

20's Plenty – A report into national and local policy and next steps

A joint report by Vicki Hubert (KCC) and Hilary Smith (TWBC) to the Tunbridge Wells Joint Transportation Board on 19 October 2015 investigating the ways that 20mph speed limits can be implemented and their relative benefits; local and national policy; the financial implications; and a way forward should Members be minded to further progress this investigation for Tunbridge Wells.

1. Introduction

1.1 At the last meeting of the JTB on 20th July, it was evident that many issues of concern to Members and residents referred to the possibility of introducing 20mph speed limits in line with the national '20's Plenty' Campaign. Therefore KCC and TWBC agreed to jointly investigate national and local policy and case studies, and from there make a recommendation regarding the next steps for Tunbridge Wells.

1.2 The national '20's Plenty' Campaign was set up by Rod King MBE in Autumn 2007 in response to a developing social consensus that the default limit of 30mph in urban areas was no longer appropriate, and should be lowered. 20 mph schemes are now relatively wide-spread, with more than 2,000 in operation or planned in England (the majority of which are 20 mph zones) covering 14 million people. These schemes have been credited with reducing Personal Injury Accidents (PIAs) and other collisions, promoting modal shift to walking and cycling, and reducing vehicular traffic flows.

1.3 DfT Circular 01/2013 states:

“...there is clear evidence of the effect of reducing traffic speeds on the reduction of collisions and casualties, as collision frequency is lower at lower speeds; and where collisions do occur, there is a lower risk of fatal injury at lower speeds. Research shows that on urban roads with low average traffic speeds any 1 mph reduction in average speed can reduce the collision frequency by around 6% (Taylor, Lynam and Baruya, 2000). There is also clear evidence confirming the greater chance of survival of pedestrians in collisions at lower speeds.

Important benefits of 20 mph schemes include quality of life and community benefits, and encouragement of healthier and more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling (Kirkby, 2002). There may also be environmental benefits as, generally, driving more slowly at a steady pace will save fuel and reduce pollution, unless an unnecessarily low gear is used. Walking and cycling can make a very positive contribution to improving health and tackling obesity, improving accessibility and tackling congestion, and reducing carbon emissions and improving the local environment.”

1.4 There has traditionally been a clear distinction in the UK between areas or roads subject to a 20mph 'zone' and those subject to a 20mph 'limit'.

20mph zones usually cover a number of roads. Zones are effective at reducing collisions, bringing about a modal shift towards more walking and cycling, and reducing vehicular traffic flows. They are predominantly used in residential areas and town centres, “though they should not include roads where motor vehicle movement is the primary function” (*DfT Circular 01/2013*).

- 1.5 20mph limits are signed and do not require traffic calming measures. They are similar to other local speed limits and normally apply to individual or small numbers of roads, but are increasingly being applied to larger areas.

Historically, the DfT required any point within a 20mph zone to be within 50 metres of a traffic calming device, and any point within a 20mph limit to be within 50 metres of a 20mph repeater sign. The DfT also required that the traffic calming devices used within 20mph zones had to be physical features such as speed cushions. This often resulted in significant scheme costs.

However, this requirement was subsequently relaxed in 2013 when the DfT revised its guidance to state that repeater signs, carriageway roundels and mini-roundabouts could also be classed as traffic calming devices, although 20mph zones still have to include at least one physical calming device.

- 1.6 This report considers national and local policy governing the introduction of 20mph schemes, identifies relevant case studies from elsewhere in the UK, and suggests the potential next steps required to progress this matter in Tunbridge Wells.

2.0 National Policy

- 2.1 In line with the Government's overall approach to devolution and localism, the DfT's 2013 speed limit guidance (contained within Circular 01/2013) is non-prescriptive in nature and seeks to enable local authorities to introduce 20mph zones and limits where they consider it appropriate to do so.

- 2.2 DfT Circular 01/2013 states the following in summary:

- Zones should not include roads where motor vehicle movement is the primary function.
- 20mph limits are *generally* only recommended where existing mean speeds are already below 24mph.

- 2.3 DfT Circular 01/2013 tells that local authorities CAN introduce 20mph speed limits on major roads "*where there are – or could be - significant numbers of journeys on foot, and/or where pedal cycle movements are an important consideration, and this outweighs the disadvantage of longer journey times for motorised traffic*". The centre of Tunbridge Wells is accessed by several heavily trafficked arterial routes. These are key vehicular roads into and through the town, but they are also important walking and cycling routes and residential areas.

- 2.4 The DfT are undertaking a 3-year study on 20mph limits, the results of which are due in 2017. This is an important piece of work that is meant to support and inform future policy development on 20mph speed limits and zones.

3.0 Local Policy

- 3.1 In 2013, KCC as the Highways Authority investigated '20's Plenty' as a result of growing interest in the subject following the publication of DfT Circular 01/2013. A policy was adopted at the October 2013 Environment, Highways & Waste Cabinet Committee which states KCC will fund 20mph schemes where:

- There is clear justification to achieve casualty reduction;
- It would assist in delivering targets set out in Kent's Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy, which sets out how the NHS, social care and public health services in Kent can work together to improve people's health and reduce the health

inequalities that exist in the county, particularly in reference to increasing physical activity.

And if not fitting into the above but locally important, 20mph schemes can be funded by:

- The Members Grant
- Developers
- Parish Councils

All schemes must however meet the criteria set out in the Department for Transport (DfT) Circular 01/2013.

- 3.2 Over the years KCC has been implementing 20mph schemes in Kent and has over 50 schemes covering approximately 800 roads. In addition all new residential developments are designed to restrict vehicular traffic to 20mph where appropriate.
- 3.3 The Tunbridge Wells Transport Strategy and Cycling Strategy commit to exploring the opportunities for further introduction of 20mph schemes.
- 3.4 A local 20's Plenty group was set up in Spring 2015 to promote the introduction of speed limits within the Borough.
- 3.5 In order to start to engage with the local community on this issue, TWBC have included questions to draw out views on 20mph schemes in its current Resident's Survey (reporting in late November) and also in the current consultation on the Draft Cycling Strategy (due to close on 1 November).

4.0 Case Studies

- 4.1 As has been noted, 20mph schemes are now widespread across the UK and throughout Western Europe, although in many cases it is too early to draw firm conclusions as to their effectiveness in reducing vehicle speeds, improving road safety and promoting modal shift to walking and cycling. There are nevertheless a number of themes emerging from schemes that have been implemented that warrant consideration in this context.

4.1 Brighton

Brighton and Hove City Council introduced Phase 1 of its 20mph scheme, which provided for a blanket 20mph limit throughout central Brighton and Hove, in April 2013. Phase 2, which extended the scheme to many residential streets surrounding the Phase 1 area, was subsequently introduced in June 2014, followed by Phase 3, which incorporates streets in neighbourhood centres and villages outside of the city, in June 2015. Interim results from the Phase 1 area following its first year of operation indicated that vehicle speeds reduced on 74% of roads (by an average of 1mph), the numbers of both collisions and PIAs fell and there were no fatal road traffic collisions. It should be noted, however, that average vehicle speeds within the Phase 1 area were already 20mph prior to the introduction of the scheme. Brighton and Hove City Council has allocated a project budget of £1.5 million over four years to the implementation of the scheme.

4.2 Portsmouth

Portsmouth City Council was the first local authority in England to implement an extensive area-wide 20mph limit scheme covering the majority of residential roads in the city. The scheme utilises signing only and encompasses 94% of the total length of

the City Council's highway network. On the majority of the roads subject to the scheme, average vehicle speeds prior to implementation were less than or equal to 24mph, which reflected their narrow carriageways and on-street parking. The scheme was implemented partly to reinforce the low driving speeds adopted previously by many motorists and partly to encourage less aggressive driving behaviour by those who drove at inappropriate speeds. The cost of implementing the scheme was £570,000, which came from the City Council's local transport capital expenditure programme.

The stakeholder engagement process included:-

- consultation with Neighbourhood Forums and residents' associations;
- publishing statutory advertisements in the local press;
- placing articles in the local press;
- television and radio interviews, both locally and nationally;
- exhibition of plans and posters in all local schools and public buildings;
- sending each school pupil home with a leaflet.

This proactive approach was considered by the City Council to be a better publicity strategy than simply publishing a lengthy list of street names using on-street notices, as was the minimum statutory requirement. The strategy received positive public feedback and no complaints were made regarding a lack of information. The Police supported the scheme on the basis that it would be self-enforcing.

The average vehicle speed following the implementation of the 20mph limit was 0.9mph lower than the average speed prior to its introduction; however at sites where the average speed was greater than 24mph prior to the introduction of the scheme, the average speed reduced by 7mph. During the one year period following the implementation of the scheme, the total accident reduction was 13% relative to the preceding three year period and the number of PIAs fell by 15%. Numbers of Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) casualties stayed the same; however the number of KSI incidents increased by 2%.

4.3 *Kent*

In response to a petition submitted to the Maidstone JTB in 2010 requesting the implementation of blanket 20mph limits outside all schools and residential areas it was agreed to run a trial of low cost speed management schemes outside a number of Primary Schools in Maidstone.

This trial, funded by local Members via their Highway Fund, included both formal and advisory 20mph schemes aiming to provide local evidence as to whether 20mph schemes near schools could provide cost effective road safety benefits. The proposed trial was limited to primary schools within 30mph speed limits. Speeds outside the schools were surveyed prior to implementation, then after three and nine months. After three months the initial results were positive and in line with Government advice that 20mph limits without traffic calming generally reduce mean speeds by about 1mph. After 9 months any benefits had mostly disappeared and perversely in most locations overall speeds had actually increased.

The results of this trial are similar to those seen elsewhere in the country. As a result of this, more recent schemes have tended to cover larger areas. It appears to be easier to gain community acceptance on a larger scale, and the cost per head is significantly reduced.

4.4 *Transport Research Laboratory*

The Transport Research Laboratory undertook a review of the effect of 200 20mph zones in the UK in 1996. The review concluded that 20mph zones had been successful in substantially reducing vehicle speeds, collisions and PIAs in the areas where they had been applied. Average annual accident frequencies fell by 60%, accidents involving cyclists reduced by 29% and overall vehicle speeds fell by 9.3mph. Moreover, traffic volumes reduced by an average of 27% within the zones (and increased by only 12% in the surrounding areas) and public acceptability surveys found that local residents were generally in favour of the schemes.¹

5.0 **Financial**

5.1 KCC has made some estimated cost predictions for the physical implementation of the two different ways of implementing a the 20mph speed limit (please note that these figures do not include design fees or consultation: some councils that have now introduced 20mph speed limits spent the same on consultation as they did on physical implementation):

- 1km 20mph limit (signs only) £1,400
- 1km 20mph zone £60,000

5.2 The 20's Plenty campaign website suggests that a borough-wide approach to implementing 20mph is more cost effective and quicker to implement than taking each urban area at a time. This would mean consultation borough wide with particular engagement with the areas proposed to be excluded from the proposed 20mph scheme.

5.3 Many local authorities that have implemented 20mph restrictions have spent a similar amount on consultation and education as they have on physically implementation. A very general cost has been calculated by the 20's Plenty group of £3 per head to cover the whole process² based on the total cost of consultation, education and implementation divided by the total population of the area concerned.

5.4 Experience from other parts of the UK that have implemented 20mph schemes demonstrates that it is possible to secure funding for such projects from a variety of sources, including local transport capital expenditure programmes, local authority health and wellbeing budgets, air quality grants, the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and developer contributions.

6.0 **Conclusions**

6.1 Evidence from successful 20 mph schemes show that the introduction of 20 mph zones generally reduces mean traffic speed by more than is the case when a signed-only 20 mph limit is introduced. This is likely to be attributable to the greater reductions in average speed (in the order of 9mph) achieved by 20mph zones. Historically therefore, more zones than limits have been introduced³. It is notable however that on roads in Portsmouth with high initial speeds, a significant speed reduction was nevertheless achieved.

6.2 In order for 20mph schemes to be effective a culture change is required within a local area where slower speeds become the norm with the aim of improving the overall

¹ Transport Research Laboratory (1996), Review of Traffic Calming Schemes in 20mph Zones.

² York £600k for 200k population equating to £3 per head; Middlesbrough £1.80; Oxford £2; Portsmouth £2.75; BathNES £3.58 (*20's Plenty website*)

³ DfT Circular 01/2013

quality of the environment for all. Therefore, a comprehensive and early consultation of all those who may be affected by the introduction of a 20 mph scheme is an essential part of the implementation process. This needs to include local residents, all tiers of local government, the police and emergency services, public transport providers and any other relevant local groups (including for example, groups representing pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, or equestrians)⁴. It is widely accepted that without the support of the local community and the police, speed limits can be ineffective. Early consultation to gauge community support will be vital from investigation stage onwards.

7.0 Recommendation

7.1 Members of the Joint Transportation Board are recommended to progress this topic further by requesting that KCC and TWBC officers form a working group to take the next steps:

- a) Contact another council (with similar demographics to Tunbridge Wells) which has successfully introduced 20mph speed limits to identify good practice and lessons learned;
- b) Identify key stakeholders who will have an important role to play in the progression of this debate (i.e. two representative JTB Members (one KCC and one TWBC), Tunbridge Wells' 20's plenty campaign leader, residents groups' leaders, schools, pedestrian and cycling representatives, National Health contacts, local press etc.);
- c) Invite key stakeholders to an inaugural meeting to introduce the topic and begin the debate.
- d) Report back to the JTB with a comprehensive report making specific recommendations based on the experiences of other local authorities, experts in the field and the opinions of local stakeholders.

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⁴ DfT Circular 01/2013