

Update on 20mph Working Group

A joint report for information by Hilary Smith (TWBC) and Vicki Hubert (KCC) to the Tunbridge Wells Joint Transportation Board on 15 February 2016.

Introduction

At JTB in October 2015, an initial report entitled **20's Plenty – A report into national and local policy and next steps** was presented to Members. The report recommended that officers progress this topic further by undertaking the following next steps:

- Contact another local authority (with similar characteristics to Tunbridge Wells) which has successfully introduced 20mph schemes to identify good practice and lessons learned;
- Identify key stakeholders who will have an important role to play in the progression of this debate; and
- Invite key stakeholders to an inaugural meeting to introduce the topic and begin the debate.

The information below provides an update on the progress that has been made since.

Lessons Learned

Research has been undertaken on 20 mph schemes that have been implemented in other parts of the country. Where possible, telephone conversations have taken place with those that have been responsible for implementing these schemes. The locations that have been considered include:

- Bristol
- Brighton
- Lancashire
- Portsmouth

The research has already provided us with some useful lessons learned including:

- the recent relaxation of Government regulations and the reduction of local authority resources has led to an increasing preference for 'signed-only' 20mph limits, which have generally achieved a smaller reduction in vehicle speeds;
- there is consequently a need to identify ways of achieving meaningful reductions in vehicle speeds within 'signed only' 20mph limits, acknowledging that enforcement is only a partial solution and that behavioural and cultural change is likely to be required in order to deliver the most sustainable results; and
- 20mph schemes should be implemented alongside a package of complementary measures to encourage the uptake of walking, cycling and public transport by creating a safer and more pleasant urban environment;

We have also learned that a number of other local authorities/community groups in Kent are also exploring the idea of introducing 20mph restrictions in their areas, including Maidstone Borough Council where the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee resolved the following, at their meeting on 13 January 2016:

That the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee noted the reference from Council regarding a Motion for 20 mph speed limits and requested that officers present a report to the Committee at a later meeting showing the scope and costs required to implement 20 mph speed limits within the Borough of Maidstone.

Early Consultation

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC)'s Annual Residents Survey in 2015 included a number of questions regarding traffic and transport, including the following of relevance to this subject:-

"How safe do you feel on the roads of Tunbridge Wells Borough?"

	Very Safe	Fairly Safe	A Bit Unsafe	Very Unsafe	Don't Know
As a driver/ motorcyclist	60%	33%	4%	2%	1%
As a cyclist	20%	35%	23%	13%	9%
As a pedestrian	57%	33%	7%	2%	1%

The response shows that a clear majority of residents feel safe on the Borough's road network as a driver/motorcyclist and as a pedestrian. However, the views of cyclists are more varied, with only 55% claiming to feel 'safe' and some 36% feeling 'unsafe'. This may reflect the current lack of cycle route infrastructure in Tunbridge Wells. As might be expected, the results vary by age group, with a significantly higher proportion of residents aged 16-34 feeling 'safe' from all three perspectives than those from older age groups.

"Would you like to see 20mph speed restrictions introduced in the Borough?"

Area	Yes	No	Don't Know
Urban and village centres	58%	37%	6%
Residential areas	61%	33%	5%
Across Royal Tunbridge Wells	38%	51%	11%

It is noted that the majority of respondents are in favour of the introduction of 20mph speed restrictions in urban and village centres and residential areas. There is considerably less support for their introduction on a blanket basis across the town centre of Royal Tunbridge Wells. Again, there are significant differences in attitudes by age group, with a much higher proportion of residents aged 35-54 expressing support for the introduction of 20mph speed restrictions in all three geographical areas compared to those aged 16-34.

The recent consultation feedback on the Borough Cycling Strategy showed significant (94%) support from respondents for the principle of 20mph speed restrictions as part of a package of measures to improve conditions for cyclists. All responding schools identified their support for the introduction of 20mph limits/zones. Respondents including Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group, The Cycling Embassy for Great Britain and some residents, also expressed specific support for the introduction of 20mph restrictions within urban areas.

It is considered that the results of the Residents Survey and the Cycling Strategy consultation afford TWBC and KCC a strong mandate upon which to proceed with this exploratory work to assess the feasibility and cost of introducing 20mph schemes within appropriate locations in the Borough.

Key Stakeholders

The following key stakeholders have been identified as important for the 20 mph debate in Tunbridge Wells:

- Kent Police
- KCC Highways – Schemes Planning and Delivery Team and Development Planning Team
- KCC Public Health (preparing the Active Travel Strategy)
- Councillors – KCC & TWBC (including JTB representatives)
- TWBC Officers (Economic Development)
- TWBC Officers (Community Safety Unit)
- Local 20s Plenty community group
- Local Cycling group (Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group)

Working Group

From the list above, a Working Group has been set up to explore the issues relating to 20mph restrictions in the Tunbridge Wells context. The first meeting of the Working Group was held on 28 January 2016 at the Town Hall. A good debate was had at the meeting and the following actions were agreed:

Prepare a Business Case for introducing 20mph restrictions within the Borough to include:

- Set the objectives for the project e.g. reduction in casualties, improving quality of life, encouraging walking and cycling; and measures of success;
- Define the area/roads to cover – residential, urban and village centres;
- Identify a preferred approach to implementation – phased approach with pilot areas;
- Develop cost estimates for engineering measures and education, using principles from previous schemes across the country;
- Identify potential funding sources;
- Agree approach to enforcement with Kent Police;
- Propose an approach to consultation/engagement building on lessons learned from elsewhere; and
- Identify risks involved in the project.

The Business Case will then be presented to April Joint Transportation Board meeting for consideration.

Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Contact Officer: Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager x3295 and Vicki Hubert, Strategic Transport & Development Planner (03000 413679)