

DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL: BEACON COUNCIL CASE STUDY

Motorcyclist Safety An inter-agency and cross border initiative

Problem

Motorcyclists comprise 1-2% of traffic, but 30% of deaths. One in four of every motorcyclist casualty is fatal or involves serious injury.

Context

Trade figures show that motorcycle sales are still increasing, particularly with young people and more mature riders. It is these age groups that present the most worrying collision profiles and, in a context of supporting motorcycling as transport mode that has much to offer the network, it is these riders that are the principal target of Devon's road safety work.

A conspicuous proportion of motorcyclists are consistent violators of traffic laws, especially speeding. There is reported antipathy against motorcyclists from a proportion of drivers; each blames the other for the cause of crashes. The County Council Local Transport Plan recognises the value of travel by two wheels as an alternative to cars – the accessibility and social inclusion benefits are clear and powered two wheelers have much to offer in reducing congestion, pollution and energy consumption. However we need to influence the behaviour of riders if they are to be successfully integrated into a safe road network. The safe and sensible use of motorcycles is central to the viability of the mode.

Data and research

As an intelligence-led team we allowed the data to guide us in the first instance. Our team statistician and data analyst was commissioned to discover the wider facts behind the known crash statistics. What we found helped us to understand the objective facts behind the biker casualties and provided a basis against which the scale and revenue value of our interventions could be judged. This information was shared with the Police at a joint review of fatal casualties. An outcome of this review was that Devon Road Safety then took the lead role to pioneer a campaign of interventions.

The original scoping report is now scheduled for review and updating, and will provide a valuable insight into the overall effectiveness of the first four years of the Bringing Bikers Out of the Blind Spot programme. The updated report will further help to inform the direction of our work during the period of the 2006-2011 Road Safety Strategy.

Consultation

Next we needed to flesh out and 'humanise' the data. We recognise motorcyclists as a distinct community with a clear sense of identity and self-awareness.

We approached rider groups, trainers, dealers and individual riders for their experiences of riding on the Devon network and their views on the nature of any problems and the best solutions for them.

The results of the consultation provided the additional focus we needed to start building solutions that would be recognised and endorsed by riders.

We also knew that the backing of rider representatives would be critical to ensuring that our ideas gained local acceptance – and the endorsements we have received from national organisations such as British Motorcyclist Federation and Motorcycle Action Group are indicative of the success of this approach.

As is the case with the hard data analysis this consultation now requires a formal and structured updating, so that we have manageable soft data to add to the informal but regular feedback we have obtained over the first four years. In addition to allowing riders to comment on the services and campaigns we already have in place, we will also be seeking open views on other areas that may be explored in 2006-2011. Once again this survey will not be restricted to local riders but will also include our regional and national contacts.

Leadership, organisation and focus

Our vision has been to enable rider casualties to be reduced across the south west within a context of increasing sales and miles travelled.

Our direction and goals designed to realise this vision are as follows:

- Gather intelligence from bikers as to their needs, concerns and aspirations as users of Devon's roads.
- Raise the profile of biker safety amongst drivers and riders alike.
- Research, develop and deliver new training programmes for newly qualified and experienced riders.
- Introduce courses for riders recently involved in crashes or high risk behaviours.
- Ensure that highway design and maintenance takes full account of the needs of riders.
- Create the right conditions for a reduction in rider crashes and casualties.

Our rationale for investing time and resources at this level is also very clear. We accept that riders are a type of community, with shared beliefs and characteristic behaviours. Consequently what is needed is to achieve a gradual change in the culture of riding in order to help realise our vision.

This suggested to us that our work needed not only the project breadth indicated by our goals, but also work on a broader geographical scale.

To attempt this for Devon alone would be highly problematic since Devon riders would inevitably be influenced by riders from Torbay, Plymouth and Cornwall.

A culture change would need to be attempted on a much larger scale and for that a well defined strategy would be needed including a partnership extending throughout our policing area.

From its inception, Devon has provided leadership and support to create a Devon and Cornwall Motorcycle Casualty Reduction Group, with a shared vision for motorcycle casualty reduction. This has now become the Peninsula Motorcycle Forum.

The structure of the Forum has reflected the way that resources are organised and deployed in Devon. Specifically the group is divided into four operational teams: the intelligence group gathers local and national information that informs the development of services and resources created by the education, engineering and enforcement teams.

The core Forum includes Devon education, training and engineering specialists, and personnel from our neighbouring authorities. Enforcement specialisms are provided by the Police – who contribute an expanded and dedicated team of motorcycle enforcement officers as well as casualty reduction officers - and the Devon and Cornwall Safety Camera Partnership. Other input is provided by rider groups (either directly or through liaison officers) and topic specialists such as Exeter University School of Psychology.

In all the Forum represents a breadth of operational ability and know how, working together with decision makers and budget holders to ensure that good ideas are generated and wherever possible implemented. Necessarily some initiatives are taken at a local level in the first instance, but made available to other forum members. This allows individual authorities primarily to reflect local needs whilst supporting the broader interests of neighbouring authorities. The development in Devon of the [Rider Risk Reduction](#) course is a good example of this – with the course now catering for high risk riders across the Peninsula area.

Innovation

Maintaining clear, open lines of communication with the riding community is vital to ensure that our work is recognised, advised and commented on. Our innovative approach to rider consultation – the Devon rider safety online [bulletin board](#) – has allowed us to bypass the limitations that are imposed by more formal, time-dependent approaches. Over 60,000 visits have been made to these boards with hundreds of postings covering dozens of topic areas.

Of course not everyone wants to engage with us – but they still want to be included and informed.

To this end Devon has branded its rider safety work, so that it's easily recognisable through our [web pages](#) and our [newsletters](#) and we have ensured that Devon's **Bringing Bikers Out of the Blind Spot** campaign is recognised by riders and drivers throughout the county. The newsletters go out to around 500 riders directly and with additional supplies reaching riders through the dealership and training network. The South West Motorcycle Show and the Bike Night events that run in Paignton throughout the summer months enable us to reach an additional 6000 plus other riders.

Delivery of services

The range of initiatives that have rolled out of the Bringing Bikers Out of the Blind Spot campaign in just two years is remarkable – and our work in Devon is already influencing activities and approaches throughout the UK. They include:

- New [training programmes](#) - for novice riders and experienced riders. The vast majority of riders [suggested](#) education and training as a solution for both poor riding and poor driving standards. BikeSense is our response – a motorcycle training programme for riders who want to develop their skills further.

It is open to any rider with either a CBT certificate or full licence and is a one day course that can be developed to meet the rider's specific needs. BikeSense allows the rider to describe their own strengths and weakness – and perceived areas for development – before the course begins. In this way the instructor can develop a training plan for the rider – a plan that can be renegotiated and altered as the practical training progresses and the instructor is able to make a direct assessment of the client's strengths, weaknesses and needs.

We will now be working with the Police throughout the regional BikeSafe events to allow riders to opt for further training once they have completed their assessed rides. This will allow riders to build on the expert advice they have received from Police motorcyclists at BikeSafe and turn outstanding advice into sound safety skills at the earliest opportunity. BikeSafe events in the Peninsula are now attracting younger and less experienced riders and so we are confident of being able to assist some higher risk riders through this service. Customer surveys built into BikeSafe will enable us to track this.

- The [Rider Risk Reduction](#) course is for high risk riders who have come to the attention of the police – a partnership project with [Devon and Cornwall Police](#) and [Exeter University](#) that has already benefited over 100 riders across the region with courses now scheduled 12 months ahead. This service allows us to work directly with the elusive high risk, violating motorcyclists who would not normally put themselves forward for any kind of safety based scheme. This type of partnership undertaking – between Devon road safety practitioners, enforcers and researchers – is now a common feature of our work and has successfully promoted and underpinned projects throughout the UK.

We have also welcomed a number of other Police forces and local authorities, as well as the Driving Standards Agency, who are interested in either adopting this course directly - or developing other courses based on the model used for Rider Risk Reduction.

- ScooterZ is a new school and college based course that responds to three issues:
 1. the worrying crash and casualty rate amongst young and novice riders in Devon;
 2. the propensity amongst this group to want to ride their machines to school and college and;
 3. the need to support responsible schools and colleges that want to provide for both the travel aspirations and the safety needs of their students.

The course is currently being piloted and assessed, but in its current form is designed to raise awareness of safety issues and their solutions and to encourage the sort of safer behaviours that will reduce rider risk and increase the confidence of schools and colleges in their students to ride in. For those taking part, satisfactory course attendance forms the basis of a Passport to Ride – permitting the student to bring their motorcycle to, and park at, their school or college. The course is actively supported and delivered by a partnership of Road Safety Officers, trainers, enforcers and dealerships.

Following its pilot stage the course will also be offered to local [Wheels To Work](#) projects to help enhance the safety training they provide for young people using their machines.

- [Spiller Killer](#) – our campaign to reduce diesel spillages on the network and improve the rates at which they are reported. This initiative is partnered with local haulage companies and fleets, including the largest haulage company in Devon and our own maintenance contractor with a fleet size of over 300 vehicles.

The Devon 24 hour Highway Operations Control Centre accepts telephone calls reporting spills, and then refers them for local attention. Spiller Killer is a direct response to concerns raised through rider consultation and is a highly cost-effective initiative that has won praise from local riders for the efficiency of the response and subsequent clean up service.

This campaign has been highlighted as good practice in both the Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers' (IHIE) Engineering Guidelines for Motorcycles and the Association des Constructeurs Européens de Motocycles' (ACEM) 'Guidelines for Powered Two-Wheelers - Safer Road Design in Europe'

We are also supported by KillSpills, a national lobby group actively pushing for this issue to be recognised and for the introduction of new legislation to deal with the problem.

- A series of mass media campaigns to target both rider and driver awareness. Again, this work has been highlighted in the Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers' (IHIE) Engineering Guidelines for Motorcycles to illustrate good practice.
- Route-specific signing that targets riders (in the case of single vehicle loss of control incidents) and drivers (in the case of routes experiencing high levels of drivers pulling out in front or cutting across the path of riders).

We are currently looking into the effectiveness of this work and if the results are encouraging we will continue with signing projects in 2006 and 2007. High risk routes – including those that cross local authority boundaries - and clusters of motorcycle collisions are being examined by local teams of engineers, technicians, road safety specialists and enforcement officers. These local area teams will identify areas where innovative solutions may be required and will contribute to the knowledge pool on how, and why, riders have crashes on our network.

- We have also introduced user-specific training programmes on the needs of riders and other vulnerable road users to our highway technicians, designers, maintenance engineers, crash investigators and safety auditors.
- In addition, we are currently providing Highway Engineers, Road Safety Officers, technicians and safety auditors motorcycling training to allow them to work as part of an assessment team which will allow them to assess highway safety from a rider's perspective. Although already sensitive to the needs of riders these professionals have not always been able personally to assess the highway from a powered two wheeler perspective. This initiative, supported by the Police, local advanced riding groups, Torbay Motorcycles and Honda UK will allow us to field teams of assessors and auditors drawn from a pool of road safety and engineering professionals, enforcers and amateur riders to gain the most robust insights possible into our high risk, and potentially high risk, routes.
- Devon's Materials Engineer and Science Officer has influenced the British Standards committee on which he sits to adopt a much enhanced standard for the skid resistance values of highway ironmongery. The Devon Road Safety Team mobilised its network of UK and European contacts to lobby for this change and we are hopeful of influencing the future BS EN standard as a result. Devon's work could influence outcomes throughout 25 member states.
- In the same context we are also trialling new forms of retro-fit anti-skid surfaces for existing ironmongery. Although Devon as a highway authority is responsible for no more than 5% of the ironmongery on our network we accept our position as the intellectual lead for this type of initiative.

In 2006 we are also looking into the viability of undertaking skid resistance testing for new materials using machinery mounted on two, rather than the traditional, four wheels.

This would enable our materials laboratory to extend further its commitment to providing road surfacing solutions that are designed and installed for the safety of all road users. A judgement on the viability of this project will be made after further investigations during the year.

Sharing

We still have much to learn as well as much to offer. Consequently we have worked with the Transport Research Laboratory to make sure that the UK will shortly have a national benchmarking group to compare processes and outcomes amongst members.

As a founder member we have influenced the structure and composition of the group in order to help guarantee that each member gains from the experience. This, together with our commitment to share excellent practice through the Beacon programme, will be the basis on which we hope to influence nationally and internationally whilst retaining a focus on the needs of Devon citizens.

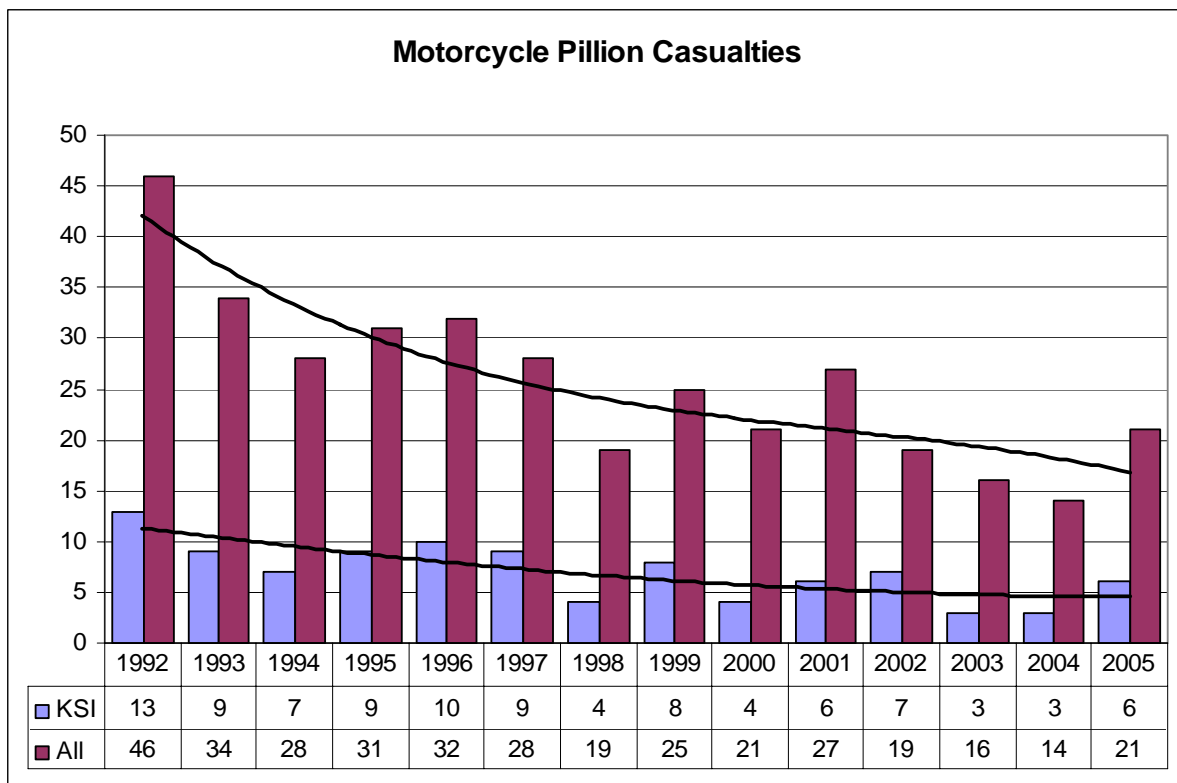
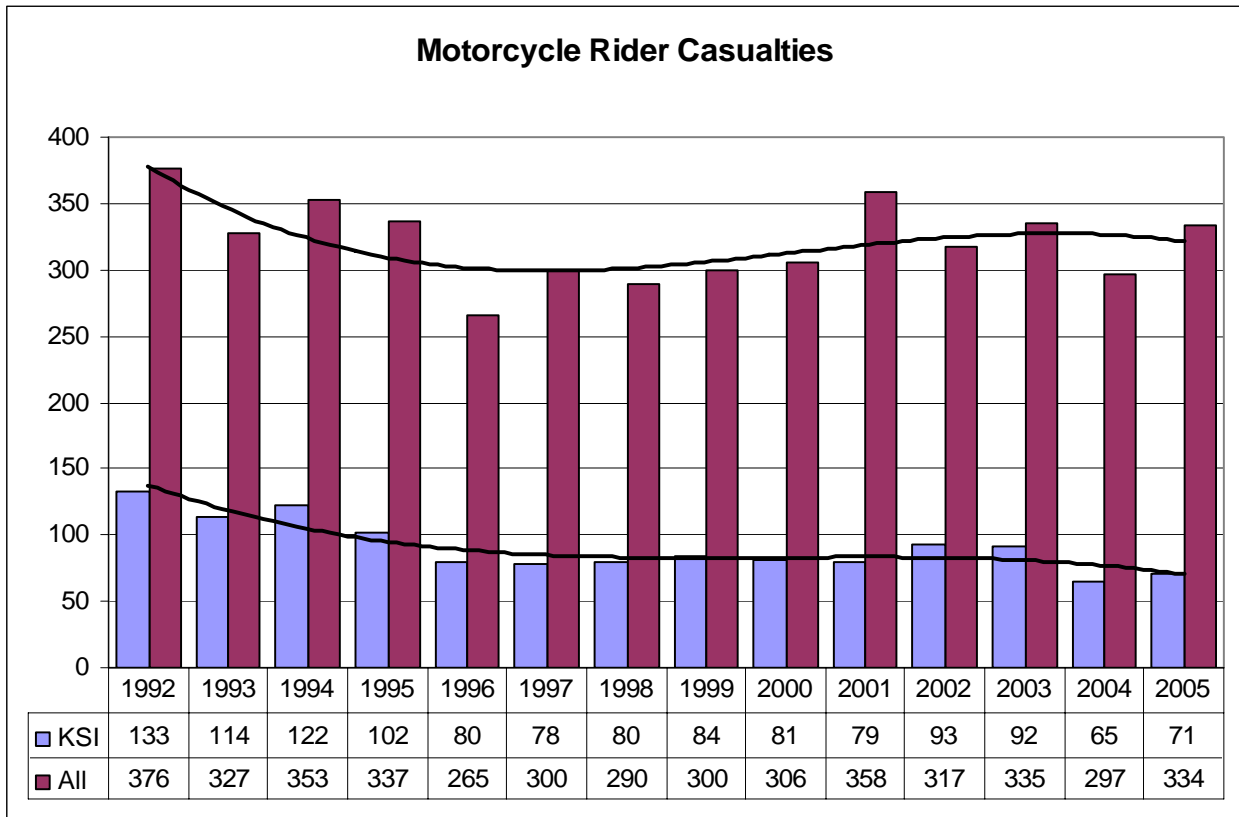
Locally our principal opportunity for sharing experience (success and failures) will be the Peninsula Motorcycle Forum.

Outcomes – tracking our progress

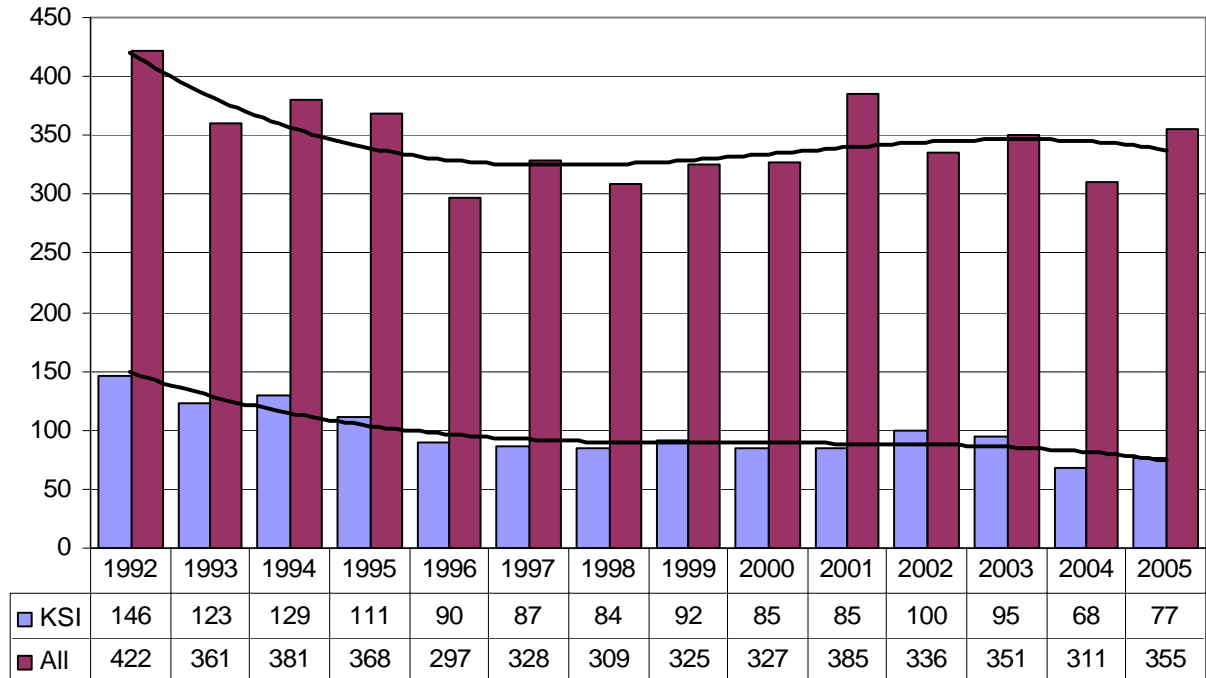
The following graphs show the KSI trend from 1992 – 2005. Our current initiatives date from July 2003. These general figures will be supplemented with enforcement data and route & site analyses to help us to see if our work is having a tangible effect on the nature of the crashes that occur and their locations. Data by location will be especially useful to see what effects are evident from our experimental signing initiatives.

We will also look at any non-crash related enforcement data – as supplied by the Devon and Cornwall Safety Camera Partnership (speed and red light violations) and by the incident reports behind Rider Risk Reduction referrals – each of which will help to inform us about any changes in high risk and violatory behaviours that form a backdrop to the casualty trends.

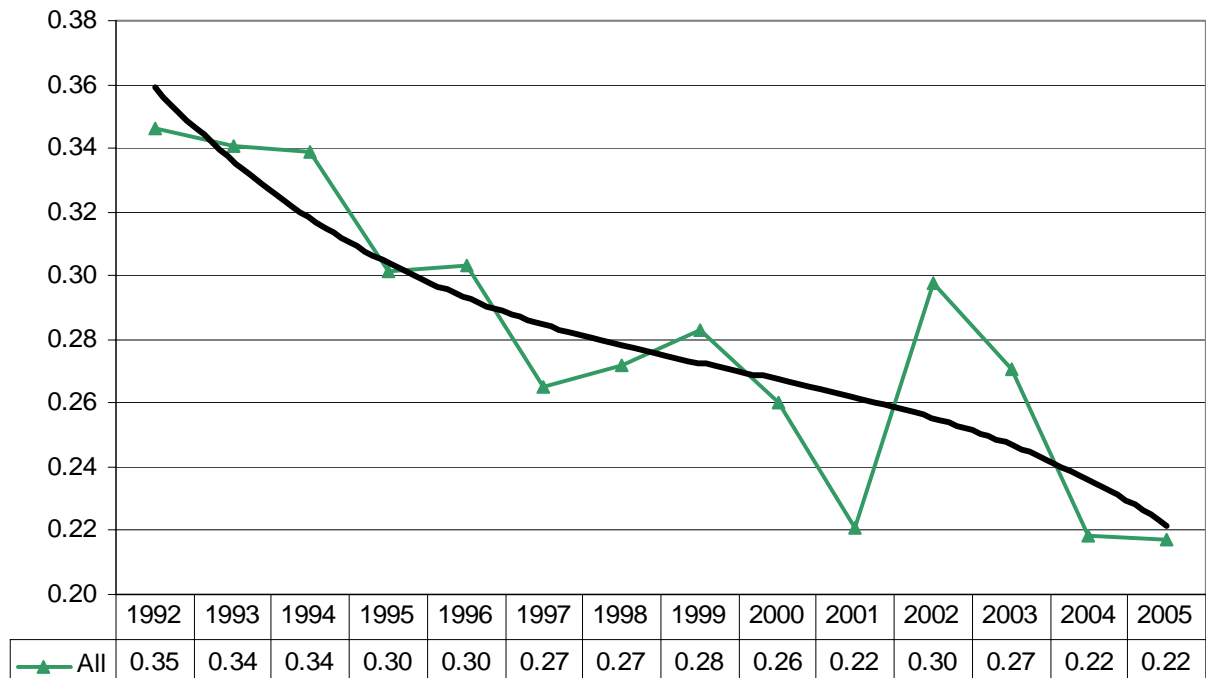
All engine capacities



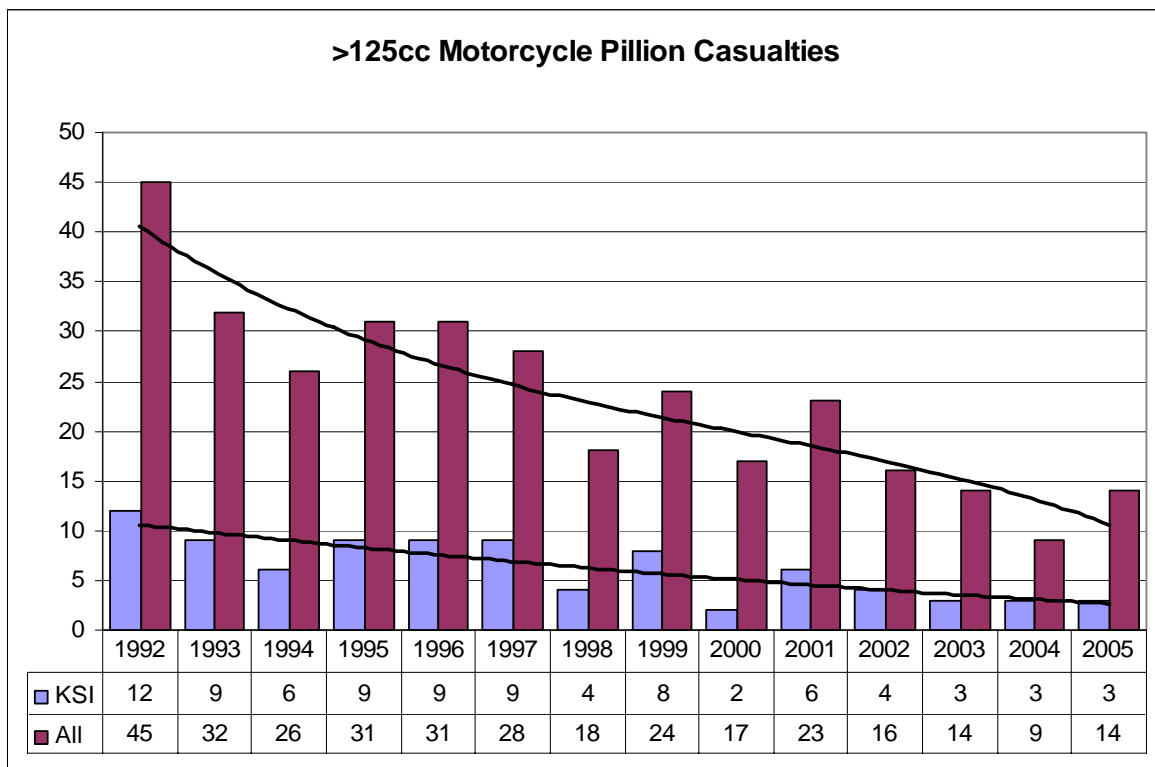
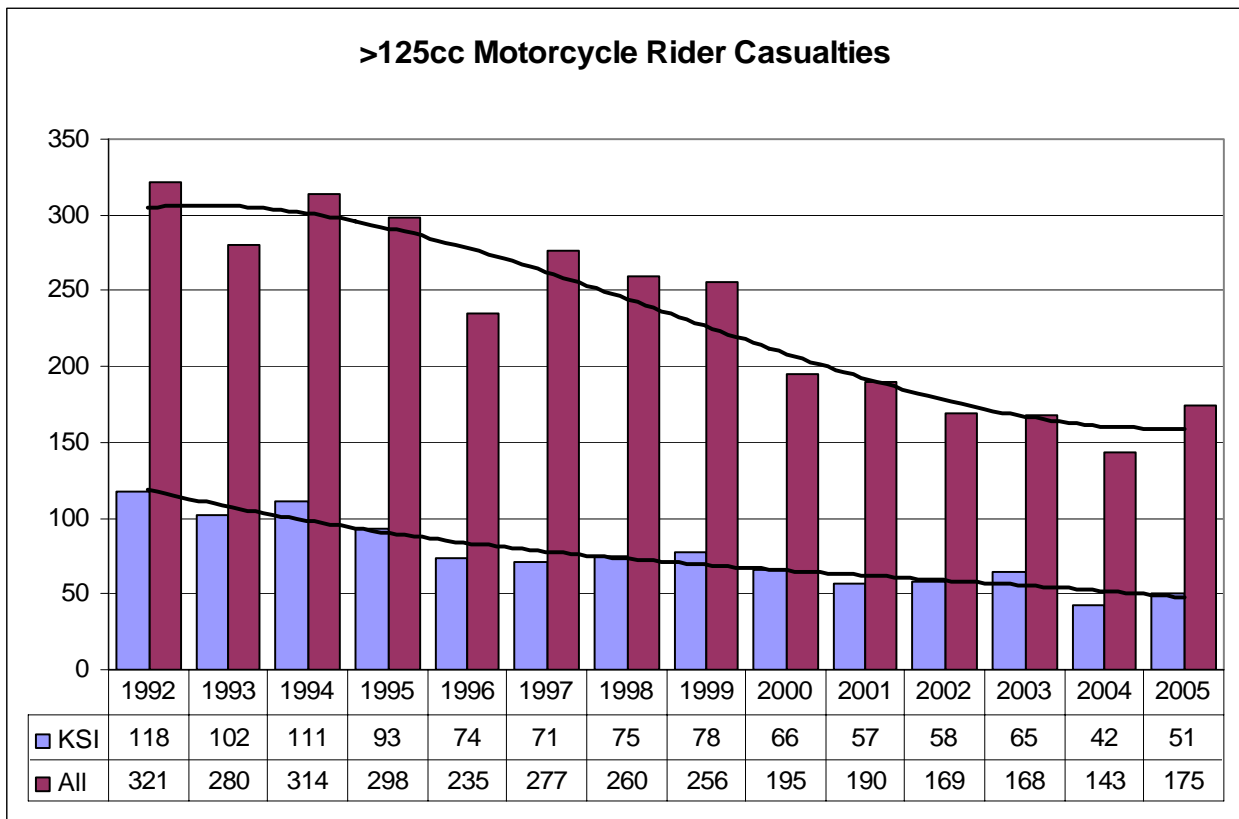
All Motorcycle Casualties



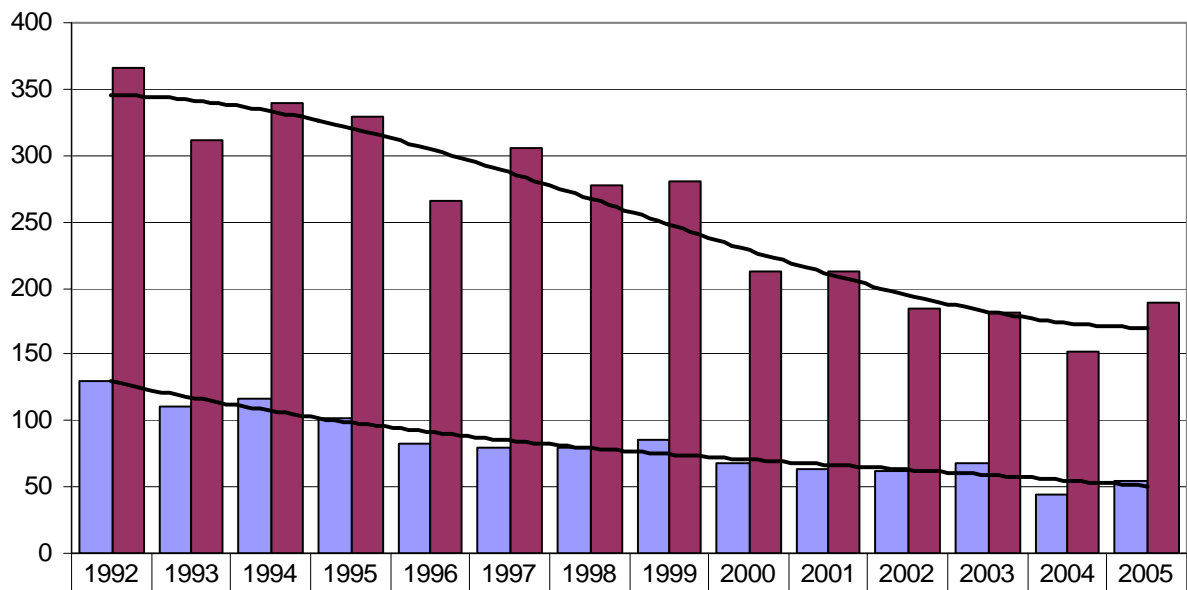
Motorcycle Severity Ratios



Greater than 125cc

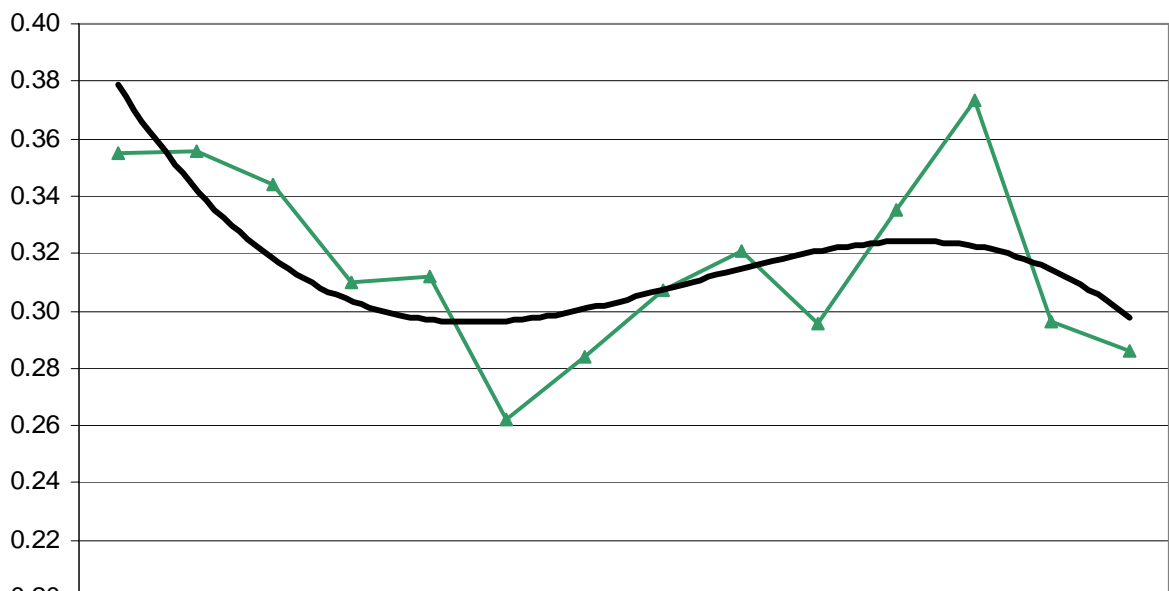


All >125cc Motorcycle Casualties



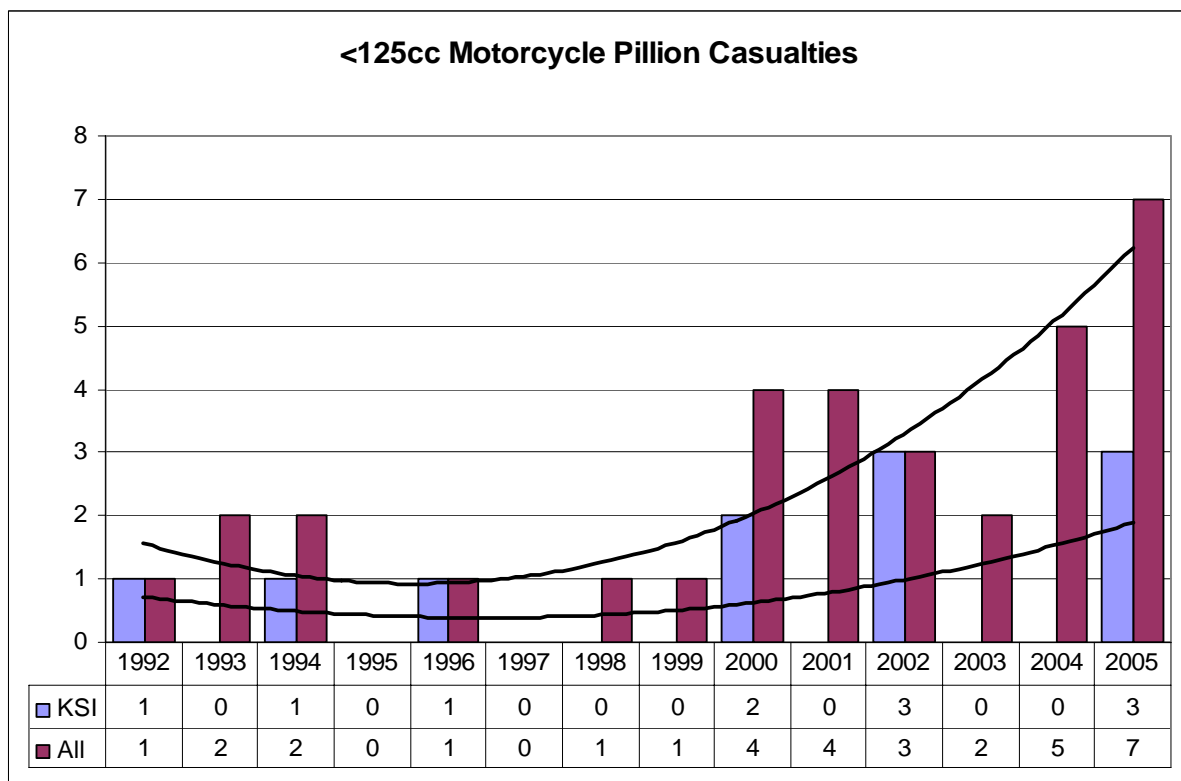
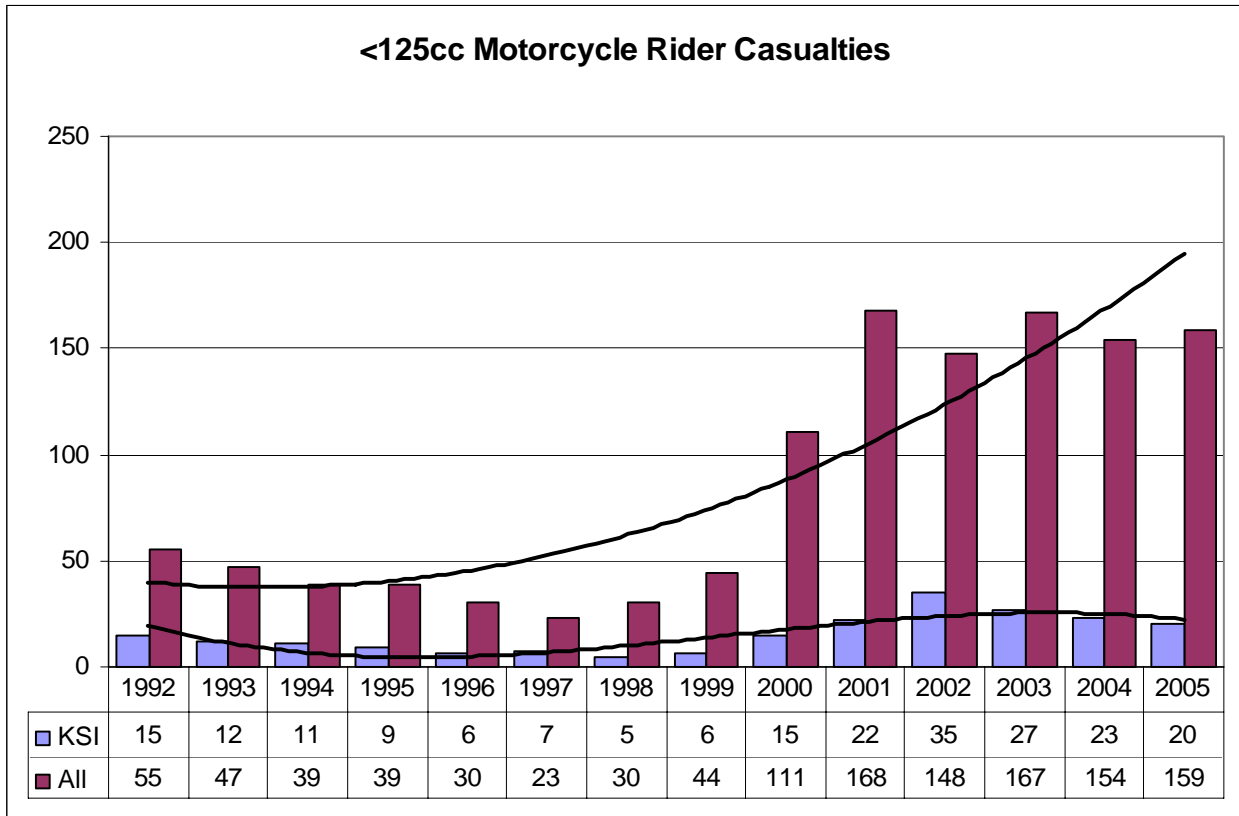
■ KSI	130	111	117	102	83	80	79	86	68	63	62	68	45	54
■ All	366	312	340	329	266	305	278	280	212	213	185	182	152	189

>125cc Motorcycle Severity Ratios

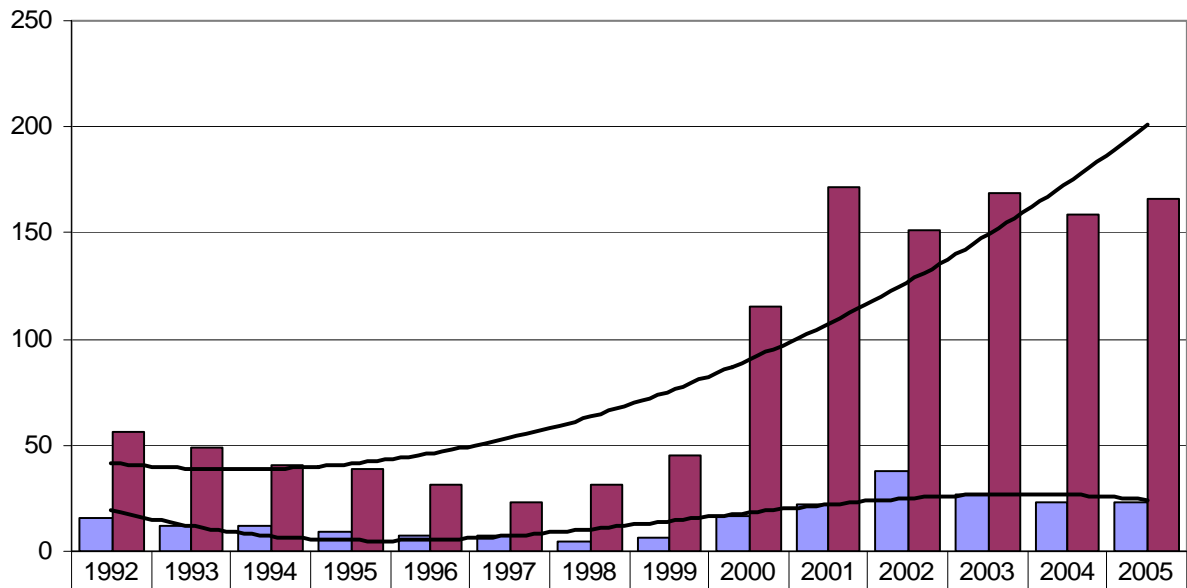


▲ All	0.36	0.36	0.34	0.31	0.31	0.26	0.28	0.31	0.32	0.30	0.34	0.37	0.30	0.29
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Less than 125cc

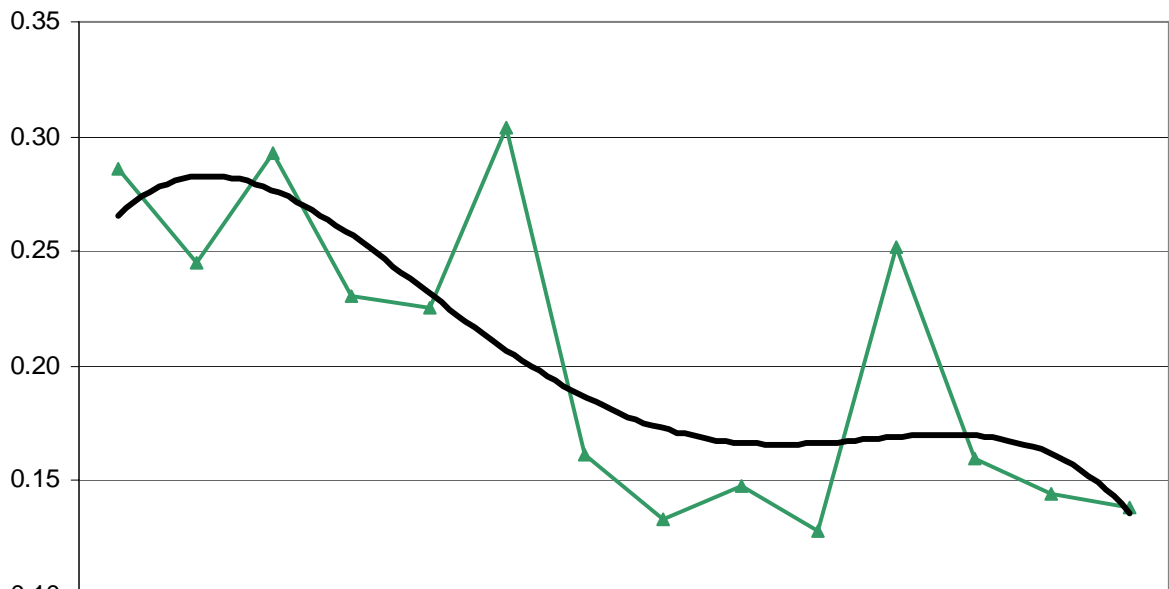


All <125cc Motorcycle Casualties



■ KSI	16	12	12	9	7	7	5	6	17	22	38	27	23	23
■ All	56	49	41	39	31	23	31	45	115	172	151	169	159	166

<125cc Motorcycle Severity Ratios



▲ All	0.29	0.24	0.29	0.23	0.23	0.30	0.16	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.25	0.16	0.14	0.14
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Outcomes are, of course, more than the casualty figures alone. Below are listed some of the key ways in which the **Bringing Bikers out of the Blind Spot** programme is making a difference to the welfare of riders in Devon – and the ways in which we expect to make improvements in the near future.

1. **Improved understanding** of biker needs and aspirations from quantitative and qualitative research and dialogue.
2. **Improved relationship** between road safety professionals and riders through engagement, empathy and a clear willingness to respond to their aspirations.
3. Innovative **web-based dialogue** that has helped to develop a free-speech approach to engaging with riders.
4. A **multi-agency Forum** designed to ensure that resources are pooled and innovations are shared across the wider network. Also, the sharing of ideas and innovations nationally through the forthcoming **national benchmarking** group.
5. Engagement with researchers, trainers and enforcers to design and deliver an innovative **course targeting high risk riders**.
6. Excellent one-way communication of Devon initiatives through our **newsletter distribution** network, which again helps to convince riders that we are serious about supporting them.
7. **New training opportunities for riders** who want to bridge gaps between CBT and full licence and between full licence and advanced qualifications.
8. **Educational support in schools and colleges** that meets the diverse needs of young and aspiring riders and the establishments responsible for the travel safety.
9. A **hotline for riders and drivers to report diesel spills** (and other carriageway defects).
10. **Mass media campaigns** that target riders engaging in aberrant behaviours – sending a clear signal to riders that whilst we wish to support motorcycling in Devon it has to be in the context of a safe and sensible use of the machine.
11. **Experimental signing** of routes to target and inform both riders and drivers.
12. Greater emphasis on the quality and appropriateness of **road surface materials** for powered two wheel users.
13. Training for engineers, auditors and road safety specialists to ensure that the needs of riders and other vulnerable groups are recognised in **highway design and improvement schemes**.
14. Training for engineers, technicians, auditors and road safety specialists as motorcyclists – and the provision of motorcycles – to **ensure that route and site inspection work can be conducted from a powered two wheeler perspective** whenever appropriate.