

Total 20 (30kph) – Good for UK, good for EU!

20's Plenty



Where People Live

Briefing sheet on how the "Total 20" policy used by UK towns should be replicated throughout Europe.

Reducing vehicles speeds in urban and residential areas to around 30kph or less is a key strategy for reducing road casualties, increasing modal shift to walking and cycling as well as reducing noise and emissions.

This may be implemented with physical calming or signage alone. However, if this is done with expensive physical calming it inevitably results in patchy and isolated implementations because of the cost or time to design and implement. This isolation reinforces faster speeds on the rest of the urban and residential network and legitimises speeds above 30kph which are excessive for the mix of road users in such areas.

In the UK many towns have adopted a "Total 20" approach which sets 20mph (32kph) as the default mandatory speed limit for all residential roads (with certain exceptions) without the cost or complexity of physical calming. All that is required are "repeater signs" at frequent intervals. This approach sets a new "societal norm" for vehicle speeds where people live, work, shop, play and go to school. Results have been significant. The first town where this was deployed (Portsmouth) reduced its casualties on such roads by 22%. This has been followed by wide area implementations in Oxford, Bristol, Warrington, Brighton, Liverpool, Newcastle, Wigan, Cambridge, Wirral, Sheffield, Middlesbrough, Darlington and London Boroughs of Islington, Camden, Hackney, Southwark and Waltham Forest. Lancashire County Council are rolling this out to every residential road in the county. Now some 8m people live in local authorities with a "Total 20" policy. Even more are currently considering such a development which is supported by the UK Department for Transport.¹

Of course such a policy will include many roads which already have a low speed. On these there will be little change in actual speed. However, in Portsmouth, faster roads (previously > 40kph) were found to have reduced by some 11kph. Across the whole town the average reduction was 2kph. Whilst this is less than using physical calming the area covered is 50 times greater (for the same cost) than if physical calming is used². Hence on the basis of roads covered and speed reduced 30kph area-wide limits are some 6.5 times more effective for the same costs as physically calmed streets.

In other towns implementing wide-area 30kph limits similar results have been found. There are several key factors which we believe have influenced this success :-

- 1) Total 20 gives most drivers a benefit of a 30kph on their home street. This increases the "ownership" and benefit from the wide-area limit so increasing compliance
- 2) A consistent message is communicated with regard to the appropriate speed for residential and urban roads. "20's Plenty Where People Live".
- 3) In the UK, such wide-area limits are subject to the local democratic process, This also increases understanding and "ownership" and a "collective, community commitment" to road danger reduction.

We believe that these successes are dependent upon the fact that Total 20 is far closer to "social engineering" than "traffic engineering", and acts as a catalyst for behaviour change. Its effect can therefore go beyond a simple reduction in vehicles speeds and create a debate and environment for behaviour change through community benefit and pressure.

So if this is appropriate and successful in UK, can it be equally successful for towns and cities across Europe and even extended beyond Europe.

¹ Speed Limit Circular 01/2006 – Appendix C.

² 20mph limit with physical calming costs £60,000 per km, with only signage costs £1,100 per km.

Some EU countries, have exemplary records on creating cities where cyclists and pedestrians can co-exist with motor vehicles in safety equity to create vibrant towns with active travel at the core of its transport policies. Often these do involve extensive physical calming and/or separate infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. No-one is suggesting that such communities take out their physical calming measures.

However, many communities do not have any such measures and their towns and villages are dominated by motorised traffic with low levels of walking and cycling and high VRU casualties. A 30kph speed limit for all residential and urban roads, with exceptions where appropriate, could transform those communities and provide a foundation for their walking and cycling policies.

This is particularly the case for those countries that do not have a record of lower speed limits. Such an intervention is relatively cheap as it does not employ physical calming. This is especially important in today's economic climate. Reducing maximum speeds to 30kph also reduces noise and emissions by removing all 30-50kph acceleration and creating opportunities for reduction by modal shift. This would play an important role in reducing NO₂ and PM 2.5 emissions to required levels.

Active travel levels also have a large effect on society health. In England alone the costs of physical inactivity are calculated at some €10,000,000,000 per annum. Traffic speeds are seen as the major deterrent to walking and cycling. Road casualties are also a considerable drain on economies which in turn constrains economic growth. And in an age when oil is becoming a "difficult" commodity, an economy that empathises and protects active travel will reduce its exposure to increasing oil prices.

However, such interventions do benefit from clear leadership and communication of 30kph limits being "best practice" for residential and urban roads. We believe that the EU Parliament can play a very important role in this matter by demanding that all urban and residential speed limits should be set at 30kph or lower unless a clear, conscious and culpable decision had been made by the traffic authority concerned.

The advocacy of a 30kph speed limit for all residential and urban roads would be a significant contribution to making EU streets safer and increasing the quality of life for its citizens. It would communicate a clear and unequivocal message that the protection of life and equality of transport opportunity are the foundations on which we build our transport policies. It would provide world leadership which if adopted in developing countries could make the largest single contribution to road casualty reduction in the UN Decade of Road Safety.

20's Plenty for Us are the UK's national voluntary organisation that supports communities wishing for lower speeds on their roads. It campaigns for 20mph as the default speed limit for residential roads to be implemented across a complete local authority. It has a network of 131 local campaign organisations in the UK and is seen as a major influencer in local authorities adopting this important initiative.

The UK Sustainable Development Commission recently said of 20's Plenty for Us :-

Through the provision of information, advice and best practice 20's Plenty for Us helps communities to establish democratic initiatives which reinforce the community's sense of ownership of the solution, and therefore their likely compliance with the limits. The aim is for drivers to consider and decide upon their compliance with a decision made by their community, rather than simply complying with a sign. This high level of community interest and campaigning around the issue can also be effective in overcoming traditional stumbling blocks such as the highways department, by providing a political mandate for the works.

Feedback We welcome your response on this press release. We provide more information on our site www.20splentyforus.org.uk and can provide advice on technical issues.

20's Plenty For Us campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in residential streets without physical calming.

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