



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

**CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

16th JANUARY 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FRONTLINE SERVICES

WELSH GOVERNMENT 20MPH SPEED LIMIT 2023

Author: Tim Phillips – Head of Traffic and Transportation

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in respect to the Welsh Governments (WG) proposals to reduce the national speed limit from 30mph to 20mph on restricted roads across Wales.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members of the Committee:
- 2.2 Acknowledge the contents of the report and,
- 2.3 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise further the WG's proposals and the likely impact such changes will have on the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The ¹Welsh 20mph Task Force Group was formed in May 2019 on the direction of the then Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport. Their report proposing a reduction in speed limit on all restricted roads (roads with streetlights placed at least every 200yards) was published in July 2020.
- 3.2 Following the recommendations of the Task Force Groups report, the WG passed 'The Restricted Roads (20mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order 2022' on the 13th July 2022, ensuring the national speed limit of 30mph on most restricted roads will be lowered to 20mph from the 17th September 2023.
- 3.3 In doing so, Wales will become one of the first countries in the world to introduce such legislation and the first in the UK to do so.
- 3.4 The change supports the Welsh Governments ²'Programme for Government', the ³'Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy' and ⁴'Future Wales, the national plan 2024' which sets the aims for people to live in places where travel has a low environmental impact.
- 3.5 The WG propose that reducing the national speed limit from 30mph to 20mph on restricted roads could see a number of benefits, including;
- A reduction in road collisions and severity of injuries of those involved in collisions between vehicles and vulnerable road users
 - make streets safer for playing, walking and cycling
 - encourage more people to make more sustainable travel choices
 - makes Wales more attractive for our communities
 - bring physical and mental health benefits
 - reduce noise pollution, promote cleaner air and will be better for the environment.
- 3.6 Whilst the WG's ⁵Public Attitude Survey (Nov 2020) indicated four in five Welsh adults said they would support a 20mph limit in the area in which they live, public scrutiny of such proposals has notably focussed on collisions, pollution, journey times, fuel consumption and ability for a lower speed limit to influence walking and cycling levels. The WG's response to each of these points is summarised below:
1. **Collisions** – World Health Organisation (WHO) states that the most effective way to improve pedestrian safety is to reduce the speed of vehicles. RoSPA states that 45% of pedestrians are killed when struck by a car at 30mph or less but only 5% when going at 20mph or less. In the distance a 20mph car can stop, a 30mph car is still doing 24mph.

¹ [Welsh 20mph Task Force Group \(gov.wales\)](#)

² [Welsh Government Annual Report 2022](#)

³ [Llwybr Newydd A New Wales Transport Strategy 2021: full strategy \(gov.wales\)](#)

⁴ [Update to Future Wales - The National Plan 2040 \(gov.wales\)](#)

⁵ [traffic-orders-and-20mph-public-attitudes-survey.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

2. **Pollution** – A study by Imperial College found that 20mph limited areas were “pollution neutral” as many things contribute to pollution levels, such as driving style, acceleration, braking, vehicle condition, distance travelled and engine temperature.
3. **Journey times** – In many cases lowering the speed limit to 20mph will have little or no impact on journey times. Where there was an impact, WG’s study showed that most journeys would only be around 1 minute longer.
4. **Fuel consumption** – A 20mph speed limit does not increase fuel consumption. Consumption is mainly influenced by the way we drive – driving at a consistent speed is better than stopping and starting. Accelerating up to 30mph can take twice as much energy as speeding up to 20mph.
5. **Walking and cycling** – Lower speeds mean that people feel more confident to walk and cycle and it is safer for children to walk to school. Older people, disabled people or people with additional needs will feel more able to travel independently. There is evidence from across the world that vehicle speeds are the main reason why people do not walk or cycle or do not allow their children to walk or cycle to school.

3.7 It is widely recognised that it would not be appropriate to apply a 20mph speed limit on all existing 30mph roads, especially on well-engineered routes that are principal corridors for movement, where there is little frontage development or community activity and where pedestrians and cyclists do not need to mix with motor vehicles. Such routes would therefore need to be made ‘exceptions’ to the default limit of 20mph and a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) introduced by the Local Authority (LA) to retain the existing 30mph limit.

3.8 In order to identify ‘exceptions’ the WG in conjunction with Transport for Wales (TfW) and LA’s developed a process and set of criteria to enable TfW to assess the road network of each LA to determine which roads should default to 20mph and which should be considered an ‘exception’ and therefore remain at 30mph.

3.9 In line with the WG aspiration to meet the aims of Article 11 of the United Nations ⁶Stockholm declaration (2020) a 20mph speed limit should be set where pedestrians and/or cyclists and motor vehicles mix in a frequent manner, except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe. Therefore, to meet this objective, the following two principal questions were developed:

⁶ [stockholm-declaration-english.pdf \(roadsafetysweden.com\)](https://roadsafetysweden.com/stockholm-declaration-english.pdf)

A) Are there significant numbers (or potential numbers, if speeds were lower) of pedestrians and cyclists travelling along or across the road?

If the answer to A is 'no' then an exception for a 30mph speed limit may be appropriate.

B) If the answer to A is 'yes', are the pedestrians and cyclists mixing with motor traffic?

If the answer to B is 'no' then a 30mph speed limit exception may be appropriate.

If the answer to B is 'yes' then a 20mph speed limit will be appropriate unless the robust and evidenced application of local factors indicates otherwise.

3.10 To further assist LA's with assessing the need for exceptions on their network, the WG issued additional criteria to be considered when setting exceptions:

- Consider only 30mph roads
- Road Clarification (most exceptions made on A&B classified roads)
- Place Criteria
 - Within a 100m walk of any educational setting
 - Within 100m walk of any community centre
 - Within 100m walk of any hospital
 - Where the number of residential and/or retail premises fronting a road exceeds 20 properties per KM.

3.11 Sections of road which meet any of these Place criteria should be considered to positively answer principal question A. Although it is stated that LA's should continue to have the flexibility to set local speed limits that are right for individual roads, reflecting local needs and considerations although such decisions need to be clearly and robustly evidenced.

3.12 Following publication of the above assessment criteria, TfW undertook an assessment of all restricted roads across Wales to determine which were to default to 20mph and which were to remain at 30mph as an exception. The results of the process were issued in map format to the respective LA's to consider and make changes as necessary and then ultimately deliver on the recommendations made by TfW.

3.13 In order to test the outcome of the assessment process, eight communities were selected by the WG for the first phase of the 20mph national programme, with pilot 20mph limits introduced at the following locations:

1. St Dogmaels, Pembrokeshire
2. Llanelli North, Carmarthenshire
3. St Brides Major, Vale of Glamorgan
4. Central North, Cardiff
5. Cilfrew Village, Neath Port Talbot
6. Abergavenny, Monmouthshire
7. Severnside, Monmouthshire
8. Buckley, Flintshire

3.14 Whilst the findings from these pilot schemes are yet to be published by the WG, it has been widely reported through the media that several schemes have been negatively received by the community within which they are located and notably Monmouthshire CBC are in the process of removing sections of the 20mph limit and reinstating a 30mph speed limit at Severnside in Caldicot.

4. UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Whilst Welsh Ministers have the necessary powers to amend primary legislations to introduce a national default speed limit of 20mph on restricted roads, the Welsh Government is reliant on LA's to progress any TRO's required for the exceptions and to physically implement the required changes to the signing and lining infrastructure.
- 4.2 The Councils Traffic Services Team are leading on the delivery of the default limit across RCT with support from a variety of internal and external partners and agencies.
- 4.3 Officers have completed the first technical review of the exceptions map issued by TfW, with an amended version having now be provided by TfW.
- 4.4 The Councils Consultant Partners WSP have been commissioned by the Council to complete the technical assessment of the works required to amend the signing infrastructure across RCTs road network to reflect the change of default speed limit. To do this, officers have utilised the latest technology to asset map every road sign and carriageway marking across the entire road network which will enable engineers to identify which of the thousands of signs, markings, posts and other supporting infrastructure which either needs to be removed, replaced or new arrangements installed.

5. FUTURE PLANS

- 5.1 The next key stage in the delivery process is to initiate wider engagement, first meeting with Local Members and other key stakeholders to introduce the draft proposals and seek feedback on a local level. This process will commence in January and continue into February 2023 with Local Members receiving an invitation to meet with officers.
- 5.2 Officers will collate and consider all feedback received and identify the need for change where necessary and appropriate (taking account of the approved assessment criteria) before submitting final recommendations to Cabinet for approval. Once approved the Council will then publish the exceptions map via Data Map Wales before proceeding to initiate the Traffic Regulation Order process in respect to delivering the exceptions. This process will include engagement with the public and will likely conclude during spring/summer 2023.
- 5.3 In order for officers to meet the challenges of delivering such a significant infrastructure change to the highway network, it is vital that early preparatory works are undertaken where possible.
- 5.4 So to ensure officers meet the WG's objectives of implementing the default limit by the 17th September 2023, all non-statutory infrastructure that will no longer be permitted for use on the highway following the implementation of the 20mph default speed limit will start to be removed from the road network from mid-January 2023. Such infrastructure includes the red high friction surfacing and 20mph speed limit roundels located at many of the existing 20/30mph speed limit gateways.
- 5.5 As Members will duly note, officers are also acutely aware that such infrastructure tends to be concentrated around schools and other community hubs and their removal is likely to be perceived negatively by the community and therefore officers are in discussion with the WG in respect to what alternative measures may be legally permissible.
- 5.6 It is worth noting at this point that there will likely be a number of secondary benefits arising from the introduction of the of the default 20mph, that would be of particular interest to this committee. Recent changes to the regulations and general directions that control the use of signing on the highway have relaxed the need for most signs to be illuminated when situated within a 20mph limit. Therefore, in anticipation of the reduction in speed limit officers are actively compiling a list of illuminated signage present on the highway network with a view to replacing them with standard non illuminated signing arrangements. This will likely see the removal of a significant number of illuminated signs from the highway helping to reduce the Councils annual energy costs and overall carbon footprint.

- 5.7 Officers are due to bid for further WG Road Safety Capital Grant funding for FY 2023/24 to continue with the project and successfully deliver the recommended changes by the 17th September 2023. However, it should be noted that officers anticipate this project will continue far beyond this initial delivery date and possibly spanning the next several years. The scale of the changes will undoubtedly lead to secondary elements of work such as resolving anomalies on the network associated with the new default limit, responding to potential legal challenges to the newly set 20mph limit and requests to review existing 40mph, 50mph and 60mph limits on neighbouring roads.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Screening Assessment will have been completed by the WG in respect to the legislative change. However, RCTCBC will complete its own EIA prior to the commencement of the TRO process required to deliver any exceptions.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation will be key to successfully implementing the proposed changes and the Council in pursuit of its duty as Highway Authority will undertake all necessary consultation in accordance with the requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 7.2 The WG is currently developing a wider communication campaign to support the introduction of 20mph limits across Wales, which is due to go live in January 2023. The WG will be supporting LA's in communicating these changes on a local level and will be providing a toolkit for LA communications teams that contains information reflecting the key narratives, topline and assets to use when publicising the initiative.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There are significant financial implications associated with the implementation of the planned legislative change. The WG have committed to meeting the financial obligation on LA's in delivering the required legal and physical infrastructure changes to the highway network.
- 8.2 The WG has provided financial assistance to RCTCBC via the Road Safety Capital Grant, with a breakdown of funding set out below in table 1.

Financial Year	Grant allocation (£)
2021/22	53,500
2022/23	1,073,587
2023/24	2,264,000 (projected)
2024/25	TBC

Table 1 – RCT’s WG Road Safety Capital Grant allocation by year (realised and projected)

- 8.3 Funding allocation for 2022/23 of £1,073,587 has been awarded and officers expect to commit the full allocation against feasibility and design and an element of preparatory works to the highway in preparation of the main works later in 2023.
- 8.4 The WG have formally invited RCTCBC to bid for grant funding for the financial year 2023/24, with officers required to submit their bid by the 20th January 2023. Current projections suggest the value of the bid to be in the region of £2.26M.
- 8.5 The annual WG Road Safety Grant capital fund bidding process has effectively been deferred in favour of funding implementing the 20mph initiative.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 Whilst Welsh Ministers have utilised existing powers to change primary legislation to introduce a default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads in Wales, it will be necessary for the Council in pursuit of its duties as Highway Authority and in accordance with powers granted to it by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Local Authorities’ Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, to set higher speed limits on all roads considered ‘exceptions’ to the default 20mph limit following a period of public notice.
- 9.2 The WG task force have also identified various Legislation, Regulations, Guidance and Policy documents that will need to be revised prior to the implementation of the default limit on restricted roads. The WG are currently in the process of updating these documents in consultation with LA’s and other key stakeholders.

10 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 10.1 The Senedd has approved legislation to lower the default national default speed limit on restricted roads from 30mph to 20mph to reduce the number and severity of collisions and casualties, to enable more people to use active travel, to reduce environmental impacts and to improve people’s quality of life in communities across Wales.
- 10.2 The legislation supports the objectives set out in ⁷Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021, which prioritises walking and Cycling above all other

⁷ [Llwybr Newydd A New Wales Transport Strategy 2021: full strategy \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/llwybr-newydd-a-new-wales-transport-strategy-2021)

modes of travel; and Future Wales, the national development framework which sets the aim for people to live in places where travel has a low environmental impact.

- 10.3 Many of the anticipated benefits of introducing a 20mph default speed will directly support the three main priorities of the Councils Corporate Plan (2020-2024) and help deliver on many of the objectives linked to developing People, Places and Prosperity.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The RCT Traffic Services Team continues to work to deliver this WG initiative across RCT in accordance with the newly implemented WG legislation. The aim of which is for WG to deliver their Wales-wide objectives of implementing a reduction in the national speed limit on restricted roads across Wales from 30mph to 20mph, subject to satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and in accordance with relevant regulations which includes for consultation with key stakeholders.