**The Liaison Group on Road Accident Statistics**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 18th May 2012**
in Conference Room 2, Victoria Quay

1.1 **Attendees**

**Police Forces and Councils:**
Leslie Harrold (Grampian Police representing IRSO)
Sergeant Jon Barron (Grampian Police representing ACPOS)
Ewan Innes (Grampian Police)
Sandy Bowman (Tayside Police)
Andy Jones (Fife Police)
Alan Murphy (Lothian & Borders Police)
Gary Patton (Edinburgh City Council)
Christopher Cooper (Strathclyde Police)

**Users of the data:**
Andy Duff (Moray Council; rep. COSLA and Soc. of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland)
Andrew Fraser (Senior Accident Investigation Officer, Falkirk council/CoSLA rep. at SCRAS)
Hugh Logan (Highland Council)
Steven Sellars (Fife Council)
Michelle Kusch (Fife Council)
Kathleen Braidwood (ROSPA)
David Connolly, MVA Consultancy

**Scottish Government / Transport Scotland (TS):**
Matt Perkins, Transport Statistician (Chairman)
Kathy Johnston, Transport Analytical Services
Andrew Knight, Transport Statistics branch (Secretary)
Charlie Lewis, Transport Statistics branch
Mike Berry, Road Safety Policy
Michael McDonnell, Road Safety Scotland
George Henry, Strategic Road Safety
Alison McLeary, Scottish Safety Camera Programme

**Department for Transport:**
Pat Kilbey, Road Accident Statistician

1.2 **Apologies for Absence:**
Paul Middleton (WDM)
Dr Emma Fossey/Irene Magill (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary)
Fran Warren, Social Research
Margaret Laing, Tayside Police
Bob Murphy, Central Police
John Santarossa, Strathclyde Police
Martin Parker, Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary
Stuart Geddes, Stirling Council
Jill Mulholland, Road Safety Policy

**Introduction & previous minutes**

1.3 Matt Perkins welcomed everyone to the meeting. He then asked all delegates to introduce themselves and explain their role.

1.4 The Group had agreed the minutes of the previous meeting, as distributed on 20 July 2011. Matt Perkins went over the action points from that meeting, those not covered elsewhere in the agenda are:

- Action point 1, to include a clear language description in the data collection. Matt Perkins explained that some users were trying to send the data. Chris Cooper said that it was not
practical for Strathclyde to send the information and suggested that the Scottish Government collate this data centrally from the forces as part of the next changes. Andy Duff asked what would happen if there was a single police force. Alan Murphy explained that it would be some time before that would be an issue. Andrew Fraser suggested that there might be a problem with the Data Protection Act and Andy Duff said that in some cases names might be included. George Henry explained that Central had tried to send the data but it was not compatible and that WDM had been vetted so there would be no problem in receiving the data.

Action 1: Transport Statistics to discuss with WDM and individual police forces to see what can be done about sending clear language descriptions. [Secretary note: a meeting to discuss this issue with WDM is being arranged.]

- Action point 7, Matt Perkins explained that the DfT’s online database was no longer being funded. Mike Berry suggested that members might be interested in the MAST project which was a not for profit online database providing STATS 19 data by geographical area with contextual information about the population alongside it. Transport Scotland has purchased a group licence for the public sector in Scotland. Anyone who is interested in using the database should contact Mike Berry.

Action 2: Anyone interested in using MAST to contact Mike Berry (Michael.Berry@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk)

2. Remit of the group (paper 1)

2.1 Matt Perkins said that it had been a long time since consideration had been given to the remit of the group. He asked members if they had any views on changes that might be made to the remit. Andy Duff said that there was no mention of feeding information back to DfT. Pat Kilbey suggested that there could be a mention of SCRAS. Kathleen Braidwood asked why there was a specific mention of drunk driving. Matt Perkins suggested that this was a specific issue at the time. Andrew Fraser did not think that it was a specific purpose of the group and that there was a need to consider a range of priorities. Andy Duff suggested that a general phrase could be substituted to look at various topics. John Barron said that problem areas should be identified and included in a statement. Andrew Fraser asked for an explicit statement about data quality.

Action 3: Matt Perkins to incorporate the views suggested by members into a revised remit for consideration by members. [Secretary note: a redrafted remit is included with the minutes for comment.]

3. Developments over the last 12 months and upcoming work (paper 2)

3.1 Matt Perkins outlined the developments that had taken place over the past 12 months covering the statistical publications, UK Statistics Authority assessment, undercounting of reported road casualties, changes to the Transport Statistics website and the Transport Statistics user consultation that is currently in progress. Andrew Fraser asked when the closing date was for the Transport Statistics user consultation. Matt Perkins said the date was set for 1 June but that consideration would still be given to any that arrived later.

3.2 Matt Perkins explained that there was a new national indicator representing the road safety framework in the revised National Performance Framework published in December. Consideration was given to using numbers killed and seriously injured as two separate indicators but the decision was made to go with an indicator to reduce the deaths on Scotland’s roads. Kathleen Braidwood asked why there was no outcome. Matt Perkins said that the indicator was simply a broad statement and that the indicator influences a number of outcomes. Michael McDonnell said that when they have to apply for money they have to make a case using outcomes.

4. Transport Statistics Work Plan (paper 3)
4.1 Matt Perkins outlined the work that Transport Statistics would be undertaking in 2012/13. He said that paragraph 5 of the paper sets out the timescales for the publications. He explained that the National Travel survey would no longer be collected from 2013. The tables in Reported Road Casualties Scotland would be changed to reflect the new targets. He said that consideration had been given to publishing Key Reported Road Casualties earlier. Some analysis had been done to find out how complete the data was at various points during the year. Consideration was also given to the fact that if the publication was to published much earlier that DfT’s then there could be three differing sets of figures for Scotland in the public domain once Reported Road Casualties was published. As a result a decision was made to stick with a June publication date.

4.2 Pat Kilbey said that DfT would be publishing Reported Road Casualties Great Britain at the end of June which would be a week later than Transport Scotland. They had tried publishing in May but this had caused confusion and they are now keeping the publication at the end of June. She also said that DfT had revamped their website and would be grateful for any feedback. Drink drive estimates will now be published in August and are also going to include drug statistics. She also explained that they had stopped funding road casualties online so that they could concentrate on setting up a tool to access data from the website.

4.3 Mike McDonnell asked whether the data that are sent to DfT will be different from that held be Transport Scotland. Matt Perkins said that there would be no difference as we take a snapshot of the data at the time it is sent to DfT. Michael McDonnell said that if you have a MAST licence you should use it. Gary Patton suggested that if a MAST user were to move on then it might not be used by their replacement. Mike Berry said that they were going to do a survey to find out who is using the licence and to obtain some feedback. Chris Cooper said that Argyll and Bute use it for motor cycle data. Andy Duff said that although it was a useful tool, he did not think it was used very often and suggested checking frequency of use when surveying users. Matt Perkins asked everyone to note that the data for Scotland held in MAST at present is the provisional data used in Key Reported Road Casualties and Reported Road Casualties Great Britain. Transport Scotland are working with MAST to make the final data used in Reported Road Casualties Scotland available to MAST users.

5. STATS 19 data collection developments

5.1 Pat Kilbey said that DfT are able to take accident data in either the old or new format. The initial idea was for the police forces to move over to the new system with effect from 1 January 2013 but the decision has been made to be more flexible due to the delayed implementation of CRASH and preventing the requirement to make two changes to IT systems. However, DfT need to be told what format the data is being sent to them in. Due to various delays in linking the electronic CRASH system with the national police computer system it will not go live (for piloting) until after the Olympics, in September/October 2012. Data for 2012 will be converted to the new format and STATS20 and STATS21 have now been revised.

5.2 Matt Perkins referred to Paper 4 and said that Transport Scotland were working towards changing the system from 1 January 2013. Two changes will be required in Scotland as Police Reform will mean further IT changes in the medium term. Given this, it makes sense to implement the Stats19 changes now. A test system will be will developed over the Summer and Transport Scotland will be accepting submissions of test files from data providers in the Autumn.

Action 4: Transport Statistics to create a test system during the summer of 2012 for processing accident data in the new format.
Action 5: Data suppliers to provide test data files by the Autumn of 2012.

5.3 ACPOS update (paper 5) Jon Barron explained that there were 8 police forces who were using 5 systems to collect STATS19 data. It has been agreed that the changes to police IT systems can be implemented despite the moratorium currently in place due to police reform. There were no plans for using the CRASH system in Scotland at the moment but once contracts expire the decision to change may become more important. Chris Cooper asked how many forces were involved in the CRASH pilot scheme. Pat Kilbey said that two Forces in England and Wales were involved in the initial pilot and around three quarters have expressed their intention to take on CRASH. Some forces may wait until others have moved over.
6. **STATS19 data quality concerns (paper 6)**

6.1 **Andrew Fraser** explained that he had long suspected that recent “quality reviews” had made no difference to the quality of the data. Few seemed to believe this, however, and it seemed necessary, therefore, to attempt to prove the matter. Hence, he had counted the number and nature of the queries he had been obliged to make over a period of about one year (2010). The best “before” data that could be found are described in the paper, wherein the results are tabulated. These seem to confirm his suspicion.

6.2 Referring to the quotation towards the end of Paper 6, **Andrew Fraser** pointed out that the one of the problems involved is not an unusual one: agreement between coders using the same classification scheme is rarely tested and/or reported.

6.3 Not all variables are coded equally badly, however, and there are likely to be different reasons for miscoding. Paper 6, therefore, includes an attempt to discover which codes are causing most difficulty, and a chart showing how numbers of queries were distributed is given under the heading “Variables causing most difficulty”. This is qualified, to some extent, by the difficulty in correcting them, which is not necessarily the same thing.

6.4 Following a request from **Pat Kilbey** and **Matt Perkins**, Paper 6 goes on to look, in slightly more detail, at the nature of a few of the recurring difficulties. The confusion over direction, for instance, might be eliminated if bearings were substituted. Junction location legends might be listed in a more logical order. It was notable on how few occasions “mid junction” was selected, although that is where a very large proportion of junction accidents happen. Terms such as lane, carriageway, nearside and offside are frequently confused. Paper 6 suggests (in relation to First Point of Impact) that such terms be avoided.

6.5 **Andrew Fraser** suggested that different people might code variables differently. However, Sandy Bowman said that the priority for the police was to clear the road and direct traffic. Filling out the form was something that was done later. Pat Kilbey said that studies referred to above had shown that generally there was reasonable agreement in the reporting of contributory factors in STATS19 compared to the more comprehensive investigations conducted in the in-depth studies. Although factors where the evidence was less obvious after the event were less well reported in STATS 19, for example speeding was one that was under reported. Gary Patton suggested that more time was being spent on more serious accidents therefore the quality of the data would be better. Andy Duff said that quality of the data could be improved if the collection of the data could be simplified. **Andrew Fraser** stated that he was familiar with experts in the relevant field (taxonomy) who may be willing to help.

6.6 **Pat Kilbey** said that DfT used to fund in-depth studies, this involved follow-ups with hospitals and attendance at accident scenes. A couple of years ago the consultants had compared STATS19 data with the in-depth studies and had checked contributory factors and the severity coding. The conclusions were that there were some variables that were less well coded and some differences in the coding of serious injury accidents. However, it was hoped that the CRASH system would help with the coding of severity having a drop-down menu. **Chris Cooper** agreed that there were problems in some cases with accidents that were reported over the counter with nobody to clarify queries. He suggested that data collection could be improved if it were electronic rather than paper based. **Gary Patton** supported Andrew Fraser’s paper and said that engineers were interested in the location of accidents. He also supported the issue of looking at problems with under-reported accidents. **Matt Perkins** acknowledged that there are problems with any administrative data collection but that we should still be aiming to improve data quality.

6.7 **Andrew Fraser** suggested that different people might code variables differently. However, Sandy Bowman said that the priority for the police was to clear the road and direct traffic. Filling out the form was something that was done later. Pat Kilbey said that studies referred to above had shown that generally there was reasonable agreement in the reporting of contributory factors in STATS19 compared to the more comprehensive investigations conducted in the in-depth studies. Although factors where the evidence was less obvious after the event were less well reported in STATS 19, for example speeding was one that was under reported. Gary Patton suggested that more time was being spent on more serious accidents therefore the quality of the data would be better. Andy Duff said that quality of the data could be improved if the collection of the data could be simplified. **Andrew Fraser** stated that he was familiar with experts in the relevant field (taxonomy) who may be willing to help.
Andy Duff suggested that there could be a GB wide study or perhaps a pilot study in Scotland to look at the variation between forces and individuals. Ewan Innes said that the number of people who filled out or check the data before it was input was likely to increase the number of mistakes being made.

6.8 Matt Perkins asked if there were any particular ways of improving the data collection. Mike McDonnell suggested that previous research could be expanded. Pat Kilbey said that it may be possible to look at the issues raised but that the new CRASH system should be able to improve the quality of the data. She also pointed out that some of Andrew Frasers queries had been included in the last review but others had not. She did not know when the next review would be, but work in identifying the issues could still be done in preparation. Matt Perkins asked whether location details could help to improve other data. Sandy Bowman said that location details used to be a problem but there are now electronic ways of checking the position. He also said that there were problems where people were recording information for years. They would then move on and someone else would need to be trained. Alan Murphy said that Lothian & Borders were upgrading their PDAs so that GPS data could be collected. Pat Kilbey and Matt Perkins asked members to let DfT or Transport Scotland know if there are problems with any particular variables.

**Action 6**: All to flag up any issues with data quality and ideally solutions to Transport Scotland.

**Action 7**: Matt Perkins and Pat Kilbey to consider how to take forward the issue of data quality. [Secretary note: Matt Perkins has agreed to table a paper on Scottish issues with data quality at the next meeting of SCRAS to be held in the Autumn and will be seeking input from LGRAS members.]

6.9 Andrew Fraser stated that he was willing to look at the various other variables that he had not had time to include in Paper 6, as some threw up more interesting problems than those to which it already refers.

7. **Estimating Cycling levels**

7.1 David Connolly gave an overview of work which he is undertaking to provide estimates of levels of cycling. Data for the study was obtained from a range of data sources including STATS19 data and from local authorities. Andy Duff said that local authorities would have STATS19 data but although he knew that Elgin had a good deal of information on cycling he wondered if the rest of Scotland would have as much data. Also, to collect the data would need a good deal of resources. David Connolly said they wanted to look at the bigger picture. Kathleen Braidwood asked if under reporting had been taken in to consideration. David Connolly said that the study was about the use of cycling and that STATS19 data was only part of the information that was being collected. Mike Berry said that the study would help to put the STATS19 data into perspective. David Connolly suggested that members might also be interested in a Child Safety and Poverty Research Project which MVA have worked on for Northern Ireland. It can be found here [http://www.doeni.gov.uk/roadsafety/final_report__no_appendices_final.pdf](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/roadsafety/final_report__no_appendices_final.pdf)

8. **Any Other Business**

8.1 Chris Cooper suggested that there was a problem with the severity of serious casualties where some were more serious than others. Pat Kilbey said that the introduction of a drop down list in the crash system means that the data collected can be looked at and checked for accuracy. She said that the collection of International data was only for fatalities and that it was a struggle to get consensus on the definition of serious. Kathleen Braidwood said that it would be useful to have information about life changing cases to use in promoting road safety to young people.

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

9.1 Members were happy with an annual meeting and Matt Perkins agreed to organise another meeting in late Spring / early Summer 2013.

Transport Scotland
Transport Statistics branch
May 2012