

# Life champion

Over the last decade, **Andy Rooke** has become synonymous with eCall. After 30 years with the Sussex Police force in the UK, in which time he held the role of technical advisor to ACPO (the Association of Chief Police Officers), and three years with Transport for London, Andy has spent the past five years as senior manager at ERTICO, latterly focusing on I\_HeERO, the Infrastructure Harmonised eCall European Pilot. **Kevin Borrás** talks to the man dubbed “the eCall evangelist”

In 2010 I found myself in the Autoworld car museum in Brussels, talking to a TV camera as I attempted to channel my inner James May and talk knowingly about the benefits of eCall, the European initiative intended to bring rapid assistance to motorists involved in a collision anywhere in the European Union (Brexit notwithstanding). I wrote the script for the majority of the video so was quite familiar with what I was saying – but it was only after I had finished recording my to-camera piece that I realised the enormous importance of the video’s subject. That previous year I had come within millimetres of being involved in what would have been a serious car accident on the main highway that links the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana with the country’s beautiful but miniscule coast. Literally, millimetres.

When putting the script together I thought I would draw upon that personal experience (as it had served us so well in our *Thinking Cars* video) and allude to what might have happened had my car collided with that truck at 140km/h. “What if you were driving in, for example, Slovenia, and you had a serious crash? The car overturns, you can’t find your phone...and even if you could find it would you know who to contact or how to contact them? With eCall,” I concluded after a dramatic pause, “the car would make the emergency call for you.”

I seem to remember calling the mandatory implementation of eCall a “no-brainer”, so what’s the current status of eCall six years later? Andy Rooke takes a deep breath.

“Well, on the legislative front there are



▲ **Andy Rooke, eCall’s tireless campaigner**

some very clear dates that should be pencilled into most Member States’ diaries and the next key date that is legally enforceable is 1 October 2017. After that date all Member States should have installed their public safety answering points (PSAPs). They’ve got to be ready to receive any call based on 112 and not only have they got to be technically ready they’ve also got to have passed through what’s called ‘conformance assessment’. This is a subjective test to say ‘I’m technically ready and I’ve passed all the necessary criteria to say I’m there and I’m ready to go.’ Andy points out, without naming names, that some member states are keener than others but as for the UK?

“They haven’t done anything yet and we’re fast reaching a point on the technical

timescale were if they don’t do something very soon, they won’t be in a position to be ready in time.”

At the time of writing October 2017 is only 14 months away – how feasible is it that the UK can catch up with its mainland European colleagues? The perception is that the UK has been a long way behind from the very beginning – not only in terms of implementation but in terms of governmental support.

“Actually that’s a bit unfair,” says Andy, defensively. “At the very beginning when eCall was first discussed the UK were right at the front of the queue and set the tone. It all started to unravel a bit when the element of choice was removed and it became mandated and there were some very difficult decisions made by the Department for Transport – they didn’t feel it necessarily offered consumer choice and there were some quite authoritative studies done in the UK which put a monetary value on this. The hard decision made was that the amount of money that would be necessary to invest in the UK to make it eCall-ready didn’t equate to the number of lives that could be saved.”

Thereby disproving the theory that you can’t put a price on a human life.

“That was where the UK found itself. Whereas most of the other Member States have now started to move forward quite quickly, some of the new cohesion countries are finding this difficult, particularly those in the Baltics because as they are an area of focus for the ITS industry the spotlight is on them and make no bones about it they are

finding it a challenge to find the necessary finances and to understand the process.”

One country already active, pro-active even, is Germany, as Andy explains.

“The Germans are a special case in their own right as they’ve made a political decision, rather than a technical one, that they will upgrade 262 PSAPs to receive eCall. The thing is, you don’t actually need that many and that is an absolutely massive undertaking but they are working on it and I’m helping them. That will be some achievement in that timeframe – and it’s an expensive option as well.”

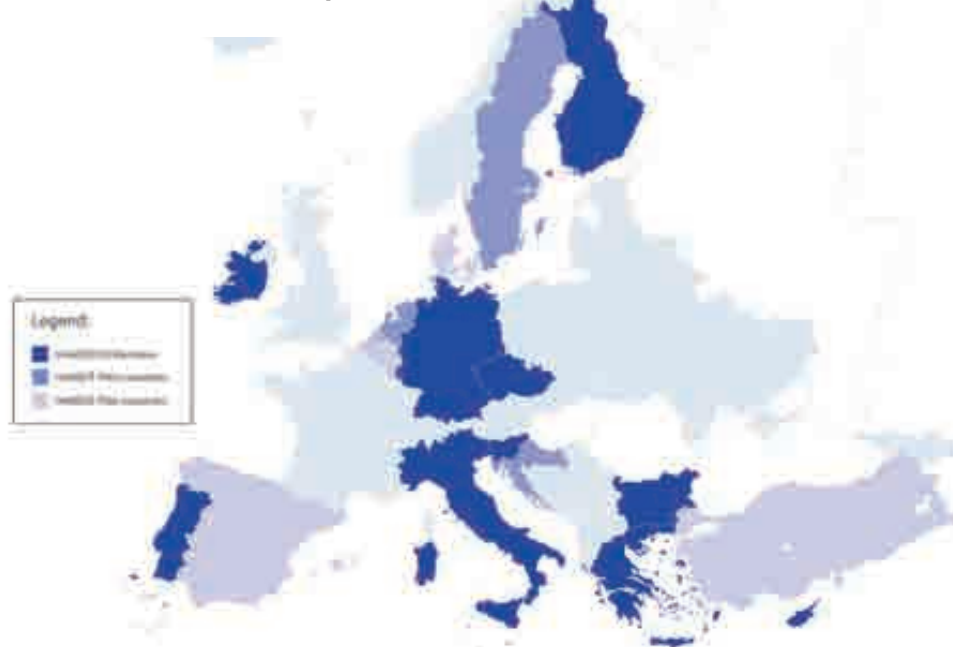
So if we liken eCall implementation to a horse race, we know who the runners and riders are but who’s in the lead? If we go back a few years the Dutch were ahead by a couple of lengths at least but is that still the case?

“There’s been quite an interesting change there,” observes Andy, “whereas eCall deployment has approached the ‘champions’ the Netherlands were right at the front of the queue and the knowledge, expertise, enthusiasm and drive they had to get eCall completed originally emanated from political decisions made solely by the administration. They subsequently felt that the whole process had to be moved to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) because logically the PSAPs and the management of them would be handled by the Dutch police. Everything moved over to the MoJ in theory, but what didn’t move over was a lot of the expertise, enthusiasm and know-how.”

Jan Malenstein was hugely instrumental for the Dutch – certainly around the time when we were making those three eCall videos. Jan was a key figure, and just in the Netherlands, but Europe-wide. Did his retirement set the whole Dutch eCall push back?

“Jan was key right from the beginning and is still a very, very good friend of eCall and a very strong champion of it, but you speak to some of these guys and you can sense their frustration. It’s a similar situation in Belgium where responsibility for eCall has been transferred to the Ministry of Health. They are now asking the same questions that the partners in the HeERO project were asking two years ago because the knowledge wasn’t uplifted and taken with them

#### ► I\_HeERO involvement map



and they won’t be the only countries that are doing that. There are some very good models, though”, he counters. “Greece was actually a case in point, where all the ministries involved, health, road transport and public safety, all came together and worked as a team. There are some very good strong champions out there and as you quite rightly said the Dutch were in the lead but in practical terms the countries that have declared themselves eCall-ready first are Romania, Croatia and the Czech Republic. Those countries were ready right from the very outset and declared themselves ready at the end of the HeERO project. They’ve just continued to refine their processes so they’re waiting for the conformance assessment programme to be ready.”

#### UPS AND DOWNS

“I mustn’t forget to mention Hungary,” Andy interjects, “who at that point who were an associate partner of HeERO2 and sat on the sidelines and watched what was going on and then did their implementation. They learned a lot and did a really, really good job and produced some very pertinent studies on cost effectiveness. There were some interesting models explored in HeERO2 about how to deal with a Federated State, particularly referencing Spain. This was a very innovative process via the Dirección

General de Tráfico (DGT) so using their own highways agency, in effect, as a collecting point. This was a brilliant plan, but unfortunately the Spanish have taken a decision that each region will now deal with its own eCall, which is a shame because it was a real hub. Not only did you get all the eCalls in one place, they filtered the unnecessary ones out and you got that critical early heads-up that you’ve got a problem on the road network and you really should do something about it even before the shutters open and the fire engines come out. I was a bit disappointed about that because it was a good study.”

Surely for an eCall system to work properly it needs to be intra-national and international because you only need to have an accident one kilometre the “wrong” side of the Andalusian border and then you’re pretty much on your own and you may not be in a position to make an emergency call or even know how to make one.

“That is definitely an issue and the Spanish are well aware of it because that theme is continued through 112 as well. You’re absolutely right, the Belgians also did quite an interesting study on how you could deal with all the false calls, so they put what in effect is a motoring organisation in front of their PSAP so they would screen all calls, public and private, and only put through the real ones through to the 112 – there’s still a

number of countries looking at that option. There are some technical challenges with that but it is still a model that is possible."

And now we have I\_HeERO, the "i" standing for infrastructure, and its sole purpose is to get countries "eCall-ready". 'I\_HeERO is aimed at the preparation of the PSAP in Member States for the deployment of eCall based on 112 as reference implementations. It addresses explicitly the PSAP element of the eCall roll-out and will enable the PSAP to install hardware and software solutions that fit the necessary requirements within each Member State,' says the project website. 'I\_HeERO builds further on HeERO and HeERO2 pre-deployment of eCall started with the EU co-funded projects "HeERO" and "HeERO 2", ie the Harmonised eCall European Pilot'.

"We're working with 12 Member States

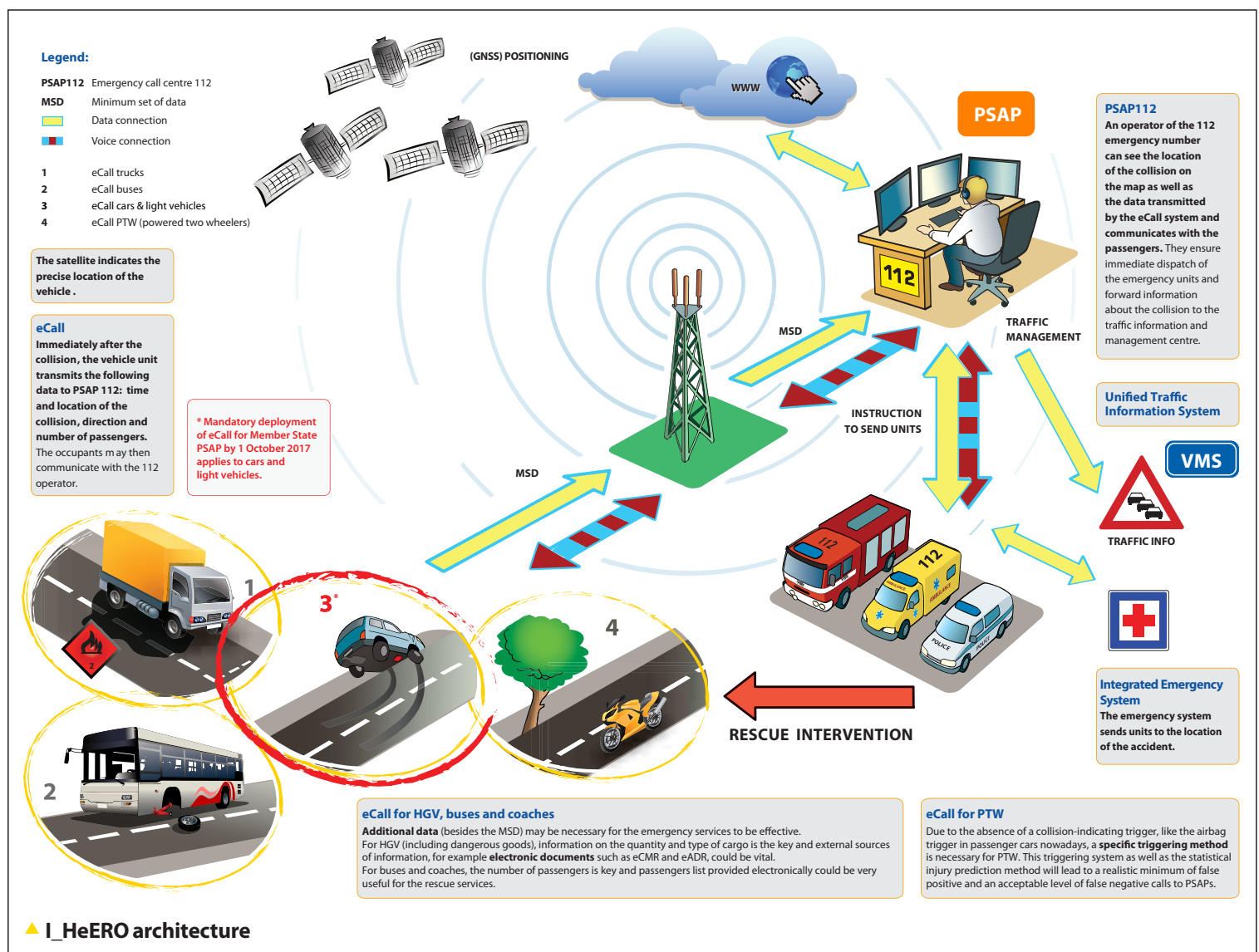
now and they are being prepared in exactly the same way. Start with state-of-the-art analysis and then you find the equipment they need to complement their existing architectures," Andy explains. "We're helping them through that process, they are on track to complete within the schedule and have the conformance assessment done and should be good to go."

What about Finland? Thinking back to the video we made at Autoworld, there were a couple of Finns involved in eCall at the time and I remember them being extremely enthusiastic as they believed a lot of lives would be saved in accidents that occurred in rural locations in deep mid-winter.

"Good point! Finland were in the first HeERO project and they really contributed a huge amount in terms of understanding, especially with ERA-GLONASS as Finland is

a neighbour of Russia. Their biggest problem was that they didn't have their PSAPs ready to roll because they were tendering for a new system. What has transpired since is that they are setting their new system up, they are an I\_HeERO partner and crucially they are bringing all their expertise from HeERO. They've got all their ministries working alongside each other so they're upping their game again but this time it's for real so they will be ready and they bring a very unique, geographical perspective to eCall because of the unique position they hold in Europe as one of the gateways into Russia."

Which brings us almost seamlessly to aftermarket sales and retrofitting of eCall? This was one of things that was spoken about quite liberally all those years ago and now added to that we have the conundrum of data ownership with car renting and leas-



ing. Whose vehicle data is it if you rent or lease a car? And more pertinently, where does eCall fit into that question?

"The renting and leasing market has become incredibly complicated," Andy echoes. "If it's just a 112 eCall is only interested in the vehicle identification number and all you'll get off that is the make, model, year of manufacture and a few other bits of data, so in terms of actually rushing out to the scene with the right kit and knowing what you're looking for it doesn't really matter initially if it's a hire car, leased car, or your own car, that bit's taken care of."

It's when you find a hired car upside down with everyone in it either dead or very seriously injured when the problems begin.

"No matter what kind of arrangement you've got with your own national database it's not going to help you so you're going to have to make some more enquiries. At that point if it was a foreign-registered hire car from another Member State at the very least it would tell you where the thing came from and as with most hire car companies there is a central contact point you can call and say 'here's been a serious accident involving one of your cars' and ask them who's currently renting it at or if it's a lease car you can at least discover which company has it."

A report was commissioned from a number of industry experts looking at what potential there was for aftermarket eCall or where there were any unforeseen pitfalls as to its introduction. Again Andy is the measure of diplomacy with his answer.

"It's fair to say that some Member States have already discussed and embraced eCall more robustly than others and those that have embraced it wholeheartedly have done so in the realisation that in the first instance eCall may not benefit them immediately because they don't buy that many new cars," he surmises.

"This causes them something of a dilemma as there are some Member States that have very poor casualty records and the governments know about it and are trying every measure they can think of to bring the casualty figures down. They've embraced eCall, they know it will not benefit their citizens in any great degree for

probably 10 years or more and they are also acutely aware that after 2018 it only applies to a new type of vehicle not just a new vehicle, so again the pot is shrinking. A number of Member States have looked at this and it really started with some statements made in Bulgaria as part of the digital agenda in 2012, where it a commitment was made that a number of States wanted to look at aftermarket eCall as they were looking for cheap, robust devices that can be fitted to existing vehicles and the target price was around €50. I'm pleased to say that work has continued and there are devices out there that will be in that realm of cost."

DG GROW and DG MOVE are looking into eCall for HGVs, long-distance coaches and powered two-wheeled vehicles, as well as after-market solutions across the entire vehicle fleet from cars to trucks. "The I\_HeERO project is looking at those vehicle types and the project is working with CEN to develop some standards," says Andy. "Setting up the clock and the GPS positioning is relatively simple but then you get into the more crucial points like where do you put the speaker, where do you put the microphone, where do you put the manual button, where do you put the device itself and once you've put it there how do you know it's safe? For argument's sake let's say you attach it to the windscreen and you have a massive accident – to put it bluntly do you want to know where the windscreen has ended up or do you want to know where the actual car is?"

"You have issues like that and if you're placing parts of a device in a vehicle how do you know that when the occupants are involved in collision they aren't going to be either hit by that device or that the designed ability of the vehicle to compress and absorb energy is going to be adversely affected by an aftermarket device being put into it, so there's really very, very serious questions that have got to be answered about aftermarket eCall. But then saying that we don't want to be waiting too long for all this to happen either."

### TIME IS AGAINST US

I put it to Andy that the mandatory implementation of eCall in all new vehicle types by April 2018 is starting to look, not for the

first time, a tad ambitious. What needs to happen between now and April 2018 and crucially, does he think that it will happen?

"What has to happen is that there needs to be some urgent work carried out in terms of aftermarket and to recast your question, if I may, it should be "and how is that going to be achieved?" Having said that, I'm not sure what the answer is," he admits. "Clearly CEN have a relationship with the European Commission so that's one plus point and there are a number of Member States who would very much like to see the progression of aftermarket eCall now, let alone in a year's time. Realistically," he continues, "I would think we should see the formulation of the standards in a year or so. What worries me a bit is that there are device manufacturers who are making aftermarket eCall devices already, whether they are private or public ones, but they are both appearing. Of course they are running a risk by manufacturing now – what if it all goes wrong and unravels and someone says 'sorry but they should look like this'? It doesn't bear thinking about."

You seem to be doing more as much as or more than anyone to get eCall off the ground but there always seems to be barriers and invisible walls everywhere you turn – would it be fair to say that your job is to help people to get over those walls or at the very worst, acknowledge that they are there?

"Yes, I think that's quite a fair assessment," he concurs. "I also think that the actual eCall scene has matured tremendously over the past 18 months because if you consider two years ago the conversation in town was 'we'll talk about anything you want to do with eCall providing it's eCall that's based on 112'. However, since the delegated acts were published it's very clear now that there could be an eCall private or an eCall 112 and they have quite simply got to co-exist."

Andy ends on a hopeful note. "There's more of an adult conversation being had now and I sincerely hope that adult conversation will continue with aftermarket eCall

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