

P-06-1537 We require a public poll on 20 mph speed limits as the Welsh people are being ignored

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 8 Rhagfyr 2025
Petitions Committee | 8 December 2025

Reference: SR25/12648-1

Introduction

Petition Number: P-06-1537

Petition title: We require a public poll on 20 mph speed limits as the Welsh people are being ignored

Text of petition: The speed limit petition has been ignored by those in power, the only way to properly gauge feeling from the people would be to have a public poll of all Welsh voters, and, when it is realised how hated the 20 mph limits are, then they should be changed back to 30mph immediately.

The promise of the Senedd listening was yet another lie from politicians too self-absorbed to listen to the voters. We have now seen many other speed limits also reduced, which also need returning to the previous limits. Since the petition against the 20mph speed limit closed, there has been a lot of talk but very little visible action on this matter, and more speed limits have been reduced. All limits need to be restored, including the M4 back to 70mph, as the pollution excuse is now redundant as a large part of Port Talbot steelworks has been shut down.



In my opinion, the safety reason for these limits is being proved wrong every day as there now appear to be more accidents than ever. This law has targeted the wrong people, the people speeding excessively are still speeding, but now I believe the accidents are more severe as when the speeders hit those who wish to keep their licenses, the speed difference is now far greater.

It is also causing more road rage incidents than I've seen in 35 years of driving, and has reduced the significance of the areas that had, and actually needed, 20mph limits.

It has been and continues to be a waste of time and money, forced on us by zealots that have no idea how this country needs to be run.

The text provided above is submitted by the petitioner. The petitions team make every effort to ensure it preserves their authentic voice. This text has not been verified for accuracy, or errors, and may contain unverified opinions or assertions.

Mae'r testun uchod yn cael ei gyflwyno gan y deisebydd. Mae'r tîm deisebau yn gwneud pob ymdrech i sicrhau ei fod yn cadw ei lais dilys. Nid yw'r testun hwn wedi'i wirio am gywirdeb, neu wallau, a gall gynnwys barn neu honiadau heb eu gwirio.

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. In July 2020, 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 approved by the Senedd in July 2022 and came into force in September 2023.

The policy has received widespread media coverage and the petition calling for the legislation to be 'rescinded' received over 469,000 signatures – the highest ever received for a Senedd petition.

Senedd Research has previously published a number of articles on:

- the policy and reaction to it in the lead up to the national roll-out;
- the implementation of the policy and the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits;
- how the policy will be enforced and monitored; and
- developments since the policy came into force (such as the guidance review and early monitoring data).

Impact of the 20mph speed limit

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 in September 2023.

The first monitoring report on the impact in pilot areas 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;
- “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.

Collisions and casualties

The police recorded road collisions: 2024 data showed that in 2024 there were 1,441 road collisions on 20 and 30mph road speed limits (combined), the lowest figure since records began. This was a decrease of 19% from 2023, the largest annual fall apart from 2020 (during the COVID-19 pandemic).

During the 12-month period from 2023 Q4 to 2024 Q3 (after the introduction of the 20mph default speed limit), the number of casualties on 20 and 30mph roads (combined) is 28% lower than the same period a year before.

Within these casualties, fatalities decreased by 17.3% and seriously injured casualties decreased by 2.3%.

It is important to note that the Welsh Government’s Chief Statistician has said that more time (typically three years) and data is needed to make meaningful comparisons to statistics around collisions before the speed limit was introduced.

Monitoring public opinion

National listening programme

The Welsh Government introduced a ‘national listening programme’ in April 2024. This was a Wales-wide programme of interviewing citizens to understand their perspectives on road safety in residential areas. Within this programme, the public are asked to identify and report roads to the local highway authority where they believe the speed limit should change.

Transport for Wales monitoring programme

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. 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 the July 2025 report on the framework, TfW said:

Research on public attitudes to the 20mph limit will be conducted through a separate policy evaluation commissioned by the Welsh Government, so data for the associated KPIs is not available for this report.

At the time of preparing this briefing, the last research released on KPIs associated with public attitudes was released in November 2022 by the Welsh Government.

M4 speed limit

Exposure to Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) has negative health impacts. The Welsh Government has a legal duty to comply with air quality regulations, including limits on NO₂ at the roadside. Legal limits are set at:

- an hourly limit value of an average of 200 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³) (which must not be exceeded more than 18 times in a calendar year); and
- an annual limit value of an average of 40 µg/m³.

Assessment and monitoring previously identified NO₂ levels above the legal limit at several locations on the motorway and trunk road network, including the M4 between Junctions 41 and 42 at Port Talbot (Swansea and South Wales Zone).

Since the introduction of the 50mph speed limit in 2018, NO₂ concentrations have reduced (last measurement in the 2024 report was taken in 2023).

2. Welsh Government action

In a letter to the chair responding to the petition, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales, Ken Skates MS, refers to 2024 collision statistics being “at their lowest level for that quarter [July to September] since records began, including during the pandemic”.

The Cabinet Secretary affirms that in 2024 the public were given the chance to suggest where they feel changes to speed limits should be made.

The Cabinet Secretary also referred to local authorities being able to change speed limits where it is safe to do so, and that local authorities and the Welsh Government are reviewing feedback from residents on trunk roads to ensure they have the right speed limits.

In terms of the M4 at Port Talbot and at Newport, the Cabinet Secretary discussed the Welsh Government's legal obligation to meeting statutory air quality limits to protect public health.

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 mentioned above, the Welsh Government laid the Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order in June 2022. The draft Order was approved by the Senedd in July 2022.

In June and November 2024, the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee scrutinised the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales, Ken Skates MS, on the policy.

The Petitions Committee has previously considered a number of petitions relating to the policy including:

- A petition calling on the Welsh Government to stop the introduction of the 20mph limit (considered in April 2022). At that time the Committee agreed to close the petition due to the ability of local authorities to change the limit on roads where 20mph would not be appropriate.
- A petition calling on the Welsh Government to hold a public poll on the speed limit reduction (considered in October 2022). This petition was also closed.
- A petition calling for a survey of residents living in the pilot areas (considered in March 2024). Again, this petition was closed in light of monitoring work taking place through TfW.

In May 2024, a Plenary debate was held on the largest ever Senedd petition calling for the policy to be scrapped. The policy has been mentioned in multiple questions and speeches during Plenary from January to October 2025.

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.