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for Transport

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Dear Andy,

Thank you for your email of 22 May enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Rod King, Director of the 20's Plenty speed campaign, about setting an emergency national urban 20mph speed limit during COVID-19.

Local authorities already have the power to set 20mph speed limits on their roads, and the Department has published guidance designed to make sure that speed limits are appropriately and consistently set while allowing for flexibility to deal with local needs and conditions.

However, the Department has no plans to impose a national urban 20mph limit. Evidence suggests that average speeds tend to fall to compliant levels only if previous average speeds were already low, around 24 mph. To be effective, such a change would need enforcement and publicity. It would put a significant strain on our police forces at a difficult time and would not be desirable unless sufficient compliance with the limit could be achieved. Nor would lower speed limits be likely to alter the behaviour of those who are taking the opportunity of clear roads to drive far in excess of the existing limits. We did find that when the roads were quieter we saw some people speed. We took action and we will continue to take action in the future, even as we expect traffic levels to return to more normal levels.

Road Safety GB is encouraging all road users to help reduce the strain on the emergency services during the coronavirus pandemic by taking extra care when travelling, with support from the Department for Transport's THINK! campaign. This includes a plea for drivers and riders to watch their speed: <https://roadsafetygb.org.uk/takeextracare/>

Mr King also noted that I recently attended the 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, whose output was the Stockholm Declaration, to represent the UK. The Declaration is intended to provide guidance and actions to 2030 to help improve road safety: most of the goals are items that the UK is already working towards, including application of the Safe System approach; encouraging active travel (walking and cycling); investing in cleaner transport and innovative future technologies. But it is a voluntary document that will not bind the UK or other countries to any of the set actions.

It is expected to be presented at the UN General Assembly in due course, though it may be amended from its current form before forming the basis for adoption as a resolution for a new decade of action on global road safety.

The UK would support a new decade of action and will continue to work with countries and organisations to reduce the number of deaths and injuries on global roads.

Please extend my gratitude to Mr King for taking the time to write in with his concerns.

Yours,
Charlotte

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON