

Statement to the 17.7.17 meeting of B&NES Council CTE PDS Panel

Thank you Chair.

I am no longer speaking to the Transport Strategy item, as I don't want to steal the thunder of the statement I will be making to Wednesday's Cabinet meeting. However, I do wish to take this opportunity to comment on 20mph speed limits and in particular on the evidence and reasoning on which their continued funding is being considered. (I do so primarily as an economist and policy development professional, but am also informed by my pedestrian, cycling and driving experience in Lyncombe and Combe Down.)

My concerns are that:

1. The data is too aggregated
Although the report acknowledges that the imposition of speed limits needs to be informed by "character and usage of a particular road", the data presented in the tables on pages 6 and 7 is silent as to the type of roads falling within each ward, and the variation in speed across streets or wards, albeit it is this sort of information rather than the rather than an undefined measure of average speed reduction that is most relevant to the issues you are being asked to consider.
2. The sample size is too small and over too short a time period to draw robust inferences
Note in this regard that the report does not specify how the street sample was selected nor if and how any adjustments were made for other contributory factors, that many of the schemes have not yet been in place for 3 years, and that the 12 month accident rate per area is, statistically speaking, very small.
3. The cost benefit analysis is inadequate
The report concludes that 1.3mph average speed reduction is "not persuasive in terms of money". However in so doing it makes no distinction between sunk costs (namely the £871k of capital investment prior to 2015) and the future costs associated with retaining, ending or particular changes to the scheme. Nor is there a convincing statement of the benefits associated with these options and their diverse impacts on community wellbeing as well as that of the safety of road users.
4. The multi-causal nature of the problem demands a more bespoke response.
To the report's credit, it cites DfT guidance that "the reasons for the non-compliance should be examined before a solution is sought" (page 5), acknowledges that "accidents are random, multi-factored events" for which there are "no simple explanations", and that "changing the road environment across all streets in the same way" may not be the best way forward (page 8).

So, in conclusion, rather than make a decision based solely on the evidence and analysis contained in this report, I urge you to

- assemble more, and more road-specific, evidence
- consult a wider cross-section of the public so as to develop a more detailed and locally based understanding of causes and impacts
- await the results of DfT study. (Note however, that whilst useful for its analytical approach and its conclusions as regards national policy, the DfT study won't mitigate need for B&NES specific evidence and context appropriate analysis.)

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