



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Please use this form to submit written submissions in relation to the Roads Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill. Return to committee.regionaldevelopment@niassembly.gov.uk

Organisation: The RAC Foundation.

Date: 6th May 2015.

1. The RAC Foundation is an independent transport policy and research organisation which explores the economic, mobility, safety and environmental issues relating to roads and their users. The Foundation carries out independent and authoritative research with which it promotes informed debate and advocates policy in the interests of responsible road users.

INTRODUCTION

2. The Foundation is an established advocate of well designed speed limits and enforcement as essential tools in managing the safe and efficient operation of the road network. It has published several pieces of work in recent years on this topic including:

- ***The Effectiveness of Speed Cameras: A review of evidence***, Allsop, November 2010,
[http://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/effectiveness_of_speed_cameras_allsop_181110.pdf].
- ***Effectiveness of Speed Cameras***, Allsop, February 2011,
[http://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/speed%20camera%20q%20&%20a%20240311.pdf].
- ***Speed and Safety: Evidence from published data***, Mitchell, August 2011,
[http://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/speed_and_safety-mitchell-aug2012.pdf]
- ***Speed Limits: A review of evidence***, Box and Bayliss, August 2012,
[http://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/speed_limits-box_bayliss-aug2012.pdf]
- ***Guidance on Use of Speed Camera Transparency Data***, Allsop November 2013,
[http://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/s

In 2012 the Foundation responded to the Department for Transport's consultation on the revision of its speed limits circular which dealt primarily with the circumstances in which 20 mph speed limits should be introduced. This response is included as an annex to this response.

OBSERVATIONS ON 20 MPH SPEED LIMITS

3. In England 20 mph speed limits/zones have become increasingly common in recent years with over 2,000 now in operation - mainly 'speed zones'. The difference between speed zones and speed limits being that speed zones cover a limited area whereas speed limits are, as implied, the simple imposition of a speed limit either on individual streets or wider areas. Where the measures used result in lower speeds, both the frequency and severity of collisions can, *ceteris paribus*, can be expected to be reduced.
4. Lower speeds mean longer journey times, but the increased journey times will be limited where the distance travelled at the lower speed is small. The longer the distance travelled on 20 mph restricted roads, where this limit is significantly below the speed the traffic would otherwise travel, the less likely drivers are to comply with the speed limit as the time penalties start to become significant. The use of traffic management measures with which compliance is likely to be poor is undesirable unless additional enforcement is introduced.
5. Speed zones covering limited areas where there are higher densities of vulnerable road users, which means the need for lower speeds is evident to drivers and reinforced by physical measures, are more likely to be effective in reducing speeds and collisions. This results in 20 mph zones being more popular than simple 20 mph limits and many more zones than speeds limits have been introduced in England over the last decade or so.
6. Guidance in England states that 20 mph zones should be used 'predominantly in urban areas, both town centres and residential areas, and in the vicinity of schools'. They should also be used around shops, markets, playgrounds and other areas with high pedestrian or cyclist traffic, though they should not include roads where vehicle movement is the primary function. It is generally recommended that they are imposed over an area consisting of several roads'.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE ROAD TRAFFIC (SPEED LIMITS) BILL.

7. The Bill would introduce powers to allow the imposition of a blanket 20 mph speed limit on residential roads in Northern Ireland. Residential roads are defined generally as those with street lights no more than 185 metres apart, in residential areas and which do not form part of a major thoroughfare. This was chosen in preference to a zonal approach which had already been tried and shown to be effective in pilot schemes in Belfast.
8. Experience from England has shown that the zonal approach has the advantages of achieving a better level of compliance and focussing the lower speeds on areas where the benefits are greatest. This maximises the safety and environmental benefits whilst restricting the costs of delays to motorists from extended journey times.
9. There may well be areas where a general 20 mph speed limit is the best way of dealing with road safety problems but there will be others where a more selective approach is appropriate such as in the vicinity of schools or local shopping centres and accident black-spots where a range of measures are required to reduce the risk of

collisions.

10. It is therefore the Foundations view that, whilst 20 mph speed limits have an important role to play in improving road safety on residential roads a targeted approach involving a range of road safety interventions is more likely to be effective and enforceable than a blanket 20 mph speed limit.

SOURCES

Atkins, *Interim Evaluation of the Implementation of 20 mph Speed Limits in Portsmouth., Portsmouth County Council,*

[<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/research/rsrr/theme4/interimeval20mphspeedlimits.pdf>]

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Northern Ireland Assembly, *Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill Explanatory and Financial Memorandum as Introduced*, NIA, Belfast, December 2013,

[<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/current-non-executive-bill-proposals/road-traffic-speed-limits-bill/road-traffic-speed-limits-bill-explanatory-and-financial-memorandum/>]

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December 2013, [<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/current-non-executive-bill-proposals/road-traffic-speed-limits-bill-pat-ramsey/>]

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, *20 mph Speed Limits: Fact Sheet*, RoSPA, London, December 2014, [<http://www.rospace.com/road-safety/advice/drivers/speed/20mph-zones-and-limits/>]

RAC Foundation, *RAC Foundation Consultation Response on the revision of DfT's speed limit circular*, RACF, London, September 2012..

Taylor M. C., Lynam D. A. & Baruya A. *The effects of drivers' speed on the frequency of road accidents, TRL Report 421*, Crowthorne, 2000,

[<http://www.20splentyforus.co.uk/UsefulReports/TRLREports/trl421SpeedAccidents.pdf>]

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