



## People for Proper Policing in North Wales

### The Fatal Five ... NWPf Assistant CC's Blog ... May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008

***We remain completely committed to reducing death on the roads in North Wales and this Spring has seen a number of terrible collisions on our roads. We continue to work with our partners to help educate drivers and riders, look to improvements in engineering and to enforce the law in order to make our roads safer. Our approach to enforcement is targeted on offences that are most likely to lead to deaths or serious injuries – the “Fatal Five”; speeding; not wearing seat belts; using mobile phones; dangerous driving; and drink driving. It is the latter that I want to discuss now.***

*Drinking and driving is now generally socially unacceptable, this was far from being the case when I joined the Police Service 27 years ago and the increase in enforcement, strict penalties and education have made a real difference and there are many people alive today who would not be here if it had not been for the initiative and courage shown by Barbara Castle when she introduced the drink drive laws. However, we still have people being killed on the roads due to poor driving directly related to drinking too much alcohol. In that time the UK has moved from leading the way with anti drink drive legislation to falling behind our European partners, who now have significantly lower acceptable legal levels for drinking than we do – surely it is time to change by reducing our limit to bring it in line with mainland Europe? (0.5 per mg is the European norm, as opposed to 0.8 per mg in the UK)*

*However, there is much that can be done by rigorous enforcement of the current laws. National statistics for traffic enforcement tend to be published a little slowly and the Ministry of Justice has recently published the 2006 figures. **In North Wales we conducted 3,234 per 100,000 population**, more than any other police force in England and Wales (the national average was 1,145 and the lowest was 268) and we also had **the lowest number of positive or refused breath tests, at 6%** (the average being 18%). This result was wanted and predicted, the aim of conducting the breath tests is not just to catch people it is also to deter would be offenders – there really is a very significant chance that you will be caught if you drink and drive in North Wales and the message is getting through. Our focus on drink drive is not confined to a Christmas campaign; we take a rigorous approach right through the year. And my message to those who fancy a quick pint or three before driving home is clear – don't, you risk losing your license, livelihood and life.*

**The PPP comments .... There are around 40 deaths on N.Wales roads each year. Every fatality should have been investigated using **new procedures** which require the incident site to be treated as a crime scene similar to that for a homicide.**

**The ACPO road death investigation manual is at**

**[http://www.acpo.police.uk/asp/policies/Data/road\\_death\\_investigation\\_manual\\_18x12x07.pdf](http://www.acpo.police.uk/asp/policies/Data/road_death_investigation_manual_18x12x07.pdf)**

**This system is the cause of the excessively long road closures following such incidents. Also the Stats19 system is used to record data relating to road conditions and other causation factors at the time of any serious incident.**

**We believe that the conclusions from these investigations and the causation data should be published each year in as raw a form as is sensible. We can then all judge what the problems are and if North Wales Police's policy and priorities are effective.**

**We believe that even the few figures quoted above highlight a number of issues viz. 6% is a very low fail rate for breath tests and about a third of the national average, whilst the test rate is, coincidentally, 3 times the national average.**

**We would conclude that NWPF testing is poorly targeted and over 94% of the tests are on innocent drivers. This is both inefficient and ineffective. We all know the places and times that intoxicated drivers are on our roads. How many of the total incidents resulting in serious injury or death also involved drivers who tested positive?. These are the key issues. Annually NWPF prosecute about 65,000 motorists for speeding which is totally disproportionate to the causes of serious incidents. Most of these will be relatively minor technical offences. The number of convictions for dangerous driving and similar serious offences has actually fallen and is only about 35/annum. The number of disqualified drivers arrested has practically halved but the number of mobile phone tickets has increased significantly .... these are policy decisions BUT are they based on sound management or knee jerk reactions to government short term priorities??**

**In conclusion we are not impressed with Ian Shannon's statements and we know he is the chief officer responsible but not really accountable for N.Wales road safety policy. The PPP are all experienced road users and we are aware that it is a difficult problem but only sense and reason in the application of science and psychology will improve the situation. A frank and honest discussion is required and internet blogs do not give such a serious situation justice. We note that the number of comments from the public is virtually NIL for all these blogs.**