

North Yorkshire Council

Executive

Extract of the Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 4th July 2023 commencing at 11.00 am.

273 Review of 20mph Speed Limit Policy

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Environment seeking Executive approval for the development of a North Yorkshire speed management strategy and countywide programme of speed limit reviews, in order to generate a pipeline of schemes, to be delivered over a number of years.

Councillor Keane Duncan introduced the report confirming the Council’s proposed new approach to managing speed limits across the county, which included a new speed management strategy and a county-wide review of speed limits. He noted it would produce a rolling pipeline of speed improvement schemes for delivery, with local communities and local Councillors involved from the outset. He acknowledged it was an ambitious pro-active approach build on evidence and community empowerment. He suggested the proposal took account of the diverse nature of North Yorkshire’s communities, and drew attention to the consultation undertaken with councillors, with most supporting lower speed limits around schools and other high footfall areas. Whilst he recognised the value that speed limits and 20mph zones had in terms of road safety, he noted the concern expressed about a default 20mph limit in every town and village and highlighted that those who were in favour of it were not in agreement on where it should be applied.

It was noted that five public submissions had been received, as follows:

1. Hazel Peacock

“My name is Hazel Peacock. I am from the Oatlands road safety and active travel campaign, and I am here today to ask a question about our petition “for North Yorkshire Council to deliver a maximum speed of 20mph across south and west Harrogate – covering Oatlands and parts of Pannal, the Stray, Hookstone and St George’s areas in Harrogate”, which had 924 signatures at the time of submission (and now has 982) and was endorsed by the Area Constituency Committee of Harrogate and Knaresborough on 8th June.

Over 4,000 children walk, cycle and travel by car and bus to schools in the area every school day and the implementation of a maximum speed (in the area proposed), is urgently needed for the safety, health and well-being of children and the wider community, for better road safety and to facilitate active travel.

In October 2022, the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee resolved for the Executive to be advised of the wish for a 20mph speed limit to be piloted throughout towns and villages in the constituency area, where a need had been identified. Since then two serious collisions involving three children have occurred in our community (three weeks apart), one on the pavement outside Ashville College on Yew Tree Lane in February with devastating effects and another outside Oatlands Junior School, also on the pavement, in January. These awful events coupled with the overwhelming evidence of the benefits of 20mph limits demonstrate why change is urgently needed.

We know from evidence shared by Brake the road safety charity that “The higher the speed a vehicle travels the greater likelihood of a serious injury or death if there is a crash”, which is further evidenced by TfL data showing that people hit by a vehicle at 20mph are around five times less likely to be killed, than at 30mph.

The changes to maximum speed limits of 20mph in other rural and urban areas of the UK show positive effects and the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety stated in May that “20mph is now generally accepted as the safe speed for streets used by people walking, cycling or wheeling”.

Implementing a maximum speed of 20mph in South and West Harrogate in the area proposed in the petition, will help save lives, reduce collisions and bring about lasting improvements to road safety, the environment, active travel and public health.

The proposal has strong support from the local community, school leaders (of 13 schools), local councillors and endorsement by the Harrogate & Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee, showing there is an urgent need and desire for this change. With this in mind: “What timescales will North Yorkshire Council commit to, for the implementation of a maximum speed of 20mph across south and west Harrogate - covering Oatlands and parts of Pannal, the Stray, Hookstone and St George’s areas in Harrogate, to improve the safety, health and well-being of the children and wider community?”

2. Malcolm Margolis (Unable to attend, so his statement was read out by Ian Conlan)

“Please advise if you have considered the timeliness and cost effectiveness of delivery of the council’s proposed 20mph policy compared to that of Calderdale’s proven default 20mph scheme which has resulted in 30%+ casualty reduction at a cost of under £4 a head, and many other successfully delivered schemes?”

Which 20mph road safety experts did you show the draft report to, to ascertain whether its conclusions are in line with the best evidence available? What is the budget for reducing collisions on our roads, and how will you ensure that vulnerable road users are given better protection? How many people will get to live, work, play, shop and be educated on roads that have 20mph?

How many children will be able to walk all the way from home to school in a 20mph area in the next 12 months? And how many years before all children in villages and towns can walk and cycle all the way to school in a 20mph area, or walk to the bus stop in a 20mph limited area if their school is in the next town or village?

Cllr Duncan stated in February 2023 at the Full Council meeting, that he would be led by the evidence. However, this report seems to make sense only if the conclusion was written first, and then the evidence bent to fit it, with the benefits of default 20mph outlined in the appendix side lined or ignored. Why has no mention been made of the work that the UN and World Health Organisation done on this?

Why is there no mention of the Stockholm Declaration, the work of hundreds of top road safety experts from around the world, and endorsed by over 100 countries including the UK, calling for 30kph/20mph as the default speed limit where people and motors mix, with exceptions only where safe?”

3. Barbara Hickman (Unable to attend, so her statement was read out by an NYC officer)

“I am a pensioner, resident of Nawton/Beadlam, 2 small villages bisected by the A 170 with schools on either side of this busy main road.

I conducted a small survey in the villages; everyone was in favour of the 20mph limit. Children need to cross the road daily and it is a long way from the ends of the villages to the pedestrian crossing. Older residents must be very nimble when crossing the A170.

I have looked at the evidence around the UK; Wales and Scotland are well on the way to transition, as are many urban areas in England. So how can NYCC claim there is insufficient evidence? The evidence from other countries is very substantial too, I refer to the Stockholm Declaration.

There will be costs, but the benefits greatly out way them - lives saved, fewer injuries especially to children, less pollution and noise. Slower traffic in built up areas will encourage

walkers and cyclists, make life easier for those with reduced mobility, and enhance the living conditions of those who live on busy main roads.

I ask that the Council consider the lives of residents of North Yorkshire where many roads are narrow with poor visibility. Cars are considerably bigger and faster than when the 30mph limit was introduced.”

4. Jenny Marks

“Thank you for giving us the opportunity to ask a question. I am Jenny Marks, from the Pannal Ash Safe Streets Campaign. We are parents, working together with schools, school trusts, local residents and other stakeholders in the area around five major schools in Harrogate.

In February 2023 a very serious accident occurred outside Ashville College, leaving two Year 10 boys with life-changing injuries. The boys are still undergoing treatment and are in and out of hospital. Three months before this accident, in November 2022, we had applied to NYCC for the creation of a 20mph zone, with appropriate additional infrastructure, including safe crossings, around Ashville College, Rossett High Harrogate Grammar School, Rossett Acre Primary, and Western Primary.

The 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy (Jan 2022), allows for the creation of 20mph zones particularly around schools, where they benefit both safety and a sense of place, to extend an existing 20mph limit, and where there is public support for the proposal. We can demonstrate a need on the basis of all these points. The review under discussion today does not alter the core of the policy, and we have been assured by council staff that this review will not delay processing of our application. The recent accidents have highlighted and intensified our position of significant collective concern for the safety of the 5000 school children, and for all those, who use the network of roads around the schools on a daily basis, including residents, and users of Rossett and Ashville Sports Centres, Busy Bees Nursery, and Rossett Nature Reserve.

We are speaking from a strong position of local knowledge and support, having spent the last two years consulting schools, local residents and other stakeholders in order to better understand their needs. Throughout this process we have been struck by:

- The overwhelming sense of concern for the safety of children and others using these roads, a concern which was justified in by the recent accidents.*
- People's alarm at the degradation of the area's atmosphere and sense of place due to its increasing use as a cut-through by speeding traffic;*
- Worries that the situation will only get worse as many more houses are built on the West side of Harrogate.*

We have heard time and again the wishes of parents and others to have a network of streets that makes all forms of active travel SAFE.

Last year, the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee voted in favour of piloting 20mph zones in selected residential areas, where a need was demonstrated. We have demonstrated that need. On your agenda today is the fact that the ACC have also asked for 20mph to be implemented in South and West Harrogate. Our proposal meets the criteria of the 20mph speed limit and zone policy and fits well with the priorities highlighted in the review outlined today, being in an area with high footfall, several major schools with 5000 school children, and many vulnerable groups. Headteachers, councillors and residents want the council to act urgently to implement positive change. We have been working with council staff to look at the detail of our application and how it might be implemented. Despite the application having been made seven months ago, we still have no timeline for implementation, and we still have no firm commitment from the council to deliver.

Please can the executive assure us that this application will be treated with the weight and urgency it deserves, and will be implemented soon as one of the first 20 mph pilot areas?”

5. Josephine Downs (Unable to attend, so her statement was read out by an NYC officer)
“Why would you not support a default 20mph speed limit that improved safety particularly for vulnerable people, was 50% quieter, and also cost-effective and popular?”

In response to the submissions from Hazel Peacock & Jenny Marks relating to the Oatlands and Pannal Ash areas of Harrogate Councillor Keane Duncan provided some factual background as follows:

- Excessive speed was not recorded as a factor in any of three recorded collisions that had taken place in that area in 2023, including the two referred to, and it was unclear whether a lower speed limit would have avoided those collisions. He did not say this to diminish in any way the severity of those incidents, nor to deny the case for improvements in those areas but rather simply to ensure the full facts were understood and to ensure that reducing speed limits was seen as just one tool at the Authority’s disposal.
- 20mph limits, that is signed-only 20mph as opposed to a 20mph zone with calming, did not necessarily mean motorists would travel at or below 20mph. As seen in Pannal Ash Road, where the average speed with a signed-only 20mph stood at 27/28mph. This was an example of an ineffective signed-only limit, introduced following public pressure, that was not compliant with Department for Transport (DfT) guidelines and that risked undermining, rather than aiding, road safety.
- A 20mph “pilot” was not being pursued by the council – it did not need to pilot when limits and zones already existed on a permanent basis in Harrogate and across North Yorkshire. The Authority wanted to continue to deliver schemes that were effective on a permanent, rather than trial basis. The Authority was already working to do this in Oatlands and Pannal Ash, and the approach under consideration provided the opportunity to do that across North Yorkshire, subject to local consultation and support.
- The proposed signed-only 20mph across the whole of Pannal Ash and Oatlands would, on the basis of speed information, not be compliant with DfT guidelines and would likely have limited impact on average speeds. A 20mph zone, with appropriate calming, would likely be much more effective in terms of reducing speeds and improving road safety.

Overall, Councillor Keane Duncan confirmed his belief that effective action was in all cases better than ‘urgent action’. On that basis, the Authority was working with councillors, residents and schools to deliver a package of measures aimed at genuinely improving road safety. This was not narrowly limited to 20mph limits only, but 20mph zones, traffic calming, new crossing points and public transport infrastructure improvements too.

He noted the Authority had already committed to deliver or was actively exploring:

- a Schools Streets trial at Oatlands Junior School;
- a tiger/parallel crossing on Oatlands Drive;
- further traffic calming on Oatlands Drive;
- traffic calming on Pannal Ash Road to promote compliance with the 20mph limit;
- expanding and linking existing 20mph limits where appropriate in the immediate term;
- new 20mph zones across Pannal Ash and Oatlands as part of the Otley Road Sustainable Transport Package and Oatlands feasibility study.

He noted that work on those measures was already in progress, and nothing within the proposed new approach to setting speed limits would delay work that was already ongoing, nor prevent the introduction of appropriate and effective 20mph limits and zones in Pannal Ash and Oatlands. It would aid and expedite delivery of these limits and zones, there and elsewhere in the county.

He confirmed the Authority took road safety seriously, in those areas of Harrogate and across North Yorkshire, and he was confident that the council would continue to work in unity with councillors, residents and school representatives to deliver action that was genuinely effective.

Finally, he highlighted the next two key steps on the horizon and confirmed the proposals for the Otley Road Sustainable Transport Package, including timescales for delivery, would be presented to the next Harrogate & Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee in September. He also confirmed further public consultation would take place on proposals arising from the Oatlands feasibility study later this year.

In response to the specific questions within Malcom Margolis' submission, Councillor Keane Duncan confirmed Calderdale's example was considered within the review; the report was compiled by the Council's team of experienced traffic and road safety engineering professionals; the highway capital programme would be used to deliver more road safety improvement schemes, and the programme would be publicised annually to ensure progress could be scrutinised. Finally, he confirmed the review team were aware of the Stockholm Declaration and of the work by the UN and World Health Organisation.

Responding to other submissions more widely, Councillor Keane Duncan drew distinction between the approach 20's Plenty and its supporters were seeking, and the new approach North Yorkshire Council was considering. He noted:

- 20's Plenty wanted 20mph as the new default speed limit in every town and every village in North Yorkshire. Whereas North Yorkshire Council supported the roll-out of new 20mph limits and zones over time, but not everywhere and not on every urban road.
- 20's Plenty's focus was on reducing 30mph limits to 20mph – a focus exclusively, by definition, on urban roads. Whereas North Yorkshire Council felt it was imperative to improve safety on all roads, urban roads yes, but also rural roads where too many lives had been lost.
- 20's Plenty believed signs alone would reduce speeds cheaply and quickly. Whereas North Yorkshire Council was concerned by evidence from elsewhere that showed it resulted in only a marginal reduction in speed and in poor overall compliance.
- 20's Plenty appeared to show disregard for Department for Transport best practice. Whereas North Yorkshire Council would ensure full compliance with their guidelines and address inconsistencies across the entire road network over time.
- 20's Plenty talked about democratic support from town and parish councils yet wished to impose a 20mph limit even on communities opposed to such a limit. North Yorkshire Council believed strongly in democracy, not dictation.

He also suggested the council's new approach was based on empowering councillors and communities, not imposing upon them. Fundamentally recognising both the importance of 20mph and the diversity of the vast county. It looked at all roads, not just urban roads. It looked at all speed limits, not just 20mph limits. It positioned speed limits as an integral part of the Authority's road safety strategy but promoted consideration of alternative measures too.

The approach sought tailored solutions to road safety rather than adopting the one-size-fits-all approach favoured by some. It was based on support from partners, including North Yorkshire Police, the findings of the cross-party Transport, Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee and the feedback from elected councillors representing all political groups. It set the county on a new path, where more 20mph limits and zones would be delivered – but in all cases in an effective way and with local support.

Hazel Peacock sought clarity on what could be done to deliver 20mph in Harrogate given the support for it from communities. Councillor Duncan reassured her that where there was support and a strong case for it, the Authority would deliver it as well as other road safety improvements. He also made a commitment to work with her group in order to do that.

Jenny Marks acknowledged the feedback received at the meeting and the Authority's previous engagement with her group. She also welcomed the proposal of permanent changes rather than a piloted approach.

Allan McVeigh – Head of Network Strategy provided an outline of the proposed way forward and the immediate next steps i.e. to draft the strategy and develop the prioritisation methodology and continue to explore potential additional funding opportunities.

In response to a question from Councillor Gareth Dadd it was confirmed there was no proposed change to the criteria for 20mph zones.

Councillor John Mann welcomed recommendation (ii) i.e. to undertake a series of planned reviews. He was also pleased to note the focus on considering priority locations such as outside schools. He therefore asked that his recent application for 20mph limits on Yew Tree Lane, Green Lane and Hookstone Road be given a high priority. In regard to a recent petition for 20mph across south and west Harrogate, he asked that when the proposals in the petition were considered, that they give approval to a comprehensive package of road calming measures within the constraints of the available funding and strategic speed management plan.

Councillor Duncan confirmed that Councillor Mann's application was currently being considered alongside those of Hazel Peacock and Jenny Marks, as one coherent piece of work.

Councillor Arnold Warneken acknowledged the Council was engaging on the issues but suggested that whilst the Authority was listening to the views of communities, it was not hearing them, as evidenced by the wealth of evidence and support behind the Oatlands and Pannal application but the lack of resulting action. He asked for an acceleration of the process.

Karl Battersby, Corporate Director for Environment acknowledged the positive engagement at a recent community meeting and confirmed the intention of officers was to draw it to a conclusion quickly and come to a view about the proposals based on a range of long-term measures.

Councillor Monika Slater made the following statement on behalf of the Liberal Democrat members of the Harrogate & Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee:

'We regret the lost opportunity to be truly ambitious in realising the benefits for residents and our environment, especially as there is mounting evidence of the benefits of widespread adoption of 20mph limits which have been selectively excluded or misrepresented in the report although are present in the appendices. For example the reference in section 6.4 to the reversion to 30mpg in Coldicut, Wales, which is a town of 10,000 out of a population in Wales of 3.1 million suggesting that apart from the introduction of 30mph buffer zones when approaching new 20mph limit areas indicates that 99.7% of new 20mph ones are still in place across Wales. The fact that the report states that North Yorkshire cannot be compared with Edinburgh because there isn't an existing culture of 20mph speed limits is thanks to the council's previous 20mph strategy and it seems unfair to discount the evidence from Edinburgh on that basis. Other evidence of cost effectiveness, impact on serious incidents and resident satisfaction all point toward the acceptance of default 20mph zones but are not faithfully reflected in the report suggesting strongly that the 'no change' in policy was predetermined. It begs the question as to how much evidence is needed to shift a policy rooted in a national report published in 2018 and clearly therefore not able to take account of new evidence.

Whilst some consultation of members was undertaken, we challenge the Exec to undertake a consultation with the wider public, on the basis of which H&K ACC made the original request for a review and for pilots in the H&K area. As early as 2010 the British Social Attitudes Survey undertook work for the Department of Transport in which speeding traffic was identified as the No. 1 concern out of 16 social problems. When implemented there is consistent evidence that residents feel the benefits, and our residents are crying out for this change. Is Cllr Duncan afraid of running a pilot scheme in H&K as evidence suggests it would be successful and popular with the public?

The report recognises the importance of place in determining where and how any new 20mph are implemented as part of the proposed programme. We would urge any reviews that focus on schools and areas of employment also include the 'travel-to' neighbourhoods to ensure maximum wider health and related benefits as opposed to piecemeal and very focussed locations.

We are concerned that the process of prioritising set out in sections 10 – 12 is driven by rather than informed by data. Relegating local residents' representations to 'ad hoc' requests flies in the face of good engagement, which is acknowledged as being foundational to compliance and therefore the benefits that a more proactive 20mph policy could achieve.

We therefore regret that a more balanced and up to date review and acceptance of the evidence does not seem to have been taken in preparing this paper, and that the views of residents are not reflected. If, however, this paper is approved by the Exec today we urge them to go at pace and scale based on 'travel-to' neighbourhoods and prioritise areas where there is a strong desire from residents to see 20mph implemented. The additional delay of 6 months when there are well informed and widely representative groups ready to progress with 20mph zones seems to cut across the Council's expressed desire to be the most local of large authorities.'

Councillor Paul Haslam welcomed the report and proposed changes as it was an urgent issue that needed addressing. He stressed he would like to see some imperfect action rather than perfect inaction and suggested some of the work proposed for areas of Harrogate could be delivered in stages, to deliver stepped progress. Finally he questioned what success would look like i.e. what the impact of the proposed 20mph zones outside schools would be in terms of transition to alternative travel options, and the impact on CO² emissions and air quality.

Councillor Sion Myers agreed the proposed approach must respond to the concerns of residents and welcomed the focus on communities and evidence, but recognised the difficulty associated with the one size fits all approach. He suggested that what all communities would like to see is a greater degree of enforcement of existing speed limits. He also wanted to see speed being designed out of roads and welcomed physical infrastructure improvements to make it impossible to speed.

Councillor David Chance welcomed the report and the proposal for a speed management review. He confirmed his view that a default 20mph approach was wrong but supported it where it was needed and supported by the community. Councillor Gareth Dadd suggested the Authority needed to be careful not to raise expectations that support from a community or local Councillor would automatically result in a successful application.

In response to a question from Councillor Bryn Griffiths, it was confirmed the proposed new strategy included an analysis of any strategic potential risks associated with applications.

Having considered the report and contributions at the meeting, the Executive all voted in favour of the recommendations, and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The core criteria for introducing 20mph speed limits and zones, as set out in the existing 20mph Speed Limit Policy remain unchanged;
- ii. Area-wide or default 20mph speed limits not be supported;
- iii. A series of planned reviews be undertaken, underpinned by a speed management strategy for the local road network, delivered over a defined period to generate a pipeline of schemes; and
- iv. Approval of the following be delegated to the Corporate Director for Environment in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation:
 - a. Content and detail of the proposed speed management strategy; and
 - b. Prioritisation methodology for ranking proposed speed limit schemes.

