Wales will soon be slowing down...

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PUBLIC BACKLASH AGAINST PROPOSED 20MPH SPEED LIMITS

*MORE SPEEDING POINTS MEANS MORE EXPENSIVE INSURANCE COSTS

By Robin Roberts.

Speeding convictions and fines will rise this autumn in Wales after the new default 20 mph limit is introduced and Welsh Government ordered the removal of warning repeater signs and funded more camera vans.

Existing 20 mph repeater signs and soon-to-be illegal 30 mph repeater signs will be taken down, offered to English authorities or recycled as scrap. Wales is the first part of the UK to introduce a default 20 mph limit.

Answering a Freedom of Information request from WheelsWithinWales, the Welsh Government said 20 mph repeater signs will not be permitted on the newly reclassified roads and councils will have 12 months to remove them.

The precise number of signs to be taken down, both 20 mph and 30 mph, is unknown but realistically will be tens of thousands, and changes to the signage and markings has a budget of £26.7Million.

Wales will also be exporting its redundant signs to any English authorities who want them with unsuitable signs recycled.

In February, Welsh Government confirmed it's allocated £10M this year to implement the new lower limit, five times that spent the previous 12 months and in April said it had funded extra Go Safe camera vans with £35,000 to enforce 20 mph pilot schemes.

Now, an additional £80,000 is set aside for enforcement in the next financial year with £2.5M to cover running ticketing offices in Wales.

Welsh Government claims the new lower limit would save lives have been debunked by studies in Queens University, Belfast, Edinburgh University and University of Cambridge which found the 10 mph reduction had little impact on road safety.

Local authorities can apply to waive the new 20 mph limit if they or residents' feel it's unsuitable for a particular stretch of urban road but they are being encouraged to stick to the new lower limit by Welsh Government.

The new pilot limit was lifted in some places in Wales where it led to congestion.

It has been described by Welsh Conservatives as one of a number of "vanity projects" and they want the money spent on road resurfacing improvements instead which could also lead to reductions in road injuries and deaths.

Public backlash against new 20mph speed limits

Last week, Labour's Minister for Transport Lee Waters faced questions from Welsh Conservative Shadow Transport Minister Natasha Asghar over Labour policy of imposing a blanket 20 mph speed limit on roads in Wales. This policy has faced significant backlash from across Wales, with 21,000 people signing a petition against it, as well as facing a lot of criticism on Social Media.

Commenting on her spokesperson questions, Welsh Conservative Shadow Transport Minister, Natasha Asghar MS said:

"The people of Wales strongly oppose the implementation of default 20 mph speed limits. However, the Labour Government refuses to listen.

The Labour Minister appears incapable of considering the broader consequences of these policies. Commuters, families and even bus passengers will suffer due to these measures and it is evident that Labour shows a complete lack of concern.

Its implementation will adversely affect people's daily lives, making their journeys longer and more difficult. Astonishingly, even the Labour Government's own explanatory memorandum to the bill acknowledges that this policy will impose a staggering cost of £4.5 billion on the Welsh economy."

More speed more cost

According to Wales-based Confused.com car insurance, drivers who have points on their licence as a result of speeding may have to pay up to £751 for annual insurance.

“If you have a driving conviction or have been disqualified from driving, insurers assume that you’re more likely to take risks when you drive. So insurers think you have more of a chance of being involved in an accident which can increase your car insurance costs”.

It says a conviction for exceeding the limit on a public road brings about an average annual insurance premium of £630 with at least three points and they are valid for four years but fines and points may be higher for some drivers.

Wheels-Alive comment:

‘Party political aspects aside, this is a controversial measure and IF this is about road safety rather than revenue-generating, one has to wonder why it is proposed that the speed limit ‘repeater’ (reminder) signs are being removed. Surely if the idea is to get drivers to obey the limits it makes sense that they know what the speed limit is on a particular section of road.

From what we have been told there are many cases of new (usually lower) speed limits being brought into force in England too, with inadequate or obscure signage. For example, a reader contacted us to say that on one stretch of road in the south of England the speed limit on a dual carriageway has been reduced from 40 mph to 30 mph, with the only signage to this effect being placed in an obscure position on the central reservation, where it cannot be seen by a driver in the left-hand lane if being overtaken… We have checked this section of road and it’s true.

Of course we are NOT advocating speeding, nor breaking speed limits, and we know that excess speed can have awful human consequences. However at the very least it should be obligatory for the powers that be to check the known facts regarding safety in terms of

speed reduction proposals, *before* implementation, and to take heed of public opinion and informed studies in this regard. As quoted in the story above, “Studies in Queens University, Belfast, Edinburgh University and University of Cambridge found the 10 mph reduction had little impact on road safety”.

When financial times are hard, if there is cash available, as a top priority it would be wise to spend it on improving the terrible condition of road surfaces generally, not least so that cyclists are not at risk of accidents resulting from potholes etc, and motorists would find it easier to concentrate on speed limits rather than constantly avoiding deep holes that can wreck their vehicles’ wheels, tyres and suspension”.

Meanwhile, take care on the road everyone, and adhere to the speed limit, if of course you can establish what it is. In the light of this story, in Wales from this autumn (if not already) it would be wise to assume that it is likely to be 20 mph where it was previously 30 mph…‘