

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

20mph Speed Limits

20mph zone, 20mph advisory part time speed limit. What's the difference?



20mph speed limit

Consists of terminal signs at the start and end of the speed limit and repeater signs at intervals along the road to which the speed limit applies. An optional 20mph roundel may be painted on the road adjacent to the terminal sign.

Such limits are generally used where average speeds are already at or below 24mph and no traffic calming is required.



20mph zone

Consists of terminal signs at the start and end of the 20mph zone. There are no repeater signs. To be a zone there must be at least one physical traffic calming feature, but generally there will be a series of features such as road humps, narrowing's, bends or refuges. In the absence of regular physical traffic calming features, 20mph roundels can be used.

Such limits are generally where physical traffic calming is already present or where it has been necessary to install traffic calming because mean speeds are above 24mph.



Part time advisory 20mph speed limit

Consists of a school 20 when lights show sign combined with wig wag units that are set to flash at the start and end of the school day. The speed limit is advisory only and cannot be enforced.

They are only used outside schools and generally installed on roads where mean speeds are too high to install a formal 20mph speed limit and where there are insufficient funds or insufficient support for a 20mph zone and associated traffic calming measures.

How will a reduced speed limit improve safety?

A: The World Health Organisation's *Pedestrian Safety: a road safety manual for decision-makers and practitioners* summarises published research on the science of road safety for those on foot. It uses case studies from around the globe. A distinguished peer review group have carefully studied the evidence. The report says "One of the most effective ways to improve pedestrian safety is to reduce the speed of vehicles" and in particular, reducing speed limits. Specifically listed as a proven intervention is to "Implement area-wide lower speed limit programmes, for example, 30 km/h" (20mph).

Reducing speeds means that residents, pedestrians and cyclists can live and travel more safely. Over half of all accidents in which people are injured happen on urban roads with a maximum speed limit of 30mph.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) says: "*An analysis of vehicle speed in pedestrian fatalities in Great Britain, found that 85% of pedestrians killed when struck by cars or car-derived vans, died in collision that occurred at impact speeds below 40mph, 45% at less than 30 mph and 5% at speeds below 20 mph.*"

How will a lower speed limit promote walking and cycling?

A: Lower speeds result in an environment where people feel more comfortable to walk and cycle and this generally results in increased levels of walking and cycling.

How will the 20mph speed limit be enforced?

A: Enforcement of speed limits in South Gloucestershire is undertaken by the Police. You can find the following statement on their website:- "20mph speed restrictions will be treated in the same way as any other speed limit in the Avon and Somerset Police area in that enforcement will not be routine but will be intelligence led and where there is evidence of clear and excessive offending, accompanied by an aggravating factor, Avon & Somerset Constabulary may consider enforcement where appropriate."

I live in a conservation area how will the new speed limit effect this?

A: Where schemes are proposed in conservation areas the Councils Conservation Team are always consulted. Where possible existing street furniture is used and any new signs will be sensibly sited to reduce any impact on listed buildings. Bollard mounted repeater signs are often used to reduce any negative visual impact.

Does this mean that traffic calming i.e. speed humps will be installed as well?

A: Traffic calming is generally considered when average speeds are above 24mph and sufficient funding has been made available for such measures within the scheme budget. Traffic calming measures are specific to each scheme and will be consulted upon at the same time as the proposed speed limit.

Can you introduce a 'buffer zone' where the speed limit gradually decreases for example; from 40mph to 30mph to 20mph?

A: Department of Transport advice on the setting of local speed limits states:-

The use of such transitional limits should however be restricted to sections of road where immediate speed reduction causes real difficulty.

Will having a lower speed limit mean more pollution?

A: Imperial College London found 20mph limits improve air quality. Per 100 cars, 20mph was equivalent to taking 32 petrol cars off the road for particulates plus 30 petrol cars off for NOx. A 20mph speed limit offers better air quality from traffic and emissions reductions.

Why are there roundels in some roads within the 20mph zone and not within others?

A: A 20mph zone requires that there are some traffic calming measures in place within the zone, in places where there aren't any for what ever reason, 20mph roundels are installed in lieu of traffic calming measures.

What are the benefits of a 20mph speed limit/zone?

A: The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) states:- *“As well as road safety benefits, it is important to highlight the contribution that 20mph zones can have in improving air quality, reducing noise pollution and encouraging more physical activity, such as walking and cycling, by contributing towards a safer environment. The money spent on the schemes can also greatly improve the residential area. A recent study calculated casualty rates and the effects of vehicles on air pollution in 30mph zones in Wales. The researchers then estimated the casualty rate and the impacts of vehicles on air pollution in 20mph speed limit areas.*

Evidence from the study suggested that a default speed limit of 20mph would substantially reduce road traffic casualties, and at worst would not lead to a direct change in air pollution. However, indirectly, if reduced traffic speeds encourage people to switch to active modes of travel, such as cycling and walking, there are likely to be greater reductions in air pollution. The study concluded that health and costs savings are likely to be substantial, and the costs of implementing 20mph limits are likely to be far lower than the benefits reduced speeds bring.”

Do 20mph speed limits actually reduce vehicle speeds and injury accidents?

A: In short yes. Bristol City Council recently commissioned UWE to analyse their 20mph rollout project. The study is called The Bristol Twenty Miles Per Hour Limit Evaluation (BRITE) Study and can be found here: <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/34851/>

The study says; *“On average, according to the Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) speed data (with over 36 million vehicle observations carried out and analysed) there was a statistically significant 2.7mph decrease in vehicle speeds on roads where the 20mph speed limit was introduced...”*

The Study also says; *“Annual rates of fatal, serious, and slight injuries following the introduction of the 20mph speed limits are lower than the respective pre-20mph limit rate, this showing a reduction in the number of injuries. The estimated total number of injuries avoided across the city each year is 4.53 fatal, 11.3 serious and 159.3 slight injuries.”*

In addition to the above the study also states; *“Walking and cycling across Bristol has increased, both among children travelling to school and adults travelling to work.”* And due to the reduction of injury accidents and road traffic collisions the study states that that there has been an estimated cost saving of over £15 million per year.

In conclusion 20mph speed limits;

- Reduce speeds by around 2.7mph
- Reduce the amount of injury accidents significantly

- Encourage more walking and cycling among adults and children
- Creates significant cost savings

It is expected that the Department for Transport will soon be issuing its own study into the effectiveness of 20mph limits, which should cover a much broader range of schemes and hence give a better insight into their effectiveness.