



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24**

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

**1<sup>st</sup> February 2024**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF  
HIGHWAYS, STREETCARE AND  
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

**Agenda Item No: 6**

**REVIEW OF WELSH GOVERNMENT  
20MPH SPEED LIMIT**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in respect to the Welsh Governments (WG) reduction of 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 consider the contents of the report and;
- 2.3 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise further the impact the scheme has had on the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The <sup>1</sup>Welsh 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 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022, ensuring the national speed limit of 30mph on most restricted roads will be lowered to 20mph from the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2023.
- 3.3 In doing so, Wales would 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 <sup>2</sup>'Programme for Government', the <sup>3</sup>'Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy' and <sup>4</sup>'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 argue that by reducing the national speed limit from 30mph to 20mph on restricted roads you will 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 However it was 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.
- 3.7 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.

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

<sup>2</sup> [Welsh Government Annual Report 2022](#)

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

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

3.8 The criteria were adopted by the WG and later used by TfW to assess all LA restricted roads. 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. The adopted assessment criteria are set out below:

- **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.

- Consider only 30mph roads.
- Road Classification (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.

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION**

4.1 Whilst Welsh Ministers have the necessary powers to amend primary legislation and introduce a national default speed limit of 20mph on restricted roads, the WG was 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 As the legislative change enabled the WG to implement 20mph limits, LA's were still legally bound to consult on and then implement a TRO to establish any 30mph exceptions.

- 4.3 The first step in implementing any TRO is for officers to initiate a period of informal consultation with local members in order to present the proposals for 'exceptions' within their respective wards and seek feedback. Comments were recorded and an officer led response was issued to each Local Member directly addressing all matters raised.
- 4.4 Having sought acceptance from Local Members in respect to the location of each exception 30mph limit, officers were then able to proceed to give Public Notice of the intention to implement a TRO to establish a 30mph speed limit for each exception site.
- 4.5 Officers consulted on and implemented 84 exceptions across RCT, with 18 in the Rhondda, 16 in the Cynon and 50 across Taf, which is amongst the highest number of exceptions implemented by a LA across Wales.
- 4.6 Public Notice of the exceptions was given on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and during the 21-day response period, the Council received 20 responses, 19 in opposition to the proposals and 1 in support. Of the 19 objections, 17 were objecting to a road remaining 30mph and requesting the limit be reduced to 20mph. The remaining 2 objections were in respect to sections of road that were to default to 20mph.
- 4.7 Whilst the consultation phase was ongoing, the Council's Consultant Partners WSP were commissioned to complete the technical assessment of the works required to amend the signing across RCT's road network to reflect the change of default speed limit.
- 4.8 The appointed consultant was also tasked with compiling all the technical documentation required to enable the Tendering of the works and appointment of a contractor. RCTCBC subsequently appointed Horan Construction Ltd as the main works contractor who were tasked with implementing the works required to change the speed limits across our network.
- 4.9 The scale of the project was significant, with over 3140 signs needing to be removed and over 2000 new signs having been erected. Hundreds of gateway arrangements have also either been removed, amended and or replaced in order to reinforce the transition between limits with this specific package of works having been undertaken by the Councils Streetcare Services Team and their sub-contractors.
- 4.10 In addition to the amendment of the specific speed limit signage, Officers had identified an opportunity to reduce RCT's annual energy costs and carbon footprint by removing many of the now obsolete illuminated road signs from our network. With the reduction in speed limit to 20mph, there is no longer a regulatory requirement to illuminate many of our road signs. The table below indicates the number of signs earmarked for de-illumination:

Area	No. of illuminated signs
Rhondda	553
Cynon	475
Taff	946
<b>Total number of signs =</b>	<b>1,974</b>

*Table 1: Total number of signs to be de-illuminated by area.*

- 4.11 The average cost to power each sign is £21 per annum, therefore the anticipated cost saving to the Authority if all 1,974 signs were de-illuminated is estimated to be £41,454 per annum based on current energy rates.
- 4.12 Whilst the main works package being delivered by Horan Construction Ltd is substantially complete, secondary works packages are still ongoing and due for completion by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. One such package includes the provision of supplementary signing and road markings around school sites with an additional 313 signs and road markings to be installed, an example of which are shown below:



*Image 1: Sign face to be erected at school sites.*

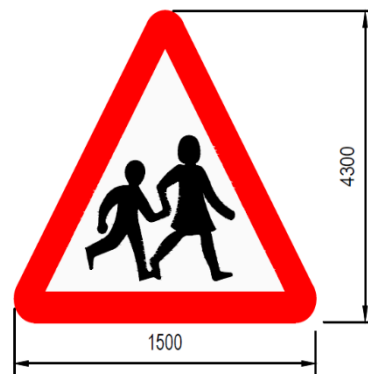


Diagram 1

*Image 2: Thermoplastic road marking.*

4.13 Following the implementation of the scheme on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2023, officers have received and responded to a significant number of contacts from the public. Up to 50 daily contacts were received in the days immediately following the 17<sup>th</sup> September. The nature of each contact varied widely from residents querying speed limits on their local roads, complaints of new signing arrangements being installed in the vicinity of properties, requests for speed limits to be raised or lowered, to general objections to the principle of the 20mph limits. As the scheme has become more established the number of specific contacts regarding the scheme has significantly reduced and become more sporadic.

4.14 Targeted attacks and vandalism on the newly installed 20mph infrastructure has been well reported across Wales. Unfortunately, infrastructure within RCT did not escape this mindless vandalism with signs being damaged and or sprayed over in many locations, however some of the worst affected areas were:

- Llanharry
- Tonyrefail
- Aberaman
- Llwynypia
- Pontypridd
- Glyncoch

In response, RCT's cleansing team have been responding to each instance and cleaning the signs, or where the damage is significant officers are arranging for the sign/post to be replaced. However, it is noted that the longer the scheme has been in situ, the frequency with which these acts of vandalism are occurring is declining.

## **5. MOVING FORWARD – POST IMPLEMENTATION**

5.1 The current priority for officers at this time is to ensure the physical works to implement the infrastructure needed to support the 20mph speed limits is completed and in compliance with current technical standards which is essential if the limit is to be enforced.

### **5.2 Enforcement**

5.2.1 Gosafe temporarily suspended enforcement of 20mph limits in September 2023 following the legislative change. This decision was made in order to allow drivers to adjust to the new speed limits and allow time for LA's to update the road signage and implement the required TROs.

- 5.2.2 Gosafe and Welsh Police forces will actively support the new national 20mph speed limit and along with other partners such as Welsh Fire and Rescue services, LA's and community speed watch groups have adopted an engagement focused approach to 20mph.
- 5.2.3 On the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 'Operation Ugain' was launched across Wales in order to deliver roadside engagement. The priority is to inform and educate the general public through engagement with communities in areas where the speed limit has changed from 30mph to 20mph.
- 5.2.4 Speed monitoring equipment is used to identify people travelling over the speed limit, before police officers stop the vehicle and give the driver a choice between roadside engagement or points and a fine. This approach is designed to help drivers adjust to the change during the initial stages of the rollout.
- 5.2.5 With regard to more traditional methods of enforcement in 20mph areas that were previously subject to 30mph, the decision to enforce will be made at the discretion of a Chief Constable and will be communicated in advance through official sources.
- 5.2.6 Enforcement by Gosafe's fixed and mobile camera units in locations where enforcement previously occurred will continue and whilst the public get used to the change in default limit, the threshold for enforcement in 20mph limits will be temporarily increased to 10% plus 4mph, meaning drivers will only be prosecuted for driving at 26mph and above in a 20mph limit.

### 5.3 Monitoring

- 5.3.1 The responsibility of monitoring the impact of implementing the default 20mph limit sits with TfW. TfW published the 'Default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads Monitoring Framework Document' in September 2023, which sets out how they intend to monitor the impact of the scheme for up to five years post implementation.
- 5.3.2 The main components of the monitoring frameworks are as follows:
- **Objectives** – Statements explain what should be achieved by implementing a default 20mph speed limit.  
For example:
    - Reduce injury and death.
    - Encourage a change in Travel behaviour.
    - Reduce negative effects of vehicle use on the wider environment.
  - **Key performance indicators (KPI's):**  
For example:

- % of traffic compliance with the 20mph speed limit.
- Change in 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed.
- Change in mean speed.
- **Data collection methods:**
  - For example:
    - Speed volume and vehicle classification data.
    - Vehicle and pedestrian interactions.
    - Roadside air quality.
    - Qualitative attitudinal surveys.
    - STATS19 collision data.
    - GPS Journey time data
    - Bus GPS data.

5.3.3 TfW will be responsible for collating data and reporting against the KPI's set out above. Reporting period will be every six months for the first-year post implementation, following which reporting will take place annually.

## **5.4 Impact of 20mph default limit on Vehicular speeds and collisions**

5.4.1 As the scheme has only been operational since the 17<sup>th</sup> September, it is far too soon to evaluate how effective the scheme has been in respect to reducing vehicular speeds and collision rates. However, the WG has commissioned Agilytis to undertake periodic independent analysis of vehicle speeds post implementation of the scheme.

5.4.2 On the 25<sup>th</sup> September, eight days after the implementation of the new default limit Agilytis published their first report analysing the change in speeds on 500km of roads in ten Welsh Towns and Cities using data collected from mapping company Tom Tom. Their analysis demonstrated a 2.9mph drop in average speeds, from 22.7mph down to 19.8mph based on data collected from thousands of journeys.

5.4.3 Agilytis have since undertaken a second study, examining data captured three months post implementation of the default limit. The data was collected from the same roads as the initial study to ensure consistency. The analysis identified a slight bounce back in speeds compared to the previous study with average speeds down by 2.4mph compared to the 2.9mph in week following implementation.

5.4.4 The data also highlighted a variation in reduction of average speeds across the area surveyed with the largest reduction in average speed recorded at 3.2mph and the smallest reduction of 1.3mph. Over half (52.9%) of all journeys were driven above the 20mph speed limit, with 9% of all journeys analysed were driven above the enforcement threshold speed of 26mph.



5.4.5 The WG have commissioned their own monitoring of speeds at a small number of sites within each LA with monitoring being undertaken at five sites within RCT. The result of this monitoring is displayed in the table below:

Location	Week	Pre 20mph default speed limit (85%ile)	Post 20mph default speed limit (85%ile)
East Rd, Tylorstown	1	35	33
East Rd, Tylorstown	2	34.6	33
Penrhys Road, Tylorstown	1	32.2	31
Penrhys Road, Tylorstown	2	31.4	31
Brynheulog Terrace, Tylorstown	1	32.8	34
Brynheulog Terrace, Tylorstown	2	32.6	33
Llewellyn Street, Pontygwaith	1	28.5	28
Llewellyn Street, Pontygwaith	2	28.4	28
A4233 Pleasant View, Tylorstown	1	29.2	28
A4233 Pleasant View, Tylorstown	2	29	28

*Table 2: Speed monitoring data collected by WG pre and post implementation of 20mph default limit.*

5.4.6 Unfortunately it is too early to examine and evaluate the impact that the default 20mph speed limit has had on collision and personal injury rates across Wales and RCT. However, research analysed by the Global Road Safety Facility suggests that even a 3mph drop in average speeds would lead to a reduction of 32% killed and 25% seriously injured on our roads. Further analysis by WG and RCT officers will be undertaken once sufficient data is made available.

## **5.5. Analysis of journey times**

5.5.1 Pre implementation of the default speed limit, the WG were predicting through their research that 'most journeys will be around one minute longer'. Unfortunately, testing this hypothesis and assessing in real time the impact that the default speed limit has had on journey times across RCT's Road Network is not feasible at this point in time. Whilst WG will be reviewing the wider impact on journey times across Wales utilising the independent services of companies such as Agilysis and Tom Tom, RCT officers will examine local journey times

by utilising telemetry provided by bus operators travelling along key routes. However, officers are mindful that traffic patterns across RCT are currently distorted by extraordinary factors beyond the control of the Council and the time is simply not right to commence such analysis. For example, the rail network across RCT has been severely disrupted by the ongoing TfW sponsored works to electrify key valley lines, with services having been suspended on some routes since the 20mph default limit was introduced. As a result, many former rail users have now reverted to using personal cars to complete their journeys which has led to an increase in congestion along key routes which will have undoubtedly impacted journey times for all road users.

5.5.2 There is anecdotal evidence that suggests bus operators have been affected by the implementation of 20mph limits within RCT and across Wales, with operators reporting that services would need to be reviewed and timetabling adjusted to accommodate for any delays to services. Bus operators running services within RCT are expected to submit revised timetables for 2024/25 services during February 2024 but are yet to engage formally with officers with regard to any issues with 20mph limits.

5.5.3 The Deputy Minister for Climate change addressed the suggestion that delays to buses had led to services being cut, in the Senedd on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Mr Waters commented that "...bus companies had all the information about changes to speed limits available to them to adequately plan for the introduction of the 20mph" and "some bus operators like Cardiff Bus changed their timetables before the new speed limit came in" whereas "Arriva and First Cymru did not" and others such as "Stagecoach decided not to make changes because they did not anticipate that the changes would impact significantly on journey times". Mr Waters also stated that there are many other factors affecting bus services across Wales at present and therefore we must remain mindful of the impact those issues are also having.

5.5.4 In response the WG have asked bus companies to submit their journey time data so that it can be reviewed.

## **5.6 Future review of speed limits in RCT**

5.6.1 The submission of a petition to the WG at the end of 2023 with close to 500,000 signatures has caused widespread debate over the benefits and disbenefits of the scheme. The petition calling for the 20mph law to be rescinded and 30mph limits reinstated also appears to have been the catalyst for members of the public to contact the Council requesting 20mph limits across the RCT be reviewed.

- 5.6.2 This ongoing debate, has led the Deputy Minister for Climate Change to write to all LA's on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024, confirming his appointment of a small specialist review team that are tasked with providing an independent challenge to how the 20mph default limit has been implemented and how LA's have applied and interpreted the Exception guidance outlined in section 3.8 above.
- 5.6.3 Preparatory meetings have already been held with LA's to gain an insight as to how each LA applied the Exception guidance and the resultant impact on the highway network. For example, there is a significant variation in number of exceptions applied by LA's across Wales, with some retaining very few 30mph limits, whereas RCT retained 84 30mph exceptions.
- 5.6.4 The review team will upon conclusion of their investigation prepare a final report, accompanied by a draft updated guidance on setting speed limits in settlements affected by 20mph default speed limit and exceptions. It is intended that the updated draft guidance will assist LA's with reviewing 20mph and 30mph speed limits where there is concern, either on the part of the LA or Community that the current limit is either too high or too low.
- 5.6.5 RCT currently has a list of five roads where officers consider there may be sufficient justification to warrant further review. As communities continue to react to the recent changes, it is anticipated that calls to review additional routes may increase as residents and community leaders request limits to revert back to 30mph and conversely exceptions sites revert to 20mph.
- 5.6.6 It is important to note however, that unless there is a clear and obvious error associated with an existing speed limit that is considered detrimental to the safety of highway users, it is proposed that no widespread review of 20mph/30mph speed limits will take place in RCT until after the draft updated guidance on setting speed limits is published by the WG appointed review team during summer 2024.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Screening Assessment has been completed by the WG in respect to the legislative change.

## **7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no Welsh language implications associated with this report.

## 8. **CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Consultation was undertaken by the Council in pursuit of its duty as Highway Authority and in accordance with the requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 8.2 Should the publication of the updated draft guidance on setting speed limits and exceptions by the WG appointed review team cause RCT to propose further changes to current speed limits, then officers would be obliged by the requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 to consult and give Public Notice.

## 9. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 9.1 There are significant financial implications associated with the implementation of this 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.
- 9.2 The implementation of this initiative across RCT has been fully funded by WG Capital Grant. The table below summarises total spend by year. Note a further funding bid is currently being prepared by officers seeking additional funding in 2024/25 in order to complete any outstanding works and begin preparations for any formal review of routes that may be required subject to the publishing of the updated draft guidance on setting speed limits and exceptions during the summer of 2024.

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Grant allocation (£)</b>
2021/22	53,500
2022/23	1,130,000
2023/24	2,934,568 (projected)
2024/25	TBC

*Table 3 – RCT's WG Road Safety Capital Grant allocation by year (realised and projected)*

- 9.3 During the implantation phase of this initiative, the WG suspended the Road Safety Capital Grant application process to enable LA's to concentrate on the delivery of the Default 20mph speed limits. With works now substantially complete and the scheme operational, WG have invited LA's to bid for Road Safety Capital funding once again in 2024/25. Officers are currently preparing bid submissions.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 10.1 Whilst Welsh Ministers have utilised existing powers to change primary legislation to introduce a default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads in Wales, it was 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.
- 10.2 The WG had identified various Legislation, Regulations, Guidance and Policy documents that needed to be revised prior to the implementation of the default limit on restricted roads.

## **11 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 The legislation supports the objectives set out in <sup>5</sup>Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021, which prioritises walking and Cycling above all other 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.
- 11.3 Many of the anticipated benefits of introducing a 20mph default speed limit 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.

## **12 CONCLUSIONS**

- 12.1 The RCT Traffic Services Team continues to complete the delivery of this WG initiative in accordance with WG legislation and technical guidance.
- 12.2 Upon publication of the draft updated guidance on setting speed limits and exception criteria, Officers will carefully consider any amendments and what impact it may have on RCT's road network. Officers will work with all stakeholders to ensure any road that meets the threshold for review, will then be subjected to a review in a timely manner.

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<sup>5</sup> [Llwybr Newydd A New Wales Transport Strategy 2021: full strategy \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/llwybr-newydd-a-new-wales-transport-strategy-2021)

- 12.3 Officers will continue to assist TfW and other agencies in respect to monitoring the impact of the scheme, ensuring the requirements of the TfW monitoring framework are upheld.
- 12.4 Officers will continue to work in partnership with the Police and Gosafe to promote operation Ugain and ensure adequate roadside engagement and enforcement of the default 20mph speed limit is undertaken to ensure greater compliance by drivers.