Safe Roads in Somerset: Road Safety Strategy 2017-2026

Consultation Summary Document

Somerset County Council will adopt a Safe System approach to road safety, aiming to ensure that no human is killed or seriously injured as a result of a road crash.
Introduction

Road collisions can have a devastating effect on the lives of those involved, their family, friends and the wider community. The fear of road collisions can make people reluctant to travel by certain modes such as cycling and walking and this can affect freedom of movement, especially for young people and the elderly. In addition extended road closures can have serious consequences for both road users and the local economy.

From 2012 to 2016, 122,512 people were seriously injured or killed on England’s roads, 1041 of them in Somerset. This is unacceptable. There are indications nationally that progress to reduce casualties has stalled, and locally it is slowing, suggesting new approaches may be needed.

In its road safety strategy, Safe Roads in Somerset, Somerset County Council (SCC) outlines how it plans, through a Safe Systems approach, to deliver its vision that no road user should be killed or seriously injured on the roads of Somerset. The Safe System approach and specific actions required to achieve this are outlined within this consultation summary where we are asking for your views. Your responses will be used to refine the final strategy which is planned to be published in Summer 2018.

The full draft strategy can be viewed on SCC’s consultation website: www.somersetconsults.org.uk/consult.ti/system/home and contains more detail and background information.

Responses to this consultation should be also be made via SCC’s consultation website (web address above). The consultation period runs from 24th January until 8th March 2018.

If you wish to respond via a different format please e-mail: Transportpolicy@somerset.gov.uk with your requirements.
Safe System

Almost all road deaths and injuries are preventable. However, for a continued decline in road traffic collisions and serious injury there needs to be a shift in the way that road safety is delivered in local areas. Somerset County Council aims to adopt a Safe System approach to road safety; the principle aim of this approach is that no human should be killed or seriously injured as a result of a road crash, and the traffic system should be designed to this end.

In a Safe System there is a shared responsibility for preventing injury, not just between road users and enforcers but also those that design, build and manage roads or vehicles. It is also essential that good quality post-crash care is available should a serious collision occur.

The approach requires recognition that even with comprehensive road safety interventions, people will always make mistakes on the road and that the human body has a known, physical limit to tolerate crash forces before harm occurs. Road infrastructure must be designed and engineered to minimise both the risk of mistakes by road users (by enabling them to behave with due care and respect), and serious injury should a collision occur.

Four Guiding Principles of a Safe-System

- People will always make mistakes;
- The human body has a known, physical limit to tolerate crash forces before harm occurs;
- Individuals have a responsibility to act with care and within traffic laws; however a shared responsibility exists with those who design, build, manage and use roads/vehicles and provide post-crash care; and
- All parts of the system (Figure 1) must be strengthened in combination to multiply their effects ensuring that road users are protected if one part fails.

Figure adapted from the 2009 WHO report on the Global Status on Road Safety

Additional resources on the Safe System and Vision Zero approach to road safety

www.visionzeroinitiative.com/
The differences between a safe system and traditional approach to road safety are summarised in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Safe System</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the problem?</strong></td>
<td>All injury collisions, but a focus on fatal and serious injuries.</td>
<td>Significant focus on fatalities and serious injuries.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What causes the problem?</strong></td>
<td>Human factors.</td>
<td>People make mistakes, people are fragile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is responsible?</strong></td>
<td>Individual road users.</td>
<td>Road users and system designers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the approach?</strong></td>
<td>Incremental approach to reduce the problem.</td>
<td>Systematic approach to build a safe road system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the appropriate goal?</strong></td>
<td>Optimum number of fatalities and serious injuries.</td>
<td>Zero fatalities and serious injuries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Please respond to the following questions online at: [www.somersetconsults.org.uk/consult.ti/system/home](http://www.somersetconsults.org.uk/consult.ti/system/home)

There will be opportunities to provide additional comments where appropriate and we would particularly like to hear if you are not in agreement with any objective.

We would also like your views if you think any of the actions may have a negative impact on individuals or groups of road users.

**Question 1:** Do you think that the Safe System is the best approach for Somerset to reduce casualties?

**Question 2:** Do you agree that road and transport designers have a role to play in improving road safety?

**Question 3:** Do you agree that you have a role to play improving road safety (for example as a driver for work, as a cyclist, or as a parent etc.)?

In a Safe System road user’s responsibility to act with care is proportional to the risk of causing serious injury. Therefore drivers of motorised vehicles bear the greatest responsibility for safety, while cyclists and pedestrians less so because they rarely cause serious injury.

**Question 4:** Do you agree that drivers of motorised vehicles have a greater responsibility for road safety?
In a Safe System priority should be given to the vulnerability of human beings, **not to vehicle mobility at any cost**. This can pose challenges in a rural county like Somerset where there are significant lengths of rural roads, some of which have historic and constrained layouts, in addition to lengthy commutes both within and across the county. The use of a Safe System approach in Somerset will require identifying high risk locations, prioritising road treatments and balancing proactive assessments of highway improvements with the rural character of the County.

**Question 5:** Do you agree that, particularly in residential areas, road safety is more important than quick or flexible journey routes that motorised vehicles often enjoy?

(This may mean it takes a little longer to complete a journey by a less direct route or that priority is given to cyclists or pedestrians for example.)

**Vision**

The vision for Safe Roads in Somerset is that no road user should be killed or seriously injured on the roads of Somerset. The specific actions required to achieve this are detailed within the action plan and align with the following key components of a safe system;

- Safe road users;
- Safe roads and roadsides;
- Safe speed; and
- Safe vehicles.

**Somerset County Council’s Responsibility**

Under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 highway authorities are required to prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety. This includes: investigating collisions arising from the use of vehicles on roads and highways within their administrative area; taking measures to prevent reoccurrence; and the construction, improvement, maintenance and repair of such roads and paths, in addition to road safety education to enable safe road users.

The Local Authority also has a duty to ensure the efficient movement of traffic under the 2004 Traffic Management Act (traffic meaning all modes of transport). Section 16 (1) of the Act refers to the duty placed on a highway authority to manage the road network with a view to achieving efficient movement of traffic on the network, while having regard to other policy objectives.
Individual knowledge, experience and attitudes affect road user behaviour and compliance with road safety law. Putting road users at the centre of a safe system requires acknowledging road user’s strengths and weaknesses and avoiding a victim blaming culture for those experiencing serious road injuries. Although intentional non-compliance with the laws of the road does occur, lapses in attention and errors of judgement are an unavoidable reality of road use when there are millions of road users daily.

In terms of addressing the modifiable factors that impact on road user behaviours (e.g. drug and alcohol use, excess speed, mobile phone use and driving while tired) evidence shows that using Behaviour Change Techniques (BCT) in road safety education and training are most likely to impact on road user behaviour. There are a range of different BCTs available that can be tailored to the target audience.

**Question 6:** Do you agree with the overall need to improve road user behaviour?
(This may mean attending road safety training, advanced riding or driving courses, or more law enforcement, for example).

**Safe Road Users Objectives**

1. Promote a sense of responsibility by road users, especially for the protection of more vulnerable road users (e.g. children, pedestrian, cyclists, horse riders etc);

2. Encourage compliance with traffic law and educate road users of the risks of excess speed, fatigue and being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol while using the road;

3. Identify road users not compliant with traffic law;

4. Promote corporate responsibility for fleet vehicle behaviour (including agricultural vehicles) and work driver training;

5. Ensure that evidence led road safety education, training and information is available and accessible to identified priority groups; and

6. Provide and promote road safety education and awareness raising material in a range of appropriate formats e.g. face to face training, virtual reality training and through social media.

**Question 7:** Do you agree with the individual Safe Road Users objectives above?
The design of roads and roadsides can contribute to the outcome of collisions, as well as the causation. It is recognised that not all collisions can be prevented however when they do occur the road environment should be engineered to reduce the risk of serious injury. There are a wide variety of approaches to achieving this outcome including passive safety (where interventions such as crash barriers on central reservations and the avoidance of signs or fixed objects in likely crash paths are used to protect road users) and more extensive highways engineering. Techniques such as traffic calming, filtering out or directing motorised traffic (filtered permeability) can also be used to reduce speed and direct traffic away from residential or pedestrian areas.

Adapting roads and roadsides after they have been built can be expensive and challenging. An effective and safe road system for Somerset requires a pro-active approach, ensuring that safety is considered in the planning and building of all new developments, prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable road users.

Question 8: Do you agree with the overall need to design roads to reduce the risk of injury?
(This may mean motorised vehicles and their journeys are no longer given priority when designing roads.)

Safe Roads and Roadsides Objectives

1. Ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, children and the elderly) are prioritised in new and existing highways infrastructure, implementing passive safety and evidence based solutions;

2. Continue to review and adapt routes where there is an increased risk of serious injury to road users, implementing lower speed limits and engineering solutions to mitigate against this risk;

3. Investigate serious and fatal collisions to assess the contribution of the road infrastructure on the outcome of a collision and identify any suitable engineering solutions.

Question 9: Do you agree with the individual Safe Roads and Roadsides objectives above?
Studies show that reductions in average speed result in substantial casualty reductions. Just a 5% reduction in speed can result in a 30% reduction in the number of fatal crashes.

Vulnerable road users are at particular risk from higher traffic speeds. The risk of a pedestrian being killed if hit by a car increases from 10% at 30 mph to 70% at 50 mph.

Speed can have wide impacts on communities. Real or perceived danger can deter people from walking and noise levels increase with higher speeds.

Speed is an area of shared responsibility between those that design, use and enforce road traffic laws. Alongside ensuring that road users understand the significant benefits of speed reduction is a need to ensure that roads guide and enable road users to adopt the posted speed limit, this is termed as self-explaining and requires consistency across a wide area to be effective.

**Question 10:** Do you agree that there are areas of Somerset where vehicle speed causes a hazard?

**Safe Speed Objectives**

1. Ensure that speed limits are consistent and reflective of the road environment and use, taking into account the vulnerability and physical limitations of road users;
2. Ensure a consistent ‘self-explaining’ road design;
3. Protect vulnerable road users by separating them from fast moving traffic;
4. Continue to increase the use of 20mph limits and zones in areas where vulnerable road users will be mixing with motorised vehicles e.g. town centres, children’s playgrounds and outside schools during pick-up times;
5. Work with communities and police to identify, assess and enforce areas where speed of motorised vehicles is a concern;
6. Increase road users’ understanding of the benefits of speed reduction, promoting an ethos of responsibility for other road users, especially for those using modes of transport that make them more vulnerable to injury in a collision.

**Question 11:** Do you agree with the individual Safe Speed objectives above?
Vehicle design, maintenance and technology all play important roles in ensuring the safety of road users; however this often relies on appropriate use of systems such as seatbelts, child car seats, in-vehicle insurance telemetry as well as regular maintenance of private, fleet and agricultural vehicles.

Although innovation for safer vehicles is primarily nationally or internationally led, local authorities have a role and interest in ensuring that vehicles using the road network are road worthy and that the road network can adapt with technological developments.

**Question 12:** Do you agree with the overall need to improve vehicle safety?
(This may mean ensuring your vehicle is regularly serviced or checking your vehicle regularly.)

**Safe Vehicles Objectives**

1. Enforce, lobby and encourage compliance with regulatory and maintenance standards by vehicle owners and our own organisations, to ensure that vehicles using our road network are safe and roadworthy;
2. Promote ‘safe vehicles’ within road safety campaigns and training;
3. Plan and prepare for technological advances, such as connected and autonomous vehicles on the Somerset road network;
4. Educate road users, especially children, pedestrians and cyclists about the road safety issues related to being around large and long vehicles.

**Question 13:** Do you agree with the individual Safe Vehicles objectives above?
Somerset County Council is a leading member of the South West Accident Reduction Working Group (SWARWG) and a member of Road Safety Great Britain. At a local level Somerset County Council works closely with partners in Avon and Somerset Police, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service, Severn Major Trauma Network, Highways England and the South West Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWAST) to both better understand the collisions that occur on our roads and to co-ordinate road safety activity.

Although road safety has always taken evidence based approaches to road engineering and road user education, the availability and quality of road safety data is continuously improving. Partnership working and a shared responsibility for road safety across the system offers an ever increasing insight into the causes and consequences of road injury in Somerset.

**Question 8:** Do you agree with the overall need to work with partners to deliver safer roads in Somerset?

**Partnership Working Objectives**

1. Increase partnership working across the road safety system;
2. Use data and evidence from across the system to inform preventative road safety interventions;
3. Lead from the front over promotion of corporate responsibilities for road safety;
4. Use data and evidence from across the system to understand injury causation, outcomes and modifiable factors in road injury prevention.

**Question 9:** Do you agree with the individual Partnership Working objectives above?

Please remember to complete and submit your response at:  
[www.somersetconsults.org.uk/consult.ti/system/home](http://www.somersetconsults.org.uk/consult.ti/system/home)

Thank you