

At the end of the session there was a suggestion made that considerable savings in signage costs could be made if a suggested amendment were made. This may have prejudiced the committee against the original bill.

However I believe that such a presumption is incorrect and that the suggested amendment would not intrinsically change to costs. I have put together the attached by way of explanation. I think it would be useful if this were copied to all committee members and Mr Ramsey.

20's Plenty for Us comment on Speed Limit Bill

Clarification of point raised regarding signage requirements for the Speed Limits Bill and whether the amendment proposed by Sustrans will alter this.

At the final presentation by Sustrans there was a suggestion that a proposed amendment by Sustrans would remove the requirement for so many speed limit signs and therefore reduce the cost considerably.

The amendment would create a default 20mph limit in residential streets which would only be implemented after a comprehensive consultation process.

Putting aside the inaccuracy regarding using the term "residential road" without the important classification that is inherent in the original bill there are a number of flaws in this amendment which should be considered:

- 1) The implication was made that such a "default" would not require any "within limit" 20mph repeater signs.

This is entirely false. The requirement for repeater signs is not in whether the speed limit is a default or no, but whether it is 20mph. This is defined not in primary legislation directly but in the need to adhere to the Traffic Signage Regulations and General Directive which states that 30mph repeaters should never be used on "restricted roads" and that any other speed limit including 20mph will require repeaters signs as specified in the directive. Note that in a 20mph limit these may be replaced by carriageway or (in a zone) by other traffic calming devices.

Whilst it would be possible to make the case to DfT that such a regulation could be waived where the whole of Northern Ireland was to adopt a policy where most urban roads had a 20mph limit, exactly the same case could be made if the classification of roads as "residential" were used as in the original bill.

Hence there is no inherent cost saving from this amendment.

- 2) The implication is that the amendment will choose to change the speed limit for restricted roads (as defined by street lighting periodicity) from 30mph to 20mph.

This would therefore include, by default, all the A, B and C category restricted roads that the current bill takes care to exclude. Whilst there may be grounds for setting some of these roads at 20mph, by automatically including them then an immediate appraisal and justification will be needed on every road to possibly exclude them. This idea that all "30's will be changed to 20" will not be easily understood and is likely to result in a negative reaction.

We believe that whilst the original bill is more conservative in its selection of roads to be set at 20, this is far more manageable in implementation whilst still allowing, over time, for additional roads to be added as appropriate.

We can understand that whilst being mindful of a Sustrans aspiration that all restricted roads should be 20mph, we believe that the bill in its current form is far more pragmatic and has no increased costs above that with the amendment.

In either case, it must be taken into account that the benefits of lower speeds on most urban roads outweighs the costs by a very large margin. In some cases a FYRR of 800% was found on the value of casualties saved in the first year compared to implementation costs.

Throughout England local authorities have justified and valued wide-area 20mph limits even including the costs of repeater signage. If NI can gain the flexibility to only require repeater signs on the 30mph roads then this should be seen as an additional windfall and not an intrinsic requirement.

I trust that the committee will understand that it is important to fully appreciate the technicalities of this issue and would suggest that it should continue its deliberations on the basis of full repeater signage being required, yet at the same time seek clarification from DfT regarding relaxation as suggested.

I hope that the above is useful for the committee and would be pleased to elaborate further and assist in any way that I can.

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