

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

RESTRICTED ROADS (20 MPH SPEED LIMIT) (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM THE FACULTY OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN SCOTLAND

About the Faculty of Public Health

The Faculty of Public Health (FPH) is a membership organisation for nearly 4,000 public health professionals across the UK and around the world, including several hundred in Scotland. We are also a registered charity.

Our role is to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities and national populations. This includes a role in campaigning for healthy approaches to transport and physical activity in line with our Call to Action to improve the health of Scotland '[Healthy Lives, Fairer Futures](#)'.

Summary Position

The Faculty of Public Health in Scotland supports the Restricted Roads (20 Mph Speed Limit) (Scotland) Bill as proposed.

Evidence shows that reducing the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph will be likely to reduce the speed of traffic, and the number and severity of traffic casualties in Scotland. Furthermore, streets that feel safe are more likely to encourage more people to walk and cycle.

We believe the overall effect of such a bill, when taken in conjunction with other measures into a healthy approach to transport policy, will improve the public's health through a preventative approach.

This approach is well accepted by the public and aligns with national policy, public health priorities and international evidence.

Evidence Base for 20mph limits

There is strong evidence that 20mph limits have had a positive impact on public health where they have been introduced.

There is consistent and convincing published research that shows 20mph speed limits reduce collisions, injuries, traffic speed and volume, all important public health concerns in Scotland. [1] Improvements in these areas would directly support the recently published Public Health Priorities for Scotland. Children are disproportionately affected by road traffic in urban areas and 20mph as part of a wider package of measures will positively impact the health of the early years.

Studies have demonstrated that a lower speed limit would be cost-effective in the long-run with reduced costs from air pollution, road traffic casualties and other health impacts. [2] [3]

The Glasgow Centre for Population Health estimate between 145 and 755 fewer casualties per year and an annual saving of between £7.8m and £39.9m. [4]

National vs. Local

We recognise the good work of Councils in introducing local policies but feel that this Bill is an ideal opportunity to take a national stance on this issue as we try to redefine our relationship with our cars, our communities and our carbon use.

Relying on local approaches risks a continued piecemeal approach. Deprived communities and younger people suffer disproportionately from road traffic accidents, yet are least able to speak up for their needs. Allowing each local Council to pick and choose the areas that implement 20mph limits or zones risks widening health inequalities.

As with all public health problems the impact of a 20mph limit would feed into a complex system and will not be a silver bullet on its own. The recent Department for Transport (DfT) commissioned report on 20mph limits and zones highlighted the importance of creating a culture of slower and more considered driving in the UK rather than relying on 20mph signage alone. The challenge of changing driving culture while relying on local policies was also highlighted. [5]

We would also highlight the need for improved commitment to active travel, healthy urban design and integrated public transport. Setting a national 20mph limit can only be one element of this whole system approach.

The call for evidence asked for input regarding an **awareness campaign** and the need for **additional enforcement**. The Faculty of Public Health would support both of these measures if resources were available. Evidence shows that efforts to reduce health inequalities works best where there are structural changes in the environment, [6] enforcing limits will ensure these changes make the greatest possible contribution to improving our road environment for active travel.

Resources should be made available to local councils to support the transition and a reasonable time frame set for implementation.

References

[1] Jo Cairns, Jon Warren, Kayleigh Garthwaite, Graeme Greig, Clare Bamba; Go slow: an umbrella review of the effects of 20 mph zones and limits on health and health inequalities, *Journal of Public Health*, Volume 37, Issue 3, 1 September 2015, Pages 515–520.

[2] Jones SJ, Brunt H Twenty miles per hour speed limits: a sustainable solution to public health problems in Wales, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 2017;71:699-706.

[3] Pilkington P, Bornioli A, Bray I, Bird E. The Bristol Twenty Miles Per Hour Limit Evaluation (BRITE) Study, Bristol: University of the West of England, 2018.

[4] The potential impact of a 20mph speed limit on urban roads in Scotland, Whyte, Glasgow Centre for Population Health, September 2018

[5] Atkins, AECOM, and Mike Maher (UCL) 20mph Research Study. Department for Transport (DfT), November 2018.

[6] Health Inequalities Policy Review for the Scottish Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities, NHS Health Scotland, June 2013