

# Restricted Roads (20mph Speed Limit) (Scotland) Bill

A Stage 1 briefing by Friends of the Earth Scotland

7 June 2019



**Friends of the Earth Scotland**

## Key points

Friends of the Earth Scotland was disappointed with the shortsighted nature of the Committee report on this Bill, and urges MSPs to **support** the the Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Scotland) Bill, in order to create safer and healthier streets. The Bill would:

- Improve air quality by creating a smoother flow of traffic
- Encourage greater levels of active travel, reducing pollution, and encouraging more people to access the huge benefits of an active, healthier, lifestyle
- Reduce accidents and reduce pollutants which have a particularly detrimental impact on health
- Contribute to tackling the climate emergency by reducing transport emissions
- Create greater cost efficiency for local authorities in delivering safer streets

Friends of the Earth Scotland fully supports the proposal to replace the current 30mph default speed limit on restricted roads with a 20mph limit, and urges MSPs to support this Bill. Changing the default speed limit would make our streets safer and healthier for people who use them.

There are a number of benefits to the Bill, delivering on a variety of policy objectives:

### **The need to improve air quality and reduce transport emissions**

This Bill will help to improve air quality and reduce transport emissions in Scotland. Scotland has been breaching air quality legal limits since 2010, and air pollution causes **2,500 early deaths** a year here<sup>1</sup>. Breathing in toxic fumes increases the risk of having a heart attack, stroke, or cancer. Vulnerable groups, such as **children and the elderly**, are at higher risk.

Reducing the speed limit would improve the flow of traffic, which has been proven to

reduce congestion and emissions<sup>2</sup>. Slower traffic would also incentivise and encourage **more active, healthier, travel**. All of this would contribute to reducing pollution, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and improving air quality.

Transport also remains Scotland's biggest contributor to climate change - with greenhouse gas emissions still at the same level they were in 1990. If Scotland is serious about **tackling the climate emergency**, politicians need to back policies like this which would deliver an increase in cleaner, active, travel.

### **Reducing Vehicle Emissions**

Vehicles flow more smoothly in 20mph areas than in 30mph areas<sup>3</sup>. This means less congestion and, as a result of reduced acceleration and braking, vehicles in 20mph areas on the whole use less fuel than in 30mph areas. This would create both cost

<sup>1</sup><https://foe.scot/press-release/new-research-means-2500-deaths-a-year-in-scotland-are-from-air-pollution/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/business/environmental-health/environmental-protection/air-quality/Documents/speed-restriction-air-quality-report-2013-for-web.pdf>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/business/environmental-health/environmental-protection/air-quality/Documents/speed-restriction-air-quality-report-2013-for-web.pdf>

## savings for the driver and **reduced air pollution emissions.**

Studies have found that 20mph limits bring about a net **reduction in air pollution** from transport, largely driven by a decrease in Particulate Matter 10 (PM10) from petrol cars and less PM10, Carbon Dioxide and Nitrous Oxides from diesel cars. According to Transport for London, over 75% of road transport particulate emissions come from tyre wear and brake wear, meaning driving conditions and driver behaviour are crucial determinants of air pollution. In 20mph zones vehicles move more smoothly, with fewer accelerations and decelerations, than in 30mph zones, meaning less pollution<sup>4</sup>.

## **Efficient use of Council resource**

This Bill would create greater financial efficiency at local authority level. It would reduce the need for councils to introduce street-by-street Traffic Regulation Orders, which is a lengthy, time-consuming process. In Edinburgh, for example, the initial pilot was launched in 2012, but the final rollout only took place in 2018<sup>56</sup>. Edinburgh City Council estimated that if this legislation had been in place, it would have cost them **less than £1million** to roll out their 20mph limit, as opposed to the £2.5million it cost without the legislation.<sup>7</sup>

There is scope for greater national savings with a joined up rollout and more shared procurement. A nationwide introduction of 20mph-as-default will save Council resources, speed up changes, and ensure no family waits longer than necessary for their street to be made safer.

<sup>4</sup> <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/speed-emissions-and-health.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/news/article/1743/busting\\_the\\_myths\\_around\\_edinburghs\\_20mph\\_roll-out](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/news/article/1743/busting_the_myths_around_edinburghs_20mph_roll-out)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20243/20mph\\_for\\_edinburgh/1481/20mph\\_in\\_my\\_area](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20243/20mph_for_edinburgh/1481/20mph_in_my_area)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11982>

## **Essential modal shift**

Safety is the key reason people don't walk or cycle, and why they don't want their children walking or cycling to school<sup>8</sup>. Areas which introduce 20mph limits have seen an **increase in the number of people walking and cycling**, and we can expect that to continue as lower speed limits become more widespread and normalised<sup>9</sup>. This modal shift - from motor transport to walking and cycling - is essential for reducing transport emissions and improving air quality.

## **Compliance**

Lowering speed limits leads to lower average speeds - a study by Imperial College London found that, "mean cruise speeds were 14.9mph on 20mph segments and 19.2mph on 30mph segments"<sup>10</sup>. Research suggests that we would see a 5% reduction in accidents for every 1mph decrease in average speed<sup>11</sup> - highlighting the impact that any change in average speeds would bring. Evidence also shows that the larger the 20mph area, and the longer they've existed, the higher the level of compliance. On a national level and over time, we would expect increased levels of compliance<sup>12</sup>.

## **For more information contact:**

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/6007/Active\\_travel\\_synthesis\\_final.pdf](https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/6007/Active_travel_synthesis_final.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/757307/20mph-headlinereport.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/757307/20mph-headlinereport.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/business/environmental-health/environmental-protection/air-quality/Documents/speedrestriction-air-quality-report-2013-for-web.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, M. C., Lynam, D. A. and Baruya, A. (2000) The effects of drivers' speed on the frequency of road accidents /

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_Rural/20\\_plenty\\_for\\_us\\_20mph.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Rural/20_plenty_for_us_20mph.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/democracy/Microsoft\\_Word\\_-\\_Item\\_8\\_Speed\\_Reduction\\_Review.pdf](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/democracy/Microsoft_Word_-_Item_8_Speed_Reduction_Review.pdf)