



Agenda Item 11

National Strategy for 20mph Speed Limits

Falkirk Council

Title: National Strategy for 20mph Speed Limits
Meeting: Executive
Date: 6 December 2022
Submitted By: Director of Place Services

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Scottish Government's National Strategy for 20mph which aims to ensure all appropriate roads in built-up areas have a speed limit of 20mph by 2025.
- 1.2 This report also advises how the National Strategy will impact the Council's phased introduction of 20mph speed limits as agreed at the Executive committee meeting on 18 January 2022.
- 1.3 This proposal supports the strategic priority "Supporting stronger and healthier communities" as set out in the Council Plan 2022-2027.

2 Recommendation(s)

2.1 It is recommended that the Executive:-

- (1) notes that Transport Scotland is gathering information from local authorities with respect to 20mph speed limits, after which it is anticipated that Transport Scotland will provide further guidance, information on funding and a timetable for implementation; and**
- (2) agrees that implementing the Council's proposed 20mph speed limits in town centres and villages should be deferred until such new guidance on 20mph speed limits is issued.**

3 Impact on Climate Change

- 3.1 At this stage, the recommendations in this report do not impact the Council's climate change ambitions. However, the Scottish Government's intention to implement 20mph as the 'default' speed limit on urban roads would have a positive impact on the Council's climate targets and obligations. Further information on the benefits will be presented to future Committees.
- 3.2 Transport is the largest national contributor to carbon emissions and forms a priority area for Scottish Government in the target to reach Net Zero by 2045.
- 3.3 Lower speed limits would make more sustainable forms of travel, such as walking and cycling, a much more attractive option for getting around town and village centres.

4 Background

- 4.1 At its meeting on 18 January 2022, the Executive agreed to progress 20mph speed limits in all town and most village centres. Furthermore, the Executive agreed to proceed with a phased approach to the introduction of 20mph restrictions across the urban road network thereafter.
- 4.2 As a result, work was undertaken to determine locations for 20mph traffic signs which have now been purchased and are currently in storage.
- 4.3 In 2019 the Scottish Government commenced a review of Strategic Transport Projects (STPR2). The development of a National Strategy for 20mph zones and limits is a committed project within STPR2, which supports the delivery of the National Transport strategy 2 (NTS2).
- 4.4 The Scottish Government and Scottish Green Parliamentary Group signed a Cooperation agreement and agreed a shared policy programme in August 2021 (this agreement is often referred to as 'The Bute House Agreement'). The Shared Policy Programme (SPP) includes a commitment which states: 'All appropriate roads in built-up area will have a safer speed limit of 20mph by 2025.'
- 4.5 A task group has been formed to plan the most effective route to implementation of this commitment which includes representatives from Transport Scotland, the Society of Chief Officers of Transport (SCOTS), Sustrans and Police Scotland.
- 4.6 The SPP refers to 'appropriate roads in built up areas'. Transport Scotland have defined the term 'appropriate road' as: 'all 30mph roads unless after the road assessment a valid reason is provided as to why they should remain at a speed limit of 30mph'.
- 4.7 In early July 2022, Transport Scotland wrote to all local authorities requesting that a 'Road assessment' is undertaken by the end of March 2023 to inform the development of the National Strategy for 20mph and ensure that a consistent method of assessment was undertaken across Scotland. The results of the Road Assessments will also be used to inform future policy and guidance on 20mph speed limits, and ensure that a consistent approach in their implementation is taken across Scotland.
- 4.8 In light of this guidance officers believed it was necessary to come back to Council with a report updating on the change in national policy, the impact this would have for Falkirk Council and the new proposed timeline for implementation.

5 Considerations

- 5.1 Transport Scotland has advised that implementing the strategy for 20mph speed limits would be undertaken in two phases. The first phase would be

implementing 20mph speed limits utilising “20” signs only, this to be completed by the end of 2025. Thereafter, following evaluation and monitoring, phase two may entail the introduction of speed reduction measures where data indicates this is required.

- 5.2 The criteria for determining which roads should become 20mph is discussed below and differs from guidance used in preparation of the 20mph report considered by the Executive in January.
- 5.3 Transport Scotland has made £52,000 available to the Council for undertaking the road assessments.

Assessment Guidance and Criteria

- 5.4 Transport Scotland has requested details of the existing speed limits for built-up areas (towns, villages and any smaller settlements through which a road with a 30mph speed limit passes) and that GIS mapping showing the extent of these existing speed limits is provided. It should be noted that the assessment excludes all roads with a 40mph, 50mph and 60mph speed limit and focusses only on existing 20mph and 30mph roads.
- 5.5 Transport Scotland has also requested local authorities undertake a review of existing 20mph and 30mph speed limits against given criteria. Each road in the Falkirk Council area subject to a 30mph speed limit will be considered following the process provided by Transport Scotland which is set out in Appendix 1. Currently, there are no full-time 20mph speed limits within the Falkirk Council area. The process involves the completion of a spreadsheet supplied by Transport Scotland and the development of a GIS map showing all roads proposed to have a 20mph speed limit and those where a 30mph speed limit would remain.
- 5.6 The process includes the assessment of the road against the following ‘Place Criteria’ which will indicate which 30mph roads are considered appropriate for potential alteration to 20mph:

A minimum road length for the speed limit is suggested between 400-600m. The length adopted will depend on the conditions at or beyond the end points.

- a) *Is the road within 100m walk of any educational setting (e.g. primary, secondary, further & higher education);*
- b) *Does the number of residential and/or retail premises fronting the road (on one or both sides) exceed 20 over a continuous road length of between 400 - 600m. Other key buildings should also be considered such as a church, shop or school;*
- c) *Is the road within 100m walk of any community centre, church, place of worship, sports facility, any hospital, GP or health centre;*
- d) *Does the composition of road users imply a lower speed of 20 mph which will improve the conditions and facilities for vulnerable road*

users and other mode shift. (reflect on future plans such as active and sustainable travel, places for people, consider existing and potential levels of vulnerable road users);

- e) *Will the road environment, surrounding environment, community and quality of life impact (e.g. severance, noise, or air quality) be improved by implementing 20mph speed limits.*

- 5.7 The assessment will also identify those roads which will remain at a 30mph speed limit. The criteria advises that those roads which remain at 30mph will typically be on A and B Class roads with little frontage activity and where people walking, wheeling and cycling do not need to share space with motor traffic.
- 5.8 In order to introduce 20mph speed limits on some roads which meet the criteria in paragraph 5.6, physical measures to reduce traffic speeds may be required to ensure that the limits are 'self-enforcing'. The assessment will identify roads where these measures may be required as part of the process and an estimate of the costs for introducing these measures will be provided to Transport Scotland. This will help to inform the implementation costs of the National Strategy.

Next Steps

- 5.9 Once the road assessments are complete the evidence on the number of roads affected and the financial cost will be used to identify the most appropriate route to implement 20mph speed limits and this will be shared with the 20mph Task Group. A briefing will also be sent to Ministers on the findings. All of Transport Scotland funding is subject to Ministerial approval.
- 5.10 The Road Assessments will also be used to inform policy and guidance on 20mph speed limits and zones. Implementation of any 20mph speed limits or zones in the Council area at this time and prior to the issue of any further guidance would not be advised as it may lead to inconsistencies with the approach taken across Scotland.
- 5.11 Officers will continue to be involved with the development of the strategy with Transport Scotland and provide updates to this committee as and when new information and any timescales for implementation of the strategy are provided.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The relevant services have been consulted on this report.

7 Implications

Financial

- 7.1 Transport Scotland have made available 'ring-fenced' funding of £52,000 to assist with the delivery of the assessment. The assessment will be used to determine the specific number of roads affected and the financial implications for implementation of the National Strategy for 20mph in the Council area.
- 7.2 The provision of funding for the implementation of the National Strategy for 20mph from the Scottish Government has been indicated by Transport Scotland but it is not yet committed. There remains at this time a risk that further funding may not be available at the implementation stages. Once availability of the future funding has been confirmed, officers will report back to committee with details of any shortfall and any opportunities to pursue the implementation of 20mph speed limit or zones through grant funding.

Resources

- 7.3 Assessing all urban roads within the Council area subject to an existing 30mph speed limit is a significant piece of work. Roads assessments are currently on-going and, at this stage, it is anticipated that this will continue to be undertaken in-house, utilising officer's detailed local knowledge.
- 7.4 However, consultant support utilising the funding provided by Transport Scotland may be required to ensure the road assessments are completed by the end of March 2023.

Legal

- 7.5 The assessments are required to be undertaken using criteria laid down by the Scottish Government. By doing so, the intention is that there will be a consistent approach to implementing 20mph speed limits across the country, which has benefits in terms of driver understanding and knowledge. Local authorities who do not adhere to the criteria may be challenged by the Scottish Government to justify their approach and possibly to adjust the outcome of their assessments.

Risk

- 7.6 Assessing all urban roads currently subject to a 30mph speed limit in the Council area is a significant undertaking. In order to meet the deadline of the end of March 2023 for completion of the assessments, it is possible that part of the assessment may have to be outsourced to an external consultant, the fees for which may exceed the ring-fenced funding made available by the Scottish Government. However, this risk can be managed by close monitoring of progress made working through the assessment and committing resources as required to minimise the requirement for or the input required by an external consultant.
- 7.7 The introduction of a nationwide default 20mph speed limit in urban areas will significantly affect all road users, particularly drivers. There is a risk that communities may not understand or agree with decisions made in terms of

whether a particular street or streets meets the assessment criteria or not. Addressing this matter, will require clear communications with all road users, residents and businesses.

Equalities

- 7.8 An initial EPIA has been carried out. It is considered that no direct action is required at this time until further guidance is provided by the Scottish Government and a recommendation presented to Elected Members. Looking forward, it is not expected that any such strategy would have an adverse impact on any of the identified protected characteristics but this will be considered in full when the recommendation comes forward.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 The Scottish Government has requested local authorities undertake a review of existing 20mph and 30mph speed limits against given criteria. This criteria differs from the current guidance in that consideration of existing vehicle speeds is no longer required.
- 8.2 The assessments are likely to impact the Councils proposals for 20mph speed limits, although it is not possible to determine the extent of this until further guidance is produced by the Scottish Government.

Director of Place Services

Author – Gary McGregor

Date: 24 November 2022

Appendices

None

List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- National Strategy for 20mph - Road Assessment Guidance (June 2022)