

RISK CONSULTING

The Road Ahead in 2021

The last year has without doubt been unprecedented and none more so in transport and road safety. Transport of essential goods increased, whilst business fleets in many cases temporarily hung up their keys. It has been a time for organisations to rapidly find alternative and smart ways to continue operating and reflect on whether there could be a permanent shift to fewer miles and online business meetings.

As a result, there have been significant changes across the Industry reflecting our need to be greener and find alternative safer ways to travel. Some of the changes are highlighted here.

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E-SCOOTERS

With the world starting to open up again many will be thinking of safe ways to get to work. There is growing popularity for e-scooters but there is tight governance around how and when you can use them.

Privately owned scooters are outlawed but they can be officially rented and will include Insurance but are limited to a maximum speed of 15.5mph and only on the road. You will also need to hold a category Q on your driving licence but all full and provisional licence holders will have this. Those with an International driving licence however are not covered.

According to lawyers Slater and Gordon penalties for riding a private e scooter on a public road will land the rider with a £300 fine and 6 points.



DIRECT VISION STANDARDS

Drivers of vehicles over 12T will now have to meet strict safety standards when heading into London. Part of the Mayors Vision Zero safety strategy it is designed to reduce the number of vulnerable road users killed or injured.

Vehicles will need to be fitted with a wide range of safety features including Class V and VI mirrors, side underrun protection, pictorial stickers and markings, nearside driver sensor, fully operational nearside camera and audible warning for turning left.

Compliant vehicles are issued with a permit but those failing to register face large daily fines and possible exclusion. Compliant vehicles automatically meet the FORS (Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme) Silver vehicle requirements. More information can be found at Transport for London: www.tfl.gov.uk



DRINK DRIVING

The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) has suggested that vehicles should be fitted with Alcolocks to help reduce the number of people killed or injured through drink driving.

PACTS have stated that the figures have remained unchanged for the last 10 years with 240 people killed as a result of drink driving annually. One in six drink drive offences is committed by a reoffender.

From 2022 all new cars sold in Europe will be sold with the device, but it will be up to the government to decide how it is used.



TAILGATING

Highways England are currently trialling new cameras on the M1 for six months into the summer of 2021, which is targeting tailgaters and known as 'close following'.

According to the motoring organisation the RAC in the first two months of operation, they identified 26,000 drivers who were less than the required 2 second gap which highlights the extent of the problem. Once the trial ends and the cameras go live drivers are likely to receive 3 points on their licence and a £100 fine.

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SPEEDING

The RAC Foundation have reported that speeding offences for 2019 / 2020 made up 85% of all motoring offences illustrating that despite obvious penalties it remains a big issue for road users including fleet operators.

It has been suggested that drivers caught during the first lockdown believed they were unlikely to get caught due to perceived lower enforcement and fewer vehicles on the road.

This highlights that drivers do not lack skill but that tackling driver behaviours are key for fleets in addressing adverse decisions to protect business reputation, O'Licence compliance and reduce costs through fewer fines and lower collisions.



CLEAN AIR ZONES

March 2021 saw Bath launch the first Clean Air Zone (CAZ) outside London where charges will be applied to non-compliant commercial vehicles including vans, taxis, and minibuses at £9 per day, whilst LGV's, and buses or coaches face charges of £100 per day.

Many CAZ schemes were delayed in 2020 and a number of UK cities will launch their own schemes later this year.

Whilst this must be a welcome move to protect our environment and health from poor air quality (Nitrous Oxide - NOx and Particulate Matter – PM) it will undoubtedly lead to some fleets facing increased costs.

This will be due to non-compliance or the physical costs of retrofitting and even replacing vehicles.



UK ROAD DEATHS

2020 saw an unprecedented change to our work and driving habits with many choosing or being required to work from home. This meant that there were far fewer cars on the roads, with a hope that the number of road deaths would significantly decrease.

Provisional figures from the Department for Transport show that in the first six months of 2020 there was a 14% decrease in road deaths, compared to the previous year for the same period, which is perhaps disappointing given the traffic reduction .

There was a larger percentage increase of those who were cycling, and this saw the introduction of many new cycle lanes in towns and cities, but it remains unclear if this trend will continue into 2021.



DRIVER CPC TRAINING

2020 saw many organisations embrace digital working like never before. Whilst the logistics market continued to be in strong demand and essential for public sector service delivery; many transport and fleet managers were able to make the most of online platforms such as Zoom, Teams and WebEx for training of their drivers.

Professional drivers of vehicles over 3.5t were no exception and many were able to continue with their driver CPC (certificate of professional competence) remotely from the comfort of their own home.

JAUPT the Joint Approvals Unit for Periodic Training have said that remote learning is to continue for the foreseeable future and may become part of a wider blended approach to training opportunities where both classroom and online options are acceptable.

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AUTOMATED LANE KEEPING SYSTEMS (ALKS)

It has been suggested that ALKS could be on the UK roads by the end of this year. Technology, once activated, keeps the vehicle within its own lane and controls its movements without the need for driver input.

The Department for Transport has told the insurance industry that drivers would be free to dispose of their time including checking emails, using their phones, or even watching a film.

Whilst there is criticism of the scheme by road safety groups the government are pressing ahead and are currently considering if it would be allowed at 70mph. The Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) is advising all fleet managers that their drivers should maintain full steering control of their vehicles despite any autonomous technology they may have fitted.



ALTERNATIVE FUELS

The UK Government has announced a further £54 million to support three projects all designed to cut emissions and develop alternatives to fossil fuel vehicles .

Whilst hydrogen buses are now commonplace for Transport for London (TfL) some of the funding will go towards developing low cost hydrogen fuel cells for buses, whilst the remainder will be allocated to developing electric propulsion systems for LGVs and energy saving technology within the motorsport sector.

The funds form part of the Governments wider commitment to net zero by 2050. It is estimated that the developed technology will help save over 260 million tonnes of CO2 which is the equivalent of 10.2 million cars on our roads.



HIGHWAY CODE

Important changes affecting commercial vehicles have been added to the updated Highway Code in April 2021.

Whilst a new book may not be published annually any changes are added to the online version and Annex 6 has been updated. The changes apply to goods vehicles with a gross vehicle weight of more than 3.5 tonnes and also passenger vehicles with more than 8 seats. Tyres which are over 10 years old must now not be used on the front axles of these vehicles.

Other proposed changes expected to be introduced this year, following a consultation with motorists include ensuring that when overtaking cyclists, a gap of 1.5 metres is given when under 30mph and 2 metres when over 30mph.



SMART MOTORWAYS

The Government, in conjunction with Highways England, have published an extensive 75 page document regarding safety of smart motorways and following public consultation will be refining the advice given to motorists in the Highway Code .

They have recently launched a TV campaign asking motorists to 'Keep Left' should they find themselves with a potential breakdown. It comes off the back of figures released by the BBC through a Freedom of Information request that show in five years since their introduction 38 people have lost their lives on a smart motorway. Near misses prior to their inception were 72, but since then has increased to 1,485.

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VULNERABLE ROAD USERS

A further expected change to the Highway Code will include a change of wording for those overtaking horses which is expected to state that the driver should give at least 2 metres and at a speed of no more than 15mph.

The British Horse Society (BHS) recently released figures that showed for 2019-20 the number of reported incidents had increased by 23% on the previous year. 40% of those incidents were due to a motorist passing too quickly and 81% because they passed too close.

In total 1,037 incidents were reported to the BHS which resulted in 80 horses being killed and one rider was killed. 135 were injured as a result of a road incident.



SUMMARY

These changes have highlighted that whilst we may be looking forward to alternative transport, and even autonomous vehicles in a few years there is still a need to focus sharply on road safety.

Not only do collisions have an unquantifiable emotional cost, but also one of financial and reputational. 95% of all collision causations are considered to be human error and whilst this is bad news, it does mean we can all take responsibility and make changes to improve both own driver safety and that of all other road users.

GET IN TOUCH

Dr Sandra Macdonald-Ames

Associate Fleet Risk Consultant | Gallagher Bassett

Halford House, 2 Coval Lane, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1TD • M:(+44) 07776 352847