

LIFE SAVING BARRIERS FOR BIKES

Whilst it may be the case that a new steel safety barrier has been approved and specified at high-risk sites and key locations of trunk roads, it seems to have taken some time to appear, leaving motorcyclists lives at risk until such time as the old barriers are worn or destroyed and the new barrier can be installed. Similarly, the Highways Agency's approved and specified safety barrier on all motorway central reservations, the concrete step barrier, is facing the same delays of installation. Put quite simply, they are not going in fast enough.

Whilst the concrete step barrier is approved on all motorway central reserves exceeding 25,000 vehicles a day, there is no doubt that this barrier would be beneficial on all trunk roads and in any high-risk location if it meant lives would be saved. And that includes those of motorcyclists.

"One big problem with the steel barrier is not so much the steel barrier itself, it's those vertical uprights, that's steel as well and if you should be unfortunate enough to come off your motorcycle, slide along the motorway, you're going to hit those with your body and lose limbs. Whereas a concrete barrier, that have been used extensively on the continent, that's smoother. You still don't want to hit them, but at least when you do, you travel in the same direction of traffic," says Jeff Stone of the British Motorcyclists Federation.

"The smooth angle of the barrier face will cause fewer and less serious injuries to motorcyclists than steel barriers with protruding bolts, nuts and joints that can and do inflict severe damage," says David Jones, Director of Britpave, the transport infrastructure group.

So if the new design of the steel barrier, with its BikeGuard (a metal panel that covers the support posts) is meant to save lives, how does that compete with the concrete step barrier? It doesn't. The cost of installing the concrete step barrier onto hardened road is comparable to that of steel. When you add that together with the fact that it is designed to be repair and maintenance free for the entirety of its 50 year life, it's a no brainer. So what can they do with the money they save from sending out their maintenance workers to repair and tension the steel barriers or the difference in installing concrete over steel? Put more of it in and save more lives.

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Notes

- Britpave, the British In-situ Concrete Paving Association, was formed in 1991 to promote better and greater use of concrete. For further information please contact David Jones, Director, on 01276 33160 or at djones@britpave.org
- For photography contact Jaime Norris at jnorris@britpave.org.uk

The Highway Agency's decision to install concrete barrier on its motorways was based on the following benefits:

- In the event of an accident, the concrete step barrier is specifically designed to enable the vehicle to be directed along the face of the barrier in the direction of the traffic flow
- Its higher containment level of 13 tonnes, compared to the steel barrier of 1.5 tonnes, means that crossover incidents will be virtually eliminated

- It has a 50 year life span and is maintenance free, which means no lane closures and therefore no congestion and delays
- As it is maintenance free, no longer will barrier repair teams risk their lives to carry out work on site in dangerous conditions