

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM COSLA

Introduction

1. This response from COSLA is in regard to the Restricted Road (20mph Speed Limits) (Scotland) Bill introduced by Mark Ruskell MSP on 21 September 2018.
2. The purpose of the response is to provide COSLA's views to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee of the Scottish Parliament on the Bill.

Background

3. COSLA provided a written response to the original consultation carried out by Mark Ruskell MSP on 22 September 2017.
4. Several reports were taken to COSLA's Environment and Economy Board in 2018 to discuss COSLA's position in relation to the Bill. Mark Ruskell MSP attended the June 2018 board where he provided a presentation and participated in a discussion with the members in attendance.
5. COSLA is currently working with Mark Ruskell MSP, Transport Scotland, The Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) and Police Scotland to discuss some of the issues that are raised in this response. COSLA will continue to work with Mark Ruskell MSP and other partners on this matter in a collaborative manor.

COSLA's Current Position

6. Following the attendance of Mark Ruskell MSP at the June 2018 Environment and Economy Board and after further discussion at the September Board, members agreed the following position to reflect the range of views expressed:

"In general terms it seems sensible for COSLA to set out an initially positive position towards the proposed Bill, recognising that much detail must be established before we can offer more concrete support. We recognise what Mark Ruskell is attempting to achieve and the constructive aims of the legislation. However, it is important that any proposal to change the speed limit to 20mph is resourced and is practical for Local Government to deliver. We understand the challenge of implementing Traffic Regulation Orders, and if the proposed Bill leads to an improvement or simplification in the process for Local Authorities there could be much to support in addition to its general principles. That said, we also should not underestimate that this will require a change in culture for many drivers and will, as a result, need a considerable and lengthy public information campaign."

7. The September 2018 Environment and Economy Board was held a week before the Bill was introduced. Although the detail of the Bill was unknown to members during the meeting, the discussion that was held between COSLA Environment and Economy Spokesperson, Cllr Steven Heddle, and Mark Ruskell MSP, and the presentation given by Mark Ruskell MSP to the Board gave the members a broad understanding of what was going to be in the Bill.

8. COSLA wishes to emphasise the concerns of members in relation to any additional costs being placed upon Local Authorities, especially at a time when local services are under considerable financial pressure.
9. COSLA also has concerns over the robustness of the Financial Memorandum that accompanies the Bill. These concerns are centred on the fact that the Local Authorities that have been used to construct the costs are further ahead in the process of considering restricting speed limits to 20mph than others, and this may underestimate the total cost for all Local Authorities across Scotland. The cost of the assessments that Local Authorities would have to conduct to implement the Bill have also not been factored into the Financial Memorandum, nor any additional costs for Traffic Restriction Orders (TRO) that would have to be put in place for any roads that will remain at 30mph.
10. COSLA has concerns over the timetable for implementation should the Bill become law. As drafted, the Bill's provisions will come into force within 18 months of Royal Assent. This will put additional pressure upon Local Authorities, which means COSLA feels it is essential for a longer lead in time, to allow Local Authorities, Transport Scotland and Police Scotland to work together to enable a smooth transition for all parties, including motorists. It is also essential that over this period of implementation, a public information campaign is carried out to prepare road users for the change in speed limit.

Conclusions

11. COSLA broadly supports the aspirations of the Bill and we acknowledge the work that has been undertaken by Mark Ruskell MSP; however, COSLA reserves the right to amend its current positions as the Bill progresses. This is due to a wide range of views being expressed by the membership around the costs and the practicalities of implementing this change of law, which so far have not been resolved. We firmly believe that more work on reconciling the practical and financial challenges is necessary to allow for the concerns of Local Government to be addressed. COSLA will continue to work collaboratively with partners such as SCOTS and Transport Scotland and we are happy to support the work of the Committee in scrutinising this important piece of legislation.