



20mph Compliance

Introduction

The Welsh Government is proposing to introduce a default speed limit of 20mph on all residential roads in Wales as part of a suite of measures to promote 'liveable' communities. 20mph limits have been implemented in many places in the UK but not on a national scale. A substantial shift in driver behaviour will be needed for the limit to achieve its desired effect.

The Wales Centre for Public Policy conducted a review of the evidence (Toy, 2020) to answer two questions:

1. Which behaviour change interventions are most effective in achieving driver compliance?
2. Which driver types and geographies should interventions focus on to maximise compliance?



Public attitudes

Overall public support for 20mph is high, however driver compliance is minimal with a case study in England showing that speeds only reduced by 0.7-0.9mph (Atkins et al., 2018).

Three types of driver can be identified:

1. Defiers;
2. Conformers; and
3. Champions.

These groups respond to different messages and techniques. The majority of the population are conformers who follow social norms; they tend to break the speed limit if others do.

Therefore, to maximise compliance, behaviour change measures should focus on this group.

Defiers need enforcement and champions are self-motivated to act as role models.

Moments of disruption...are times when people are most open to change; the Coronavirus pandemic could present such an opportunity.

Learning from other sectors

Reviews of road safety campaigns (seat belts, drink-driving) and recent legislative changes in Wales (plastic bag tax, organ donation) show that people do not respond well to information campaigns unless they form part of a package of measures to encourage and enforce the desired change. Moments of disruption or the forming of new habits (e.g. learning to drive) are times when people are most open to change; the Coronavirus pandemic could present such an opportunity.

What works

Published reports and discussions with practitioners from London, Bristol, Edinburgh and Birmingham – which have all implemented 20mph at scale – provide insights into compliance.

All use three distinct and complementary approaches in parallel as part of a comprehensive speed reduction plan:

1. Enforcement.
2. Engineering; and
3. Promotion.

Technology may also offer support in the future.

Enforcement: Small road policing teams can use agile enforcement to target problem areas and signal positive support for 20mph. Community Speed Watch is effective in certain areas but only with police support. Signage should be installed more frequently than suggested by the Department for Transport minimum standards and Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) are effective if moved regularly.

Engineering: Visual cues strongly affect speed choice and some roads in Wales will need to be re-engineered to achieve lower speeds. A risk-based approach, as used in London, can prioritise resources to tackle hotspots. Low cost changes such as rearranging parking and positioning benches or planters are effective and can be made in partnership with local authorities, communities and the third sector.

Promotion: Positive public messages targeted at the mainstream conformer drivers e.g. 'Love Our Streets' are the most effective (Tapp and Davis, 2019). Some groups, such as young male drivers, respond better to messages with a mix of negative (fear) and positive (skill) messages. All messages and channels need to be tested with different target groups in Wales as there is a lack of evidence around what works for 20mph. Speed awareness courses that focus on 20mph are effective, as part of a wider package of measures, in educating and encouraging mainstream compliance.

Future technology: Intelligent Speed Adaption (ISA) will be required by EU legislation to be installed in all new cars by 2022. The system will be over-rideable by drivers but could be used by public and private sector fleet managers to improve 20mph compliance and to act as 'pace cars' to bring down average speeds.

Speed cameras can be recalibrated to 20mph, as was done in London in March 2020, to support 20mph compliance.

...showcase Wales as a global leader in creating liveable neighbourhoods by implementing a 20mph default limit.

Recommendations

- To be effective, 20mph limits need to be introduced as part of a wider system of encouragement and enforcement.
- Local and national policy makers and practitioners need to work together to encourage compliance positive outcomes including fewer injuries, lower carbon emissions, better air quality and more active travel.
- We need a multi-stakeholder integrated plan supported by financial resources to enable delivery to be sustained over at least five years. A possible target could be to achieve a 5-8mph reduction in speed over this period.
- The most cost-effective approach will be to target resources at the 'average' driver so that we reach a tipping point where the majority are complying. A package of behaviour change measures for this group could include mobile VAS, positive messaging, pop-up police enforcement and speed awareness courses.

Some locations, such as main roads, will require a combination of re-engineering and enforcement to get compliance; a risk-based approach can be used to identify and prioritise these roads.

Annual speed data, from a 2020 baseline to at least 2025, should be used to monitor whether speed reduce and to showcase Wales as a global leader in creating liveable neighbourhoods by implementing a 20mph default limit.

Sources

Atkins, AECOM and Maher, M. (2018). **20mph Research Study – Process and Impact Evaluation Headline Report.**

Tapp, A. and Davis, A. (2019). **Communications Strategies to Encourage Support and Compliance with 20mph Limits in Wales.** Background paper prepared for the Welsh Government. Unpublished.

Toy, S. (2020). **20's the limit: How to encourage speed reductions.** Wales Centre for Public Policy



Find out more

For the full report see Toy, S. (2020). **20's the limit: How to encourage speed reductions.** Wales Centre for Public Policy

About the Wales Centre for Public Policy

Here at the Centre, we collaborate with leading policy experts to provide ministers, the civil service, and Welsh public services with the high quality evidence and independent advice that helps them to improve policy decisions and outcomes.

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and Welsh Government, the Centre is based at Cardiff University and is a member of the UK's What Works Network.

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