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## Welcome reform to drink-driving legislation in Northern Ireland

26 September 2011

RoadPeace welcomes Northern Ireland's commitment to reducing, by nearly a half, the drink driving limit from 80mg/100ml to 50 mg/100ml blood alcohol concentration (BAC). A lower limit of 20mg/100ml for novice and commercial drivers will also be introduced, as well as allowing random breath testing.

These changes to Northern Ireland drink driving legislation will bring it in line with many other European nations, and are part of a wider strategy to reduce the number of road deaths in Northern Ireland that will include tackling speeding and careless drivers.

The risk of having a collision increases exponentially with the amount of alcohol consumed. A recent review by the Centre for Public Health Excellence (NICE) indicated that drivers with a BAC of 50-80 mg/100 ml have at least a six times greater risk of dying in a vehicle collision than those with no alcohol in their blood<sup>i</sup>.

Measures to tackle drink driving are long overdue in Britain, with calls for the adoption of the 50mg/100ml limit dating back over 30 years from health and road safety experts, most recently in the government-commissioned report by Sir Peter North in June 2010<sup>ii</sup>. Its adoption in Northern Ireland will benefit its people, as it will also benefit those of Scotland, if they proceed as predicted down the same path.

We hope that their example will also encourage the government to adopt this limit for England and Wales, where its longer term benefit is provisionally estimated at a decrease of over 300 road deaths and over 700 serious injuries per year (North, 2010).

*'Lower drink drive limits, as well as the use of smart technologies such as alcolocks, mean we could have, and should have, designed out drink driving by now. If we had our priorities right, we would have made it virtually impossible for a driver to drive whilst over the limit. Ironically, the greatest benefit would have been to the impaired driver, as they are more likely to kill themselves than anyone else.'*

Amy Aeron-Thomas, RoadPeace's Executive Director

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## RoadPeace

RoadPeace is also calling for an appropriate response by the criminal justice system to drink drivers who kill or injure. Since 1967, first time drink drivers only receive a 12 month driving ban, yet surveys show that 75% of the public would support a 5 year ban. Last week, RoadPeace attended the appeal hearing of a driver who was appealing a six year prison sentence and a five year driving ban after killing Wayne Moore in a hit and run collision. RoadPeace is calling for all drink drivers who kill to receive a life-time driving ban.

RoadPeace is an independent national charity, providing practical information, emotional support and advocacy to those affected by road crashes; as well as campaigning for justice for road crash victims and for road danger reduction, with a focus on reducing the volume, speed and dominance of motorised traffic and promoting cycling and walking.

RoadPeace was a winner of the Guardian Charity Award in 2008:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/video/2008/dec/04/guardian-charity-awards-roadpeace>

RoadPeace was founded in 1992 on the principle of road danger reduction (RDR) which places a greater duty of care on those that pose the greater threat, and argues for danger to be controlled at source through reducing the speed, volume and dominance of motorised traffic. RDR differs from traditional road safety in that it also takes into account the other negative consequences of inappropriate and excessive motor vehicle use such as fear and intimidation, environmental impact and public health issues, . adopting a wider approach that considers not only the quantity of death and injury by crashes, but also the effects of inappropriate and excessive motor vehicle use on the quality of life and the environment.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.nice.org.uk/media/3FE/1A/BloodAlcoholContentEffectivenessReview.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/6gxja9b>