

“ PPP ”

People for Proper Policing in North Wales

The UK's A-ROADS ARE TOO DANGEROUS

Two-thirds of Britain's single-carriageway main roads fall below acceptable safety standards, according to a report attributed to **the Road Safety Foundation but paid for by the Highways Agency**.

The report, part of the **European Road Assessment Programme (EuroRAP)** rates the majority of the UK's A-road network with two stars out of a possible four. www.eurorap.org/campaigns

"Single carriageways lack most of the safety features that would protect road users and almost two-thirds (62 per cent) get an overall rating of two stars," says Dr Joanne Hill, director of the Road Safety Foundation. "Some 91 per cent fail to reach high standards for run-off. Head-on collisions are prevented only by road markings. Where road sections have junctions, few layouts rate well" www.roadsafetyfoundation.com/

The Road Safety Foundation wants more protection for drivers on these rural roads. *"A quarter of all British rural road deaths involve hitting roadside objects," says Dr Hill. "It is common to see unprotected steep embankments, poles or trees that have grown far too close to the road. A quarter die at junctions and there are simply too many junctions that do not provide protection to turning vehicles."*

Ironically, road safety charity Brake is calling for the opposite approach: **"Britain's A roads must not be upgraded to be pseudo-motorways with wider lanes, crash barriers or other measures that encourage faster speeds, more environment-damaging car use, and encroach into our countryside,"** it says. *"Many of Britain's A-roads are in rural areas and inevitably bendy, single carriageway and with lots of brows. What these roads need is slower speed limits of 40mph rather than being derestricted and speed cameras to enforce those limits, as has been recognised by many rural local authorities implementing such measures."*

So where lies the future of the UK's A-road, we ask? If EuroRAP (and the Highways Agency) gets its way, it seems it'll be all about unsightly crash barriers and dull, sanitised road layouts from Dover to Fort William. If we follow the Brake route we'll have a country covered with speed cameras, and woe betide anyone who allows their car's speed to trickle above 40mph.

There's got to be a better way. We would never condone irresponsible driving but a society so risk-averse that it attempts to eliminate all possible dangers on the road is ridiculous.

Surely the motoring public can be trusted with a little common sense and intelligence? And if they can't, let's make the drivers better, not the roads safer. It's got to be more effective (and cheaper) to teach people how to properly control and understand a 1.5-ton machine capable of 130mph than it would be to cover the country with speed cameras or entirely remodel the UK's road network. But then that wouldn't make a good headline...

The PPP comments ... we appreciate the concerns expressed by the authors of this story BUT we reiterate J.J.Leeming's comments in his book [Road Accidents: Prevent or Punish](#)

*'Strange and incredible as this may seem, I have spent forty years of my life **increasing the speed of traffic to reduce accidents**, with some success. The book will, therefore, run counter to many **strongly held prejudices**, and will come to many as a severe shock. It can safely be said that places which look dangerous do not have accidents, or very few. They happen at places that do not look dangerous.*

*The reason for this is simple. The motorist is as intelligent as the 'local people'. If a place looks dangerous, he can see that it is, so he takes care and there are no accidents. He does not want to have an accident, and he will take care at obviously dangerous places. Accidents happen when there is some trap in road conditions which is not obvious at a glance, or where the conditions are too complicated for the limited human machine to deal with in the short time available. The driver has only **a fraction of a second** to size up a situation, and there may be some trap which he cannot see in this short time.'*

Leeming wrote this in 1969 and attitudes haven't changed as the attitude of **Brake** shows. Many of the traps today are in the form of distractions both within and without our modern vehicles which squander the fractions of a second that Leeming refers to.