WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE
BY DEPUTY H.M. MILES OF ST. BRELADE
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON TUESDAY 27th MAY 2025
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 3rd JUNE 2025

Question

"In respect of La Route de Noirmont, will the Minister state –

(a) what evidence, if any, exists to support the claim that removing the central white line will lead to improved road safety, and what are the underlying mechanisms which explain this effect; and
(b) whether his department consulted the States of Jersey Police prior to agreeing to a six-month trial before the central white line could be reinstated?"

Answer

(a) Several studies (see further notes below) and real work trials, including within the UK, indicate that the removal of the road centreline can, on certain types of road – typically on rural or low-traffic urban streets (roads less than 6.5m wide) – improve safety by lowering speeds (lower vehicle speeds correlate with fewer and less severe crashes, especially for vulnerable road users like pedestrians and cyclists.) and increasing driver attention. This effect is largely behavioural and hinges on uncertainty regarding right-of-way and shared responsibility, two key behavioural triggers in traffic calming.

The key mechanisms are:

1. <u>Increased Uncertainty</u>

   - Road markings provide visual cues that promote confidence and faster driving.

   - Removing the centre line creates perceived uncertainty about right-of-way, which leads drivers to slow down and pay more attention to the environment and other road users.

2. <u>Narrower Perceived Lane Widths</u>
   - Without a centre line, drivers are less likely to assume symmetric, dedicated space for each direction.
   - This perception of a narrower or shared space leads to slower, more defensive driving.

3. <u>Reduced Perception of Road Ownership & Cooperative Behaviour</u>
   - Centrelines give a sense of entitlement to "half" the road.
   - Without them, drivers perceive the space as more ambiguous and negotiate their use of the road more carefully.
   - Especially on narrow or shared roads, the absence of a central line fosters informal negotiation, such as yielding or pulling aside for oncoming traffic.

4. <u>Reduced Risk-Taking</u>
   - Marked roads can give a false sense of security, encouraging riskier overtaking or higher speeds.
   - Unmarked roads disrupt this perception and discourage aggressive manoeuvres, drivers are less likely to overtake, especially on curves or where visibility is limited.

5. Encouragement of Lateral Shifts
    - Without a centreline that demarcates "their" lane, drivers tend to keep more distance from the road edge and slowdown, which creates more space for cyclists or pedestrians on the roadside.

(b) The Department for Infrastructure's Transport Section as 'main road' highway authority did not consult the State of Jersey Police prior to the trial. While we work in partnership with the States Police regarding strategic road safety initiatives, such as the Island's 'Collision and Casualty Reduction Plan: 2025 – 2034', it would not be in line with normal practice to consult the States of Jersey Police about a specific operational matter such as a road traffic trial, or road improvement scheme, unless it required specific enforcement support, which was not the case in this instance. The Department for Infrastructure's Transport Section is the competent authority in relation to traffic and highway engineering matters.

Further Notes

Historic Road Safety Concerns (Before Trial)

The Infrastructure Department receives noticeable ongoing correspondence from members of the public, especially residents of the Noirmont area, regarding safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists using La Route de Noirmont. A prevailing view exists that the route provides an unsafe road environment for those walking or cycling due to the lack of a continuous footway, limited carriageway width, limited visibility, multiple property access combined with perceived excess vehicle speeds.

The route is a single point of access to a large resident community and the route is an important link to sites enjoyed by islanders and visitors (i.e. Noirmont Headland and Common, Portelet Beach and Common, Ouaisne Beach, and Belcroute Bay).

Department for Infrastructure Actions Since 2022

Following political representations in 2022 the Department (Infrastructure & Environment) carried out work to accurately identify measured vehicle speeds / volumes (Sept. 2022), pedestrian and cycle usage (August 2023), and Police injury accident records. Although work identified good speed compliance (with the speed at which 85% of vehicles travel recorded as being at or below 25mph) and a low police injury accident record, it accepted the need to create a better / slower traffic environment for vulnerable road users and to support active travel. As such, the Department prepared a coherent set of improvement options (awaiting funding). Due to the road's challenging geometry and roadside land ownership pattern, interventions focus on road layout changes within the road's available width, to accommodate a walking route such as a virtual footway, and traffic regulation changes, etc.

The Reason for the Trial Removal of the Road Centreline

Taking into account the public's ongoing safety concerns and the Department's actions since 2022, the decision to not reinstate the road's centreline, following its scheduled resurfacing in February 2025, are in order to:

- Create additional space for pedestrians while also acting as a traffic-calming measure by encouraging greater driver awareness.
- Mitigate a likely increase in vehicle speeds due to the road's resurfacing (TfL Centreline Removal Trial - 2014 demonstrated that a possible average increase of 4.5 mph was mitigated by the none-reinstatement of the centreline after resurfacing to see an actual reduction in vehicle speeds).
- Avoid having to 'scrub' any reinstated centre line (scaring the newly resurfaced road) as part of any final scheme.

- Create a (trial) traffic environment in which practical observations can be made that will inform any final scheme (if needed), such as to identify locations where further support for pedestrians is required (and physical speed suppression measures).

The removal of the centreline along La Route de Noirmont is on a trial basis (initially 6 months) and is subject to the periodic monitoring of vehicle speeds using automatic traffic survey equipment at control points along the route. Site visits are being carried out on an ad-hoc basis to review changes in driver behaviour and pedestrian safety over time. Public feedback is being logged and assessed, and towards the end of the trial a community engagement will be carried out (Q4 2025). This will allow the department to gather input on the effectiveness of the road layout changes and other options. Further regulatory or physical interventions will be considered based on observed outcomes, community feedback, and available funding.

Studies and Trials on the Effects of Removing the Road Centreline

Department for Transport - Manual for Streets – Guidance – Section 9.3 Common situations

- The use of centre lines is not a legal requirement.
- On residential streets, there is little evidence that centre lines improve safety.
- They are often used out of habit, not based on clear data or safety outcomes.
- Evidence Suggests Benefits from Removing Centre Lines (Wiltshire Research): Found that the removal of the centre line led to a wider margin being maintained between opposing flows. At 12 test sites it resulted in slower speeds and reduced accidents and research carried out in 20 residential areas during the preparation of MfS found no relationship between white centre lines and recorded casualties.

UK Department for Transport Trials

Source: Department for Transport (DfT), UK (TRL Report PPR700 - Title: Speed reduction by removing centre lines on rural roads)

Findings: On rural roads with low traffic volumes, the removal of centreline markings led to:

- Reduced vehicle speeds (by 2–3 mph on average)
- Improved lane discipline
- No increase in accidents—in some cases, a reduction
- Drivers became more aware of surroundings and exercised more caution.

Transport for London (TfL) Centreline Removal Trial

Source: Transport for London (TfL), UK (Road Space Management Directorate- Title: Centre Line Removal Trial – August 2014 - Ryan Cooper & Sam Wrigh)

Findings: This trial on three stretches of road showed a "statistically significant" reduction in vehicle speeds – by a minimum of 5.4mph and maximum of 8.6mph.

Explaining the results, TfL suggests that "centre line removal introduces an element of uncertainty which is reflected in lower speeds". TfL points to an earlier study by Wiltshire County Council which found that not reinstating white lines led to a reduction in injury collisions and traffic speeds, and to referenced research by TRL which concluded that there are safety benefits to be gained by removing centrelines in 30 mph zones.

Scottish Transport Application Research (2022) – Literature Review

Source: STAR, UK (The impact of the absence of centre line road markings on traffic speed within 20 mph and 30 mph speed limits – 2022 - Adrian Davis)

Findings:

- Removing centre lines (CLR) has been shown to reduce driver speeds, potentially by around 2 km/h, with some studies suggesting even greater reductions (up to 7–8.6 mph).
- CLR could be used alongside other traffic calming measures (e.g., speed humps, lower speed limits) to improve safety, especially on low-speed urban or residential roads.
- CLR may benefit cyclists and pedestrians by shifting road design priorities away from motor-dominance.

University of the West of England

Source: University of the West of England, UK (Influence of road markings, lane widths and driver behaviour on proximity and speed of vehicles overtaking cyclists - 2014 - Shackel & Parkin).

Finding: In the study "Measuring the influence of on-road features and driver behaviour on proximity and speed of vehicles overtaking cyclists," researchers observed that the absence of centrelines led to a reduction in the speed of vehicles overtaking cyclists. The study suggests that without centrelines, drivers are more cautious and adjust their speed and positioning when overtaking.

Swedish and Dutch Experiments

- **Sweden**: Some rural roads without centrelines saw fewer head-on collisions and lower speeds.
- **Netherlands**: Similar results were observed under the concept of "self-explaining roads" and "naked streets", which encourage cautious driving through minimalist design.

Other Academic Studies

- **Charlton et al. (2010)**: Psychological research showed that drivers treat unmarked roads as **less predictable**, leading them to slow down and pay more attention.
- **Kaparias et al. (2012)**: Found that removing road markings increases drivers' uncertainty, which results in more cautious behaviour.