

20mph – Publication of first 3 months of data – interview with media brief

Date and time	20 February 2024
Interviewer and organisation	15:00: ITV - Redacted – Section 40 15:15: LBC/Global - Redacted – Section 40 15:25: Wales Online - Redacted – Section 40 15:40: BBC Wales - Presenter TBC
Length	1 hour allocated.
Format	Face to Face
Location	Senedd - Cardiff Bay
Press officer	Press officer: Redacted – Section 40
Brief summary	This is a briefing for your media interviews on the publication of TfW's report on the first 3 months of the 20mph default.
Key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The data published today shows that speeds have reduced by an average of 4mph on main roads since the national rollout of the default 20mph speed limit.• From data published by Go Safe earlier this month that 97% of drivers are complying with the new slower speed limit.• Every 1mph reduction in speed makes a real difference – so this is a real turning point.

There is a detrimental impact on buses detailed in this report, why wasn't more done to protect bus routes?

We have been clear we will continually monitor any impacts of the new default 20mph speed limit on bus services. We continue to work closely with bus operators, local authorities and TfW to tackle the wider challenges facing the bus industry and will bring forward new legislative proposals to reform the sector.

This Initial Report from the Review Team recognises that some rural and inter-urban bus routes, in particular, seem to have been adversely affected by the introduction of

lower speed limits, but further data on the impact of bus services is needed and being sought.

The Review Team will consider whether further clarification to the guidance on exceptions would be helpful – for example by considering whether bus routes could be one of the criteria local authorities can use in their decision-making.

How can we be confident in this report, weren't two of the members involved in implementing 20mph in Wales?

The Welsh Government has appointed a small team to work with local authorities to consider the way the policy has been implemented and how the exceptions guidance has been applied. The review team includes Professor Peter Jones, Professor of Transport and Sustainable Development at University College London. Professor Jones was not involved in 20mph implementation and will provide independent challenge to the process. The other two members of the panel are Kaarina Ruta, Transport Adviser at the WLGA, and Phil Jones, the Chair of the 20mph Task Force Group that made the initial recommendations.

Why is your review not considering the initial concept of 20mph – the petition shows that the public do not support 20mph. Shouldn't they be asked?

This review is specifically considering the way the policy has been implemented and how the exceptions guidance has been applied.

An open public consultation on the proposed law change was carried out in 2021. On 12 July 2022, the Welsh Senedd approved the legislation to lower the default national speed limit on residential roads and busy pedestrian streets from 30mph to 20mph. There have been two votes in the Welsh Parliament on this matter, both passed with two-thirds majorities on a cross-party basis. By the tests of our democracy and our parliamentary system, that is the way that consent is sought for policies and this policy has had that consent.

Why was there not more engagement and communication from the Government between the Taskforce recommendations in 2021 and the legislative change?

Did the communications campaign fail? What could have been done differently on communications and engagement? Did Welsh Government do enough to support LAs with communications and engagement?

An open public consultation on the proposed law change was carried out by Welsh Government in 2021. Since then, Welsh Government has communicated progress on the first settlement trials, as well as new evidence and milestones for 20mph in Wales, culminating in a national marketing campaign launched in March 2023. Welsh Government also supported Highway Authorities by sharing good practice from first phase settlements, and by engaging other key stakeholders in preparation for 20mph.

Welsh Government also supported Highway Authorities by sharing good practice on communications and engagement from first phase settlements, providing the national communications campaign and holding regular meetings to take on board feedback and to support Highway Authorities with their communications. Welsh Government also engaged other key stakeholders in preparation for 20mph.

What do you think should have been done differently on communications and engagement? What can you do now to get people on side?

We recognise that engagement with the public, both at national and local levels, should have begun earlier and been more comprehensive and interactive.

Will the Initial Recommendations be acted on now, or will Welsh Government await the full report before taking actions?

Or

When will you respond to the findings / recommendations?

The Review Team will next gather a wide range of views on the exceptions guidance from Highway Authorities, stakeholder groups and representative bodies to further inform their Final Report and recommendations

These will then be fully considered by Welsh Government when published by the Summer Recess 2024.

How does this fit in with the fuller review by both candidates?

This Initial Report will be presented to the new FM, as well as the timeframe for the Full Report.

The recommendation ‘guidance should also be broadened to address all speed limits in settlements and not only those that have defaulted to 20mph as a result of the law change’ does this mean that as a result of this review even more 30mph, or even 40mph roads could be changed to 20mph? How quickly will this happen?

Any amendments to the guidance could potentially result in changes, both to roads reverting back to 30mph where appropriate, or for additional roads to be considered to change to 20mph. The Initial Report from the review details that some inconsistencies between the approach by Highway Authorities have arisen on main roads through settlements that were subject to a speed limit above 30mph before the change in law. These roads were not covered by the legislation. Nevertheless, some highway authorities changed speed limits on such roads, while others did not. Further guidance on this would therefore be helpful in the interests of fairness.

Was this policy rushed in?

This policy has been four years in the making, with a task force which looked in detail at the evidence, as well as being trialled in eight trial areas of Wales ahead of national rollout.

The Welsh Government worked closely with Highway Authorities on preparation for the legislative change in default speed limit. We await a Full Report from the Review Team to consider whether the timeframes for preparing for this change in default speed limit were appropriate.