

PE1600/D

Transport Scotland letter of 20 July 2016

Dear Stephen

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION [PE1600](#) (Speed awareness courses)

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce speed awareness courses.

Thank you for your letter of 4 July 2016 regarding the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committees consideration of the above mentioned petition, and the Committees request for Transport Scotland's views on the discussions of 30th June, and request for further information.

Transport Scotland welcomes the Committees consideration of this issue and thanks the Committee for providing this opportunity to comment. The Committee is aware that the Scottish Government committed to consider if the introduction of a speed awareness scheme, focusing on speeding, would be an appropriate contribution to road safety in Scotland, through *Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020*. I note from the discussions of 30th June that the Committee also recognises that we support the general principle of driver education as an alternative to prosecution, where this is appropriate.

The Committee will wish to be advised that a mid-term review of the Road Safety Framework was conducted during 2015 and the Framework's Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) identified speed as one of three key priority areas for focussed activity through to 2020 and beyond. Through the review, the existing commitments in priority areas were all reassessed and the SPB identified that the commitment to consider the introduction of a speed awareness scheme should be retained.

Currently under limited circumstances, prosecutors in Scotland may offer diversion from prosecution courses in relation to careless driving. Individuals reported to the procurator fiscal for an offence of careless and inconsiderate driving under section 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 by the police, can be offered a diversion to the "National Driver Alertness" Course or the "Rider Intervention Developing Experience" (RIDE) courses, tailored to car drivers and motorcyclists respectively. However there is no equivalent diversion scheme in relation to speeding. Prosecution thresholds for speeding offences in Scotland are set by the Lord Advocate, and these thresholds may differ from the thresholds in other parts of the United Kingdom. This means that a "like-for-like" implementation of Speed Awareness Courses, as they currently operate in other parts of the United Kingdom with the same specific parameters is not currently possible.

The Committee has specifically enquired about what would constitute a robust evidence base and I can advise that partners on the SPB have been collectively considering ways in which to explore and collate this, ensuring positive behavioural change is demonstrable. This has involved interrogating the existing research base and reviewing the studies conducted to date which shows positive results, suggesting that the courses have the potential to be an important part in improving driver behaviour. However, it should also be noted that the evidence base in terms of improving behaviour is limited and the Department for Transport are currently conducting a 3 year Speed Awareness Course evaluation, that is due to report next year.

In considering what else we could do in Scotland to enhance

the evidence base, we gathered data on speeding offences and data related to courses when offered in other parts of the UK and gathered information through discussions with the National

Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS), who provide the Framework for diversion from prosecution courses, with course providers and with police forces in other parts of the UK.

Police Scotland is presently carrying out preparatory work to scope speed awareness courses and identify practical implementation steps required for their introduction. Their intention is to report back to the Board and begin detailed discussion and engagement with road safety partners in the coming weeks. However, the Committee should be aware that ultimately the introduction of any such course in Scotland would require the approval of the Lord Advocate, and separate discussion with Rt Hon. James Wolffe, QC and his officials in the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service will be held in due course.

The SPB are meeting on 28 September, by which time Police Scotland will be able to provide an update on the progress that they have made in identifying all the steps required to introduce speed awareness courses and provide a steer on any identified barriers to implementation.

I hope that the Committee finds this information useful, and I will be happy to provide you with any further information required.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Thomson
Road Safety Policy Team Leader
Transport Scotland