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Dear

I read with interest your letter and written submission of 30<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to the Convener of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. While I agree that this bill will save lives and protect our most vulnerable road users I wanted to address a number of points raised in the written submission.

I agree – as outlined in paragraph 8 – that the relationship between speed and injury is clear. Lower speed means fewer accidents and when accidents do occur they are less severe. The majority of research suggests that lower speed limits have at worst no effect on air pollution and at best reduce air pollution. Research also suggests that 20mph limits encourage active travel. 20mph limits also decrease wear and tear on roads – resulting in a reduction in road repair and maintenance cost. I understand your concern that 20mph speed limits will undermine speeds across the whole roads network, but the research that has been undertaken on this topic suggests that this concern is unfounded. The Atkins report, published by the DfT, found that 20mph limits actually reduced speed on neighbouring 30 and 40mph roads. Furthermore, when 20mph limits were extended to a wider area, speeds on those roads already subject to 20mph limits fell further.

Paragraph 9 is correct that the majority of the financial burden would be placed on Local Authorities with some costs falling directly on the Scottish Government. However, any increased costs for the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service are likely to be offset by an increase in revenue generated from fixed penalties and court fines. This revenue is now retained in Scotland following on from Smith Commission reforms.

In relation to paragraph 10 the financial memorandum does go beyond expenditure on signage. Paragraphs 30-42 cover signage from a local authority standpoint while 43 and 44 cover monitoring costs for local authorities. The totals estimated in paragraph 45 align broadly with the costs estimated by the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation Scotland. The FM estimates are partly based on costs estimated by Angus Council and include the need for buffer zones where speed limits fall from 60/40mph down to 20mph. I feel, as does NGBU and SCOTS that the content of the financial memorandum is robust and accurately costed. Furthermore, as you will be aware it is within the gift of Scottish Ministers to change the signage regulations (the TSRGD). Certain changes to the TSRGD, such as removing the need for 30mph repeater signs to be installed – or indeed for existing 20mph repeaters to be taken down – could see the cost of the Bill reduced dramatically. I would welcome further clarity from the Scottish Government on what it would intend to do in terms of TSRGD should the Bill be passed. I appreciate the work done by Transport Scotland to estimate

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the likely cost of adapting signage on the trunk road network in consequence of the Bill. Officials during your evidence session estimated that this would cost Transport Scotland £1-2m. Including this figure still leaves the estimated total cost much lower than the expected savings to the public purse.

The financial memorandum also addresses the myth that 20mph speed limits will increase costs for drivers or businesses, highlighting that journey times are likely to see no significant increase. I am happy to provide your office and the REC committee with further research evidence on this if required.

I agree with your assertion in paragraph 11 of your submission that 20mph speed limits are good idea; however, I disagree that primary legislation is not required. Some council areas – such as Falkirk Council – have virtually no full-time 20mph speed limits. Clearly the current approach is failing and providing a patchwork, post-code lottery of road safety. A number of Local Authorities have confirmed that they have put further 20mph limits on hold pending a decision on the Bill, on the basis that it would make delivery of these limits much more cost-effective.

Again, I acknowledge, as pointed out in paragraph 12, that Transport Scotland's Road Safety Framework encourages 20mph speed limits, however, as highlighted above it has not been followed through by many local authorities.

I agree with the assertion in paragraph 13 that local authorities are best placed to decide what happens in their areas. My bill will still allow for local authorities to raise or lower speed limits as they see fit. The bill would simply be changing the default speed from 30mph to 20mph.

As outlined in paragraph 14 the input of Police Scotland is vital and I have been working with them throughout this process. I recently commissioned work by Adrian Davis, Professor of Transport and Health for Edinburgh Napier University and with the Scottish Institute of Police Research (SIPR). Professor Davis highlighted that Police Scotland could ensure better compliance with 20mph through the use of evidence-led policing, social media and front-loaded enforcement. Davis, and the officers he interviewed, agree that enforcement means all other options have failed. Education is first and foremost in ensuring compliance with speed limits. The Davis report is appended to this letter and I would welcome your comments on the findings.

Paragraph 15 mentions a 'blanket approach' of 20mph speed limits. My bill does not call for a 'blanket approach' I am only proposing changing restricted roads and even then, the bill would allow for local authorities to set their own speed limits where they see fit. The Restricted Roads Bill no more creates a 'blanket' 20mph speed limit than our current approach creates a 'blanket' 30mph speed limit in built-up areas. . Rather, the Bill is about flipping the existing "default" limit to 20, while retaining local authorities' existing powers to make exceptions, by order, where local circumstances make that appropriate. This is done on the basis that we should be aiming for a situation where 20 mph limits apply on the large majority of roads in built-up areas, while leaving a minority (perhaps 10 or 20 per cent) as higher-speed through-routes – as agreed by Transport Scotland.

Paragraph 16 discusses the multiple avenues of speed management. Speed management is not achieved solely through speed-limit changes and I am not trying to suggest it would be. A 20mph limit would need to be accompanied by an education campaign and proper enforcement. Furthermore, options like having public buses operate as 'pace vehicles' can help reduce speed. Cultural changes take time, but over time new drivers who had learned to drive at a reduced speed would gradually Become the majority of motorists and in the build up to then would act as 'pace

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vehicles’.

Paragraph 17 discusses driver confusion and the role of area-wide speed limits. Lowering speed limits across the board would reduce confusion amongst drivers and encourage slower speeds, as outlined in the Atkins DfT report (see pages 10 and 38 of the report). Furthermore, evidence suggests that while many drivers may exceed 20mph they do still drive more slowly than they would on a 30mph road. As I’m sure you are aware, a drop in average speeds of just 1mph leads to a 6% decrease in accidents.

The Atkins DfT report you mention in paragraph 18 has finally been released. While I welcome this report, it should be seen in relation to other reports from across the UK – such as the BRITE report in Bristol. It is clear from the DfT report that the wider the 20mph speed limit area the greater speed reduction and greater the casualty reduction. The report also highlighted the incredibly high levels of public support for 20mph. I would be delighted to share my analysis of the report further.

I acknowledge the importance of the questions identified in paragraph 20. While this bill is relatively simple in how it changes the law, there are significant issues to consider about its practical application. This is why I formed an implementation group consisting of SCOTS, Police Scotland, COSLA, and Transport Scotland to work through these details. The four issues raised in paragraph 20 have been, I feel, already been addressed by SCOTS and my implementation group.

SCOTS stated in their own evidence session and in a letter submitted afterwards that while there is not a complete list of every Scottish restricted road this sort of work is well within their abilities and roughly half of the Local Authorities surveyed either had the information already or were working towards it.

The Financial Memorandum has estimated the difference in costings for a default 20mph speed limit and the current roll out. You may also be aware from its oral evidence that Edinburgh Council felt that it would have been £1.5m cheaper for them to roll out 20mph had this bill been in place. As highlighted above a number of local authorities are holding back on implementing 20mph limits as this bill would make the roll-out of 20 mph limits a much more cost-effective option for them.

Finally, SCOTS have been working hard to ascertain why more Local Authorities have not been rolling out 20mph speed limits. The top three responses were 1) lack of resources 2) awaiting 20mph bill and 3) low priority/low demand. Clearly a system that makes the roll out cheaper for local authorities would be welcome. The majority of Local Authorities who responded to my consultation, the REC consultation and the Finance committee consultation all supported default 20mph speed limits. A majority of rural local authorities who have responded to the consultation support a national default.

I welcome the Scottish Government’s position on encouraging the implementation of 20mph speed limits as the norm in 20mph limits. However, it is clear that the current system is failing to deliver this in a consistent and cost-effective way. I was happy to join the REC committee to discuss my bill and I am happy to share any further information I can with the Scottish Government.

Please do let me know if you would like me, or my office, to expand on any of the points raised above. I look forward to engaging further with you and our stakeholders on this issue.

Sincerely,

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