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People for Proper Policing in North Wales

SAFETY MESSAGES 'POINTLESS': REPORT ... Wednesday 20th December 2006

Story Courtesy of Safe Speed <http://www.safespeed.org.uk/>

and Piston heads <http://www.pistonheads.com/news>

Research finds drivers are in touch with reality... unlike the Dft

Real-world rules not their rules. A survey of young drivers published today by Department for Transport finds that Government messages about safe driving are a big turn-off and are not even seen as sensible, let alone credible.

The report: "The good, the bad and the talented - young drivers perspectives" by consultants SHM ([see link below](#)) found:

"A small number of participants included being law-abiding in their definitions of good driving, but this was disputed by other participants. The majority perspective was that the laws and rules of driving were things to be followed not for their own sake, but only:

- if they were judged to be genuinely relevant to the safety of driving as a physical activity
- if they coincided with what were believed to be the norms of driving as a social activity
- in order to avoid penalties."

However, it is striking that when participants talked about the laws and rules of driving, they tended to focus on the ones they found objectionable. Laws and rules are only noticed when they are seen to be 'stupid' or 'pointless'. One of the reasons why the formal laws and rules of driving were perceived by some to be distant from the realities of driving was that laws or rules thought to be sensible and relevant (like stopping at a red light) were seen as common sense or part of the 'unwritten rules' of driving. Participants were sceptical about whether the process of learning for and passing the test contributed to good driving, for a number of reasons.

- The kind of driving required in the test is believed to be very different from 'real driving'.
- The learning experience leading up to the test is not believed to cover enough real situations with motorway driving being a particular concern.

Paul Smith, founder of the Safe Speed road safety campaign said: "The message from young drivers to the Department for Transport could not be clearer. They are saying:

- they do not want to be treated like idiots or incompetents
- the rules do not define 'real driving'"

"The Department for Transport (DfT) is failing to engage with young drivers, and as such is comprehensively failing to assist them on the path to becoming safe and experienced. DfT initiatives such as speed cameras are resulting in contempt for official road safety messages.

"Department for Transport must re-align its policies in order to gain the trust of our drivers in general and young drivers in particular. Everyone knows that road safety is about so much more than rules compliance -- our drivers need believable messages about the skills, the attitudes and the responsibilities that underpin road safety in the real world."

[SHM report: The good, the bad and the talented - young drivers' perspectives \[pdf\]](http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_rdsafety/documents/page/dft_rdsafety_613879.pdf)
http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_rdsafety/documents/page/dft_rdsafety_613879.pdf