

*The Thinking Woman's Railway
Centre of the Campaign for Real Railways
Home of the Camping Vans, TOAD & TADPOLE*

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RAILWAY RECONSTRUCTION

Dear Friends,

Drink-Driving: Still a Laughing Matter

This is the title of a piece I published on my web pages and is based on correspondence I have had with Alison Hernandez, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall.

Thinking it unlikely that Ms. Hernandez had any idea how our transport systems came about and evolved, I delivered a short history lesson and introduced the lag in the state getting to grips with motor vehicles as was done with railways from their beginning.

One outstanding example of the lag was in the tolerance of drink-driving, particularly in rural areas, where

" ... it seems it is almost forgotten that the law exists, for when there is only an infinitesimal chance of being caught drink-driving, people will do it routinely and come to believe that it is normal and acceptable and harmless. The assertion I have heard that using a phone behind the wheel will soon become as socially unacceptable as drink-driving has no merit in those quiet areas where men still treat it as a laughing matter."

After two replies from Ms. Hernandez failed adequately to deal with what I had written, I pinned her down with two simple questions: Does she support a lowering of the alcohol limit for drivers? And: Will she take the matter to government on behalf of her association?

Her answers, in short, were "no" and "no."

My original letter is attached to the web page piece which can be seen at teignrail.co.uk/campaigning/drink-driving. Further correspondence is yet to be posted so I enclose a copy of Ms. Hernandez's reply to my two questions.

Seeing that she is the lead on road safety for the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and the small print of her strategy document states that she is responsible for driving changes in national policy, I find her position very disappointing.

Perhaps she is not aware that her lenience shown to the motorist is a perpetuation of the disparity between the way in which self-centred and public transport are governed.

As far as I can gather from their web pages, only six out of the 36 English commissioners support the campaign to lower the alcohol limit.

It seems to me ridiculous that because a great many motorists do not obey the law as it stands there is no point in making it tougher, which is pretty much what the doubters all say and think.

Drinking and driving is a safety issue. Safety legislation has prohibited, slowed or made more expensive activity in every field. The principle holds that no consideration should override the advance of safe practice. Many siteworkers do not like wearing safety footwear but a sign at site entrances states (something like) "no boots, no work."

Can more pressure be brought on Ms. Hernandez and her fellow commissioners, I wonder, by your noble organization?

Yours sincerely,

Colin Burges

Encl.