

P-06-1322: Reallocate the £30m being used for 20mph limits, to the NHS which is in crisis, especially BCUHB!

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 13 Mawrth 2023
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Reference: SR23/5378

Petition Number: P-06-1322

Petition title: Reallocate the £30m being used for 20mph limits, to the NHS which is in crisis, especially BCUHB!

Text of petition: The Welsh Government are currently planning on wasting over £30m to reduce 30mph speed limits to 20mph, when the Wrexham A&E department has just announced the worst waiting times in Wales. The NHS is in crisis across the country but the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is in an utter state. GP's are sitting in offices in Manchester to deal with problems at Hilcrest surgery for example. The Welsh Government don't have their priorities in order. Reducing speed limits from 30 to 20 will not save as many lives as having a functioning NHS!



1. Background

In 2019 the Welsh Government set up a task and finish group to consider whether 20mph should become the default speed limit in residential areas. The Welsh Government accepted the group's recommendations, including that the default speed limit on restricted roads should be reduced from 30mph to 20mph.

Following public consultation and a pilot scheme across 8 communities, the Welsh Government laid the Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order 2022 in June. The draft Order was passed by the Senedd in July and is due to come into force in September 2023.

The Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee's February report on the Welsh Government's 2023-24 draft budget found that in aggregate, Welsh health boards were "reporting an in-year deficit to date of £98.6m and a forecast end of year deficit of £159.9m for 2022-23". This is an increase from end of year overspends in NHS Wales of £48.4m (2021-22), £48.2m (2020-21), and £88.8m (2019-20).

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (UHB) reported an overspend of £3.2m in month 6 of 2022-23, with an end of year projected overspend of £10m.

2. Welsh Government action

During scrutiny of the 2023-24 draft budget in January 2023, the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS, told the Climate Change Committee: how the transition to 20mph would be funded:

... we have taken money from the local transport fund to fully fund this—some £30 million this year and we had some money last year. There will be a little bit of money next year, but much less.

He also outlined what he sees as the benefits of the policy:

This is a key measure for our road safety strategy for reducing deaths and casualties on the road, which cost us, public services, a significant amount of money. We've published some research sponsored by Public Health Wales showing that, in the first year alone, they estimate—obviously, it's modelled, but it's an estimate—it'll save public services £100 million per year—three times the cost of introducing it, in the first year. We'll save that in the first year alone from reduced pressures on the

NHS. Every time somebody dies on the road, it costs more than £1 million to the system. With more than 200 casualties turning up seriously injured at accident and emergency units, that puts significant pressure on the system. So, this idea that this is an additional extra cost and 'How can we afford it in a time of austerity?' needs to be directly challenged.

The research referred to is [published on the Welsh Government website](#).

The 2023-24 Welsh Government draft budget [allocated £9.6bn in revenue funding](#) for the delivery of core NHS services. The Welsh Government's [evidence to the Committee](#) on the draft budget stated that [emphasis added]:

During the course of the financial year, three more health boards (Aneurin Bevan, Betsi Cadwaladr and Powys) have reported a significant variation from their plans with in-year forecast deficits. The reasons for these deficits are largely due to the inability of organisations to deliver against their initial savings plans; high levels of variable pay particularly agency costs; the need to maintain unfunded bed capacity; and significant increases in the cost and demand for continuing healthcare.

[...]this deterioration in the NHS financial position was **“not a position that Welsh Government is prepared to support or underwrite”**.

[The Director of Finance at Betsi Cadwaladr UHB](#) told the Senedd's Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee in March 2022 that major service transformation is needed to move towards financial balance.

The letter from the Deputy Minister for Climate Change to the Chair on this petition reiterates the benefits of 20mph speed limits, referenced above. He also refers to “unprecedented demand” for NHS services, and outlines action being taken to address challenges in the NHS.

3. Welsh Parliament action

In July 2020 the Senedd [debated the introduction of default 20mph speed limits](#) with 45 of 53 Members [voting in favour of the motion](#).

As outlined above, the draft Order implementing the change was [passed by the Senedd](#) in July 2022 and is due to come into force in September 2023.

In April 2022 you considered a petition calling on the Welsh Government to stop the introduction of the 20mph limit. At that time you agreed to close the petition due to the ability of local authorities to change the limit on roads where 20mph would not be appropriate.

You also considered a petition calling on the Welsh Government to hold a public poll on the speed limit reduction in October 2022. Again you agreed to close the petition.

You are currently considering a petition calling for A and B roads to be exempt from the plan.

The Senedd has discussed the financial position of the Welsh NHS extensively.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.