizens in this aspect of policing?

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The public are our most influential partner. We know there is an appetite from the public to help police our roads, whether that is by submitting dashcam footage, being part of a local community speed watch scheme, or most importantly, using our roads and shared spaces responsibly and abiding by the laws of the road.

[NPCC roads policing strategy](#)

We couldn't put it better than the NPCC roads policing strategy statement

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

By improving public perceptions and increasing trust through fair decision making and positive public interaction, the police service can enhance its legitimacy.

<https://www.college.police.uk/app/engagement-and-communication/engagement>

And how can you reap those important rewards that the Police College show come from civic engagement. As you know, police legitimacy and positive interactions emerge from trust and fair decision-making.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Action Vision Zero
Ending Road Danger



Cycle Sheffield
Streets 4 people

Safer Roads
Yorkshire

push bikes

The Birmingham
Cycling Campaign

Oxford

cyclox
the voice of cycling in Oxford

we are cycling
The cyclist's champion UK

BRISTOL CYCLING

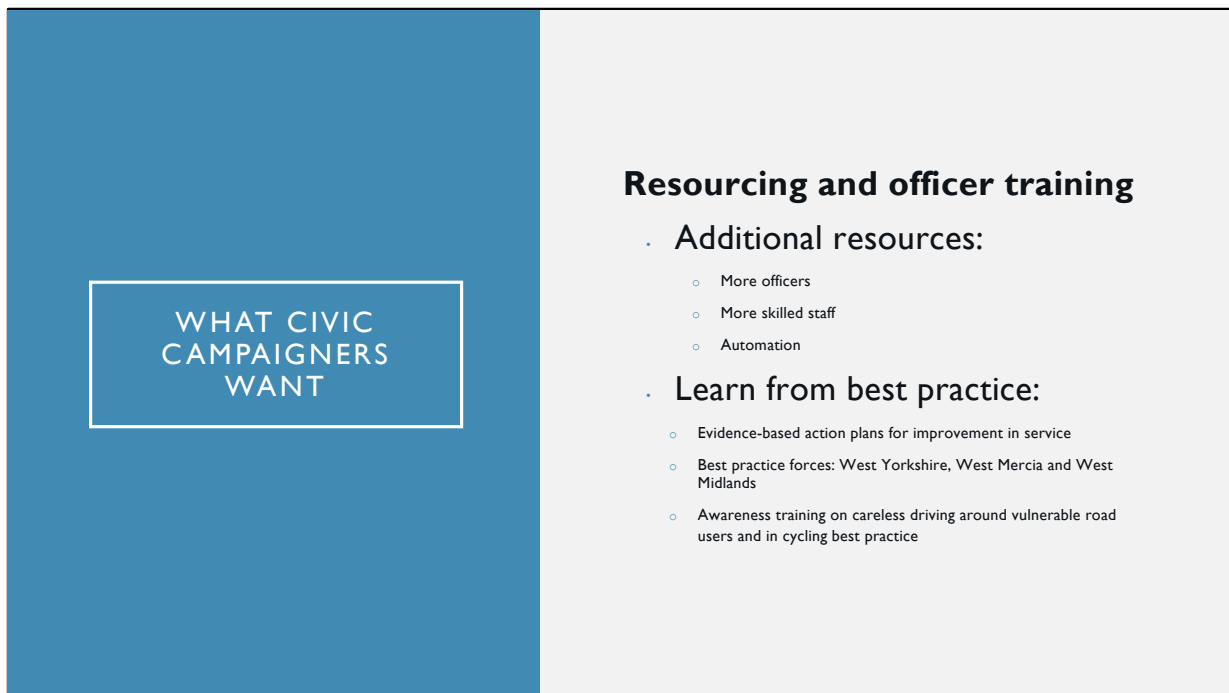
NORWICH CYCLING CAMPAIGN

WALK RIDE BATH

What I am going to tell you next comes from a range of cycling campaigns from across England. You may represent a force who already works with one of these organisations.

As a member of Push Bikes and the Cycling UK Local Representative, I have worked closely with West Midlands Police, who have transformed their road crime reporting in the last eight months.

So, what do campaigners like this want from a road crime reporting operation? Here are the six things all campaigns agreed on.



I know you'll agree with their first priority.

Campaigners recognise that forces want to do better but are often constrained by resources. More officers, better skills and better use of automation are mentioned by almost all campaign groups.

All campaigners have a sense that some forces do more of the things they want to see, and they all emphasised the need to learn from the best. They are eager to see improvement and want to see plans of how you would do that.

They are keen to see police action linked to city or town plans for road harm reduction.

Many of the campaigners see the work of three forces as particularly successful at the moment, and want to see the things they do well, repeated in all forces.

They also want officers who understand cycling. Both in the sense of the intimidation most cyclists feel from reckless drivers, and recognition of what can be expected of a cyclist. Many suggested all officers who could, should do a Bikeability course. As a cycling instructor, I'd endorse the value of that.

WHAT CIVIC CAMPAIGNERS WANT

Reporting Portal

- Standardised portal for all forces
- Indicate victim or third-party witness
- Single login portal accounts

Second, they want to see improvements to the reporting portal. They don't understand why the the portal can't be standardised.

There is also particular concern that cyclists, in particular, aren't seen as victims of crime. While many reports come from third-party witnesses, cyclists are almost always the victim of an offence. Indicating whether you report as a victim, or as a third-party witness, would be a great first step to showing this is understood.

Campaigners also had some great suggestions for creating single login portals that would store regularly used information to make reporting quicker and easier. They have in mind, pre-filled personal and contact details. It could also allow those reporting to check earlier reports they had made. And could automate feedback to victims.

Extra information on what could be reported through the portal, and what should be reported through other channels was requested many times. Things like assault or threatening behaviour that cyclists too often face.



And as you develop systems, there's an interest in having easy access to other information:

For instance, information on which force covers which streets. Reports to the wrong force are often a source of NFA decisions.

And in auto fill information about carriageway widths, when a force's portal includes a map-based reporting tool.

Ability to upload larger file sizes, or a tick-box to confirm that additional footage is available have both been highlighted.

One responder was concerned about spyware and trackers as some portals have over 40 active scripts trying to run.

WHAT CIVIC CAMPAIGNERS WANT

Decision-making

- Consistency
- National standards
- Driving offences decisions independent of behaviour of cyclists

Third in the list – and this was when the campaigners became most animated – is consistency of decision-making. The call for national standards of decision-making are very strong. It is the single thing most often complained about issue. Written, transparent criteria are probably the biggest single change cycling campaigners want to see.

Just by way of example, here's two stills from cycle cams. One is taken from a police force video encouraging submissions to their OpSnap portal, and the other was rejected (by the same force) because it wasn't seen as a close pass. Which is which?





WHAT CIVIC CAMPAIGNERS WANT

Decision-making

- Consistency
- National standards
- Driving offences decisions independent of behaviour of cyclists

Campaigners shared feedback with me from forces justifying not taking action in situations like this one. Too often it highlighted the behaviour of the cyclist reporter as a justification for not proceeding against a driver.

Now, a road crime offence is a road crime offence, regardless of the behaviour of the cyclist.

But, in the examples I have seen, the cyclist was riding to national standards. There are transparent, written statements of good legal cycling behaviour. I can make this judgement as a cycling instructor because I apply those national standards every day. You will understand why this raises concerns about the training officers receive, and the lack of a national standards for police decision-making for close-passes.

WHAT CIVIC CAMPAIGNERS WANT

Feedback

- Victim / Reporter feedback on specific actions taken
- Specific feedback on NFA to improve the quality of reporting
- Online quarterly force performance reports

Fourth, cycling campaigners want feedback on their reports. You will know that many forces do exactly this. But it isn't universal. And the quality of feedback does vary.

For road crime reporting to be a model of civic engagement forces need to name what course of action is to be taken. Campaigners just want to know if their report results in NFA, a warning letter, an NIP, or straight to court. They recognise that NIP can result in other outcomes, but this feedback loop is vital in motivating citizen reporters to believe in the process and to contribute to it.

When WMP restored feedback, reports quadrupled. And satisfaction with the police was transformed. A big win for the force.

Knowing what constitutes an offence (and what doesn't) is really important, too. Campaigners wanted to be part of helping the police to take action, and not to waste police time with reports that wouldn't be actioned.

Those forces who issue monthly or quarterly performance reports are widely praised. It raises confidence that action is being taken and informs an important debate about how we reduce harm on our roads. Many campaigners raised FOI requests, when forces didn't publish, because understanding what was happening was seen as so important.

When working to reduce road harm, we need to know stats on specific driver

behaviours that fall under the driving without care and consideration offence, especially around close passing. Forces involved in Operation Closepass know the importance of this, but we aren't catching the data that's needed to stop this behaviour.

WHAT CIVIC
CAMPAIGNERS
WANT

Feedback

- Action status access in portal
- Clarity about GDPR and feedback
- Publish examples of what's good enough/what's not

Three quick further points on feedback

- It would be great to have updates through the portal
- There are many examples of forces mistakenly claiming

WHAT CIVIC CAMPAIGNERS WANT

Action

- Proportionate and transparent police action against offenders
- Improved use of warning letters for careless driving around vulnerable road users
- Close pass education courses

Fifth.

Action taken by police against offending drivers was another area that really animated campaigners.

The biggest concerns were that actions were so variable for seemingly identical driver behaviours. This really does undermine the trust that local citizens have in forces.

Cyclists (along with pedestrians and horse riders) are the most vulnerable to harm on the road, and they want their forces to take appropriate action to educate drivers about careless and inconsiderate driving around cyclists. Campaigners know that the evidence for the effectiveness of warning letters is poor, and that education courses are very effective in behaviour change; certainly, in preventing reoffending.

Cycling campaigners understand that warning letters are often linked to insufficient resources or concerns about ability to defend cases in court.

However, we want to see better, targeted use of such letters, and new, dedicated close-pass education courses. These are areas in which many cycling campaigners have expertise to contribute.

There are also important questions about how repeat offenders are dealt with, especially across force boundaries.

WHAT CIVIC CAMPAIGNERS WANT

Wider awareness

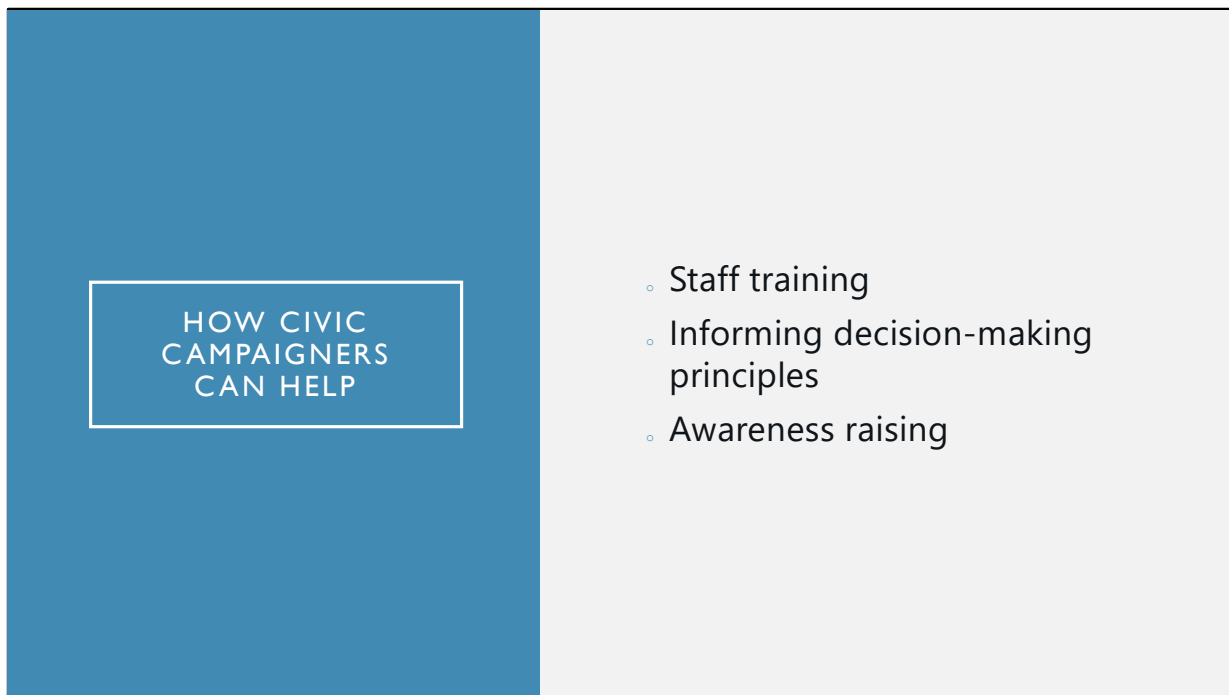
- Emphasise road harm reduction
- Highlighting behaviours that face action
- Give examples of action
- Report progress
- Share via citizen champions

Finally,

Cycling campaigners recognise that the best way to achieve behaviour change for most road crime offenders is in early intervention and direct education.

Action against individual offenders is one way to achieve this, but helping the wider driver community understand what the rules are, and what happens when they are broken, is also vital.

We support forces who disseminate examples of behaviour, and the action taken by police, as part of a crime prevention strategy. Campaigners identified five key elements that the best campaigns focused on, and would like to see such campaigns undertaken by all forces. We are particularly open to partnerships in disseminating this information. Many campaigners have established large networks on social media, and sharing material made available through the police would be a very effective tool for awareness raising.



This emphasis on citizen partnership is the area of greatest potential.

Campaigners have often been working in the area for decades, often much longer than police teams. They often draw on professional expertise that they share widely.

Mobilising campaigners to tackle road crime has been central to reporting operations so far, but could just be the start. I have already touched on three areas in which we could contribute, and I could talk more on these three areas in the Q&A section.

WHAT NEXT?

- Representation on this group
- Working group on action criteria
- Co-designed close pass education courses
- Co-designed research into awareness raising

Finally, we would like to suggest some positive first steps to achieving best practice in road crime reporting systems.

We would like to more fully contribute to your deliberations here. We would certainly be eager to contribute to a group developing suggestions on criteria for action and designing suitable education courses for offenders whose behaviour around cyclists needs changing.

We are also building partnerships for research in this area, and we would be keen to ensure such research design emerges from a working group like this one.

[National Road Crime Reporting Working Group]

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Thank you for listening to the views of cycling campaigners, I'd welcome any questions or points you may have on anything I have said; and even on the things that I should have said, but didn't.

Together, we can use road crime reporting to reduce the shocking levels of KSIs, and build partnerships with cycling and vision zero campaigners to achieve this.