

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM ROYAL BLIND AND SCOTTISH WAR BLINDED

Royal Blind and Scottish War Blind supports the aims of this Bill which would have a positive impact on vision impaired people. A national restriction on traffic speed from 30 mph to 20 mph on restricted roads would improve safety and accessibility for people with vision impairment on more streets and roads in Scotland.

Royal Blind and Scottish War Blinded works with people living with sight loss so that they have the skills to live independently and can get out and about in their communities. People with vision impairment have to use a range of skills and strategies before deciding when it is safe to cross a road, including finding kerbs and listening to traffic to judge its speed and volume. Fast moving traffic can make this more difficult and can also be intimidating for people with vision impairment. We support limiting the speed limit to 20 miles per hour on restricted roads as this had the potential to give people with sight loss more confidence to use streets and cross roads, and therefore better access to their communities.

For those vision impaired people who have limited vision, the proposal would mean they have more time to scan and see oncoming traffic. For those with very limited or no sight, they have to rely on their hearing, which is becoming more difficult as engines are becoming quieter. Again, this proposal would allow more time for them to hear approaching traffic. It would also give motorists more time to be aware of vision impaired people seeking to cross a road, or while they are crossing, and adjust their speed appropriately. Below 20mph, road users are better able to see hazards, signs of a person being vision impaired such as a guide dog, white stick, or cane, and react in time to avoid an accident. Although this proposal seeks to reduce accidents, when they occur we believe reduced speed limits would limit the severity of injury suffered by victims of road accidents.

We also welcome this proposal as it complements other measures which help shift the policy focus in regard to accessibility of public spaces to initiatives which benefit pedestrians. These include the increasing recognition of the challenges of shared spaces for pedestrians with sight loss and action to address street clutter, including the decision by Edinburgh City Council to ban 'A' boards from streets in the city. While this submission focusses on the impact of the proposal for people with vision impairment, we are conscious that everyone benefits from a more pleasant, peaceful and safer living environment.

We believe it would benefit the impact of the legislation for its introduction to be accompanied by a public information campaign. While 20 mile per hour limits have been in place in many communities for a considerable time, we believe it will be important to raise awareness of the rationale for this speed limit becoming the default, although we also recognise local authorities will still be able to designate 30mph limits on certain roads in consultation with communities, and understand the rationale for that. Still too many drivers do not adhere to speed limits and drive at

speeds in excess of the specified limits on roads, and the introduction of this proposal would benefit from an accompanying campaign highlighting the dangers of speeding, including to pedestrians with vision impairment.