



Safer Streets Bill: the proposals

The default speed limit on restricted roads will be set to 20mph. Currently any change from 30mph requires a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), which is cumbersome and expensive when changing large numbers of residential streets, but speed limits are now devolved and it's time to act. If the Bill passes, local authorities can use a smaller number of TROs to designate arterial routes as 30mph roads.

The existing default speed limit was set in the 1930s, in a very different traffic context, and awareness of safety issues and the need to promote active travel is now much higher. Communities across Scotland campaign for safer streets: this Bill is not the whole solution to that problem, but it would make a major contribution to road safety.

When surveyed in 2017, 65% of the Scottish public who expressed an opinion supported the idea. There is also strong evidence that support for 20mph limits goes up after they come in. The consultation on this proposal was very positive, with 82% in favour – the vast majority of these respondents were individuals.

Experience of 20mph

By 2008 Fife Council had already converted around 75% of residential streets to 20mph, as part of a campaign called "Don't tear the heart out of our communities", focused on safer street play. Over the three years before the introduction of 20 mph zones the average number of casualties in mid-Fife was 73, and this fell to 56 over the three years after. Prior to this rollout, 58% of traffic was recorded travelling

below 25mph, and afterwards this figure had risen to 81%. The reduced casualty rate was particularly marked in low-income communities, which saw a reduction of 34% compared to 20% in more affluent areas. In July 2016 City of Edinburgh Council began a major shift towards 20mph limits across the capital.

"The 20mph rollout in Edinburgh on 80% of our roads is helping to change the relationship between road users and make our whole urban environment more pedestrian and cycle friendly. Had a national default urban limit been in place when Edinburgh was implementing our rollout it would almost certainly have been cheaper and easier to do. If a new urban default limit does become law in future, it should help build on the culture of pedestrian priority that Edinburgh is trying to create and help improve levels of adherence to the policy in residential and shopping streets across the Capital." - **Cllr Adam McVey, leader of City of Edinburgh Council**

Benefit 1: safety

The primary aim of this legislation is to reduce the incidence and severity of accidents for both children and adults in residential areas. Every mile per hour reduction in average speed is estimated to reduce road traffic accidents by 4-6%. In 2015 162 people were killed on Scotland's roads, with 1,597 people seriously injured. Between 2013 and 2015 an average of 7 children were killed a year on our roads.

Benefit 2: active travel

The increase in active travel expected on safer streets would improve health, with a particular impact on heart disease, asthma, diabetes, cancer and mental health. This is an objective shared by all parties at Holyrood.

Benefit 3: air quality

Although a lower speed limit would not reduce CO2 emissions, research shows it would reduce the incidence of dangerous particulates and NOx, further improving health, especially by busier roads.

“We want to change the relationship between pedestrians, cyclists and motorised vehicles on our city streets and roads. A national default position of 20mph zones for residential areas would make the extension of traffic calming measures, particularly around schools and very much with the elderly and vulnerable in mind, both easier and more cost efficient. Not only would such measures improve our commitment to road safety but they would also enhance the ambience of our neighbourhoods. I look forward to seeing the results of Mark Ruskell’s consultation on his legislative proposals and the potential contribution they can make to our own ambitions for Glasgow.” - **Cllr Susan Aitken, leader of Glasgow City Council**

Scottish Government policy

The June 2016 second edition of the Scottish Government’s “Good Practice Guide on 20 mph Speed Restrictions” began with the following statement of the benefits of a lower speed limit: *The Scottish Government is committed to creating a healthier, greener and safer Scotland and believes that the introduction of 20mph restrictions can help to contribute to all these objectives. By reducing speed on our roads we can create streets where the space is shared more equally between different road users and create a safer environment, encouraging people to make active travel choices.*

The same document stated:

There is clear evidence that lower speeds reduce the number of casualties, and there is specific evidence of casualty reduction in 20 mph speed limit zones. It is argued that this is particularly true for disadvantaged areas and communities, and would help to reduce health inequalities.

Support for this proposal

Reducing the default speed limit to 20mph is supported by a wide range of organisations across Scotland and the UK, including the following:

*“Brake fully supports changing Scotland’s current 30mph default speed limit on restricted roads to 20mph because it offers an opportunity to save lives, promote sustainable transport and improve the environment... More walking and cycling means better health and prevention of illnesses like heart disease and diabetes, and greater savings for the taxpayer. Lower speed limits can also help local businesses, especially in ailing town centres, by increasing footfall. In financial terms, the introduction of 20mph limits has widespread benefits and pays for itself many times over.” - **Brake, the road safety charity***

*“GCPH/NHSGGC fully supports the introduction of a mandatory 20mph limit in urban settings (on restricted roads) across Scotland as a significant preventive public health measure. There is longstanding, robust evidence cited in the consultation paper and from many other sources that this measure will improve safety by reducing the number and risk of accidents as well as severity of injury if an accident does occur. There is also strong evidence that lowering traffic speed can encourage people to walk and cycle in urban settings. This measure would also contribute to allaying parental fears regarding their children walking to school.” - **Glasgow Centre for Population Health / NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde***

*“20mph limits are a life-saving intervention and one of several measures which are required to deliver clean air. 20mph limits have been proven to reduce accidents and injuries, traffic speed and volume, and improve safety. Less traffic on the road means cleaner air, and safer streets enable more of us to choose to walk, cycle, and enjoy healthier outdoor environments.” - **Friends of the Earth Scotland***

*“We know that air pollution can make it harder for people to breathe and can even put them in hospital. Not only that, it poses a real danger to children’s growing lungs. Traffic emissions are the major cause of pollution in our towns and cities. A 20mph speed limit could be a step in the right direction, by encouraging more people to cycle and walk.” - **British Lung Foundation Scotland***