



Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 16 January 2024

Follow Up on Road Safety Issues

Purpose	To update the Scrutiny Programme Committee on issues raised following the Scrutiny Working Group meeting of 7 December 2022 highlighting issues associated with the change in the National Default limit to 20mph.
Content	The report updates Members on Road Safety issues of concern to the Committee and sets out the approach being taken to build on road safety improvements achieved in recent years.
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided and give views on the content of the report set out hereunder.
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1. Background

- 1.1 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure set out a report to the Scrutiny Working Group on 7 December 2022 detailing of the Council's legal obligations, the funding mechanisms used to deliver road safety improvements and advice, the partnerships that are involved in managing safety on the road and the potential solutions which can be used to modify road users' behaviour to make communities safer. The report continued to describe some of the negative effects that these solutions may have and the need to consider these in developing solutions to the challenges faced in improving safety on the roads.

1.2 Following the change in the default speed limit on 17 September 2023, Scrutiny has sought an update on progress with the introduction of the new 20mph default limit as well as consideration of the affect that it has had. In particular Scrutiny has sought an update on the following issues

- Progress with 20mph implementation and its impact on road safety
- Update on issues with Road Safety Grant.
- The Council's relationship with GoSafe and input – main focus over past year, including enforcement on the Gower Commons.
- Whether we have increased the use of Countdown Crossings.
- The success of new initiatives around schools, e.g., traffic restrictions trial in Pontarddulais; any developments that will help with measures, such as signage / banners, around schools to remind motorists about safety.
- Developments in the Kerbcraft programme, e.g., developing a module on encouraging walking to school and general active travel.
- Experience of shared use paths – any more work on information, signage and guidance to encourage tolerant behaviour between cyclists and walkers; awareness of incidents.

2. Briefing/Main Body of Report

2.1 20mph Default speed limit – Legal Process

2.1.1 As Members will be aware the default speed limit reduction to 20mph came into force on 17th Septembers 2023. Prior to this date, officers had assessed the network against the guidance provided by Welsh Government for setting exemptions to the default limit. Plans of these roads were circulated to members on individual wards for consideration and comment. Following this process, a finalised list of 140 roads was identified where it was considered that a 30mph limit would be appropriate.

2.1.2 This list was duly advertised for public consultation. In response the Council received thirty-one comments on the proposals. These comprised three letters of support (including one from the police), nineteen objections to the default limit being imposed and only nine objections relevant to the order advertised.

2.1.3 Of the substantiated objections, the primary concern focused on the safety record between vulnerable road users and general traffic on the roads which were proposed to be exempt and remain at 30mph. Objectors were concerned that some of the roads identified did not meet the guidance criteria set out by Welsh Government in this regard. However, analysis of the performance of all roads was undertaken by the Council in advance of the Traffic Regulation Orders being advertised which considered the road usage and demonstrated that pedestrians and cyclists had integrated safely with vehicular traffic during the most recent five-year period for which data is available.

2.1.4 Following completion of the objection report, its review and subsequent issue to those commenting, the Traffic Regulation Order was sealed to meet the change in the default limit introduced on 17 September 2023. Since then, the Council have received a limited number of queries on roads which residents believe should be returned to 30mph. However, the current position is that the roads identified for exemption accord with the guidance provided by Welsh Government. In the event that this guidance is reviewed then further work will follow on identifying the impact that this will have on our network. It is not proposed to look at individual exemptions at this time.

2.2 20mph Default Speed Limit – Works on Site

2.2.1 Prior to 17th September the Council, through Welsh Government funding had already procured the necessary signing and posts required to implement the change in the default limit. Contracts were let to install these signs at the new terminal points, leaving the signs covered until the actual change in the default. Whilst this work was going on, lining contractors were obnubilating markings and roundels which contravened the revised limits.

2.2.2 On the weekend of the 17 September, these signs were revealed, and work focused on obscuring those signs which did not conform with the new 20mph default limit. Initially, signs showing 20 were left in place as a reminder to drivers of the prevailing limit. Since then, contractors have continued work on the removal of redundant signs and posts, including the now redundant 20mph signs. A programme of works to replace all digital speed indicator signs also commenced and road marking roundels were introduced to indicate those roads which will continue to operate at 30mph.

2.2.3 Works will continue on these programmes of work for the remainder of the financial year and will expand to include the removal of all repeater signs and roundels which show 20mph. It is envisaged that all works will be completed by 31 March 2024 as required by the Welsh Government grant conditions.

2.3 20mph Default Speed Limit – Post implementation impact

2.3.1 To enable us to ascertain the impact of the change and support decision making going forward, a number of speed surveys were undertaken in advance of the 17 September. These surveys will be repeated once all signage works have been completed. Covering a variety of sites these will enable officers to assess the impact in the reduction of the default limit and support the decision-making process in determining whether further road safety or enforcement interventions will be required.

2.3.2 However, in terms of collision and casualty reduction, whilst nationally, there may be an emerging picture of the impact in 18months or so, locally it may take up to three years to get a clear understanding of how it has impacted on the network of roads in the wider Swansea area.

2.3.3 It should be noted that at this time it is not intended to remove existing traffic calming schemes in light of the reduction in the default limit. In situations, such as Cecil Road in Gowerton, where road resurfacing on traffic calmed roads requires the removal of traffic calming; consideration may be given on whether they should be reinstalled. However, this would require local support and evidence that traffic speeds were considered to be acceptable following the removal of any features, and that the road safety issues which led to the introduction of the traffic calming had been resolved.

2.4 Road Safety Grant

2.4.1 Since 2010 there has been a significant improvement in the road safety record in the Swansea area. Analysis shows that in 2022 Swansea saw a reduction in the numbers of collisions resulting in death or serious injury of 59% from the baseline data from 2010. This reduction is even greater on those collisions classified as slight with a 79% reduction recorded. Welsh Governments target was to achieve a 20% reduction in both sets of figures.

2.4.2 Notwithstanding the above, the figures for 2022 show that there were still 25 collisions in the county classified as being KSI (Killed or Seriously Injured) with a further 119 collisions resulting in injury. Welsh Government have confirmed that they will continue to invest capital and revenue support with the ambition to strive to eliminate people killed and seriously injured on roads in Wales. To this end officers are working with partners and reviewing collision statistics for the county to develop initiatives and designs which will assist the Council in meeting this objective.

2.4.3 Work is ongoing on this process, but it is anticipated that bids will be submitted in early February for capital support to introduce measures which will be beneficial in reducing the casualty numbers identified above. Bids will also be submitted for revenue funding to continue to support education programmes to promote road safety, including Kerbcraft and Cycle Training for children in schools.

2.5 GoSafe collaboration

2.5.1 The Council continue to work with GoSafe to target areas of local concern such as the Gower Commons. It is anticipated that the reduction in the default speed limit may result in an increased demand for enforcement. However, it should be noted that Welsh Government have not committed further resource to support this. Nevertheless, officers will continue to monitor the Swansea network of roads and seek enforcement where concerns arise.

2.6 Pedestrian Crossing Facilities

2.6.1 The installation of "Pedestrian Countdown" at Traffic Signals was first referred to in the Traffic Signs Manual in 2019. Following its publication, Swansea Council began introducing these facilities at both signalised junctions and pedestrian crossing sites across the authority. To date, around 25 Pedestrian Countdown systems have been installed.

- 2.6.2 Based on the design guidance laid out within TSM – Chapter 6 the recommended pedestrian crossing facilities available to the authority, when installing new facilities or upgrading existing ones, fall into two distinct types: Nearside or Far-side systems.
- 2.6.3 A nearside crossing system has the red / green pedestrian crossing signal positioned directly alongside the waiting pedestrian in a low-level orientation, ordinarily allowing a pedestrian to be able to position themselves to see both their crossing signal and oncoming traffic. Pedestrian Countdown information is not permitted in this type of system.
- 2.6.4 A Far-side crossing, including Pedestrian Countdown sites, will have the red / green pedestrian crossing signal positioned on the opposite footway to where the waiting pedestrian is located, at the top of the associated signal pole. Pedestrian will therefore be facing their intended direction of travel and not necessarily facing oncoming traffic. In these circumstances it may be appropriate to include countdown information to benefit pedestrians.
- 2.6.5 When installing new crossing facilities or upgrading existing ones, the decision on which type of system to be used will be made on a site-by-site basis, taking its location into consideration as well as any site-specific restrictions. As part of this decision-making process the following criteria are used so that the most appropriate system is chosen each time.
- All crossings that traverse major arterial routes in the core city area (i.e. Mumbles Road, Oystermouth Road and Tawe Bridges) are configured to be nearside facilities. Nearside crossings are regarded as more efficient utilising pedestrian tracking cameras thereby creating variable crossing times. This approach assists in minimising delays on heavily congested traffic routes assisting in improving the capacity of the network.
 - On pedestrian crossing facilities outside of these heavily congested commuter routes “far side” crossings are generally introduced with the recommendation for all new and upgraded facilities to be designed as Pedestrian Countdown systems.
 - However, it should be noted that on some occasions, when considering crossing facilities in residential areas the implication of ‘see-through’ of pedestrian signals into residential properties and the nuisance issue this might cause must be considered. Should it be determined that these possible see-through issues cannot be mitigated then the recommendation would be for the provision of a nearside crossing facility to be provided. In these limited circumstances, there is no potential to introduce pedestrian countdown information.

2.7 School Initiatives

- 2.7.1 The Council continue to focus on the development of a School Streets programme. To this end officers have focused on developing pilot areas to explore the benefits in terms of road safety and how it will impact on the communities in which the schools sit. Orders have already been put in place on James Street, Pontarddulais. Further schemes have been drawn up for four other primary schools, Seaview, in Townhill, Whitestone in West Cross, YGG Y Login Fach in Waunaryllydd and St Thomas Community School. Developed plans for these latter four sites have been sent to local members and the schools in question for consideration and comment and this will be used in determining how to proceed.
- 2.7.2 To enable these schemes to work effectively, officers continue to explore the potential of taking responsibility for enforcing moving traffic violations. Studies are ongoing on establishing the extent of default for offences of this nature which will be used to develop a full business case. If successful, this will enable camera enforcement of the School Streets initiative as well as potentially targeting local road safety issues.

2.8 Kerbcraft and Road Safety Education Programmes

- 2.8.1 Kerbcraft is a cornerstone of the Council's education programme supporting road safety for children in their early years. In the current programme it is aimed to provide road safety training to 1500 year 2 children, around 60% of the total number of children in the county. The training provided makes children aware of road hazards and helps equip them with the skills required to safely negotiate the roads.
- 2.8.2 The Council also co-ordinates a developing cycle training programme to meet National Standards. The Road Safety Team recruit and co-ordinate a team of professional cycling instructors to deliver a programme of works to take children through Stages 1 and 2 on the National Standards in cycling proficiency. Working with schools, our contractors will provide training and advice to around 885 children, predominantly from year 6.
- 2.8.3 Whilst outline details of road safety programmes are currently included on the Council's webpages, officers are exploring the potential to broaden this information to enable parents to continue with their child's development once the training programmes have been completed.
- 2.8.4 In addition the Council also support programmes to provide Motorcycle training with applicants being given on road training and guidance to develop safe riding techniques. However, this course is taken up by relatively few riders and doesn't necessarily reach those at greatest risk.

2.9 Shared Use Path Experiences

- 2.9.1 The introduction of Shared Use Paths (SUP) is becoming increasingly widespread as the network of Active Travel routes develops and expands across the county. As the name suggests a SUP is designed to be used by all types of users including cyclists, pedestrians, people with mobility aids and in some cases horse riders.
- 2.9.2 However, it is recognised that there is the potential for conflict between different user groups, particularly in areas where there are alternate usage purposes, i.e. cycle commuting and leisure walking. Reported incidents are relatively few but are focused on route sections which carry high volumes of traffic, such as the foreshore link. To assist in addressing this the Council promotes 'share with care' and have added signing to key routes around the city to encourage people to use paths in a way which is safe for everyone. This message is also included in the Council's Active Travel webpage, which goes on to describe the hierarchy of road users and the good practices which should be followed to the benefit of all users of the facility.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 As noted above, the Council in conjunction with the police and GoSafe have been hugely successful in recent years in reducing the overall number of collisions occurring across the county. However, with 25 people killed or seriously injured in traffic incidents in the past 12 months and a further 119 collisions resulting in slight injury, there is a continuing recognition that further work is required to reduce this.
- 3.2 The introduction of Welsh Government's initiative reducing the default speed limit to 20mph on street lit roads may be considered as a key element in helping to achieve this. The measures introduced to monitor the impact that the change has had will be beneficial in establishing where it has worked most successfully and allowing us to target future resources and enforcement to take best advantage that lower speeds may bring about.
- 3.3 However, as noted above, the actual impact of the reduction in the default limit will not be known locally a number of years. Consequently, in the meantime focus must be maintained on continuing to develop interventions which will build on the casualty reductions achieved in recent years. This will involve both capital and revenue investment to create a safer environment for travel on the infrastructure that we are responsible for.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5. Finance Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

6.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

6.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

6.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

6.2 As this is an information report there is no need for an IIA.

Background papers: None

Appendices: None