

20 mph speed limit bill: Pedal on Parliament response

Summary

Pedal on Parliament strongly support this bill - it will help to create the baseline conditions for a Scotland which makes active and sustainable transport accessible for everyone. The current patchwork provision of 20 mph schemes as and when communities have the resources to implement them is diminishing their potential benefits, particularly for the most vulnerable communities and road users in Scotland. We believe that, far from being a weakness, this bill's 'blanket' application of a default speed limit of 20 mph in the streets where people live, work, and play is in fact its greatest strength.

To answer the consultation questions in more detail:

Is reducing the speed limit to 20 mph the best way of achieving the aims of the Bill?

- We believe that this bill will go part of the way towards meeting all of these aims.

1. There is clear evidence that well-enforced and respected 20 mph limits improve road safety, particularly for the most vulnerable road users such as child pedestrians. The more widespread the limits, the greater the effect on road safety. Although better road design (along the lines of the Dutch sustainable safety approach) will also be needed to make our roads safer for all users, 20 mph limits by default can play a substantial part. It is notable that the recent Atkins report into 20 mph limits

[\[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/757307/20mph-headline-report.pdf\]](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/757307/20mph-headline-report.pdf) found the most significant reduction in casualties and collisions occurred in the Brighton scheme which involved a 'blanket' implementation of 20 mph limits - suggesting that the real benefits lie in making 20 mph the default limit.

2. We believe having a default speed limit of 20 mph on restricted roads will be more effective at changing driver culture and promoting compliance with speed limits. At the moment, the current patchwork of 20 mph limits is not proving as effective at reducing casualties, largely because of a lack of enforcement (meaning that actual speeds are not much reduced), but also because the current guidelines mean 20 mph limits are largely confined to roads where speeds are already low (median speeds of below 24 mph). Making the lower limit the default will tend to bring in those roads where speeds are higher and also busier (as the Atkins report found for Brighton), and hence the benefit will be greater. This does mean that the change in law should be accompanied by increased enforcement, in order to ensure that ignoring 20 mph limits does not become the norm. 'Road diets' - the narrowing of carriageways by widening pavements and installing segregated cycling infrastructure - will also help to reinforce lower speeds on roads where drivers would otherwise tend to speed the most (wider and more open roads). A default 20 mph limit also means that new drivers will form the habit of driving at a safer speeds from the start, habits which will likely remain with them for life, and will not feel pressured to 'make progress' by other motorists.

3. The Atkins report found that existing 20 mph schemes have increased cycling and walking rates by a small but significant amount, and in particular increased children's cycling rates, even where actual speeds have not been reduced by much. Given the wealth of evidence on the health benefit of increased active travel (and concomitant reductions in air pollution), a Scotland-wide 20 mph limit would lead to a widespread improvement in health outcomes. If combined with other measures (such as road diets and neighbourhood filtering) to make speed limits more self-enforcing while making walking and cycling more attractive these benefits could be increased further. At the moment, cost and lack of resources are a barrier to local authorities introducing 20 mph schemes (and indeed, some are delaying schemes while they wait to see what the outcome of this bill will be). Freeing up those resources to invest in improving active travel infrastructure will reinforce the benefit of 20 mph limits and a virtuous circle could ensue - with slower speeds and better street design encouraging more walking and cycling, while more people walking and cycling encourage slower speeds among drivers.

4. Increased use of cycling and walking for transport will also reduce car use, helping to bring emissions down. Given that transport is the only sector in Scotland where carbon emissions are not falling, this will help tackle climate change. The Scottish government also envisages widespread take up of electric vehicles as part of its climate policy. These will not have the disadvantage of some diesel and petrol cars of being less efficient at slower speeds.

5. Finally, a presumption of lower speeds on urban roads will help to reduce inequalities. The Glasgow Centre for Population Health found that deprived areas have greater pedestrian casualty rates https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/5206/Pedestrian_and_cyclist_casualties_analysis_FINAL.pdf so anything which serves to reduce casualties nationally will tend to benefit people in deprived areas more. The Atkins report found that a 'vocal and active campaign group' for 20 mph limits was an important enabler for some schemes, meaning that under the current piecemeal approach areas where the residents may not have the resources to mount such a campaign could miss out.

• How will the 20 mph Bill affect you?

As a group primarily representing those who cycle - and those who would like to make more of their everyday journeys by bike - we feel that this bill will go some way towards meeting our goal of a 'cycle friendly Scotland' by reducing casualties and making our towns and cities less intimidating places for cycling. We believe that it will also encourage (and enable) local authorities to introduce other measures, such as cycling infrastructure, which will help reduce driver speeds without the need for explicit traffic calming measures such as speed bumps. Finally, we think that such a bill will send out a significant message to the rest of the world, that Scotland is welcoming to all road users, not just people in motor vehicles, and forward thinking about road safety. Scotland already leads the way in the United Kingdom in investing in active travel. This will build on that and begin to bring us in line with our European neighbours.

• It is proposed that a national awareness campaign is required to introduce a 20 mph speed limit. Do you agree with this? And if so – what shape should any campaign take?

Yes, absolutely. It should also be included in the Highway Code (for the whole of the United Kingdom) to make all drivers aware of the change. As to the shape of the campaign, we believe that it should not focus solely on the narrow road traffic and safety aspects but also include the wider reasons behind the change (public health, more pleasant public spaces, etc.) to ensure wider buy in to the changes and so greater compliance.

• Should Police Scotland be required to take additional enforcement action, over and above that used to enforce the current 30mph limit, following the introduction of a default 20 mph limit on restricted roads?

Yes. Because this change will take in roads which will not necessarily be 'self enforcing', there will need to be additional enforcement (along with, in the longer term, design changes to roads to make them more cycling and pedestrian friendly). Although this will take some additional police resources, the reduction in casualties should help offset that. It is also worth noting that a small but significant proportion of drivers stopped by police for motoring offences are found to be wanted in connection with other offences, so an increased focus on speed limit enforcement will pay wider dividends for general policing (see for example the work of the West Midlands Police Road Harm Reduction Team).

• What kind of timescale is needed for the 20 mph speed limit to be introduced?

Although we recognise this is a major change, and that councils will need time to consult over which roads should be exempted from the default, we would urge that the new limit be implemented as quickly as possible. There are already plans for 20 mph limits being put on hold as councils wait for the outcome of this legislation, so any further delay would be damaging to road safety.

• Do you have any comments on the impact that the Bill might have in relation to the following:

- human rights or equalities for any particular group of people?
- sustainable development?
- island, rural or remote communities?

We believe this bill will have a positive impact on those with visual impairments, young people (particularly children), households without access to a car, people living in deprived areas, anyone unable to drive due to health or disability, and anyone who uses a cycle as a mobility aid.

By encouraging active travel and hence reducing car usage we believe it will also have a beneficial impact on Scotland's sustainable development.

• Is there anything else that should be included or excluded from the Bill?

No.