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ROAD DANGER, MIDDLE AGED MEN AND AFFLUENCE – BIGGEST CAUSES OF DEATH AND INJURY ON BRITAIN'S ROADS

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Young people called on to protest at next week's World Safety Conference

The World Safety Conference which opens in London next week is set to point the finger of blame for road traffic crashes on the victims of those crashes, rather than tackling the root cause, which is dangerous road traffic, says Dr Ian Roberts, Trustee of RoadPeace (the UK national charity for the victims of road traffic crashes) and professor of public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

The organizers are arguing that 'Music, Youth and Poverty' are the biggest causes of death and injury on Britain's roads, and that young people need to be educated about the dangers of iPods and MP3 players when moving around in urban areas.

But Dr Roberts says that the real cause of road death and injury is dangerous road traffic, a message that he believes is being covered up because the car lobby, which has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, has such a huge influence on the road safety community.

He comments: *'We must reclaim our streets and neighborhoods from the lethal motor vehicle traffic that currently blights them so that we can begin to move our bodies again, in the way that they were designed to be moved. Youth and music are not the causes of road death – wealthy middle aged men who refuse to surrender their cars, or even consider alternative forms of transport, are the problem'*.

Dr Roberts believes that the de-motorization of towns and cities will require the greatest human mobilisation in history but that it will usher in a safer and more sustainable society.

'Our dependence on motorised transport has made us fatter and less fit. It has made the roads more dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists, and driven many them off the streets and back into their cars, further increasing the demand for transport. It has made controlling oil supplies the primary strategic objective of nation states so that scarce resources that should be devoted to building a sustainable economy are instead spent on war and destruction.'

'We should look to a future where there will be fewer road deaths and injuries, cleaner air and much less traffic noise. Urban infrastructure must show a new respect for humanity. The torrent of lies that has been used to justify the "accidental" deaths of 3,000 people each day on the world's roads and the daily disabling of 30,000 more, will take its place in history alongside the justifications for slavery, racism and imperial war', says Roberts.

Dr Roberts is calling on London's youth to picket the safety conference and to demand a future where real road safety is prioritised over wars over oil. He says: *'Young people and music are the future – these are not causes of road traffic crashes.'*

Ends

To interview Dr Roberts - contact him on 0207 958 8128 (work) or 0208 286 8718 (home)

Note: RoadPeace was founded on the principle of road danger reduction (RDR) which prioritises vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists, and challenges the dominance of motorised vehicles. RDR has the principle of sustainability at its' core; safer streets result not just in fewer deaths and injuries, but also create an environment which is less intimidating and polluted and where people are more likely to walk and cycle.