

Dear

Request for information - ATISN 17123

Thank you for your request which I received on 6 February 2023.

Your request

You have asked for the following information regarding 20mph speed limits:

1. Buckley is one of the 8 pilot schemes that you chose to trial this limit. At the outset it was clear that there were no compelling reasons why this area had been chosen. However with Pilot Schemes it is my understanding that they are introduced to assess their impact. Please therefore advise me of the following statistics for this area

(a) The reduction in accidents resulting from the scheme.

(b) The reduction in vehicle speeds.

(c) The reduction in the Nitrous Oxide emission levels.

2. The estimated cost of the scheme across the whole of Wales is I understand estimated at 30 million pounds, is this correct and can you confirm that all of the cost is being borne by the Welsh Government and that there will be none falling on the Local authority even if this budget is exceeded.

3. If item 2 is correct at a time of severe budget constraints and particularly pressure on the NHS how can you justify this level of expenditure.

4. What is the cost benefit of this exercise. Your representative at the meeting did state that Consultants had estimated that the benefits would exceed the cost by 3 times. On what was this based and how was it calculated, particularly when it appears that you do not know the number of accidents saved by the Pilot Scheme.

5. What assessment has been made on the impact that 20 mph limits will have on adjacent speed limits.

6. The minimum national limit set by Central Government is currently 30mph but is to be amended to 20, how is this to be done, under what powers and has it been approved by the Westminster Government?

7. Unless advised to the contrary 30mph with street lighting at present requires no repeater signs. Will 30 and 20 repeaters now be required in both limits and what is the spacing requirements?

8. As enforcement will be the Police responsibility what assessment has the likelihood that this will only serve to alienate public trust in the Police even further, at a time when it is already rock bottom.

9. How can Local Authorities possibly be expected to inspect, assess and make Orders for the retention on 30 limits on those roads where these are considered appropriate within an 8 month timeframe.

Our Response

I can confirm that we hold some of the information you have requested.

For question one, this information is exempt from disclosure under Section 22 – Information Intended for Future Publication. The information will be available in the 20mph First Phase monitoring report yet to be published but due to be available on Friday 17 March. Full reasoning for applying this exemption is appended at Annex A at the bottom of this letter.

For question two, the costs circa. £30m are included in the Regulatory Impact Assessment. All the implementation costs will be borne by Welsh Government via grants to local authorities. [EM template for sub leg \(senedd.wales\)](#)

For question three, the latest research conducted by the Transport Research Institute (TRI) at Edinburgh Napier University estimates the casualty savings of 20mph, in the first year alone, to be just over £92m nearly three times higher than the implementation costs.

For question four, please refer to the above answer to question 3. The 1st phase/Pilot Scheme was not to assess the effectiveness of 20mph but to understand the impact of 20mph on a wide area and to establish how best to monitor, undertake enforcement and engage with the community. The lessons learnt here are to be taken forward in the national implementation.

You can also find information in the Explanatory Memorandum at the following link:

<https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsenedd.wales%2Fmedia%2Ffo3ibze5%2Fsub-ld15187-em-e.pdf&data=05%7C01%7CLianne.Idzi%40gov.wales%7C75904041b7c8483bd15008db20bb1fb6%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C638139761626780829%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoimC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ikk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=mwiRBdhVcrXFDN6Q%2FFNLUV4B%2B2tNat93S5Mt7kqf9Q%3D&reserved=0>

We do not hold any information for question 5.

For question six, in 2018, the powers were devolved from Westminster to the Welsh Government to set the national speed limits. Consequently, Welsh Ministers have subordinate legislative powers to amend the default speed limit in Wales. The legislation was passed by the Senedd on the 12th July 2022. Although Welsh Government did consult with the UK Department of Transport, it does not need to be approved by the Westminster Government.

For question seven, repeater signs will be required on lit roads that have 30mph limits. Repeaters will need to be removed on roads that have 20mph limits after a grace period yet to be determined after the new legislation comes into force. The spacing requirements can be found in [Traffic Signs Manual Table 8-4](#)

For question eight, the Enforcement Strategy developed from the 1st Phase settlements will be used not only to enforce but to educate the public.

For your final question, local authorities have been working on the Exceptions to 20mph (i.e. roads to remain at 30mph) for the past six months. Most of them are

currently undertaking their internal consultations. A number of authorities have already published their proposed exceptions on DataMap Wales. [Roads affected by changes to the speed limit on restricted roads | DataMapWales \(gov.wales\)](#)

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedomofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

Section 22 – Information Intended for Future Publication.

Section 22 states that *Information is exempt information if –*

- a) *The information is held by the public authority with a view to its publication, by the authority or any other person, at some future date (whether determined or not)*
- b) *The information was already held with a view to such publication at the time the request for information was made, and*
- c) *It is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the date referred to in paragraph a).*

I am of the opinion that subsections (a) and (b) above are met because the information is held with a view to its publication. This information is expected to be published by 17 March 2023.

With regards to part (c), I have given consideration as to whether it would be 'reasonable in all the circumstances' that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the proposed publication date. I am of the opinion that releasing the information at this time would cause disruption to the Welsh Government's intentions in relation to its publication arrangements. Thus I am content that the exemption is engaged.

Section 22 is a public interest exemption. This means that, in order to withhold information, I must show that the public interest in withholding is greater than the public interest in releasing it.

In terms of the public interest, it is recognised that there is public interest in there being openness and transparency within Government.

The 20mph First Phase monitoring report will be published on the Welsh Government website by Friday 17 March 2023.

The Welsh Government has committed to publishing information of this nature on our website however there is a thorough validation process which is undertaken on the information to ensure its accuracy. By restricting access to the report ahead of publication, we will be publishing the information in a co-ordinated manner to all people at the same time and will ensure an editorial process is adhered to which will confirm the quality and integrity of data. Ultimately, this will improve the quality of information published and follow the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

An accelerated release of reports which involve research, drafting preparation and meticulous inspection might result in inaccurate, unchecked information being disclosed prematurely, misleading the public.

To that end, I do not think it is reasonable in all the circumstances or in the public interest to release this information prematurely. Rather, I believe the public interest would be best served if the information were released as scheduled.

I am satisfied therefore that the balance of the public interest falls in favour of withholding the information.