

# Transitioning to 20mph as a national urban limit

A 20's Plenty for Us Briefing March 2015

[www.20splentyforus.org.uk/Briefings/national20.pdf](http://www.20splentyforus.org.uk/Briefings/national20.pdf)

Presentation made by Rod King MBE  
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## 20's Plenty for Us

...making your place a better place to be

What interesting perspectives we have had today!

From local authorities managing our roads and urban realm.

From representatives of those who cycle and walk, from a transport guru, from those responsible for or concerned with public health and also from a disability and equality point of view.

But all of these are perspectives of the idea of lower speeds, and the analysis of the findings. And whilst all of these do add up to a convincing case for adopting a default 20mph limit, we must remember that, in the end, the debate comes down to our own personal perspective of the interaction of motor vehicles, the public spaces between buildings, that we call streets, and the people within them.

We have a choice to view and set our opinions either from the confines of a warm, protected, comfortable seat behind a steering wheel in a motor vehicle or from the street. And that is where the perspectives are so different. Because whilst 30mph may seem fine from within a car, the perspective of a 4ft tall 8 year old walking on the pavement is entirely different. And what about ?

- The *perspective* of a 70 year old trying to maintain their twice weekly walk to the shops.
- The *perspective* of the cyclist when a differential speed of a 30mph car is 3 times that of one at 20mph.
- The *perspective* of a mother who wants to let her 11 year old find their own way to school but fears for the way that us adults unconsciously, yet routinely and systematically, intimidate with our 30mph (or 44 ft per second) steel boxes.
- The *perspective* of us all when we simply want to walk, stand or sit in our streets.

That is why we can and should transform our perspective as drivers by limiting our speed in urban and village areas. Because 30mph will never create the conditions that all of those people deserve. Yet when we drive at 20 or less we put something back into our community, we see people rather than blurs, we help create the conditions for a thriving community, we make less noise and pollution, we allow and share and become a facilitator rather than a transgressor.

This debate has been developing over the last decade. In fact it is almost 10 years since I first stood in front of an audience and explained how I had visited Warrington's twin town of Hilden in Germany and found that their walking and cycling strategy were built on a town-wide speed limit of 30kmh set in 1991. And with 23% of in town trips by cycle and 20% of trips by public transport then for every 100 people moving in the town they had 25 fewer cars on the road than in Warrington. How could we ever hope to build a better place for us all if we continued to endorse speeds 60% higher than our German neighbours would condone?

The idea that a slower pace makes a better place is one that chimes so well with so many people across the country. We have over 250 local 20's Plenty for Us campaigns. They are levered up by the millions of people in support, and councillors, professionals and residents who have said that 20 is plenty where people live, walk, cycle, work, shop and learn.

Authorities implementing Total 20 (or 20mph across the whole authority with certain roads excepted) is now the becoming the norm for cities. In fact of the 40 largest urban local authorities, the majority have already chosen a phased or progressive Total 20 policy. They include Birmingham,, Manchester, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Bristol, Croydon, Cardiff, Coventry, Wigan, Nottingham, Leicester, Newcastle, Southwark, Lambeth, Sefton, Sheffield, Bolton, Lewisham, Hull, Brighton & Hove. Many of the rest are considering adoption of Total 20. And as well as this tier of largest authorities we have a host of other places such as Warrington, Portsmouth, Calderdale, Islington, Hackney, Oxford, Cambridge, Bath, Bury, St Helen's, Chichester, York, Middlesbrough, Camden, Waltham Forest, Haringey, City of London and the whole of Lancashire already doing Total 20. And more are joining them every year.

20mph on roads people use for local trips is the foundation on which active travel, social inclusion, child mobility, elderly health, air quality, human rights to movement, safety, accessibility, fairness and equality and public health can be built. 20mph is key to traffic reduction, to tackling congestion and to a community's economic and ecological sustainability.

In all the places committed to 20mph Local or County Councillors have looked at the national 30mph limit and rejected it as not fit for purpose for their communities. And its not only local authorities, but national institutions such as NICE, Directors of Public Health, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the EU, DfT and Transport Scotland. All say that 20mph should be the norm for residential streets and those with pedestrians and cyclists. Indeed, across the world places like, Paris, Milan, Munich, Barcelona, are all saying Tempo 30 as they set their urban speed limits to 30kmh. This is an international aspiration that we are responding to in a typical British progressive yet pragmatic manner.

The national 30mph limit has been dumped as no longer appropriate, no longer credible and no longer acceptable to meet the needs of modern Britain.

But whilst the UK government has devolved the setting of national speed limits to Scottish and Welsh politicians it refuses to take that responsibility in England and hides behind the "fig-leaf" of "localism" when it comes to revising the English national urban speed limit.

And that is why we are calling on the next government to revise the national urban limit for restricted roads and to put into place a planned transition that makes sense to local authorities, communities, police and drivers. Our call is that for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the default urban limit will be 20 by 2020.

However, our signage and regulations are rooted in the 1990's when 30mph was the 55 year old norm and anything other than that was an exception which needed special signage.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with a 30mph limit where the right conditions exist to appropriately share the road with vulnerable road users. And that may be through separated facilities and adequate crossings and junction treatments. But that needs to be a considered and rational decision rather than an assumption made 80 years ago based on street lighting and better than having no urban limit.

So how can this transition to 20 be accomplished? How can it be done to multiply the economic, social and health benefits from Total 20. Well from all our experience working with the local authorities implementing 20mph limits we propose the following timetable.

2015/16

1. DfT to immediately allow Traffic Authorities, on application, to vary local signage requirements so that the only signage required are :-
  - a. 20mph place signs on entering the authority or community
  - b. Boundary signs where limit changes from 30 to 20
  - c. Repeaters signs only on 30mph roads and above

This will require no legislation changes.

Such authorities can proceed with the adoption of wide-area limits based on lower costs of signage. Many authorities are already of a mind to change limits to 20mph but currently see costs as prohibitive. This will, at a stroke, and together with impending TRO administrative change cut the costs significantly.

2. Governments in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales to announce an intention to revise the national restricted road limit to 20mph by Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2020.

2017

1. DfT to consider the report currently being prepared by Atkins on 20mph limits and how effective they are on a wide range of benefits to communities. This should be the pre-cursor to the actual decision on changing the national limit.
2. DfT to develop plans for the change in national restricted limit to 20mph with automatic de-restriction for current 30mph limit exceptions in current Total 20 authorities.

2018

1. DfT to issue plans to local authorities for the mechanisms to de-restrict certain local roads which will remain at 30mph when national restricted limit changes.
2. Local authorities to start panning changes for change over on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2020.

2019

1. Traffic Authorities implement all necessary signage changes.
2. Central government to start national public engagement plan on changes.

2020

1. 1<sup>st</sup> Jan, 20mph become the speed limit for restricted roads with exceptions where Traffic Authority has set higher limit.
2. Central government to continue national public engagement plan on changes.

Over this time we would see a number of societal changes which will assist this whole process to increase compliance and effectiveness:-

- 20mph limits are increasingly the norm in most places.
- 20mph limits and their benefits will be seen from a national and community perspective.
- Increasing sophistication of enforcement technology will enable cost effective compliance without placing any burden on the police.

Of course, there will be those who "say no". Indeed, the more libertarian lobbyists on transport seem to "say no" to everything struggle to add any positive contributions to the challenges society faces. But these do not represent some "tip of the iceberg" motoring consensus, but merely the ideological focus of groups who would rather "shout no" from the side-lines than engage with those who are in a position of responsibility for the way we manage and use our streets and who represent their communities. As I said, 20's Plenty for Us has hundreds of UK campaigns and there are millions of people (drivers, cyclists and pedestrians) with a like mind to make their place a better place to be. I would encourage all of you to engage with your communities and colleagues on Total 20.

Engage with your prospective and elected MPs on the need to change and the benefits from national adoption.

Engage with the DfT and central government and tell them that the cost of "localised" 20mph limits is excessively high due to 25 year old signage practices and a reluctance to grasp the national nettle of urban speeds.

It is a mark of vibrant and progressive communities that they use the democratic process to move forward. Many places have already done that locally, but its time that we now demand an appropriate national standard across the UK to the way we share and use those public spaces between our houses that we call streets. Its time for us all to say that 20 is plenty where people live, shop, work, learn and walk. Its time to deliver Total 20 by 2020.

I thank you for your time and attention.

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