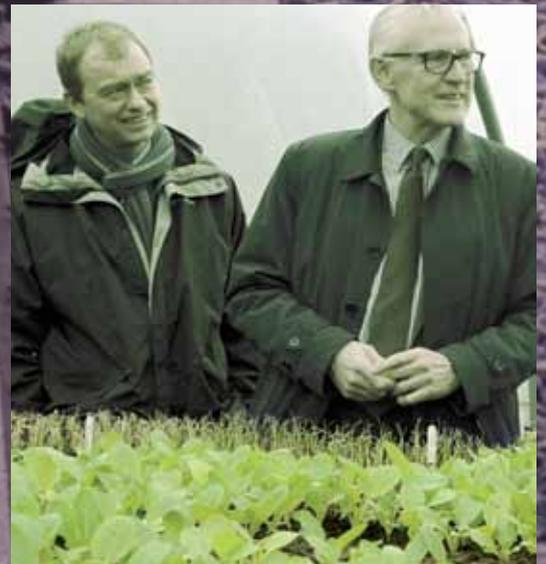


Green Liberal Democrats

challenge

Article on 20's Plenty for Us
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Summer 2015

20s Plenty for us



Rod King makes the case for a national 20mph default urban limit by 2020

If we cannot fairly and sustainably share the streets where we live then how can we ever hope to share our world fairly and sustainably.

Fairness and sustainability are key considerations for the default 20mph limit implementations in local authorities around the country that Liberal-Democratic councillors have been initiating and supporting.

Whilst there is 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.

Perspectives

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, or the perspective of the cyclist when a differential speed of a 30mph car is 3 times that of one at 20mph? What about 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? And what about 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. 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.

Ten years in the making

This debate has been developing over the last decade. I live in Warrington. 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. Since starting in 2007 we have over 260 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.

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

“We need to re-engage the relationship between the person inside the car and the person outside the car.”

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.

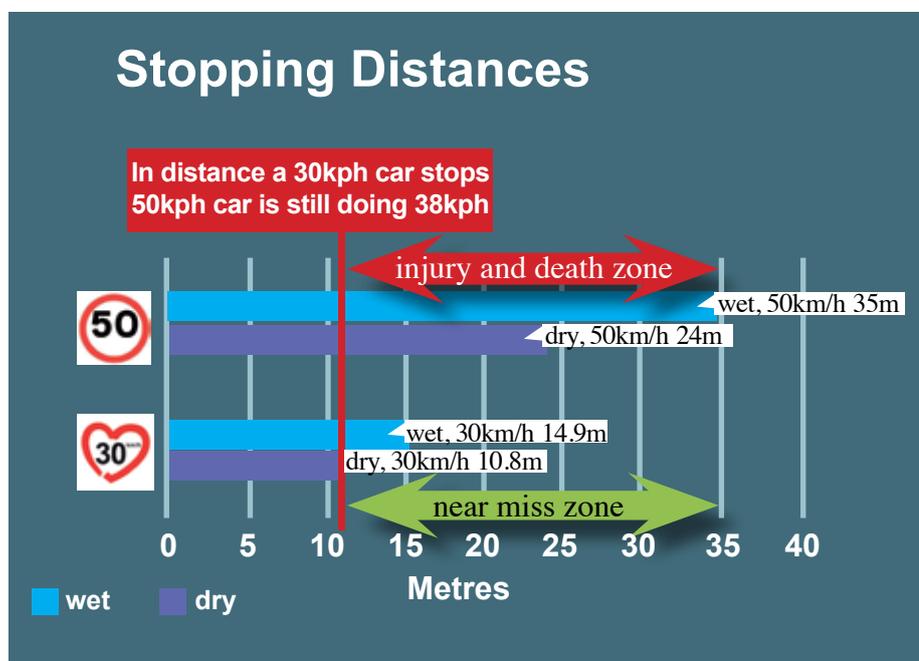
The national 30mph limit has been dumped as no longer appropriate, no longer credible and no longer acceptable to meet the needs of modern Britain.

England out of step

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 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 fifty-five year old norm and anything



Authorities implementing Total 20 (or 20mph across the whole authority with certain roads excepted) is now 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,

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.

A growing consensus

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

other than that was an exception which needed special signage. That is why we are equally calling for an immediate dropping of the need for 20mph repeater signs so that local authorities may choose to only put them on the minority of 30mph roads.

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.

A national campaign

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 elected MPs on the need to change and the benefits from national adoption.

Talk to your local council for them to 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



▲ Warrington ▼

Rod King is the founder of the 20's plenty for us campaign.

Four times as many people who are walking are killed on the roads as are cyclists.

An average motor car travelling at 30 km/h can stop in 10.8 metres. If that same motor car is travelling at 50 km/h and has to brake at the same place, it will still be travelling at 38 km/h when it passes the point at which the car travelling at 30 km/h has stopped.

That gives an idea of how a lower speed has the effect of giving everybody the space and time to take avoiding action. When there is an unfortunate incident where a collision cannot be avoided then the severity of the outcome is much reduced.

www.20splentyforus.org.uk

British Social Attitudes Survey website
www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk

