

**North Yorkshire County Council
Harrogate and Knaresborough Constituency Committee – 15 September 2022
20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy**

**Joint Report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services
and the Principal Democratic Services Officer**

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide information to inform a discussion by the Committee.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 A Member has asked for information about the existing 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy to be provided to the Committee, to inform a discussion by the Committee. The request was agreed by the Committee's Chairman and Vice-Chairman who scheduled the topic for today's meeting, and this report has been prepared accordingly.
- 2.2 The County Council's 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy is appended to this report. It was adopted in January 2022 following a review of the 20mph Policy. Further information about that review is at section 3.0. The revised policy includes the national policy framework and rationale of implementing 20mph speed limits and zones. It also sets out a detailed application and assessment process to ensure consistent application across the county.
- 2.3 An officer from the Business and Environmental Services Directorate will be in attendance at this meeting to answer Members' questions.
- 2.4 The Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee (TEE O&S) is due to consider progress with implementing the revised policy at its meeting on 19 January 2023.

3.0 Review Undertaken of the 20mph Policy

- 3.1 A review of the County Council's 20mph policy was instigated by the publication of the Department for Transport (DfT)/Atkins national research project report on the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits and zones. A TEE O&S Task Group of Elected Members was set up with input and representation received from NYCC Traffic Engineering, Road Safety and Public Health Teams, North Yorkshire Police and the 20s Plenty campaign organisation.
- 3.2 The aims of the review were:
- To consider the findings of the 20mph Research Study: National Research Project (the 'Atkins report')
 - To examine the DfT's guidance on 20mph speed limits (Setting Local Speed Limits: DfT Circular 01/2013) and relevant legislation

- To examine the County Council's current policy on the introduction of 20mph speed limits and how it was applied
- To consider whether there was a need to change the County Council's current policy on the introduction of 20mph speed limits
- To consider other measures for adoption
- To take evidence from NYCC Highways Officers, NYCC Road Safety, 95 Alive Partnership, North Yorkshire Police and the 20s Plenty Campaign.

4.0 Policy Application

- 4.1 Since the new policy was adopted by the County Council, applications are now being assessed against the revised criteria. Work is ongoing in all area offices, but it is too early to determine how many applications will result in a 20mph speed limit.

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 That the 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy, as set out at Appendix 1, be noted.

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20MPH SPEED LIMIT AND ZONE POLICY

JANUARY 2022

V1.0

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy supersedes the existing policy (2006). Its purpose is to provide the framework within which North Yorkshire County Council will consider and assess the implementation of 20mh Speed Limits and Zones.

2.0 Policy Framework and Practical Application

- 2.1 The main theme of change in this new policy is to set a clear rationale and assessment process in its application and include the opportunity for greater focus on the sense of place and community, particularly around schools.
- 2.2 Facts and figures will remain the key evidence base for decision making and although the County Council must still act in accordance with the DfT Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits that provides the framework, key objectives and practical application of speed limits for local (highway) authorities, there is a recognition that additional consideration is given to how the locality is perceived and could be used with the introduction of a 20mph speed limit or zone.
- 2.3 The County Council must also work in partnership with North Yorkshire Police which has enforcement responsibility for speed limits. Likewise, North Yorkshire Police adhere to the guidance set out in Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits and without their support it would be remiss of the County Council to implement a 20mph (or other) speed limit.
- 2.4 Another aim of the revised policy is to ensure consistency in assessment and application throughout the county, therefore a robust assessment process has been developed. A 20mph speed limit or zone must be appropriate for that part of the network and fit with its current or planned change in operation. Importantly, it must also be self-enforcing and operate without a reliance on police intervention.
- 2.5 Introducing a 20mph speed limit or zone to a road(s) where drivers do not already substantially conform to and/or is generally inappropriate for that road(s), will likely result in poor compliance enforcement problems and understandable complaints. Consequently, it may also result in drivers failing to comply with a 20mph speed limit where it has been appropriately applied for road safety reasons.
- 2.6 Also, the County Council has a statutory duty to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic and efficient use of network through the reduction of delay and congestion. Whilst there is a need to encourage lower use of private car and other motorised travel in favour of walking, cycling and other sustainable modes, those measures should not adversely impact the County Council discharging its duties.
- 2.7 It is possible to achieve 20mph speeds through signing and road markings only, on roads with a mean speed 24mph or lower. However, where speeds are in excess of 24mph it is necessary to introduce physical traffic calming measures to forcibly reduce speed e.g. chicanes, speed cushions, priority working systems.
- 2.8 Typically, traffic calming measures are designed to be negotiated by travelling along road(s) at a consistent lower speed. In reality, driver behaviour is often to speed up and slow down between traffic calming features, which can result in greater emissions and noise and generally negate any benefit of the lower limit.

- 2.9 Due to site constraints such as road alignment, the presence of private driveways, side road junctions and the loss of on-street parking, there can be significant challenges implementing traffic calming in North Yorkshire towns, villages and other rural locations. Effectively 20mph speed limits or zones must be self-enforcing by either by formalising existing behaviour or through the implementation of an appropriate system of physical measures where possible.
- 2.10 Notwithstanding the above, the benefits lower speed limits can bring to communities are fully accepted and modal shift is a key objective. Part of delivering this ambition includes investigating the need for 20mph speed limits and zones to make routes potentially safer, more accessible and encourage greater uptake.

3.0 20mph Speed Limits and Zones

- 3.1 20mph zones typically cover a number of urban roads and require traffic calming measures with no point within a zone being more than 50m from a physical feature or 20mph sign/roundel. A zone is indicated by entry and exit signage only. Zones are appropriate for roads where average speeds are less than 30mph.
- 3.2 20mph speed limits are signed only roads i.e. without physical traffic calming measures and therefore most appropriate for a road(s) where average vehicle speeds are already low i.e. at or below 24mph. As per zones, repeater signs or roundels on the carriageway can be used to increase awareness.
- 3.3 Existing 20mph zones in North Yorkshire are predominantly used in the vicinity of schools and moving forward zones can still be used unless motor vehicle movement is the primary function.
- 3.4 When assessing applications for a 20mph speed limit or zone that centre around a school, it is imperative that investigations extend to the widest possible extent to provide a zone/speed limit that captures the maximum number of journeys over the greatest distance to encourage modal shift to active modes of transport such as walking and cycling.
- 3.5 As stated in 'Department for Transport Circular 01/13 'Setting Local Speed Limits', the Secretary of State has provided special authorisation for advisory part-time 20mph limit signs to be used. The possibility of including these signs in this policy was considered as part of the review however, it was deemed unsuitable as they can be confusing to drivers and therefore the County Council does not support their use on the network, which continues the previous policy position.

4.0 STEP BY STEP PROCESS FOR A 20MPH SPEED LIMIT STEP 1 – The County Council receives a 20mph request

- 4.1 Understanding the key issues and problems in an area is fundamental. The applicant should clearly indicate the area of concern and set out the reasons/justification for the introduction of a 20mph speed limit or the extension of an existing 20mph speed limit.
- 4.2 Any evidence of road safety issues should be included in the request along with any other information that may be useful such as highlighting any schools or walking/cycling routes. Any application must have local support i.e. the parish/town council and local member must be supportive.

STEP 2 – Acknowledge receipt and consider application

- 4.3 Officers will acknowledge the correspondence and if necessary, ask for additional content to enable a response. Officers must be fully aware of the need for action and have enough information to be able to consider a decision.

STEP 3 – Carry out an initial desktop assessment

- 4.4 Taking into account the reasons stated in the application, officers will undertake an initial assessment based on guidance in **Department for Transport Circular 01/2013 ‘Setting Local Speed Limits’** and links to NYCC policy supporting modal shift to active travel and consider how the proposal could deliver improvement to the area in terms of place and sense of community.
- 4.5 Officers will determine whether there is merit in a scheme or if the local issues can be resolved in another way(s) without reducing the 30mph speed limit. If inconsiderate parking or an isolated hazard causes the problem, a speed limit request is likely to be declined and another solution is likely to be suggested.

STEP 4 – Initial response

- 4.6 Officers will either, confirm 20mph is appropriate (based on guidance and pending further investigation) or explain why a reduction of the speed limit is not appropriate for the highway.
- 4.7 If the guidance in Circular 01/2013 is representative of the existing conditions, the process will move to the next stage. If the guidance demonstrates a reduced speed limit is not appropriate, the response will detail any other options that may be available to address the local concerns. This will be subject to funding being available and prioritisation.
- 4.8 If no further action is required, the reasons will be explained.

STEP 5 – Identify funding source

- 4.9 With limited funding and resources available, it is essential a funding source is identified, as no survey or design work for a 20mph speed limit can take place without a suitable budget being identified and available.
- 4.10 Staffing resources and costs should be considered, along with the costs associated with the implementation and future maintenance of traffic signs and road markings. Legal costs should also be calculated. Typically, a speed limit scheme (including legal costs) will cost in the region of £6000 to £10,000, but depending on the area of concern, the final cost could be greater. The cost of implementing a zone could be significant given the wider area it would apply and the need for the construction of traffic calming measures.

STEP 6 - Carry out a detailed assessment including a speed survey

- 4.11 Any improvement scheme must be driven by evidence i.e. casualty reduction, but when assessing the suitability of a 20mph scheme, this is not the only driving factor. The County Council will be flexible and will consider a number of motivators. Schemes may be approved if local concerns are justified and they will be tailored to suit local needs.
- 4.12 The detailed assessment will take in to account the likelihood of increased active travel and potential improvements to ‘health and wellbeing’ and sense of place and community.

- 4.13 Officers will check the following criteria before any application is supported:
- Links to NYCC policy for modal shift and active travel opportunities
 - The road is not a network hierarchy Category 2 road
 - The Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) flow is not considered excessive for that route and not likely to increase significantly
 - There is a record of speed related personal injury collisions over the last 3 years or there will be a reduced likelihood of personal injury collisions
 - There are pedestrian and cyclist movements and more will be encouraged by the introduction of a 20mph speed limit
 - There are suitable characteristics and it is a suitable highway environment
 - There is a school or other community amenity on the road/in the area
 - A 7 day speed survey proves the existing mean (average) speeds are at or below 24mph for a speed limit to be introduced.
 - The change will result in good compliance without the reliance of police enforcement
 - Vulnerable road user concerns outweigh the disadvantages of longer journey times for motorised traffic
 - The intervention is likely to improve the quality of life for residents
 - The scheme is unlikely to attract negative feedback

- 4.14 The above criteria is not exhaustive and act as a guide of key considerations. Other factors can be considered as appropriate for that site. The quantification of some of the above criteria is subjective and therefore all decisions must be evidenced and recorded.

STEP 7 - Scheme design and cost estimate

- 4.15 Keeping street clutter to a minimum, officers will design an appropriate scheme over the agreed extent and within the available budget. The design and total cost will be shared with the applicant for feedback if the scheme is being externally funded in full or in part.
- 4.16 Communities should note that North Yorkshire Police are very unlikely to enforce a 20mph speed limit and that a signed only scheme (without physical measures) is likely to have little effect on existing vehicle speeds.

STEP 8 – Consult

- 4.17 If necessary, the scheme will be amended to suit local needs before there is a consultation exercise with North Yorkshire Police and other interested parties/stakeholders.

STEP 9 – Final Response

- 4.18 The applicant will be notified of the result of the consultation exercise and given an estimated timescale of the next stages.

STEP 10 – Advertisement of traffic regulation order (TRO)

- 4.19 TRO's follow a statutory process and are a legal document.
- 4.20 The proposed reduced speed limit will be advertised in the local press and on site to invite views from the community. Representations can be formally lodged resulting in objections and contentious issues being considered before a scheme proceeds as advertised. Feedback could result in the scheme being modified or abandoned. The TRO process can take many months if there are objections to the scheme to resolve.

STEP 11 – Scheme implementation

- 4.21 The approved scheme will be ordered through North Yorkshire Highways as soon as practicable.

STEP 12 – Monitor effectiveness to ensure compliance

- 4.22 Officers will monitor the effectiveness of the speed limit change to ensure it is appropriate. Public opinion and speed survey results will ultimately determine the success of the scheme. Officers will arrange a repeat of the surveys carried out in the assessment 12 months after implementation. Officers will engage with the local community afterwards to gather feedback and compare 'before' and 'after' mean speed values. The local community and North Yorkshire Police will be informed of the recorded speeds.
- 4.23 If the recorded mean speed value is higher than anticipated and if it continues to be high after further surveys, additional measures to reduce speeds should be introduced to ensure good compliance. These measures should be financed from the original funding source.
- 4.24 Where mean speeds of historic 20mph speed limits are between 25 and 29mph, the addition of traffic calming measures should be a consideration. Traffic calming measures will reduce mean speeds and ensure greater compliance.
- 4.25 If there is evidence to suggest the majority of motorists are travelling in excess of 30mph in any 20mph speed limit, there is clearly a more significant problem to address. It is likely the speed limit is inappropriate for the environment and potentially unsafe due to differences in how road users act and perceptions. If this is the case, the County Council must consider reverting back to the original speed limit. Any increase to an urban speed limit is likely to be unpopular with local residents, but this has to be an option where a 20mph speed limit proves to be unsuitable.