



People for Proper Policing in North Wales

The A55 is a 'catastrophe waiting to happen'

Dec 7 2007 by Carl Butler, Daily Post

A catalogue of major hazards along the 80 mile (130km) North Wales artery will be highlighted today by police bosses who want to stir the Welsh Assembly Government into action.

Chief Superintendent Geraint Anwyl, chairman of the National Roads Policing Intelligence Forum, says a whole raft of safety measures are needed to cut the numbers killed and injured. He says the infrastructure of the road is not up to standard for a dual carriageway that forms part of Euroroute 22, between Hull and Dublin. The danger points which are endangering the lives of thousands of motorists each week, include:

Five bus stops with no protection on the expressway near Llanfairfechan

88 lay-bys, some of which are too short for lorries to pull in and out of safely

No hard-shoulder along the entire route

A cycle track crossing the road near Penmaenmawr

Officially marked pedestrian crossing points on busy stretches carrying 70mph and 50mph traffic

Too many roundabouts

In the last year alone the Daily Post has reported on at least nine fatalities along the A55, stretching from Holyhead right through to the Cheshire border. In the most recent incident last Thursday, 74-year-old Henry Rees Lewis from Wrexham died trying to cross the route during the evening rush hour. The worst accident blackspot is Rhualt Hill, near St Asaph, where over 100 smashes have happened since the beginning of April.

One solution – though costly – would be the introduction of North Wales' first “average speed over distance” control, which would pick up motorists speeding up and down the hill. (Anwyl's answer to any Road safety issue is more abusive cameras)

That would involve a pair of video cameras positioned at a known distance apart with infra-red illuminators that can read number plates and calculate how fast a vehicle has travelled. Today Chief Supt Anwyl will be calling on members of the North Wales Police Authority to lend their weight in pressing for urgent action by the Welsh Assembly Government and local authorities.

The call comes amid growing concern about the volume of heavy traffic along the route, the potentially lethal condition of many lorries, particularly those owned by overseas firms, and about the standard of driving.

A major contribution to road safety would be the provision of a secure overnight truckstop. There are already plans for stops in the Caerwys area near Holywell, which face strong opposition from local residents. *“So much for a Euroroute,”* said Ch Supt Anwyl. *“It's crazy that there isn't one (a truck stop) anywhere along the A55, and with so many lorries carrying valuable cargoes it's not surprising that drivers don't want to park up somewhere they don't consider safe,”*

There is also concern about the amount of time spent by police officers on tasks which, in England, are fulfilled by employees of the Highway Agency.

These include protecting broken-down vehicles and escorting them to safety. *"We would like the Welsh Assembly to agree to that being done in Wales, as thousands of hours of police time is spent on those tasks, taking them away from core duties. We cannot stand back and do nothing because the situation is getting worse as the volume of heavy traffic increases, and that is why we hope that local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government will listen to us,"* he added.

Mark McArthur, spokesman for road safety and transport group Forward, welcomed the A55 improvement plans. *"When this road was built we did not have the traffic volumes of HGVs that we now have and it was never intended to take the weight of traffic and that needs addressing. One of the biggest safety issues on a dual carriageway is to have proper safe grade junctions and on the A55 many are not graded properly to allow traffic to merge at speed. I know the Road Haulage Association will also welcome any proposal for overnight stops. Hard shoulders are also critical when you have heavy lorries, you need space for them to get off the road."But average speed cameras are the worst safety idea. It forces the driver's attention away from advance observation and makes them focus on the speedometer."*

A Campaigner at SafeSpeed, an organisation which does not believe speed cameras improve safety, said *"average speed cameras led to obsessive driver behaviour. I am really very, very worried about average speed cameras. They tend to place them in areas where there have been temporary high incidents of accidents. When there is any improvement and this temporary, recent history of high numbers drops, they attribute this to the average speed cameras and use that as justification for introducing more where is no benefit. The whole thing is a nonsense."*

The PPP comments ...CS Anwyl, and Brunstrom have been around for years in their current positions AND during this time 10s of £millions have been spent extending and modifying and **messing about** with the A55. All the faults they describe and worse were there at the design stage and many were the result of criminally negligent design. Needless to say most of our useless Politicians who have since claimed 'ownership' of the A55 were party to this design. Most of the laybys are devoid of any services including refuse bins, are dangerously narrow, totally unsuitable for leg stretching and viewing the countryside or overnight stops for tired HGV drivers. Toilet facilities are almost non existent even at the Ferry terminal. As a member of the EU we are expected to operate to EU i.e. French and German standards. We suggest (at the risk of it becoming just another jolly) that a group including Anwyl and reps.of the haulage industry visit European highways and evaluate their services and design. ANY major road development/design should in future be vetted by senior traffic officers and their opinions canvassed and taken note of, they will then share accountability for the finished product. In Industry these are known as HAZOPs (Hazard & operability studies) and a rigorous discipline has been developed for this process which is fully applicable to roads!. It is Ironical that the Government is now hell bent on the retrograde and dangerous policy of **using Motor Way hard shoulders to ease traffic congestion**.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=489782&in_page_id=1770

North Wales police appear to be keen to COMPLETE their opting out of yet another major responsibility, highway patrol. VOSA should handle the specialist HGV issues but PREVENTION of dangerous driving needs frequent highway patrols. The East bound A55 at Pen y Clip has been redesigned as a narrow permanent hazard just to incorporate the cycle track that Brunstrom and vested cycling interests in local councils applauded.