

Rt Hon Michael Ellis MP,  
Minister of State for Transport  
Department for Transport,  
Great Minster House,  
33 Horseferry Rd,  
Westminster,  
London SW1P 4DR.

24th July 2019

Dear Mr. Ellis,

### **Re: 20mph Default Speed Limit**

We write as representatives of organisations with a shared concern to improve road safety, particularly for those most at risk of injury on our streets. If we are to maximise the health, environmental and quality of life benefits of enabling everyone to get around safely on foot or by cycle, it is vital to reduce the dangers they face when doing so. We were therefore pleased to hear of your commitment to tackle road casualties, as you launched the Government's 'Road Safety Statement' last Friday. At the start of Vision Zero week, we wish to invite you to review the case for making 20mph the 'default' speed limit for built-up streets.

Speed plays a key part in the number of casualties on our roads. TfL estimates that inappropriate speed is a factor in up to 37% of collisions resulting in death or serious injury on London's streets. Research<sup>1</sup> has shown that where we reduce maximum motor vehicle speeds to 20mph in built-up areas, casualties will fall by more than two-fifths (42%). More than 20 million people across the UK live in local authorities which are adopting or have adopted 20mph speed limits. More than half of all Londoners now live on 20mph streets and roads. Lower speed limits are extremely popular with more than two-thirds of the UK population<sup>2</sup> supporting 20mph limits on residential roads and busy shopping streets.

As well as popular support, 20mph is endorsed as the safe speed limit by many national and international road safety and public health specialists including the WHO, OECD, iRAP, Global Network of Road Safety Legislators and the Global Alliance of Road Safety NGOs; in addition, the Public Health bodies in England, Wales and Scotland are calling for a national 20mph default limit. In Wales, the devolved administration is now actively looking to introduce a 20mph default across the country. As well as London where TfL in its July 2018 Vision Zero Action Plan (Annex 1) called for the Government to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bmj.com/content/339/bmj.b4469>

<sup>2</sup> [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/20splentyforus/pages/419/attachments/original/1539441825/Prof\\_Alan\\_Tapp.pdf?1539441825](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/20splentyforus/pages/419/attachments/original/1539441825/Prof_Alan_Tapp.pdf?1539441825)

amend the default urban speed limit to 20mph, local authorities in Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow and Edinburgh have also called for a move to a 20mph default speed limit.

We do not seek to argue that 20mph should be applied on a blanket basis to every single road in a built-up area. We recognise that local authorities should have the discretion to retain higher limits where they believe this is appropriate, in consultation with local communities. However, given that 20mph is typically the appropriate limit for at least two-thirds of the street length in most built-up areas, it surely makes more sense for 20mph to be the norm and higher limits the exception, rather than the other way round as at present.

The 74 actions outlined in the Road Safety Statement are a positive step forward. But the introduction of a default 20mph limit can deliver further reductions in fatalities and casualties along with the additional benefits of encouraging active travel in the form of walking and cycling in our cities, towns and villages and promoting greater social inclusion, greater community cohesion and local business viability. In the near future, the opportunities afforded by new technology such as Intelligent Speed Assistance will naturally deliver significantly higher levels of compliance with the posted speed limit.

We believe that the Government should take the opportunity to go further than the locally led approach outlined in the Statement and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you and your colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rod King', with a long, sweeping underline.

Rod King MBE

Founder and Campaign Director, 20's Plenty for Us

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phillip Darnton', with a long, sweeping underline.

Phillip Darnton OBE

Chair, Bicycle Association of Great Britain

Mary Williams

Mary Williams OBE

Brake Chief Executive

Julie Harrington

Julie Harrington

CEO, British Cycling

Chris Barker

Chris Barker

Secretary, Campaign for Better Transport London Group

Paul Tuohy

Paul Tuohy

Chief Executive, Cycling UK

Joe Irvin

Joe Irvin,

Chief Executive, Living Streets



Dr Ashok Sinha  
Chief Executive, London Cycling Campaign



Vanessa Griffiths  
Chief Executive, The Ramblers



Nick Simmons  
CEO, RoadPeace



Xavier Brice  
Chief Executive, Sustrans