

P-06-1385 Hold an unbiased survey of the residents who live in the 20mph speed limit pilot scheme areas

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 4 Mawrth 2024
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Reference: SR24/7752-2

Petition Number: P-06-1385

Petition title: Hold an unbiased survey of the residents who live in the 20mph speed limit pilot scheme areas

Text of petition: From summer 2021 the Welsh government introduced a pilot scheme to reduce the default speed limit in urban areas from 30mph to 20mph. The trial was brought in in several areas around Wales. These areas were Abergavenny, Monmouthshire; Central North, Cardiff; Severnside, Monmouthshire; Buckley, Flintshire; Cilfriw Village, Neath and Port Talbot; St Dogmaels, Pembrokeshire; St Brides Major, Vale of Glamorgan; and Llanelli North, Carmarthenshire.

From 17th September 2023 the 20mph reduced speed limit in urban areas has become law nationally. However no one has asked the people who have lived in the trial areas what their opinions of the trial were, or if they believe the trial was a success or failure, whether the speed limit was adhered to or ignored, if it was policed or not. No one has asked learner drivers or young drivers with speed monitor devices fitted how they coped with the speed change. No one has asked people who work in these areas how it has effected them . No one has asked business owners if they believe the speed



limit change has affected their business or customer base. Information like this surely is crucial to understanding how well the pilot worked or did not work. Therefore I'm petitioning for the Welsh government to introduce a survey of residents and businesses within the pilot scheme areas to be introduced, including a section for people to give their opinions of and suggestions about the scheme.

1. Background

In 2019 the Welsh Government set up a task and finish group to consider whether 20mph should become the default speed limit in residential areas. The Welsh Government accepted the group's recommendations, including that the default speed limit on restricted roads should be reduced from 30mph to 20mph.

Following public consultation and a pilot scheme across eight communities, the Welsh Government laid the Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order in June 2022. The draft Order was passed by the Senedd in July 2022 and came into force in September 2023.

As you'll be aware the policy has received widespread media coverage and a petition to rescind the legislation has received over 470,000 signatures. The Welsh Government recently announced that a review of how the policy has been implemented will be undertaken. The independent review team's interim report was published on 20 February, with its final report due to be published later this year.

Pilot areas

As outlined, pilots took place in eight communities across Wales to trial 20mph default limits in the lead up to the national roll-out. The petitioner calls for those living in the pilot areas to be surveyed on the impacts.

The first monitoring report on the impact was published in March 2023, followed by a final monitoring report (for the pilot areas) in February 2024. Data up to May 2023 showed:

- "large positive" changes in relation to speed reduction Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and attitudes to active travel;

- a “slight positive” change in vehicle / pedestrian yield behaviour; and
- “no discernible change” in local air quality and “slight negative” changes in vehicle journey times, including a general decrease in punctuality for peak time bus services.

Monitoring of other KPIs, including public attitudes as called for by the petitioner, haven’t been covered in the pilots because of the “limited geographical coverage...and the short timescales involved since implementation”. The final monitoring report states:

...public attitudes to 20mph speed limits...can only be assessed as more people experience the effects of 20mph after the national roll-out.

Monitoring the national roll-out

In September 2023 Transport for Wales (TfW) published a monitoring framework document for the national roll-out. This identifies the policy objectives and the indicators to be used. Data will be collected for up to five years post-implementation.

Assessment will be against a total of 12 KPIs (see section 2.2 and figure 2 in the monitoring framework). The framework outlines the primary and secondary data sources, collection methods and timescales to be used in monitoring the policy. This includes “qualitative attitudinal surveys”. The framework says:

We will examine the attitudes and perceptions of people living in areas where the speed limit has been reduced using attitudinal surveys after the national roll-out. The surveys will include questions on attitudes towards using active travel modes (walking, wheeling and cycling) for local journeys in built-up areas and will also consider respondents’ perceptions on matters relating to traffic speed, traffic noise and effects on communities. There will be a particular focus on more vulnerable groups in society when collecting attitudinal data.

In terms of formal reporting timescales the framework says:

Transport for Wales will prepare an interim report on the initial effects of the national default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads based on data collected through to six months after implementation (October 2023 to March 2024). The report will be published in June 2024. A further report on the first full year of implementation will be published in December 2024. Formal reporting will then take place annually.

Senedd Research has published an article which explores enforcement and monitoring of the policy in more detail.

2. Welsh Government action

As outlined above the monitoring framework relating to the national roll-out includes reference to “qualitative attitudinal surveys” being undertaken.

In his letter to the Chair dated 8 February, the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS, says there are no plans to hold surveys specifically in the pilot areas. The Deputy Minister refers to the monitoring framework.

The letter goes on to provide details of the review into how the policy has been implemented. It says the review team’s final report is due to be submitted to the Welsh Government by Summer Recess 2024.

3. Welsh Parliament action

In July 2020 the Senedd debated the introduction of default 20mph speed limits with 45 of 53 Members voting in favour of the motion.

As outlined, the Welsh Government laid the Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order in June 2022. The draft Order was passed by the Senedd in July 2022. It has been raised in the Senedd on numerous occasions.

In October 2023 the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee scrutinised the Deputy Minister on the policy.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.