



The Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order 2022

What is it?

This order requires approval by Senedd Cymru (Welsh Government) and changes the speed limit for restricted roads (those with lighting at intervals of not more than 200yds) from 30mph to 20mph. This order would become effective 17th September 2023. It was debated in Senedd on 12th July 2022 and passed 39 votes to 15.

Does this mean that a blanket speed limit of 20mph would apply to all roads which are currently 30mph?

No. National speed limits are the default limit which applies, but local highway authorities have always had the ability to set a different speed limit on individual roads to allow for particular local requirements. The Welsh Government has always planned that local highway authorities could use their local powers to set exceptions to a national speed limit. It has provided [guidance](#) for local highway authorities. In particular a restricted road may be changed from 20mph where "robust and evidenced application of local factors indicates otherwise". This is done through a Traffic Regulation Order by the local highway authority which includes a local consultation process. Note that "decisions on exceptions should not be influenced by existing traffic speeds" and "the fact that a section of a road is on a bus route is not in itself a justification for making an exception".

If local authorities have always been able to set a 20mph limit that was different to the national limit then why can't a 30mph national limit be kept and changed to 20mph by the local highway authority as current?

This has been the approach taken in England where 20 million people currently live in local highway authorities which have recognised the national 30mph limit as "not fit for purpose". But every road included in residential areas, shopping streets, around schools, around hospitals, where old people live, near playgrounds, etc, have all needed to be individually included in Traffic Regulation Orders and be fitted with regular repeater signs to remind drivers that the road has a 20mph limit and not 30mph. This is required even if as a result the 30mph national limit is only left on a minority of roads. This process is expensive and cumbersome in terms of administrative costs and signage. It also leads to a post-code lottery with different limits for what may be very similar roads in different local highway authorities.

Until the Wales Act 2017, the setting of a national speed limits was reserved for the UK Westminster Parliament. Hence 20mph limits in Wales could only be set in this cumbersome and expensive manner with local highway authorities bearing all the costs and administrative load. The Wales Act 2017 devolved the setting of national speed limits to the Welsh Government and so enabled a far more cost effective process for setting 20mph speed limits as a norm to be developed.

In that time the benefits of 20mph as a norm rather than 30mph have become better understood from both the many successful (but expensive) implementations in the UK and global best practice where the World Health Organisation and UN have called for 20mph (or 30km/h) to be the urban/village norm where motors share roads with pedestrians and cyclists.

The Wales Act 2017 enabled the Welsh Government to combine the national "value" of 20mph for most urban/village streets with the local highways authority "discretion" to identify exceptions and set a

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30mph limit for such roads; A “Welsh Way” of setting 20mph limits that would maximise their benefit to communities at minimal cost.

How does the public go about influencing whether a road is excepted from the national 20mph limit?

The process of excepting particular roads and keeping them at 30mph is a local highway authority responsibility and process through draft Traffic Regulation Orders and this already allows for public engagement. The public will be able to influence their local highway authority well in advance of the national limit becoming operational in September 2023.

Will local highway authorities be able to set a 30mph on a road after the national 20mph limit is implemented?

Yes, Local highway authorities can set local speed limits at any time via the Traffic Regulation Process which includes public consultation and following the 2023 guidance for "Setting Local Speed Limits". This will align with the guidance for making exceptions to 20mph.

If this is such a good way to set 20mph limits then why isn't the Westminster UK government considering a national 20mph limit for England?

We understand that the DfT is looking at the Welsh 20mph implementation with much interest. But Wales has far fewer local authorities, which enables such an approach to be developed easier. It also has institutions built into government such as the Future Generations Commissioner which can take a broader and longer term view on such an issue. The national 20mph limit has strong support from Public Health Wales, and other institutions. Many councils in England are requesting that the UK government should follow Wales and take the same approach by setting a national 20mph limit. It is understood that the outcome of the Welsh 20mph implementation could well influence a decision on a 20mph national limit for England.

Note that Scotland is planning for 20mph to become the urban/village norm by 2024.

Is Wales the first country to set such a national limit?

No. Most Scandinavian countries already have a 30km/h (18.4mph) limit for most urban/village roads. In May 2021 Spain set a national 30km/h urban/village limit for all roads with a single carriageway in each direction.

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