20mph Limits for Older People and Independent Ageing

A 20’s Plenty for Us Press Release  Nov 2015

http://20splenty.org/independent_age

Older people can stay safer and more connected with a community-wide 20mph speed limit. 20’s Plenty for Us is calling for 20mph limits for a better future for older people to assist them to travel independently for longer.

…making your place a better place to be

Britain’s population is ageing rapidly. By 2030 over a quarter (27%) of us will be 65 years or over. Slower speeds are key to retro-fitting built up areas to be elderly, disability and dementia friendly. At an impact speed of 30mph, the risk of fatality for elderly pedestrians (60+ years) is 47%, (versus 5% for adults). Older people are especially vulnerable due to delayed reactions, slower movements, instability, brittle bones, dementia, visual, hearing and mobility impairments.

The charity Independent Age recently consulted over 4,000 people in compiling their 2030 Vision: Building a better future for older people in the UK. 20mph limits were suggested by 20’s Plenty for Us as a practical way of improving quality of life for all ages. Slower limits reduce danger and avoid 20% of casualties. They also lesson fear of being outside and give those both in and out of vehicles more time to react to hazards.

Older people’s risk factors include a higher prevalence of health problems, worse visual and hearing acuity leading to riskier choices, slower walking and reactions. Their health outcomes are worse because, with brittle bones, it takes longer to heal. Winter is a dangerous time for older people out and about. They walk even more slowly due to fears of slipping. Visibility reduces with darker evenings, mists and fog both for drivers and others.

Many older people are no longer drivers. They walk, cycle, take a bus, train or taxi for health, thrift and ecological reasons. There comes a time in life when car ownership just isn’t appropriate or safe plus running a car is costly on a pension. 20mph limits can help people to get about safely using their legs or public transport. It is:

- Safer – 20% fewer casualties and if hit, 20mph is 10 times more survivable than 30mph for a 60+ year old
- Dementia and ageing friendly – 850,000 people in the UK have dementia: 1 in 14 of over 65’s
- Promotes Activity – most of us don’t exercise enough. Increases in walking and cycling are found with 20mph limits.
- Community building – less lonely – a concern of over a million older people.
- Cost saving – older people, if injured, need more intensive and longer NHS and care service resources to recover. Prevention pays!

A recent on line petition for regular re-testing of older drivers received over 120,000 signatures its first three days.

Rod King MBE, Founder of 20’s Plenty for Us said:-

“Ageing is something that none of us can prevent. For many it will mean a reduction in physical and mental capabilities. The street network should not discriminate against them by endorsing vehicle speeds that are incompatible with those capabilities. With an ageing population and an increasing understanding of the need to comply with the Equality Act 2010, authorities at local and national level must fully take account of the needs of vulnerable road users and set an appropriate 20mph speed limit. Our streets should be accessible by all and not solely the fit and the brave.”

More information is at http://www.20splenty.org/older_people_deserve_20mph_limits

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1 Relationship between speed, risk and fatal injury: pedestrians and car occupants. pg 14. D C Richards TRL for DfT 2010
2 http://www.independentage.org/campaigning/our_campaigns/2030vision/
3 20’s Plenty for Us campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in built up areas without physical calming.
5 20’s Plenty for Us Press Release  Nov 2015

20’s Plenty for Us campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in built up areas without physical calming.

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