



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus
Cymru
Public Health
Wales

Name of Meeting

Board

Date of Meeting

27 September 2018

Agenda item:

8.3.270918

Position statement on 20mph speed limits

Executive lead:	Dr Chrissie Pickin, Executive Director of Health and Wellbeing
Author:	Dr Sarah Jones, Consultant in Environmental Health Protection

Approval/Scrutiny route:	Business Executive Team 17 September 2018
---------------------------------	--

Purpose
To present the draft position statement on 20mph speed limits for consideration by the Board. The Board is being asked to consider whether the statement is accepted as a Public Health Wales position.

Recommendation:				
APPROVE <input type="checkbox"/>	CONSIDER <input type="checkbox"/>	RECOMMEND <input type="checkbox"/>	ADOPT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ASSURANCE <input type="checkbox"/>

The Board is asked to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt the position that Public Health Wales believes that lowering the default speed limit to 20mph could have substantial Public Health benefits.

Link to Public Health Wales [Strategic Plan](#)

Public Health Wales has an agreed strategic plan, which has identified seven strategic priorities and well-being objectives.

This report contributes to the following:

Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	1 - Influencing the wider determinants of health
Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	3 - Promoting healthy behaviours
Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	5 - Protecting the public from infection and environmental threats to health

Summary impact analysis

Equality and Health Impact Assessment	No. But, the background paper to accompany the position statement covers the potential health impacts of a switch to a default speed limit of 20mph and includes consideration of inequalities.
Risk and Assurance	N/A
Health and Care Standards	This report supports and/or takes into account the Health and Care Standards for NHS Wales Quality Themes Choose an item. Choose an item. Choose an item.
Financial implications	No direct financial implications. This is an action that would be taken by Welsh Government. There are potentially significant benefits for health and health services at no cost to NHS Wales.
People implications	No impact

1. Purpose / situation

A proposed position statement for Public Health Wales on the use of 20mph speed limits in Wales has been drafted. This now needs to be considered by the Board.

2. Background

A conference on 20mph speed limits is being held in Cardiff on 2 October. The Sponsoring Executive (Chrissie Pickin) is keen that the position statement is ready to be launched at that event.

3. Description/Assessment

The Environmental Public Health Team had been considering evidence based interventions that would improve air quality, reduce noise pollution and reduce road traffic injuries. 20mph speed limits emerged as one of the few interventions that would, potentially, benefit all of the above, as well as active travel. At the same time, the draft Wales Bill proposed giving Wales powers to set speed limits. Sarah Jones and Huw Brunt then prepared, and had accepted for publication, a paper considering the possible benefits to Wales of a reduction in the default speed limit to 20mph. Public Health Wales, as an organisation, does not yet have a position on this.

The evidence suggests that a 20mph default speed limit would have Public Health benefits in terms of reductions in road traffic casualties and noise. There is also consistent evidence of strong public support for greater use of 20mph speed limits, including a survey by Public Health Wales¹.

There is also some evidence that a default 20mph speed limit would increase local business viability and social coherence, reduce community severance, improve air quality by avoiding acceleration and braking, as well as increase walking and cycling. There is suggestion of reductions in inequalities and minimal effects on travel times.

Notably, there is also no evidence of health related harms associated with default 20mph speed limits.

¹ Sharp, C., Hughes, K. and Bellis, M.A. (2018). The public's views on public health. Public Health Wales. <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/Stay%20Well%20in%20Wales%20Report-Eng-Final.pdf>
Accessed 6 August 2018

This proposal relates to changing the default speed limit from 30mph to 20mph, meaning that the benefits will be greatest in areas of greatest concentration of current 30mph speed limits, so mainly urban areas. That said, smaller rural towns and villages also do currently have 30mph speed limits that would be reduced to 20mph under this proposal. However, given that the greatest burden of road traffic crashes, in particular, is in rural areas, because of the high speed: high risk road network with potentially long distances to be travelled by first responders and then to medical care, an evaluation of this change, assuming it is implemented, could contribute to the case to reduce speed limits on the rural road network too.

In accordance with the position paper process, the draft paper was passed to WG colleagues in health, transport / road safety, noise, and air quality. Comments received have been incorporated into the current draft statement; these related almost entirely to the background paper, rather than the statement itself.

On 18 July 2018, there was a short debate on a proposal for a 20mph default speed limit for Wales in the Senedd. The breadth of Public Health benefits were highlighted and Ken Skates responded and was receptive to the notion. Both speakers referred to the paper that Huw and I had published in 2017.

The links to the transcript and the live feed are:-

Scroll to line 491

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5001#A44973>

Or watch from 18:19 Short debate

<http://www.senedd.tv/Meeting/Archive/d2c9e0d5-deac-4038-b6eb-fe6a5bf0b89c?autostart=True#>

3.1 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

In the original paper on this subject, we included, as part of the methods, an assessment of the contribution that this intervention could make to delivering on the goals of the WFGA² (table 1). A copy of this table is also included in the background paper accompanying the position statement.

² Jones, S.J. and Brunt, H. (2017). Twenty miles per hour speed limits: a sustainable solution to public health problems in Wales. *JECH*, 71 (7) 699-706.
<https://jech.bmj.com/content/jech/early/2017/03/23/jech-2016-208859.full.pdf>

Table 1: - An assessment of how default 20mph speed limits could support delivery of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act

GOAL	Description	Contribution of 20mph limits to WBFG Act
A prosperous Wales	Innovative, productive, low carbon society. Recognises limits of global environment & uses resources efficiently & proportionately. Develops a skilled & well educated population in an economy which develops wealth & provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.	Improved motorised traffic flow Increased walking & cycling due to fewer crashes, more time & space between vehicles & reduced fear of speeding traffic Local economies more viable & socially resilient Improved public transport & commercial vehicle flow. Increased productivity with less ill health
A resilient Wales	Nation maintains & enhances a biodiverse natural environment with health functioning ecosystems that support social, economic & ecological resilience & the capacity to adapt to change	As above, & Improved air quality enhancing the natural environment & supporting ecological resilience.
A healthier Wales	A society in which physical & mental well-being is maximised & in which choices & behaviours that benefit future health are understood	As above, & Improved cardio-respiratory health linked to improved air quality Improved general health linked to reduced noise pollution, reduced obesity & increased physical activity due to more active travel & outdoor play Improved mental health linked to all of above.
A more equal Wales	A society that enables people to fulfil their potential	As above, & Reduced inequalities since more deprived areas have greater ranges of traffic speeds & vehicle types.
A Wales of cohesive communities	Attractive, viable, safe & well connected communities	As above & Improved social cohesion & connectedness.
A Wales of vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language	A society that promotes & protects culture, heritage & the Welsh language & which encourages people to participate in the arts, & sports & recreation	As above, & Increased walking, cycling & outdoor play.
A globally responsible Wales	A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental & cultural well being of Wales takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well being & the capacity to adapt to change	As above, & Increased active travel, decreased fossil fuel use and reduced impacts of climate change.

From: Jones and Brunt¹³

This work has been put together following the five ways of working, as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act, in the following ways:



This work has identified an intervention that, if implemented, could have an immediate effect in terms of reductions in injuries, but in the longer term could significantly reduce the health burden associated with air pollution and obesity.



This work focuses on the transport environment as a wider determinant of health, aiming to prevent crashes and other negative consequences of road traffic



This forms part of wider efforts by the Environmental Public Health Team to recognise the contribution of transport to health and more closely integrate the disciplines in policy and practice terms across Wales.



Numerous examples, including presentations to the Active Travel Board and discussions across Public Health Wales. By virtue of the fact that this intervention potentially has such a range of effects it is collaborative.



The range of potential benefits of a default 20mph speed limit are so broad as to involve and benefit everyone.

4. Recommendation

The road safety benefits of 20mph speed limits alone are sufficient to justify their adoption as the default speed limit. However, the potential public health benefits extend beyond just casualty reduction and include encouraging walking and cycling³⁶ and community benefits in terms of health, wellbeing and social capital^{6,8,35}.

Much of the available evidence is from the grey literature and relates to the implementation of an intervention in different places and different intensities. However, acknowledging that the evidence is less robust than

is ideal, the fact that it is all suggestive, at best, of significant health benefits and, at worst, no effect on health, is of note.

The Board is asked to:

- **Adopt** the position that Public Health Wales believes that lowering the default speed limit to 20mph could have substantial Public Health benefits.