

RoSPA Response to “New Powers: New Possibilities Inquiry”

The Wales Act 2017 – Speed Limits

16 February 2018



Introduction

This is RoSPA’s response to the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee’s consultation into, New Powers: New Possibilities and in particular the Wales Act 2017 on speed limits.

The Committee is seeking views on:

- Current speed limits and arrangements for setting speed limits in Wales; and
How the powers to be devolved by the Wales Act 2017 from 1 April 2018 should be used by the Welsh Government and the Assembly.

RoSPA Response

Speed significantly increases the chance of being injured in a collision. A well designed road network could reduce the risk of exposure to the conditions that can cause serious and fatal injuries.

RoSPA believes that the Welsh Government should have the flexibility to set or amend speed limits and should still involve local authorities where necessary. We think it would still be beneficial for the Speed Limit Appraisal Tool to be used to help assess the cost and benefits of any proposed scheme. This would ensure that evidence-based decisions can be made when introducing local speed limits, which would reflect the needs of all road users.

A study of collisions together with analysis of traffic volumes and speeds should indicate whether an existing speed limit is appropriate for the class of road and its use by different groups of road users, including the presence or potential presence of vulnerable road users (including pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders or motorcyclists), or whether it needs to be altered. Local residents may also express their concerns or desire for a lower speed limit and these comments should be considered.

While RoSPA is of the view that road safety should be the primary reason for setting speed limits, there are many links to be made between injury prevention and other areas of public health. Vehicle emissions and air quality is one such link. RoSPA understands that compliance with air quality limits could be a factor when implementing speed limits, however, this should not override safety concerns.

Where there is poor compliance with an existing speed limit, the reasons behind non-compliance should be examined. It could be that a speed limit need not be changed if the collision rate can be improved with alternative measures. If the speed limit is set too low for no visible reason and the risk of a collision is low, then it may be appropriate to increase the limit.

It could be far easier to persuade people to drive at safer speeds if they understand and accept that driving too fast significantly increases the chances of being involved in a collision, and significantly increases the chances of such an incident being serious or fatal.

RoSPA thinks that education is absolutely vital in trying to change attitudes towards speeding. Inappropriate speed contributes to a number of injury and fatal collisions. This can be when the speed limit is exceeded but also when a driver or rider is within the speed limit but their speed is excessive for the conditions at the time (for example, in poor weather, poor visibility or densely populated areas).



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Those people who drink or take drugs and drive are seen as behaving in a dangerous, anti-social and selfish manner with little or no regard for the safety of other road users. However, those who speed are often not regarded in this way unless they grossly exceed the posted speed limit. Therefore, we feel it is essential that the dangers caused by driving at inappropriate speeds are clearly explained and demonstrated to highlight the consequences of illegal and inappropriate speed.

Roads policing is an indispensable action, which plays a vital role in saving lives and minimising injury on the road in Wales. In order for this to be done effectively and consistently across the country, roads policing must be given its rightful priority by the Welsh Government and the Police Service, and be adequately resourced.

In having the devolved powers to alter speed limits in Wales, the Welsh Government will be able to continue to work in conjunction with the already long-standing Wales Road Casualty Reduction Partnership to address issues proactively and efficiently, and also help to ensure that road users continue to comply.

RoSPA thanks the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee for the opportunity to comment on the consultation. We have no objection to our response being reproduced or attributed.

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