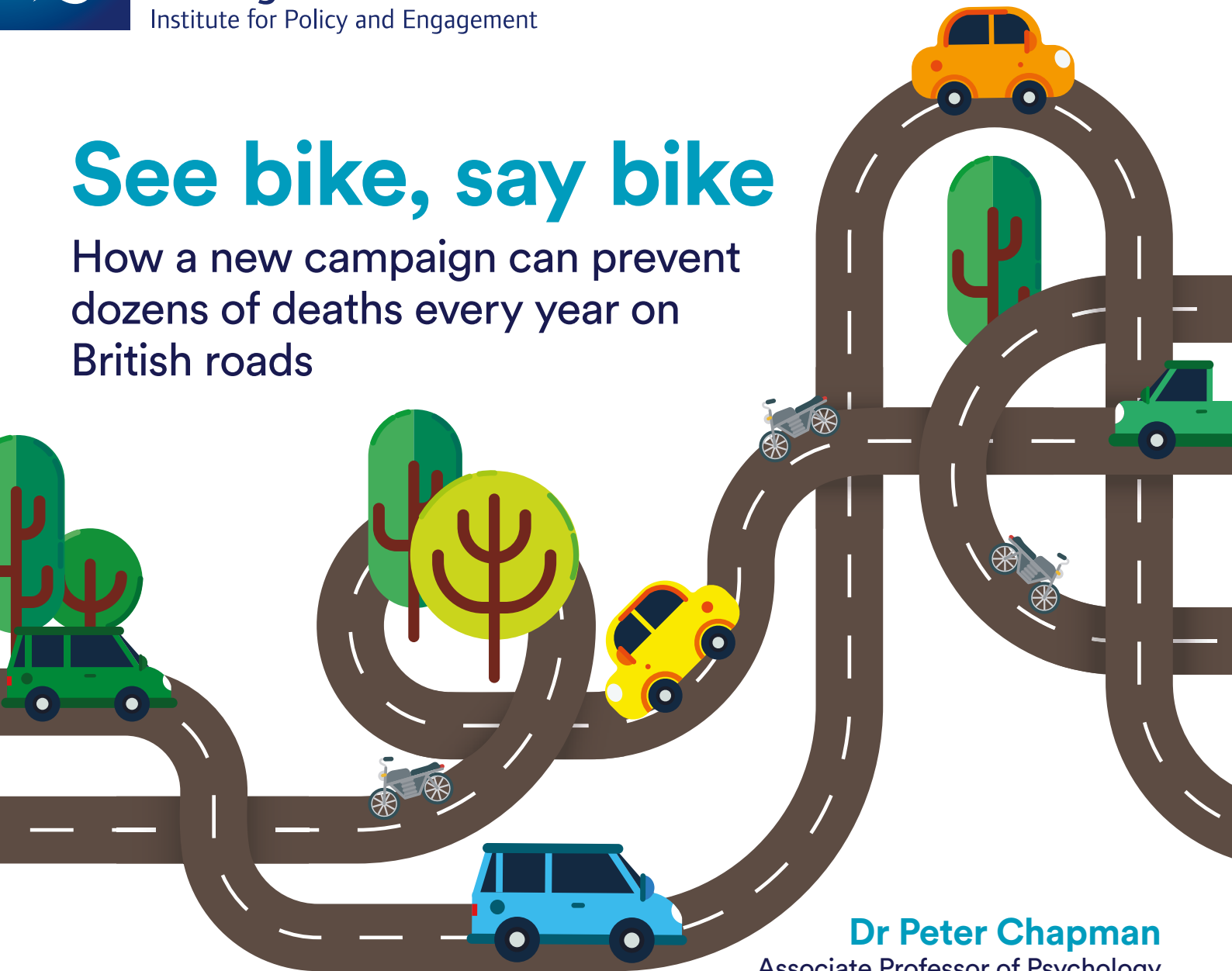




See bike, say bike

How a new campaign can prevent dozens of deaths every year on British roads



Dr Peter Chapman

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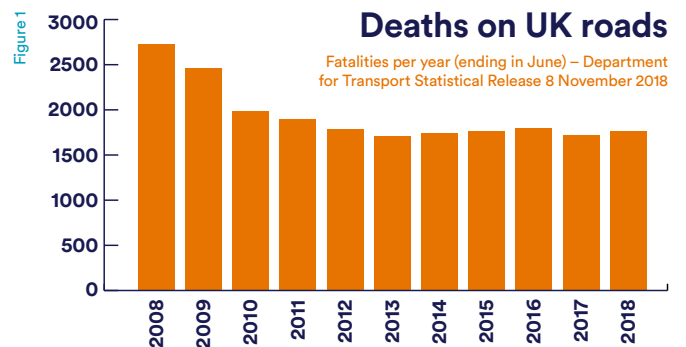
Context

After 50 years of steady reductions in road fatalities, no progress has been made in the last seven years, as Figure 1 demonstrates.

Over 50% of people killed on British roads are vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists) – see Figure 2.

One of the most common causes of fatal crash is when a car pulls out in front of another road-user without right of way. Around 100 motorcyclists are known to die each year in the UK in such crashes.

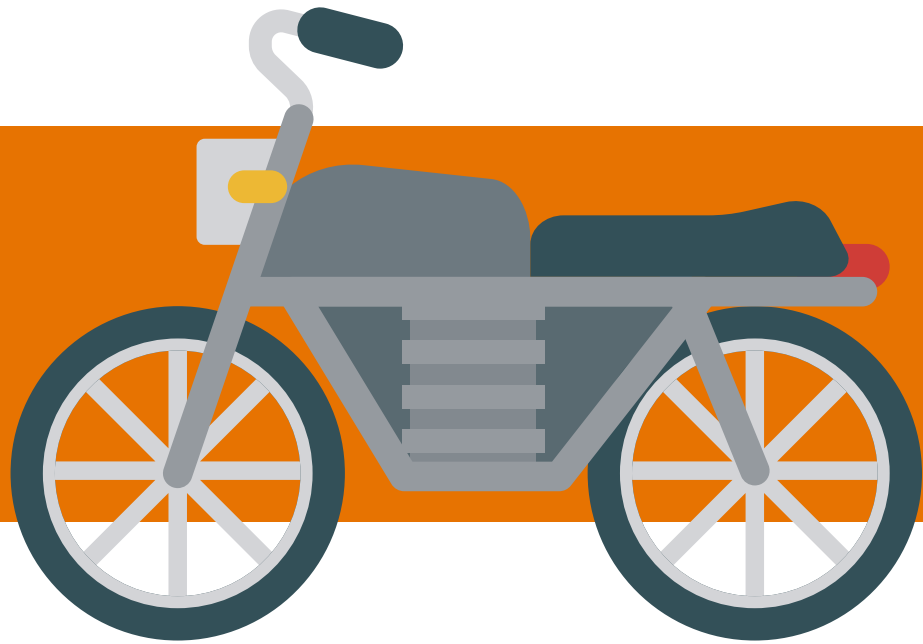
Many of these crashes and deaths are preventable with the right public safety campaign. Research from the University of Nottingham shows how.



Policy recommendation

See bike, say bike

The latest evidence in memory research shows that a new public safety campaign, calling on drivers to say “bike” out loud when they see one before pulling into a road, could significantly reduce accidents.



About the research

Research from the School of Psychology at the University of Nottingham provides new understanding of one of the most common forms of fatal crash: when a car pulls out in front of another road user without right of way.

These crashes are typically termed “looked but failed to see” (LBFTS) or “sorry mate I didn’t see you” crashes.

We have conducted research on real roads in an instrumented car, and in our advanced driving simulator, recording the eye movements of hundreds of drivers as they make decisions at junctions.

Calling for a new campaign

It is not enough to just “think bike”. When drivers see a motorcycle at a junction they need to remember it. Saying “bike” out loud raises their chances of doing so. An intervention based on this idea – a “see bike, say bike” campaign – could dramatically reduce motorcyclists’ deaths, and potentially other vulnerable road users.

Key findings

We suggest that the majority of LBFTS errors on real roads may have been misclassified, and actually occur due to a memory deficit.

We find that drivers often forget vehicles (particularly motorbikes) that they have looked at just seconds earlier.

This surprising result is consistent with recent findings in psychology suggesting that people have very limited visual memory.

Drivers do need to look for motorbikes – but if they then take steps to actively remember having seen them, the risk of accidents can be reduced.

A way to dramatically improve short-term memory is to use an additional memory store, phonological working memory: we use this to remember spoken words. The act of vocalising something we have seen therefore increases the chance that we will remember it.

Contact the researcher



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