

Response from Action Vision Zero

Summary

Action Vision Zero congratulates Kent County Council (KCC) on adopting Vision Zero for its roads and on being in the vanguard of counties across the UK taking such an approach. The language and analysis contained in the plan is of high quality. In the context of the lack of success of the previous casualty reduction strategy, Action Vision Zero welcomes the use of a Safe Systems approach, recognised globally as the way to achieve Vision Zero. As well as recognising the individual human and financial cost of road casualties, we applaud KCC for linking Vision Zero to its public health, active travel and Net Zero emission objectives.

The workshop held by KCC to discuss the strategy on 25th February 2021 demonstrated two things:

- 1) A surprisingly high level of agreement from stakeholders from a wide range of backgrounds to both the adoption of Vision Zero and to the reasoning for doing so.
- 2) The combined knowledge, experience and skills of those attending should, if leveraged effectively via the expert steering group proposed in Action #35, be able to design measures that make Vision Zero a reality and to make Kent a leader among Local Authorities in eliminating road casualties.

Main concerns and overall recommendation

Three aspects of the strategy leave us with doubt as to whether the objectives will be achieved:

- 1) A lack of committed funding. Without investing significant resources into the programme, change to past trends is unlikely.
- 2) As emphasised in the workshop, while research is always welcome, it risks coming at the expense of immediate and necessary action. Data already exists in support of interventions which work and which could be implemented rapidly without further research.
- 3) We have seen little evidence from the past that the proposal to welcome, rather than resist expert and community input will be fully embraced.

Our **overall recommendation** is to support Action #35 by immediately assembling a rapid action taskforce of experts to advise on:

- 1) which of the proposed measures will be most likely to achieve the strategy;
- 2) identifying additional information needed to confirm which measures will be most effective;
- 3) estimating the resources required to achieve the objectives; and
- 4) prioritising measures that are likely to bring the greatest results most quickly.

Such a group to report back with initial recommendations within three months.

[Appendix 2](#) contains more details of [Action Vision Zero's](#) approach to achieving Vision Zero, which we commend to KCC and to the expert taskforce.

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Suggested strategy enhancements

We have eight specific suggestions for consideration by the expert taskforce for inclusion in the final strategy:

- 1) **Place greater emphasis on serious injury reduction targets.** Since deaths on the road are, thankfully, far less frequent than serious injuries, this makes trends harder to discern and measure. Whether or not a crash leads to someone being killed or ‘merely’ suffering a life-changing injury can be a matter of chance. We therefore recommend that the measure should [include seriously injured](#), particularly for interim targets¹.

Using deaths as the criteria makes a material difference to the decision about the base figure: In 2019, there were 37 deaths on Kent roads, but 45 on average for the previous five years – a 20% difference. For serious injuries, the base is 770 in each case.

- 2) **View Vision Zero through the prism of reducing road danger.** Reducing road casualties is not just about the actual number of casualties, but the effect that actual and perceived road danger has on the day-to-day lives of individuals. While zero casualties should be the key target, too great a focus on a single measure could mean that insufficient attention is paid to other important aspects². We suggest adopting a Balanced Scorecard of Key Performance Indicators, such as that adopted by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough³ with specific, measurable annual targets, to include, for example:
 - a. Casualty reduction target to include all collisions, weighted for seriousness, using a log-scale similar to that used to assess the financial cost of casualties;
 - b. Safety performance indicators for speed limit compliance, in-car phone use, drink and drugs etc
 - c. Levels of cycling and walking, as an indicator of perceived road danger;
 - d. Take up of Community Speedwatch;
 - e. Adoption of latest vehicle safety standards by KCC, its suppliers and service providers; and
 - f. Perception of risk, particularly for vulnerable road user through attitudinal surveys.
- 3) **Bring forward Vision Zero to 2041 and adopt “50 by 30” as an interim target.** Achieving Vision Zero by [2041](#) would align Kent with other authorities, such as Transport for London⁴, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough⁵ and Leeds (by 2040)⁶ and, if achieved, would result in 200 fewer people killed and 4,000 fewer seriously injured⁷.

While a five-year target is welcome, a target of a 50% reduction in casualties by 2030 aligns

¹ In recognising that ‘serious injury’ can range from life-changing to relatively minor, targets should give due weight to the ‘most serious’.

² A focus on a single target risks implementing the wrong measures. Having no-one cycling or walking on or near Kent’s roads, would eliminate pedestrian and cyclist casualties, but would be an undesirable outcome.

³ <https://bit.ly/2Px2Y2l>

⁴ <https://actionvisionzero.org/what-to-campaign-for/>

⁵ <https://bit.ly/3dUNpeX>

⁶ <https://bit.ly/2PO3auq>

⁷ The revised ‘target’ of 400 road deaths and 7,000 serious injuries over 30 years is still arguably too many.

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Kent with national and global targets and, at the same time, provides a marketing theme for gaining support for Vision Zero in Kent.

- 4) **Prioritise population-wide strategies ahead of a focus on clusters and high-risk routes.** The previous emphasis on rural A roads fails to deal with the significant road danger in the county's towns and villages. [Casualties on urban minor roads](#) are now at least as great a concern as rural roads. Achieving Vision Zero will require KCC to deploy a population-wide strategy which includes lower speeds across the county's roads, both rural and urban, and a greater focus on urban casualties, which comprised 40% of KSIs in 2019.
- 5) **Include Vision Zero in Public Health and environmental objectives and targets.** Since more people are killed or incapacitated through poor air, obesity and, in the future from climate change, than directly on the roads, Vision Zero must be seen as an enabler of solutions to those issues.
- 6) **Embed Vision Zero in all new developments and highways schemes, by placing road danger reduction for all road users ahead of all other considerations.** Boroughs and Districts should demonstrate how their Local Plans will reduce road danger and new road schemes and interventions which do not clearly reduce road danger should not be permitted to proceed.
- 7) **Extend the proposed emphasis on post-crash analysis:**
 - a. Implement a 'root cause analysis' of all fatalities and the 'most serious' injuries; and
 - b. Commit to strategies, policies and funding to deliver the changes needed that arise from this analysis.
- 8) **Place education as just one component in achieving behavioural change** within the safe systems approach. As an objective in its own right there is little evidence that it has any but the most marginal effect.
For example, Bikeability is an excellent scheme to help protect new cyclists and might encourage more parents to see cycling as normal way for short journeys. However, it will not increase the numbers cycling without the accompanying safe cycling infrastructure designed to the highest standards.
The behavioural change needed to achieve Vision Zero in Kent, will require interventions:
 - a. directed towards those that cause the road danger;
 - b. include hard engineering; and
 - c. are backed up by enforcement.

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Appendix 1:

Chart 1: Killed

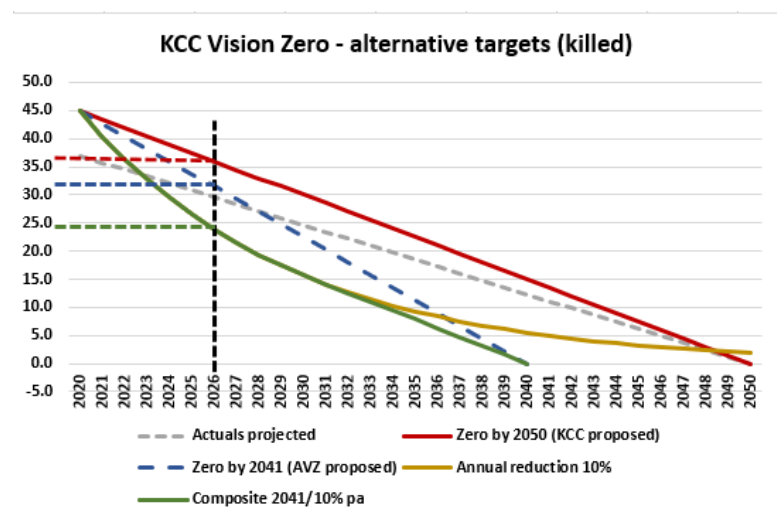


Chart 2 KSIs

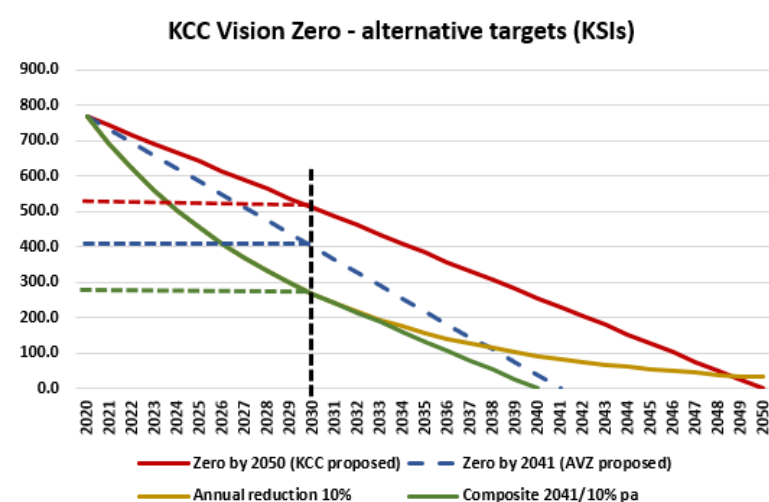
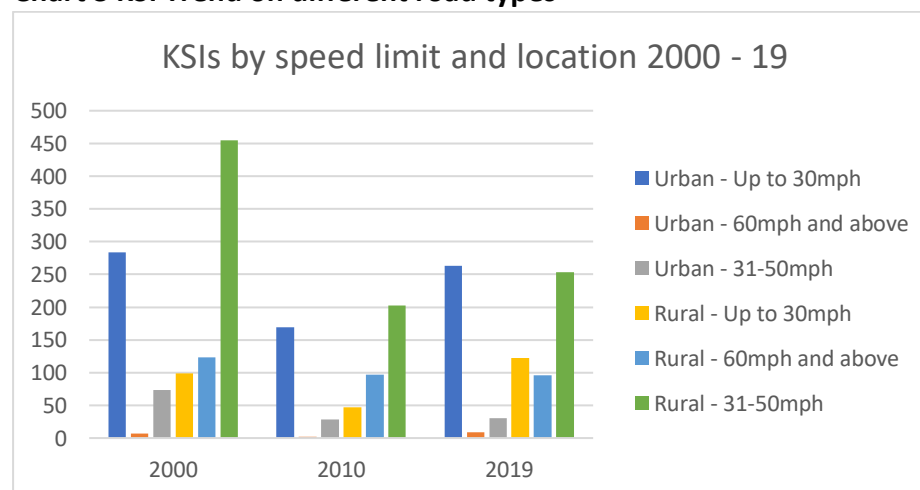


Chart 3 KSI Trend on different road types



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Appendix 2: Detailed recommendations for measures to achieve the strategy

Progress on reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured has stalled since 2010. Some Local Authorities, particularly those in larger urban centres, have adopted Vision Zero⁸ to kickstart a renewed downward trend.

While the road safety challenges facing many towns within Kent mirror those of **urban** local authorities, the more **rural** areas need a modified approach. Action Vision Zero offers the following safe systems 6-point plan for Vision Zero for Kent in its urban and rural areas:

	Urban	Rural
1. Slower speeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt 20mph as the default speed limit in built-up areas, with 30mph as the exception, where justified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt speed limits of: 20mph in village centres; 30 / 40mph on rural lanes; and 50mph on major single carriageway roads.
2. Safe junctions & crossings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct crossings on pedestrian desire lines with short waiting times and enough time to cross. Close side roads to through traffic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More cameras at major junctions. Red-light cameras to increase compliance with stop signals.
3. Safe space for cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protected cycle lanes on main roads. Implement Low Traffic neighbourhoods. Adopt LCWIP in all district and boroughs⁹. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe, fully segregated cycleways linking towns across Kent. Protected cycle lanes on other main roads as part of an LCWIP.
4. Less traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower vehicle usage means fewer people killed and injured on our streets, which requires more walking, cycling and public transport. Efficient and sustainable delivery of goods, especially last mile goods delivery. Road user charging, including use of parking charges. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since many journeys are less than 2km, implement attractive active and sustainable travel alternatives to reduce the numbers of short driven journeys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce traffic through self-sustaining communities, integrated public transport and detailed walking and cycling plans. Restrict HGVs to strategic and major roads. Key performance indicators to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The increase in the share of spending on walking, cycling and public transport. How many people have a choice in how to travel other than by private vehicle.

⁸ <https://actionvisionzero.org/what-to-campaign-for/>

⁹ Guidance on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans here <https://bit.ly/31cjGq6>

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	Urban	Rural
5. Safe vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speed limiters and black boxes in new private vehicles – compulsory on new car models from 2022; retrofit speed limiters to working vehicles; safe HGVs including Direct Vision Lorries and Bus Safety Standards. 	
6. Safe behaviours and enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus road safety publicity and education on those that generate the greatest danger- in line with proposed changes to the Highway Code. Use Black box technology to examine crash causes and used in court cases to reinforce safe driving behaviour. Enforcement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear and visible police enforcement. - Average speed cameras on A roads with a higher than average risk profile. - Emphasis on motorcycle speed compliance. - Enhanced role for Community Speedwatch. - Leveraging actual enforcement with publicity campaigns. 	