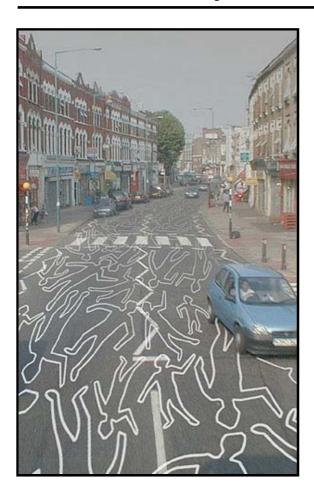
### **London's Lawless Roads**

Why traffic policing must improve to prevent road death and injury

# A report by Jenny Jones - Green Party member of the London Assembly -



#### Introduction

"I'm angry: angry that there are still people dying on our roads who shouldn't be; angry that there are still people suffering horrendous injuries from our roads who shouldn't be."

Jenny Jones

Far too many people still die or sustain horrendous injuries on London's roads. In 2006 nearly 4,000 people were killed or seriously injured<sup>i</sup>. This report explains the importance of the police in making London's roads safe and examines their record on road crime enforcement. It draws on my experience of seven years as a member of the London Assembly (and Assembly appointee on the Metropolitan Police Authority) and over five years as the London Mayor's road safety ambassador.

The report concludes that the Metropolitan Police has failed to treat road crime with the seriousness it deserves.

Summer 2007

London's roads are becoming increasingly lawless in several dangerous ways. This report describes the rise in "hit-and-run" incidents, the widespread evasion of vehicle tax and insurance, and the declining enforcement of traffic offences not detected by electronic devices, such as speed cameras. Cuts in the number of traffic police have lead a minority of drivers to believe that they can break the law with impunity. Yet, an increase of 8,000 in the total number of police officers in London over the last six years provided the Met Police with ample opportunity to make road safety a priority".

More people die on London's roads than are murdered. Most road deaths are preventable, yet several times more resources are devoted to murder investigations than to road death investigations. The lack of priority given to road crime is demonstrated by the current reluctance of the police to prosecute drivers who injure cyclists or pedestrians, in the absence of independent witnesses<sup>iii</sup>. This dismissive approach is not adopted towards the victims of car theft, burglary, assault and other crimes.

"As the London Mayor's road safety ambassador, I have met many of the relatives and loved ones of people who have died on London's roads.

Whilst I'm proud of the fact that London's roads are a lot safer than they used to be,

I realise this is of no interest to a parent who has just lost their child, or to someone who has just lost their dearest friend.

London now has one of the safest road networks of any European city, but no one should regard that as good enough."

**Jenny Jones** 

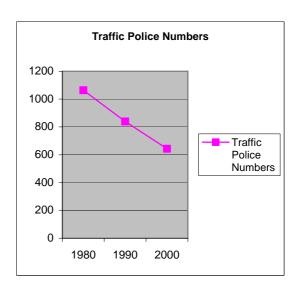
## Engineering, Education, but little Enforcement

Overall, London has more than doubled the amount spent on road safety since  $2000.^{iv}$  As a result, casualties have reduced faster than in any other urban centre in Britain. But they can reduce much more.

Road safety is a partnership of engineering, education and enforcement. In London millions of pounds have been invested in **engineering** measures, such as speed cushions, Pelican Crossings and 20mph zones. A lot of money has begun to be spent on **education** and London now runs the biggest speed awareness course in the country. The only area which has not gained extra resources is **enforcement**. This must change.

#### **Fewer Police, Less Enforcement**

- Between 1980 and 2001 numbers of traffic police in London were slashed from 1063 to 646<sup>vi</sup>
- Numbers have now stabilised at around 690 partly due to external pressure and additional money from Transport for London<sup>vii</sup>
- The numbers of traffic police as a percentage of the Metropolitan Police force has fallen from 4.48% in 1980 to 2% in 2006<sup>viii</sup>
- Currently there are over 33,670 police officers in the Met of whom only 2% (690) work on traffic policing
- More than three times the number of individuals were found guilty in court of traffic offences in London in 1984 (230,882) than in 2004 (71,661)<sup>ix</sup>
- Prosecutions for careless driving in London were 13,829 in 1984 and 4,715 in 2004. These figures do not indicate a three-fold improvement in driving behaviour. They demonstrate the effects of decreased traffic policing and enforcement, which are described in the rest of this report.



#### Roque drivers and lawless roads

London drivers are more likely to get away with speeding and other motoring offences than road users in other regions. Too many car drivers escape detection by camera enforcement by failing to register their vehicle, or giving a false address. The long term cuts in the number of traffic police in London has allowed a culture to develop where some drivers believe that they are beyond the law. Around eighty people a week are injured in collisions involving "hitand-run" driving, a serious offence.



(LtoR): Jenny Jones, Brigitte Chaudhry, Ken Livingstone at launch of Roadpeace campaign

"We need more action by the police to end the cowardly crime of hit-and-run driving in London. It is terrible that people are being left for dead by drivers who believe they are beyond the law. The sad reality is that the drivers' failure to stop is part of a well established pattern of behaviour in London." **Jenny Jones** 

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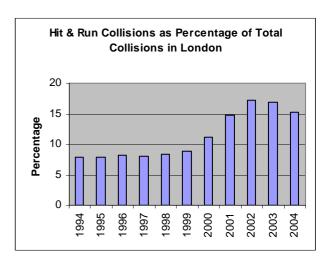
Jenny Jones with mobile safety camera partnership in Greenwich

#### London's Lawless Roads

- Uninsured drivers and "hit-and-run" incidents are examples of road lawlessness
- 81% of London postcodes have instances of uninsured vehicles above the national average<sup>x</sup>
- Drivers in Tottenham are 4.8 times more likely to be uninsured than the national average
- There is a proven link between uninsured drivers and other crimes<sup>xi</sup>
- Uninsured drivers push up the insurance premiums of insured drivers by an estimated average of £30 per policyxii
- Total numbers of collisions in London have declined in the past 20 years, but "hit-and-run" collisions as a percentage of all collisions have risenxiii
- "Hit-and-run" collisions accounted for 6.5% of all collisions in London in 1985 and 15.2% of all collisions in London in 2004

Year	Collisions Involving Hit & Run	Total Collisions	Proportion of Hit & Run
1985	2,805	43.073	6.5%
1986	3,525	43,380	8.1%
1987	3,529	41,470	8.5%
1988	4,186	42,269	9.9%
1989	4,314	44,813	9.6%
1990	4,114	44,049	9.3%
1991	3,680	39,551	9.3%
1992	3,493	38.789	9.0%
1993	3,146	38,581	8.2%
1994	3,055	38,576	7.9%
1995	2,980	38,082	7.8%
1996	3,157	38,491	8.2%
1997	3,120	38,708	8.5%
1998	3,206	38,165	8.4%
1999	3,360	38,239	8.8%
2000	4,218	37,618	11.2%
2001	5,373	36,673	14.7%
2002	5,844	33,893	17.2%
2003	5,369	31,811	16.9%
2004	4,379	28,756	15.2%

**Table 1** Numbers of collisions involving hit & run as percentage of total collisions in London<sup>xiv</sup>



**Chart 1.** Hit & run collisions as percentage of total number of collisions in London 1994-2004

### **Postcode Lottery Policing**

Enforcement action for red light violations and driving whilst using a mobile phone is very poor in certain parts of London. For example, 16 times more people are issued with fixed penalty notices for driving whilst using a mobile phone in Kingston than in Merton.\*\* There needs to be a consistency of enforcement throughout the Metropolitan area.

#### **London's Postcode Lottery Policing**

- The chance of being caught and prosecuted for certain traffic offences depends on where in London a person is driving
- In some boroughs levels of law enforcement are so low that there is little chance of being caught
- The variation between boroughs in the numbers of fines and penalty notices issued is too great to be explained solely by different rates of law breaking
- 24 times more drivers are fined for jumping red lights in Brent than in neighbouring Harrow<sup>xvi</sup>
- Clearly police in some boroughs are enforcing the law whilst in others they are not

Borough	Penalty notices
	for mobile phone
	use while driving
	(2005-2006)
City of Westminster	1691
Hounslow	1490
Kingston upon Thames	1090
Redbridge	50
Merton	65
Hammersmith & Fulham	78

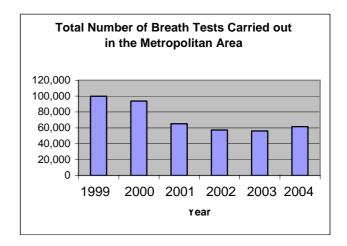
**Table 1** Illustrates variation in numbers of fixed penalty notices issued for mobile phone use while driving in a sample of London boroughs

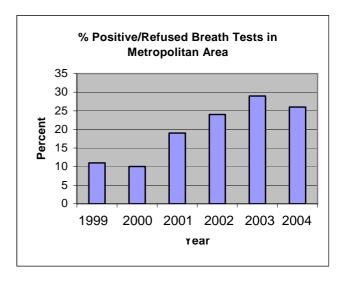
Borough	Penalty notices	
	for contravening	
	red lights (2005/6)	
Lambeth	9359	
Brent	5654	
Barking & Dagenham	4748	
Hammersmith & Fulham	179	
Redbridge	247	
Newham	250	

**Table 2** Illustrates variation in numbers of fixed penalty notices issued for contravening red lights in a sample of boroughs

#### **Drink Driving**

- Uninsured drivers are ten times more likely than insured drivers to be convicted of drink driving in the UK<sup>xvii</sup>
- Instances of breath testing in London per thousand population are below average for police forces in England & Wales<sup>xviii</sup>
- The percentage of those tested positive has risen since 1999 which could be due either to more targeted police operations, or to a possible reversal of the post war trend away from drink driving xix





#### Catching illegal drivers

Jenny Jones assists in the roadside

"The police in London are barely scratching the surface of all that needs to be done to change the culture of lawless roads."

Jenny Jones



The introduction by the Met Police of Automatic Number Plate Recognition to target illegal drivers is a huge step forward. The success of these police operations is astounding, as they not only catch uninsured and unregistered drivers, but also vehicles with guns, knives and drugs. Yet, for every car the police stop using ANPR, there are several more which they know are illegal which they have to let drive by for lack of resources.

### Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)

- Met Police officers using ANPR have an arrest rate seven times higher than borough officers\*\*
- ANPR links local police force intelligence systems with the national police computer, DVLA and Motor Insurance Bureau databases to check facts related to a vehicle
- It only takes 1.5 seconds to complete a database search of a targeted vehicle
- ANPR units detect
  - vehicle document crime (registration, MOT, tax)
  - uninsured vehicles
  - stolen vehicles
- In the UK, 70% of drivers of untaxed vehicles have a criminal record and 80% of unregistered drivers are not insured<sup>xxi</sup>

- In one 4 week operation (Oct-Nov 2006) 1894 uninsured vehicles were seized and taken off the roads in 3 London boroughs alone (Hackney, Haringey & Newham).
- ANPR operations are excellent value for money, as nearly half of the costs are recovered through vehicle auction and release fees. xxiii
- Clamping down on illegal drivers has an immediate impact on street crime and priority crime in the surrounding area.
- Despite being a cost effective form of targeted policing, the use of ANPR is still very limited in London and must be increased if it is to make a major impact upon the numbers of illegal drivers.xxiv

#### Recommendations

- 1. The Met Police should double the size of its Automatic Number Plate Recognition operations in London, with the aim of year-on-year reductions in the number of uninsured and illegal drivers.
- 2. The Met Police, working in partnership with others, should make it an immediate priority to reduce the number of uninsured drivers to below the national average in all areas of London.
- 3. The size of the storage pounds for illegal vehicles should be doubled, as limited capacity is a major constraint on ability to enforce the law.
- 4. Road traffic crimes are as criminal as other crimes. The enforcement of traffic laws should be resourced by the police as an important and mainstream part of their work. Transport for London should only be called on to fund genuinely additional road safety work.
- 5. The number of traffic police officers on the core establishment of the Met Police should be raised by 100 to improve policing of traffic offences not covered by electronic enforcement. Improvements should include all year round breath testing and action against illegal mobile phone use whilst driving.
- 6. Safety cameras should be installed at all 640 sites in London which currently lack cameras but meet the Department for Transport criteria for cameras (three deaths or serious injuries in the last three years).

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- Mayor of London Press Release "Policing and public safety are central to Mayor's budget with a freeze on 38p for the Olympics precept", 15 December 2006
- Mayor's Question Time Response, Question 623/2007
- £54m on road safety schemes in 07/08 (TfL Budget Papers 2007/08 for Board meeting March 2007) -compared to £31m spent in the two years between April 2000 and March 2002 (MQT Response, Question 468/2003)
- The speed awareness course run by the London Safety Camera Partnership is due to cater for an estimated 100,000 people a year.
- Letter from Deputy Commissioner, Ian Blair, 4 June 2001. Updated by Mayor's Question Time Response, Question 2426/2006.
- Mayor's Question Time Response, Question 876/2006 and Traffic Police OCU Plan 2007/08. The core establishment has gone down to 673, but money from TfL has paid for an additional 18 police posts and 2 police staff posts in 2007/08. This brings the total staff in the OCU to 689.5 (police & police staff).
- Letter from Deputy Commissioner, Ian Blair, 4 June 2001.

- Home office website. Findings of guilt at all courts by offence group and police force
- Figures taken from Motor Insurers' Bureau database, 2005
- According to the MIB, uninsured drivers are ten times more likely to have drink driving convictions, six times more likely to have been convicted of driving a non-roadworthy vehicle and three times more likely to have a conviction for driving without due care and attention.
- xii MIB 2006
- TfL Street Management, Issue 6, July 2005
- xiv TfL Road Safety Unit figures, 2006
- Mayor's Question Time Response, Question 1558/2006
- Mayor's Question Time Response, Question 2392/2006
- xvii MIB 2006
- Instance of breath testing in London in 2004 was at a rate of 834-1,000 per thousand population which is below average for police forces in England and Wales. (Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin: Motoring Offences & Breath Test Statistics 05/06)
- The instance of positive results of these tests was 211-230 per 100,000 of the population, or 26% of those tested. The percentage of positive tests is above the national average. (Home Office Statistical Bulletin: Motoring Offences & Breath Test Statistics 05/06)
- Report on traffic policing by Assistant
  Commissioner Ghaffur on behalf of the
  Commissioner, to June Metropolitan Police
  Authority, 29 June 2006
- DVLA figures, The Times 26 January 2007
- Evaluation of Operation FOIST,
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- Evaluation of Operation FOIST,
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- In 2006/07 the number of staff dedicated to ANPR as a full time role was five sergeants, 34 constables and four police staff.

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