

20mph petitions

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 22 Ebrill 2024
Petitions Committee | 22 April 2024

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This briefing has been prepared to support the Committee's consideration of two petitions relating to 20mph default speed limits – one in support of the policy and one calling for it to be rescinded.

Petition 1

Petition Number: P-06-1407

Petition title: We want the Welsh Government to rescind and remove the disastrous 20mph law.

Text of petition: The new 20mph law is coming into force on the 17th September and it will mark the end of having socialism in power in Wales.

Welsh Government claim to have supporting evidence stating that reducing to 20mph EVERYWHERE saves lives! Yet we get flyers merely claiming that it will, and opinions from doctors that see RTCs coming into A&E. This is NOT evidence. The only true evidence is from Belfast and it states it makes NO DIFFERENCE to RTCs!

At least one of the trial villages in Monmouthshire actually reverted their trial because it was causing absolute carnage on the roads! Mark Drakeford has come out claiming it is a success in St Brides Major but every time I go though there NO ONE is driving at 20mph.



The Welsh Government has FAILED to produce ANY convincing evidence to support these claims of safety. This law is being spearheaded by the WG Climate Change department and NOT Health & Safety!!

YOU HAVE NOT LISTENED TO US.

The Welsh Government was put there BY THE PEOPLE OF WALES, We are your boss! We demand that this foolish idea be stopped.

Petition 2

Petition Number: P-06-1412

Petition title: We want the Welsh Government to keep the excellent 20mph law.

Text of petition: I agree with the new 20mph speed limit in towns and cities across Wales. It will make our streets a lot safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

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. In July 2020, 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 eight communities**, the Welsh Government laid the **Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order** in June 2022. The draft Order was **passed by the Senedd** in July 2022 and came into force in September 2023.

The policy has received widespread media coverage and the petition calling for the legislation to be 'rescinded' has received over 469,000 signatures – the highest ever received for a Senedd petition.

Senedd Research has previously published a number of articles on:

- the policy and reaction to it in the lead up to national roll-out;
- the implementation of the policy and the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits; and
- how the policy will be enforced and monitored.

Impact of 20mph speed limits elsewhere

Historically, evidence on the efficacy of 20mph speed limits has been mixed. A 2018 UK Government report on the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits found “insufficient evidence” that 20mph limits in residential areas made a “significant change” in collisions and accidents.

In contrast, a 2018 review of evidence commissioned by the Welsh Government found “moderate to strong” evidence that 20mph limits reduce casualties. The review also considered evidence on other factors including active travel and air pollution.

Part of the challenge in assessing the impact arises from differing approaches to implementing 20mph. Speed limited areas vary in size, and there’s a distinction between self-enforcing 20mph limits without traffic calming measures, and traffic calmed 20mph zones.

The example of Belfast, referenced by the petitioner calling for the legislation to be rescinded, illustrates this point.

Belfast saw 76 city centre streets move to 20mph in 2016. A three year follow up review of the Belfast scheme, published in 2022, found “little effect for reduction in road traffic collisions, casualties and speed when a 20 mph speed limit intervention is implemented in a city centre”.

However, rather than finding 20mph limits ineffective, the reviewers found:

The intervention was implemented at the city centre scale (only 76 streets) in comparison to the recent city-wide intervention in Edinburgh which showed significant reductions in road traffic speed, collisions and casualties. Large scale implementation of 20 mph speed limit interventions may be an important factor for effectiveness (scale).

A [2021 evaluation](#) of Edinburgh’s city-wide scheme concluded it “was associated with meaningful reductions in traffic speeds”. A [three year post implementation review](#) reported a 30% decrease in collisions and a 31% decrease in casualties.

Transport for London has [found similar results](#) for its wide-area scheme, with collisions falling 25% over two years to June 2022, and those resulting in death or serious injury down 24%.

Monitoring and review in Wales

Impact in pilot areas

As outlined, [pilots took place](#) in eight communities across Wales to trial 20mph default limits in the lead up to the national roll-out in September 2023.

The [first monitoring report](#) on the impact in pilot areas was published in March 2023, followed by a [final monitoring report](#) (for the pilot areas) in February 2024. Data up to May 2023 showed:

- “large positive” changes in relation to speed reduction Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and attitudes to active travel;
- a “slight positive” change in vehicle / pedestrian yield behaviour; and
- “no discernible change” in local air quality and “slight negative” changes in vehicle journey times, including a general decrease in punctuality for peak time bus services.

Monitoring the national roll-out

In September 2023 Transport for Wales (TfW) published a [monitoring framework document](#) for the national roll-out. This identifies the policy objectives and the indicators to be used. Data will be collected for up to five years post-implementation.

In terms of reporting timescales [the framework says](#) TfW will publish an interim report in June 2024 based on data collected during the first 6 months following the national roll-out. A further report on the first full year of implementation is expected in December 2024. Formal reporting will then take place annually.

Early speed monitoring data

In February 2024 TfW published [preliminary data on average speed changes](#) following the national roll-out. The data were collected on main through roads at 43 locations in nine settlements.

The data shows that average speeds on these roads dropped an average of 4mph - from 28.9mph to 24.8mph.

Review of exceptions guidance

While the default 20mph speed limit is now in force on restricted roads, highway authorities (local authorities for local roads and the Welsh Ministers for trunk roads/motorways) can use Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to change the limit from the default of 20mph where appropriate.

In November 2022 the Welsh Government issued [guidance to highway authorities](#) on the process for setting exceptions. However the Welsh Government has suggested that local authorities across Wales have interpreted the guidance differently. It has therefore [established a review team](#) to examine how the guidance has been applied.

The review team published its [initial report](#) in February 2024 and is expected to submit its final report and draft updated guidance to the Welsh Government by summer 2024.

2. Welsh Government action

A response to the petition against the policy (letter to the Chair dated 18 March) has been received. However no response to the petition supporting the policy has been received in time to be reflected in this brief.

In his letter dated 18 March, the former Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS, refers to the Belfast study, which the petitioner suggests is evidence that 20mph limits have little impact on road traffic collisions. The former Deputy Minister says:

The Belfast study referred to in the petition is not comparing like for like. Everything about the Welsh approach has been different to the small-scale project in Belfast...[the Belfast study] has reinforced our approach that to reap the real benefits of 20mph, the changes need to happen at

scale and be part of a bigger cultural change to the way we travel and see our local communities.

The letter also highlights the early speed monitoring data reported by TfW (outlined earlier in this briefing) and the ongoing review of exceptions guidance.

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, the Welsh Government laid the Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order in June 2022. The draft Order was passed by the Senedd in July 2022. It has been raised in the Senedd on numerous occasions.

In October 2023 the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee scrutinised the Deputy Minister on the policy.

The Committee has previously considered a number of petitions relating to the policy including:

- A petition calling on the Welsh Government to stop the introduction of the 20mph limit (considered in April 2022). At that time the Committee agreed to close the petition due to the ability of local authorities to change the limit on roads where 20mph would not be appropriate.
- A petition calling on the Welsh Government to hold a public poll on the speed limit reduction (considered in October 2022). This petition was also closed.
- A petition calling for a survey of residents living in the pilot areas (considered in March 2024). Again this petition was closed in light of the monitoring work taking place through TfW outlined earlier.

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.

