

Replies to Scottish Government Rhetoric On 20mph Limits

A 20's Plenty for Us Briefing May 2019

http://www.20splenty.org/we_reply_to_scots_gov

The Scottish Government are questioning a 20mph default limit. Our response is to ask for clarity. Exactly what is at the heart of the matter with 20mph? Evidence, political will, siding with the motoring lobby or a lack of vision?

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Scottish Transport Minister Michael Matheson has issues with a default 20mph¹. We quote him and reply Matheson fears the Bill could divert resources away from existing road safety activity, "*evidenced to be more effective at reducing casualties*". We ask him to please "**provide specific evidence of which road safety interventions are more cost effective at reducing casualties than 20mph limits. How do they meet other goals such as active travel, emission reduction, social cohesion, elderly/child mobility?**"

Matheson said further consideration needs to be given to the "*impact and consequences of a nationwide 20mph limit*". We ask "**what exactly are these still unknown consequences?** Who has the Scottish Government tasked with this impact research? When will they report?" We are at a loss to understand what has been omitted from rigorous analysis and evidence sessions to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee (RECC). A vote will be taken in Parliament in June he's running out of time for extra data analysis!

Matheson said "*Changing a speed limit does not indeed guarantee that actual speeds will change*". Whilst this may be true, many reports and research papers show that in almost all cases actual speeds do change. Perhaps Matheson means drivers may not obey the limit. We ask "**Why are 20mph limit compliance issues worse than 30mph limit compliance issues**— if some drivers will speed whatever the limit?". After all, fewer people will be injured. And in car speed limiters will be fitted to all new cars by 2022 which will revolutionise compliance.

Matheson said "*the guidance on setting all speed limits is clear that they should be reasonable and consistent if they are to be credible to road users and obeyed as a result.*" We say "**Surveys show 70% support 20mph limit on residential streets. 30mph is no longer credible.**" **It is the current system which is inconsistent.** Current guidance is inappropriate because it puts 20mph as an exception in the context of a national 30 limit rather than the other way round.

Matheson said "*Councils were best-placed to decide what roads should have a 20mph limit*"². We agree. "**The Safer Streets Bill allows Councils local discretion to decide where to set 30mph - so what's the problem?**"

Matheson said "*I must stress that, whilst I support active travel and any measures which improve people's physical and mental health and air quality, I am not able to confirm that this will happen as a result of the sign-only speed limits proposed in the Bill.*" We ask "**Why is Matheson so pessimistic, given that credible experts on public health firmly predict massive benefits based on proven results elsewhere?**" **If there are issues then identify them and sort them.**

Our hypothetical reasons about why Matheson isn't openly supporting default 20mph could be any of:

- Is waiting for the RECC report expected in early June 2019
- Hasn't studied the evidence yet, especially on it saving money in year 1. For £20-22M it's highly cost effective!
- Not invented here – it's a Scottish Greens idea (not Scottish National Party), so can't be agreed too easily.
- Lacks the political will to make better the places where people are even when 20mph is popular with 70%.
- Doesn't have a vision of 20mph for all communities in Scotland.
- Sees his role as building roads rather than accessibility for all.
- Sides with the motoring lobby opposing 20mph and follows Westminster DfT thinking too much.

20's Plenty for Us call on the Scottish Government to do the right thing, as Wales have done, by setting default 20mph limits for all built up areas, with exceptions decided by Local Authorities. It's time for change. It's time for 20mph.

¹ <https://road.cc/content/news/260629-scottish-government-tells-campaigners-it-wont-back-default-20mph-speed-limit>

² Local Transport Today 29 May 2019. Matheson leaves door ajar to support modified 20mph Bill

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

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