



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Regional Development

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill:  
Department for Regional Development Briefing

19 March 2014

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

## Committee for Regional Development

Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill: DRD Briefing

19 March 2014

**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)  
Mr Seán Lynch (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Joe Byrne  
Mr John Dallat  
Mr Alex Easton  
Mr Ross Hussey  
Mr Declan McAleer  
Mr Kieran McCarthy  
Mr David McNarry  
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

**Witnesses:**

Mr Harvey Hamilton	Department for Regional Development
Mr Philip Hamilton	Department for Regional Development
Mr Greg McClelland	Department for Regional Development

**The Chairperson:** I welcome Philip Hamilton, who is the head of engineering services in Transport NI; Harvey Hamilton, who is the principal engineer in the traffic and engineering policy branch in Transport NI; and Dr Greg McClelland, who is the road safety policy manager in Transport NI.

**Mr Greg McClelland (Department for Regional Development):** Thank you. I am not a doctor; I am a mister.

**The Chairperson:** You have been promoted to doctor in my papers. If you wish, you can take a bow. At any rate, you are very welcome to the Committee. I ask you to give the Committee a briefing and then leave yourselves open to questions from members.

**Mr Philip Hamilton (Department for Regional Development):** Chairman, thank you very much for your welcome and for this opportunity to provide you and the Committee with details about recent developments.

**The Chairperson:** I am not sure whether you were in the room at the time, but I said earlier that we expect to suspend shortly after 10.30 am, as there are a number of votes in the House. When the Division Bells ring, you will have to wait for a period until the Divisions are over. I am sorry for interrupting, but I wanted to clarify that.

**Mr P Hamilton:** Hopefully, by that time, we will have got through the short presentation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Committee with information on 20 mph limits against the backdrop of Mr Ramsey's private Member's Bill. Our presentation sets out key points in the debate, and we will attempt to answer any questions that members have. My notes reflect the presentation that you received.

I reiterate from the outset that the Department for Regional Development (DRD) fully supports the drive to improve safety on our roads. We are the primary stakeholder in Northern Ireland's road safety strategy, along with the Department of the Environment (DOE) and the police. We are the lead Department in over 60 of the 200 or so action measures in the strategy.

In the past 10 years, we have spent £230 million specifically on local transport and safety measures. Of that, £22 million has been spent on speed reduction measures. Almost 500 20 mph zones have been created. Those are targeted measures that were engineered to maximise benefits and implemented in areas where there was a history of collisions or where there are high levels of road users.

The Department already has powers to set speed limits. Those are set out in the Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. That is the primary power that authorises the Department to make regulations concerning speed limits. An example of such is the Roads (Speed Limit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2005, which applied 20 mph limits to a number of roads. It is a statutory rule, and, as you will be aware, all such statutory rules come through this Committee in the form of an SL1. One such SL1 for the Roads (Speed Limit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 came to the Committee a fortnight ago.

The Department's policy document, 'Setting Local Speed Limits in Northern Ireland', highlights that speed limits should be set as part of a package with other measures to manage vehicle speeds and improve road safety, thereby helping drivers to be more readily aware of the appropriate speed limit.

The policy encourages and supports 20 mph limits and zones where there is a particular risk to vulnerable road users, especially in residential areas. There is further support for those limits and zones in the current Northern Ireland road safety strategy to 2020, which contains some 14 action measures relating to speed limits — for example, considering the introduction of vehicle-activated speed indicator signs where speeding has been identified as an issue.

When assessing the potential to introduce a 20 mph speed limit, many factors have to be taken into account, such as the average speed of vehicles using the road; the collision history of the road; the streetscape, which includes the geometrical layout and the presence of junctions, crossings, footpaths, and so on; community support from residents and local political representatives for what is being proposed; the function of a road — that is, whether it is a residential street or a thoroughfare; and demographics — that is, the numbers and types of pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles using the road.

Each road differs in its suitability to have a reduced limit applied, and the favoured solution has been to install engineering measures such as road humps and central islands, so the reduced speed limit is, in effect, self-enforcing. Such traffic-calming measures have proved to be very successful over the years and have helped to reduce pedestrian and cyclist fatalities and serious injuries significantly.

The blanket approach proposed in Mr Ramsey's Bill to establish a mandatory, enforceable 20 mph speed limit on all unclassified restricted roads will impose the limit without seeking support from those affected in any particular location; create a culture of trying to opt out rather than opt in, as any unclassified urban road where a 20 mph limit is not to apply would have to be specifically legislated for; have limited benefits for speed reduction; and have substantial associated costs.

It is important to note the difference between what we term a 20 mph zone and a 20 mph limit. In our terminology, a 20 mph zone uses physical measures such as humps, chicanes and gateway features to achieve speed reduction. The 20 mph limits use traffic regulation orders, signified by the use of 20 mph signs.

A study carried out by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) into 250 20 mph zones in 1996 found that average speeds had fallen by 9 mph; the annual total of accidents had fallen by 60%; the number of accidents involving children had fallen by 67%; and the number of incidents involving cyclists had fallen by 29%. Although the report was produced some time ago, a key finding about speed reduction

is still valid. Reductions in accidents, although still significant, may not be at the same level now, due, in part, to improvements in vehicle design, driver behaviour and awareness.

A further TRL study in 1998 focused on areas where a 20 mph speed limit had been introduced without extensive traffic-calming measures. It found that the use of 20 mph signs alone, without associated traffic-calming measures, led to speed reductions, but 20 mph speed restrictions, where reliance is placed primarily on the signing of the limit, are less effective in reducing traffic speeds than when zone treatment or traffic calming is used. Where average speeds are 24 mph or less, general compliance with the 20 mph limit can be achieved with signing only.

If the Bill were to be approved by the Assembly, it will have resource implications for DRD. Those areas where the 20 mph limit would apply would need to be signed with 20 mph limit signs, and repeater signs may need to be placed in the areas. Any lengths of road where a 30 mph limit would still apply would then require to be signed up to 30 mph, with repeater signs at regular intervals.

The map that we provided in our presentation indicates the signage that may be required. The location is not far from here: it is in east Belfast. The map shows the Newtownards Road, the Knock Road, the roundabout at the Belmont Road and Campbell College. The existing classified roads, such as the Newtownards Road and the Belmont Road, would all retain their 30 mph limit under Mr Ramsey's Bill, whereas the other unclassified streets in between those roads would all become 20 mph restricted roads. The black dots on the map indicate the signage that would be required. Each black dot is two signposts with two signs: a 20 and a 30, back to back, indicating the 20 mph limit when you enter a residential area and the 30 mph limit coming back out.

What about the financial implications? A 20 mph scheme in Portsmouth, which was implemented in 2007 and 2008 and covered most of the city area, cost £573,000 for 400 kilometres of road. A more recently completed scheme in Edinburgh — I understand that the Committee heard about it during a recent visit — cost £214,000 for 40 kilometres of road. Northern Ireland's unclassified road network extends to 4,300 kilometres in urban areas. If we use the Portsmouth and Edinburgh schemes as a benchmark, we see that they indicate a cost of between £6 million and £26 million to implement the measures associated with Mr Ramsey's Bill.

I will briefly mention the claims of the 20's Plenty for Us lobby. A significant number of 20 mph signed-only schemes are being implemented at a local level in England and Wales. Reported results confirm that there has been some speed reduction after implementation. There is also the potential for increased walking and cycling and for collision reduction. The Department, however, needs to consider all the available evidence to reach a view on the success of such schemes. We are keen to discuss the relative merits of the different approaches with the Bill's sponsor, Mr Ramsey.

What is our preferred approach? We see significant disadvantages to the widespread implementation of 20 mph signed-only limits. We have introduced around 500 20 mph zones, but only when there was a desire from local residents and following consultation with those likely to be affected by their introduction. Our preferred approach, therefore, would be to enable the introduction of reduced speed limits but not to impose them.

We are in the process of using the powers available to us to pilot a number of schemes for 20 mph limits without additional self-enforcing engineering measures. We have identified five suitable sites in conjunction with the police. We have agreed to the sites on the basis that there would be no expectation of routine enforcement. We intend to monitor the effectiveness of the schemes, along with similar pilots being undertaken by road authorities in Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. Depending on the outcome of the studies, such schemes may have the potential for low-cost options in appropriate areas, when there is a community desire.

**The Chairperson:** Thanks very much, Philip. Maybe we can start with the elephant in the room: the PSNI is incapable of enforcing speed limits at present. Maybe you do not want to comment on that, but it is quite obvious that it is not capable of enforcing current 40 mph speed limits. I wonder whether you will comment on this: according to a recent research paper, speed was the main factor in only 6% of road traffic collisions resulting in injuries. I assume that all those figures are in place.

On our visit to Edinburgh, it struck me that, apart from the signage, virtually every street, after you came off a 30 mph road, had ramps and required 20 mph road markings. I assume that we are in a similar position.

Members, we have a research paper, dated 27 February, from the Research and Information Service that shows the latest police figures. Those figures show that the main causes of death or serious injury from road traffic collisions were alcohol or drugs — 53; excessive speed — 76; careless driving — 334; and other driver fault — 42. With slight collisions, the figures for the causes were alcohol and drugs — 209; excessive speed — 227; and careless driving — 3,577. The research briefing paper also shows how many accidents were caused by pedestrian fault.

You mentioned the substantial associated costs. Is the figure around £26 million? Does that include signage? We are talking about 4,300 kilometres of road as opposed to the figures from Edinburgh, Portsmouth, and so on, where only small areas have been done. What would the £26 million do to put in effective measures such as allowing only single lane traffic in certain areas, humps, and so on? I suspect that that amount of money would do quite a lot of work.

**Mr P Hamilton:** It would. We used two schemes — Portsmouth and Edinburgh — as a benchmark, and that produced the range of £6 million to £26 million. Over the past 10 years, we have spent £22 million on traffic-calming measures, with significant reductions in casualties and accidents over that time at over 500 locations. Chairman, you are quite right that, if we were to take the upper range of that bracket, you are talking about a substantial sum of money that could produce results through other means.

**The Chairperson:** My initial remarks were about enforcement. What good is a scheme that cannot be enforced or is not enforced? Let us face it: existing speed limits are not really well enforced. Have you had a conversation with the Police Service? Have they told you that they will definitely be able to enforce this speed limit if we add on thousands of extra kilometres?

**Mr P Hamilton:** The police said that they are willing to run with the trial sites on the basis that there would be no expectation of routine enforcement. The recommendation from the Department for Transport on 20 mph signed-only limits is that they are most suitable for streets where the average speed is already 24 mph or less. That means that, when the signs are put up, there is a slight reduction in speed, which places it within the tolerance that police are willing to accept with the speed limit. Department for Transport guidance would suggest that 20 mph speed limit signs are not appropriate for roads where average speeds are higher than 24 mph.

**The Chairperson:** The streets that I am most familiar with are in the Knock area. Maybe the Committee needs to go out and have a look at some of those streets, particularly around Kensington Road, which already have single lanes and humps. I suspect that the speeds on those streets are below 30 mph because, quite frankly, I am not sure that you could drive at 30 mph there. With your pilot sites in that area, do you know whether speeds have reduced? What are the accident statistics for those areas? Were the measures put in place because of political pressure?

**Mr McClelland:** The 20 mph zones are self-enforcing. The TRL report noted a reduction of 9 mph. Those zones do not require any enforcement by the Police Service. When we introduce traffic-calming schemes, they are prioritised and driven by collision history. You mentioned Kensington —

**The Chairperson:** It is the side streets off Kensington and that area. It is close to here, so perhaps members could have a look at the area during our discussions on the Bill.

**Mr McClelland:** That is a strange one. There are advisory 20 mph signs.

**The Chairperson:** Advisory signs with a green —

**Mr McClelland:** Yes, there are green roundels. I do not know the history behind it. *[Interruption.]*

**The Chairperson:** I am sorry, but I have to stop you at that point and suspend the meeting because a Division is taking place.

*Committee suspended for a Division in the House.*

*On resuming —*

**The Chairperson:** Gentlemen, my apologies. Unfortunately, that was outside my and Committee members' control. I will park my questions, and we will pick up from where I left off.

**Mr Lynch:** Thanks for the presentation. How much flexibility have you in current legislation to change to 20 mph speed limits?

**Mr P Hamilton:** The existing legislation allows us to introduce 20 mph limits through SL1s via the Committee, so we do not need new legislation to bring into effect a 20 mph speed limit in any street.

**Mr Lynch:** You said that the Bill has "limited benefits". Those are the words that you used. Can you expand on that?

**Mr P Hamilton:** That is based on Department for Transport guidance on what you can expect from 20 mph signed-only areas. Typically, for a street that has an average speed of 24 mph, the expectation is that, with a 20 mph sign erected, the average speed would reduce to 23 mph. In the Edinburgh project that you looked at, the reduction in round figures was from 23 mph to 21 mph. Each group, depending on which side of the fence it sits, will take what it wants out of those reductions.

**Mr Lynch:** You said that current measures have proven to be very successful in reducing the number of pedestrian and cyclist fatalities and injuries. What statistics do you have to prove that?

**Mr P Hamilton:** We have statistics for each specific scheme. I gave general statistics from previous surveys, and those were quite significant. On average, the speed reduction with traffic-calming measures was 9 mph. That is from a significant survey undertaken. It was conducted some time ago, but the results are still relevant. There were significant reductions in the number of accidents as well, but, with time, changes in drivers' behaviour, better-designed cars, and so on, the accident reduction figures may not be as large now. Those figures showed accidents falling by 60% in traffic-calmed areas and the number of accidents involving children falling by 67%, so the reductions were quite large.

**Mr Lynch:** Where I live, the speed limit has changed in the past couple of months to 20 mph, but traffic-calming measures were put in place alongside that. The change seems to be doing quite a good job and is fairly effective. I was talking to residents where I live, and they say that it has slowed down the traffic significantly.

**Mr P Hamilton:** That is what we have found. Traffic-calming measures are generally self-enforcing.

**Mr Dallat:** I am sure, Philip, that you can understand why members of the Committee take anything to do with fatal accidents and bad collisions seriously. On Friday night, a man died at the wheel three miles from where I live. Another man died yesterday on the Broad Road in Limavady, about 10 miles from where I live. Those kinds of things encourage well-intentioned people to at least have things discussed.

You are keen to talk to Pat Ramsey about his Bill.

**Mr P Hamilton:** Yes.

**Mr Dallat:** Yet this morning you have been giving the Committee a thousand reasons why it is of no value.

**Mr P Hamilton:** That would not take away from the discussion between the two of us. As I said, our preferred method would be to be able to target areas. Some of those areas might be targeted through the 20 mph signed-only limits. Our reluctance is to adopt a blanket approach, which Mr Ramsey's Bill does at present.

**Mr Dallat:** OK. The 20's Plenty thing that I saw very recently in Scotland caught the attention of a lot of people. You pretty much rubbish that too, because you say that, there, cars are driving within the tolerance level anyway, so all those signs were not really necessary.

**Mr P Hamilton:** I did not go as far as saying that.

**Mr Dallat:** I am only telling you what I picked up.

**Mr P Hamilton:** I do not want to be too negative about this. The guidance from the Department for Transport is that the signed-only measures are most effective in areas where mean speeds are already at the lower end — 24 mph or less.

**Mr Dallat:** You keep talking about the Department for Transport. I have looked at statistics. Do you agree that ours is largely a rural environment? When I say rural, I include in that even bigish towns such as Dungiven. Here is quite different. England has the M6, the M1 and the M25. There are motorways and villages that are done extremely well serviced traffic-calming measures. We do not have that, do we? Some 75% of fatal accidents occur in rural areas, do they not?

**Mr P Hamilton:** Yes.

**Mr Dallat:** Where therefore is the logic in constantly comparing things with the Department for Transport? Surely the purpose of a regional Parliament is so that we can look at our own environment rather than to something that is distinctly urban and quite different.

**Mr P Hamilton:** Most of the research is carried out through the Department for Transport in some shape or form. The figures that I was drawing on are for areas that have lower speed limits, which probably pitches them in urban areas, residential areas and so on.

**Mr Dallat:** You have identified three areas for some kind of pilot, but you have not told us where they are. Will you give me a sense of whether those areas are urban, suburban, rural or whatever?

**Mr P Hamilton:** There are five areas actually. We have two schemes proposed for Belfast.

**Mr Dallat:** Good.

**Mr P Hamilton:** One is for the city centre, and one is in the residential area of Merville Garden Village in Newtownabbey. We also have schemes in three other residential areas: Ballynahinch, Ballycastle and Ballymena.

**Mr Dallat:** Do you think that the schemes are representative of the whole?

**Mr P Hamilton:** We went out and asked our divisions to identify, along with the police, appropriate areas where the schemes stood a chance of being most effective and would be likely to get community support. That is what the divisions came back with.

**Mr Dallat:** Some time ago, in a blaze of publicity, you installed a scheme at Hezlett Primary School near Castlerock and another one elsewhere. I have not heard a word about those since. What was their success? Those were pilot schemes too, but they never went anywhere.

**Mr McClelland:** I was involved in that.

**Mr Dallat:** Good.

**Mr McClelland:** Three pilots were undertaken: one at Hezlett Primary School outside Articlave, one in Ballybogy and one in Templepatrick, which was within the 30 mph limit. The two schemes on the rural roads were deemed to be very effective at reducing speed and, as a side effect, noise, and continued to be. The big issue with the two rural schemes is that they were very expensive, with a capital outlay of £67,000 for each. They also had significant maintenance problems attached. Therefore, having accepted that they were a very effective safety measure at schools, we changed the focus to trying to come up with a more low-cost solution. We are finalising a new schools safety policy for roll-out across Roads Service, and that will incorporate those schemes as a standard measure to be employed.

**Mr Dallat:** Finally, money has been mentioned constantly this morning, and it is big money. Have you any idea of the cost of a fatal accident, taking into account grief, hospitals and everything else that the experts consider?

**Mr McClelland:** The Department for Transport has a figure of £1.8 million, which is supposed to incorporate issues such as those over and above the actual financial cost of the fatality. Serious

injuries are now becoming even more costly. As a result of improvements in trauma care, an increased number of casualties are surviving collisions who previously would not have.

**Mr Dallat:** Chairperson, it is "finally" this time. I think that it would be useful for the Committee to have some statistical data that sets out the real cost of fatal accidents and serious injuries, including the cost to hospitals, which are jammed to the doors, insurance claims, benefits liability and all those things. Then we might be able to begin comparing like with like. All that I have heard this morning is a few raw statistics about the cost of road signs. To be honest, that falls far short of the data that I need to make a balanced judgement on the benefits or otherwise of trying to introduce new initiatives to address road deaths, the number of which is rising again, unfortunately.

Philip, you hit the nail on the head earlier when you said that car design has contributed largely to the fall in the number of fatal accidents, so there is no reason to be complacent.

**The Chairperson:** I am not going to let you away with that, John. We have to be fair and say that, according to statistics, the vast majority of fatal accidents are high-speed accidents that happen on rural roads in the early hours of the morning. Of course, the proposed measures would not be enforced on those roads anyway. The bottom line is that this is not a catch-all for statistics or anything else.

I have asked the Committee Clerk is to bring the PSNI along to be questioned as part of the inquiry. We will certainly look into that.

To go back to the Deputy Chair's questions, I understand that, if a blanket approach were taken, the main thoroughfares would remain at 30 mph and all the side streets would be 20 mph. When you get a complaint about a particular road or side street, do you still go out and put the black bands — or whatever they are — to measure speeds, etc?

**Mr McClelland:** Yes.

**The Chairperson:** That is done before a road has humps or anything else added.

**Mr McClelland:** We always make an assessment of the current mean speed of traffic on the road.

**The Chairperson:** Do you take into consideration the statistics for accidents — fatality, serious injury or slight injury — on that road?

**Mr McClelland:** All that data is collected and analysed.

**The Chairperson:** It all feeds into your decision.

**Mr P Hamilton:** It is all used for our prioritisation spreadsheet, on which we assess which schemes will be the most effective for implementing resources for the period that we are considering.

**The Chairperson:** That is helpful. Thank you for that.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** Thanks, gentlemen. Most of the stuff has already been covered, but one thing jumped out at me from your presentation. Where is the evidence that a reduction to a 20 mph zone increases the number of schoolchildren walking or cycling to school?

**Mr P Hamilton:** That has come from reports of the 20 mph limits that have been instigated in England and Wales. We simply quote that from the 20's Plenty publicity material. One of the benefits of the pilot schemes here is that we will be able to see for ourselves just what the effects of introducing the measures are.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** Therefore, it may not be terribly pertinent here. Here may be substantially different.

**Mr P Hamilton:** It could be.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** The reduction to 20 mph has the potential to decrease the quality of air in areas, particularly as a result of nitrous oxide emissions. Have you any evidence for that?



**Mr McClelland:** There have been mixed reports. Engines are designed to operate at greatest efficiency at higher speeds, so there is an increase in nitrous oxide emissions at lower speeds.

**Mr Ó hOisín:** But there is no —

**Mr McCarthy:** There have been several study reports, and, to be honest, they conflict. It depends which campaign group is lobbying.

**The Chairperson:** On Mr Ó hOisín's point, some of the schemes in England and Wales are part of active travel schemes. Is that correct?

**Mr P Hamilton:** That is correct.

**Mr McNarry:** You are very welcome. I usually find that engineers are more practical when it comes to balancing out wish lists. However, I do not see Pat Ramsey's Bill as a wish list. What impact will his Bill have on reducing accidents?

**Mr P Hamilton:** I can draw only on existing reports and information. The implication is that, with the implementation of signed-only 20 mph limits, there is a reduction in speed. The point that we make is that that is not as great a reduction as is the case with the traffic-calming schemes that we have been running with up until now. There are reductions in casualty numbers, but those reductions are not as great as those under traffic-calming schemes.

**Mr McNarry:** Are you saying that traffic-calming schemes are better than the single 20 mph limit signs?

**Mr P Hamilton:** They have proved to be more effective in reducing speeds, and therefore the number of casualties.

**Mr McNarry:** You may not have this information now, but perhaps you can forward it to the Committee. Is there a difference in the cost between the traffic-calming measures and single signage over a stretch of, say, 1 kilometre?

**Mr P Hamilton:** We have been able to look only at the cost of the 20 mph signed-only limits in a very broad band that we have taken from the comparison with the Portsmouth and Edinburgh schemes.

**Mr McNarry:** That is an extremely broad band.

**Mr Hamilton:** Yes, it is. However, I recognise that the cost of a traffic-calming scheme would be significantly greater than the cost of a signed-only scheme.

**Mr McNarry:** Can you provide us with the figures?

**Mr P Hamilton:** We do not have a cost per kilometre for signed-only schemes. We should be able to produce a cost for the traffic-calming schemes, because we have done that.

**Mr McNarry:** If you can do that — without bearing you down too far — was it such a wide band? Was it six to 20 or something?

**The Chairperson:** Perhaps we can get clarity again for the Committee. Traffic-calming and signage measures were incorporated into the schemes that were looked at in Edinburgh. For most schemes, are traffic-calming measures required as well as signage?

**Mr Hamilton:** In the case of most schemes that go down that route, the choice is to put up signage alone. The traffic-calming measures are a different element. It would be more costly to introduce those, as they would include humps, horizontal deflections, and so on.

**Mr McNarry:** I appreciate that. I would like to see the cost comparisons, as I need to see something to help me in my decision-making. There is anecdotal evidence — although this will also be reported to you on many occasions — that boy racers and girl racers seem to have a particular affinity for

humps, and whether the humps are there or not does not seem to matter too much to them when it comes to the speed that they drive at. Indeed, the humps seem to be part of the race track that they want to go on, so whether a 20 mph sign would make any difference to them is a matter of contention.

Enforcement was mentioned earlier on. In my constituency, I can particularly identify with the fact that the 30 mph limit is enforced. I know that to my cost, because I have been caught. That is probably because it is easy in my constituency for the police to be welcomed and to sit and set their speed traps or whatever they are. That has made me more aware of the fact that I should not do more than 30 mph on the Comber Road or the Upper Newtownards Road or wherever. The words "the policy, the policy, the policy" seem to run through your presentation, so if we have that evidence in your policy, how do we align that with the relevance of the cost of Mr Ramsey's Bill? Like Mr Dallat, I sense that you are putting a downer on this; I do not yet have a sense that you are presenting justifiable reasons.

If it was the House's wish that Mr Ramsey's Bill were adopted, is it worth considering a roll-out of priority areas over a sustained period, whereby the costs are spread and are to a scale? That would mean that we were dealing with priorities, and I would like to know what the priorities are. You might say, "We have 500 of these type of schemes, and we have dealt with what we think are priorities". However, I would like to know whether there are any other existing priorities and whether you would consider a roll-out of priorities for the signage, as per Mr Ramsey's Bill.

**Mr P Hamilton:** We have dealt with the highest priorities through the traffic calming schemes that we have carried out. We have a significant list of other schemes that various communities would like done, and they are assessed in line with the criteria that Greg mentioned. That list includes collisions, environment, traffic and pedestrian volumes and the nature of the area, such as whether there are hospitals or schools etc.

Rather than introduce a blanket scheme, which is what Mr Ramsey's Bill would propose, our preference is to identify priority areas. If those trials were successful and showed that there were merits in introducing signed-only 20 mph streets, they would be introduced through current legislation on a priority basis.

**Mr McNarry:** That is very interesting, because we dealing with not only an inquiry but a Bill. I am not too sure that any Bill of this nature would say, "We want blanket coverage of this next week." There would be no practicality in that, and I think that that may be something for you to consider when you speak to Mr Ramsey.

Moving on to the studies that you referred to, how detailed was the Transport Research Laboratory's 1998 study compared with that in 1996?

**Mr P Hamilton:** The 1996 study covered 250 zones, but I do not have a figure for how many speed-limit areas the 1998 research covered.

**Mr McNarry:** I wish that you did, because you give facts on the 1996 research and then make assumptions about that in 1998. I would much prefer to see some similar facts. That is why I asked how detailed the study was in 1998.

Finally, let us look at where we have facts and not assumptions. Do the figures from the 250 zones that were covered in the 1996 research, which was some time ago, still pertain today? That research found that average speeds fell by 9 mph, the annual total of accidents fell by 60%, the number of accidents involving children fell by 67% and, especially given our interest in not only all this subject but cycling, the number of incidents involving cyclists fell by 29%. Are those figures still constant, or have they improved?

**Mr P Hamilton:** I think that it is fair to say that the speed reduction figures are still relevant. As I said, the casualty reduction figures are probably not as strong, given the changes in behaviours and in car design and so forth. I accept that the casualty reduction figures are probably not as high as was stated in back 1996. I apologise for referring to this again, but the Department for Transport guidance and advice still sees that speed reduction aspect as relevant to the current period.

**Mr McNarry:** If you were a politician, such as we are meant to be, and some of us are, I think —

**The Chairperson:** Speak for yourself, Mr McNarry.

**Mr McNarry:** I was trying to be general.

I think that the Bill is meritorious, and I congratulate Mr Ramsey on at least proceeding with it. I bow to your knowledge, and I referred to the fact that you are engineers, so I understand the practicality of your being in this role. On what basis would you say to Mr Ramsey, "There is no need for your Bill"?

**Mr P Hamilton:** The legislation is already in place to allow the Department, through this Committee, to introduce 20 mph limits on streets. Our view is that you do not need additional legislation to do that. As I also said, our preference is to target those measures, as opposed to applying a blanket scheme. By targeting them, you address the areas that most need them and where communities want them, whereas with a blanket approach, there is the possibility that you will implement a 20 mph limit in an area where a community may not want it.

**Mr McNarry:** I do not see that.

**The Chairperson:** Community involvement appeared to be a very big priority in the Edinburgh scheme. Those of us who were in Edinburgh, such as Mr McCarthy, Mr Lynch, Cathal Ó hOisín and others, found that community support was a major plank in the whole thing. If you did not have that, they were virtually saying that it was —

**Mr McNarry:** I agree with that. The suggestion that a blanket ban means that communities will automatically have to accept something that they do not want seems quite preposterous to me. I do not see that, so I wish that you could explain that. I do not know any type of legislation that the House is capable of passing, except on flags probably, that communities will not want. So, I want you to look at that reasoned argument again, because all that is being asked for is an ability to do something on the basis that it is legislated for and not just because you or your Department say that it can or cannot happen. It is possibly about taking that responsibility out of your hands.

**Mr P Hamilton:** My understanding of Mr Ramsey's proposal — correct me if I am wrong — is that the legislation that would result from his Bill would mean the widespread introduction of 20 mph limits through signed-only measures on unclassified urban roads.

**Mr McNarry:** Maybe the sooner you and Mr Ramsey get together to thrash a few things out, the better.

**The Chairperson:** Am I right in saying that, under the legislation that is in place, you have to designate 20 mph speed limits?

**Mr P Hamilton:** Yes.

**The Chairperson:** Whereas, if the Bill were to find favour with the House, it would designate every place as having a 20 mph limited, so the existing 30 mph and 40 mph speed limits would have to be redesignated. Is that correct?

**Mr P Hamilton:** No. My understanding is that the Bill would define the category of streets that would be designated as 20 mph. Our general understanding of that is that it would be urban unclassified streets. The urban classified streets, such as Newtownards Road or Belmont Road, would remain at 30 mph.

**The Chairperson:** OK.

**Mr McNarry:** Would you still get booked for doing 30 mph?

**The Chairperson:** I know that you have an allergy to speed cameras and such things, David.

**Mr Byrne:** It seems that money is the big issue. You are saying that the cost for this could range between £6 million and £26 million. That seems to be a wide variation. How could it be kept at £6 million, and why would it have to be £26 million? That is the issue.

Can you outline what the £20 million that you reckon has been spent on traffic calming over the past 10 years has been spent on? Lastly, there is a great fear of the opt-out rather than the opt-in. Is that right?

**Mr P Hamilton:** You are quite right; £6 million to £26 million seems to be a very broad range. We have taken that from the benchmarks of the Portsmouth scheme and the Edinburgh scheme. We looked at the costs there for each kilometre on a pro rata basis and compared them with the costs in Northern Ireland for the 4,300 kilometres of urban unclassified roads that we have. That creates the range of £6 million to £26 million.

Traffic calming —

**Mr Byrne:** I am still confused. Why is there such a range? What variables —

**Mr P Hamilton:** We have taken the cost of Portsmouth, which was about £570,000.

**The Chairperson:** I think that Mr Byrne is saying that you start with a figure of £6 million and get to the figure of £26 million, which is a £20 million difference. How did you get to the figure? Is that correct, Joe?

**Mr Byrne:** Yes. I am trying to work that out.

**Mr P Hamilton:** If you took the benchmark as one scheme —

**Mr Byrne:** In your opinion, which was more cost-effective: Edinburgh or Portsmouth?

**Mr McClelland:** Portsmouth was the lower figure. We have a more detailed breakdown of the actual costs for Edinburgh, including attitude surveys, vehicle surveys and consultation costs, as well as the signing and surface marking.

**Mr Byrne:** So, the £6 million is based on the Portsmouth figure, which you regard as being more cost-effective than the Edinburgh project, which involved more largesse. Is that right?

**Mr McClelland:** If you used that as a benchmark, you would see that, if the Edinburgh scheme were considered over here, pro rata, it would be the more expensive.

**Mr Byrne:** OK. When considering the £20 million that you have spent in the past 10 years, can you tell us what mixture of traffic calming measures you used?

**Mr P Hamilton:** It covers a range of measures. Roughly 500 schemes were carried out. They involved a mixture of road humps, horizontal deflections, gateway features, signage and central islands.

**Mr Byrne:** What is the quantum of kilometres that you used on those 500 schemes?

**Mr P Hamilton:** I am not sure.

**Mr McClelland:** Each scheme is unique, and they are area wide.

**Mr Byrne:** So, you would have a Northern Ireland average for each kilometre, based on the 500 projects that you have done over the past 10 years. Is that right?

**Mr McClelland:** We probably could —

**Mr Byrne:** So, could you do definitive modelling on the costs, based on your experience over 10 years?

**Mr P Hamilton:** Quite possibly, yes.

**Mr Hussey:** You mentioned target areas. What do you use to create a target area?

**Mr P Hamilton:** We get requests for traffic calming, and each of them is assessed. We have the various criteria for assessing them. They relate to the collision history at the location, traffic volume, pedestrian volume and the make-up of the traffic volume. The environment of the location and such factors as whether it is close to hospitals, schools, nursery schools and that type of thing gains extra criteria for vulnerable users. So, all that is taken into consideration in assessing schemes, and out of that, schemes are ranked in priority through a points system. We target the schemes that tick most of the boxes.

**Mr Hussey:** I have been involved in quite a few of these schemes in my area of west Tyrone and Omagh. Again, accidents are taken into account. On the Kevlin Road, we had quite a lot of bother getting that through until a certain gentleman was knocked down twice. That gave us double points to get traffic calming on the road. A lot of the estates in the likes of Tyrone and other areas were built in the 1960s and 1970s and were built for that time. Most have a 30 mph speed limit. However, the Hospital Road in Omagh was one area on which you did a very good job. The entire estate, which consists of 6,000 or 7,000 houses, had traffic calming measures in a 20 mph zone. Can you give us any feedback on the effect of something like that where you worked on a complete estate? I am talking about several estates within a complex.

**The Chairperson:** Mr Hussey, just before we move on, you mentioned the individual case of a gentleman who had been knocked down twice. I want to make a point for the safety of the other members of this Committee. That person could be identified and, even if he were deceased, family are obviously still about the place. So, in the interests of the other Committee members, I want to keep them and the officials right about this matter. So, perhaps you will reflect on that.

**Mr Hussey:** In the last example, I did not actually refer to that gentleman. So, for that particular area, where an awful lot of work was done, I wondered whether we could get any feedback from the Department about the effectiveness of that work.

**The Chairperson:** Let me, as Chair of the Committee, if there are no objections and on behalf of the other members, ask for the rest of us to be disassociated from that particular remark. Is that agreed?

*Members indicated assent.*

**Mr Hussey:** I withdraw the remark if it causes offence.

**The Chairperson:** Thanks. It does not cause offence to anybody here, but I am thinking of the family of the individual, who may well, if it came to —

**Mr Hussey:** I apologise.

**The Chairperson:** I am only trying to keep you right as well.

**Mr Hussey:** If I caused offence, I apologise for it

**The Chairperson:** You are not causing me or other members offence. However, it is just a matter of clarity to keep the officials and members right.

**Mr Hussey:** Would it be possible for the Department to give us some feedback on that particular example?

You mentioned five schemes: two in Belfast and one each in Ballynahinch, Ballycastle and Ballymena. There seems to be a theme of Ballys. Why are they all in the north of Northern Ireland? Why are there are none further south or in the west of Northern Ireland, in counties Tyrone, Fermanagh and Londonderry? Why are they in those areas?

**Mr McClelland:** Only one proposal came through from the western division. That was for Omagh, and we considered it unsuitable for such a scheme. The police were not at all supportive. It was in the area of the regional college, and it was used mostly for rat running, or there was a dead end. The police did not really feel that speed was the issue there.

**The Chairperson:** Do members have any other questions?

**Mr McCarthy:** Let me follow up on that. For any of the areas, is the decision dependent upon a 100% request from the residents? We receive complaints from residents, who may allege that there is a rat run through the estate. If a 100% request comes from the residents, will you provide a scheme?

**Mr P Hamilton:** Are you talking about these pilots or just about traffic calming measures in general?

**Mr McCarthy:** Just in general.

**Mr P Hamilton:** We have talked about how we assess the various requests. If we were going to implement a scheme that was far enough up the list to be a priority, we would consult with the local community and take its views into consideration. If there was a majority view that traffic calming was not the solution for that area, we would not force it on the community.

**Mr McCarthy:** All I am asking is this: if the request came from that community, with the vast majority of people saying "It is fairly successful in other areas, and we would like the Department to introduce it in our area", would you introduce it?

**Mr P Hamilton:** Are you talking about the 20 mph speed limit?

**Mr McCarthy:** Yes.

**Mr P Hamilton:** We would need to look at the outcomes of the trials first to see just how effective they are before we would move forward with any outcomes.

**The Chairperson:** Just for the record, how are speeds monitored in the trials? Are speed gates put on the road?

**Mr McClelland:** We install traffic counters.

**The Chairperson:** Do they give you speeds as well?

**Mr McClelland:** Yes. We can also use radar guns, but for these projects, we gather a lot of evidence and continue to monitor any impact of the introduction of the pilot scheme.

**The Chairperson:** How often are radar guns used to monitor speed?

**Mr McClelland:** I could not tell you about radar guns with any certainty, but traffic counters operate 24/7, and we can then monitor the profile of vehicle speeds over days or at weekends.

**The Chairperson:** To give us some information, it might be helpful if you could share some of the statistics with the Committee at an early stage. We have already asked for other information. It also might be helpful if you could tell us which of those pilot schemes have humps and other features.

**Mr McClelland:** None of them has humps.

**The Chairperson:** The one down at the Kensington does.

**Mr McClelland:** It is not one of the pilot sign schemes.

**The Chairperson:** Was it monitored?

**Mr McClelland:** Yes, it was.

**The Chairperson:** How did that come about? Can I assume that the Department put those signs up?

**Mr McClelland:** Yes, a local traffic engineer would have done that. From what I understand about that scheme, there was a rat-running issue in that area. A lot of traffic was diverting through the area.

**The Chairperson:** I think that that is probably correct. Perhaps we could get statistics on that from the local engineers and information on where the pilots are located so that, possibly, on another occasion or meeting, we could look at some of them.

I have just one final question, for the record. It is about the Department of Transport setting local speed limits. It says that:

*"Speed limits should be evidence-led and self-explaining and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel."*

Do you believe that the proposed Bill will achieve that?

**Mr P Hamilton:** I have given our preferences for the proposed Bill. They are not for a blanket imposition. Our preference would be to target areas that are appropriate, rather than to impose blanket coverage.

**The Chairperson:** OK, gentlemen, I thank you for your presentation. I apologise for the delay and that you had to wait. That was due to what is happening in the House. We will be here for quite a while yet by the looks of things. There will be more votes, but that is not your problem any more. You will be coming back to us if the Bill gets to Committee Stage. Obviously, we will be talking to you on a number of occasions. In the meantime, however, thank you very much for your input.

**Mr P Hamilton:** Thank you very much, Chairman.

**The Chairperson:** The whole meeting has been recorded for Hansard, so the Clerk's office will let you have a copy of the Hansard report. We asked for some information, and we will follow up that request in writing. Thank you.