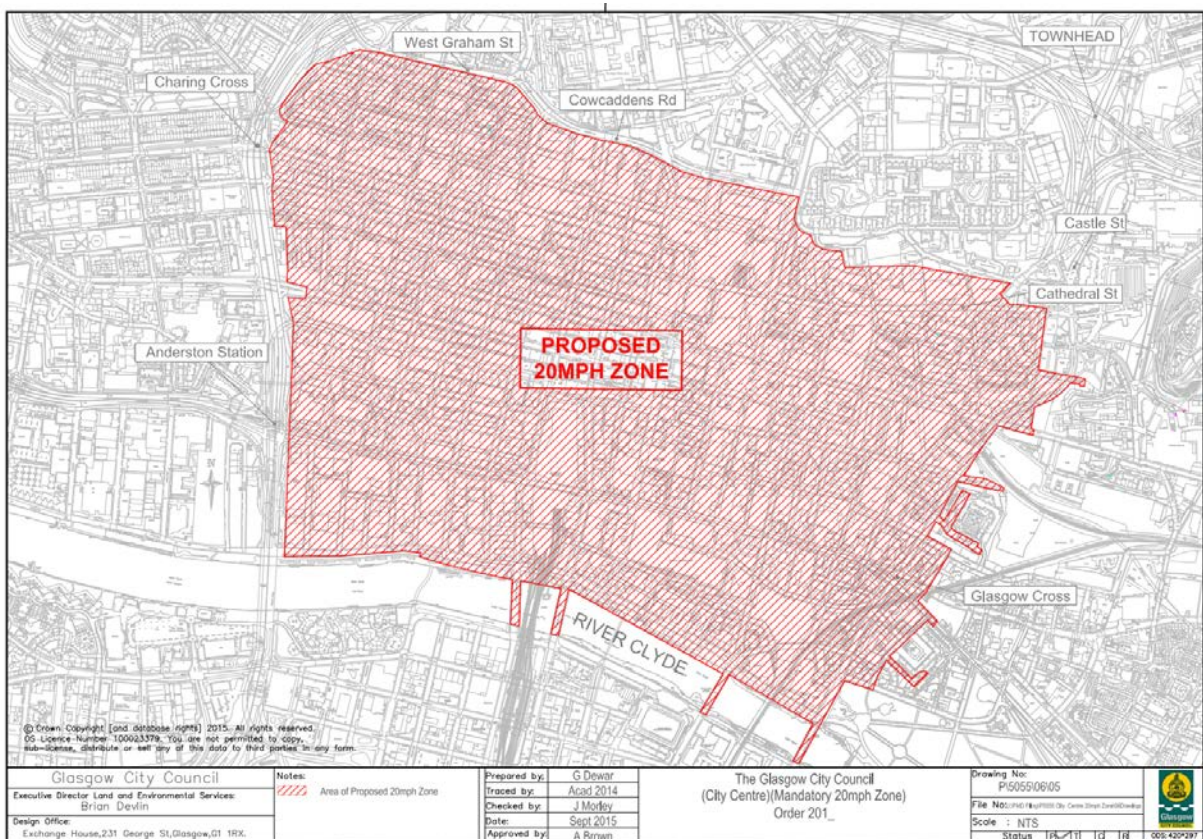


GCPH response to proposal for a 20mph limit in Glasgow's city centre

About the proposed traffic regulation order

Glasgow City Council has announced plans to revoke the existing 30mph maximum speed limit in Glasgow's city centre and introduce a mandatory 20mph maximum speed zone – see map below. Glasgow City Council considers the traffic regulation order necessary:

- For avoiding danger to persons or other traffic using the road to which the order relates or any other road.



Proposed 20mph zone (**Source:** Glasgow City Council).

Statement of support

The Glasgow Centre for Population Health supports the introduction of a mandatory 20mph limit in Glasgow city centre. This measure has the potential to improve safety, contribute to reducing accidents, increase the number of people walking and cycling in the city centre and improve air quality. In the rest of our response we expand on these points.

Context and policy

Active travel – principally, walking and cycling – has many potential health benefits, but levels of walking have reduced dramatically as car driving has become the dominant mode of transport. Census-based trends illustrate this. Car commuting in Scotland has risen steadily from 21% of journeys in 1966 to 69% in 2011, while at the same time commuting on foot and by bus has more than halved, dropping to an 11% share for each mode in 2011. In relation to safety, it is worth noting that pedestrian and cycle casualties are highest in large urban areas within Scotland and that cyclist casualties in Glasgow have risen significantly in the last decade, as cycling prevalence has increased. Glasgow city centre includes some of the busiest and most polluted streets in Scotland^a.

Across a range of government policy there is recognition of the positive contribution active travel can make to addressing obesity¹, climate change² and air quality³. Additionally, there is growing awareness (and evidence) of the social⁴ and economic benefits⁵ of active travel, and conversely of the adverse effects on quality of life associated with high volumes of motor vehicle traffic⁶. National and local policy firmly supports increasing levels of walking and cycling. Scotland's national walking strategy includes the aspiration to achieve levels of walking that are on a par with the best performing countries such as Norway, Switzerland and the Netherlands⁷, and the Scottish Government has set a target that 10% of journeys are made by bike by 2020⁸. The Scottish Government have recently published their strategy to improve air quality, Cleaner Air for Scotland, which seeks to ensure that Scotland has the best air quality in Europe⁹.

Locally, Glasgow aims to become Europe's most sustainable city over the next 20 years¹⁰. Through the proposed Local Development Plan, Glasgow City Council intend to support developments that encourage active travel and reduce any negative effects associated with vehicular travel¹¹. Within the city centre, the Council aim to improve "*the health of Glasgow's citizens by increasing the modal share of trips to/from and within the city centre by active travel modes (walking/cycling/public transport)*"¹². In 2009 the Glasgow Health Commission recommended the introduction of mandatory 20mph zones in residential areas to facilitate healthier ways of living¹³. This was one of 20 recommendations for improving the health of the city.

^a See Understanding Glasgow, air quality:
http://www.understandingglasgow.com/indicators/environment/air_quality/city_comparisons/pm10_levels

What does the evidence say?

There is strong public support for 20mph limits in the UK¹⁴, with support increasing in some areas after implementation¹⁵. The most likely cause of death in UK children aged 11-16 not attributed to disease is a road accident¹⁶. The introduction of 20mph limits and zones reduce the number and severity of road traffic accidents¹⁷, and several studies have shown that the risk of pedestrian death increases sharply between the speeds of 20mph and 30mph¹⁸.

Safety benefits may arise both through reducing the likelihood of collision and by reducing the severity of injury should an accident happen. In London, 20mph zones have led to a 42% reduction in casualties compared with areas outside the 20mph zone¹⁹.

The implementation of this traffic order would see Glasgow follow Edinburgh's example, where a 20mph limit has been brought into force across residential roads, shopping streets and the city centre. Research into the attitudes and behaviour of local residents before and after the implementation of the new reduced limit found that support increased following implementation, that there was less concern about traffic speeds afterwards and that people living in 20mph streets were significantly more likely to consider traffic speeds to be safe for walking and cycling than 30mph streets²⁰. Those surveyed also reported better conditions for walking and cycling.

Why does the GCPH support this change?

The GCPH has previously supported the introduction of speed restrictions throughout the city's road network via the introduction of 20mph limits or 20mph zones in our consultation response to *Glasgow's draft Strategic Plan for Cycling 2015 – 2025*. The introduction of 20mph speed limits is a low-cost intervention that could save lives. This traffic order has the potential to contribute positively to health by helping to create a safer and more people-friendly environment, by encouraging active forms of travel and by reducing exposure to harmful pollutants. As a cultural and commercial hub and a key location for tourism, improving conditions for residents, workers and visitors in Glasgow city centre could enhance the reputation of Glasgow as liveable and environmentally progressive city. However, in order to achieve the aim of becoming the most sustainable city in Europe, as well as potentially reducing inequalities in health outcomes, we would like to see a commitment to introducing 20mph limits on a much wider scale, as recommended by the Glasgow Health Commission in 2009. There would be savings in terms of effort, expenditure and impact to be gained from implementing a city-wide 20mph limit instead of local restrictions introduced in a piecemeal way. Lower road speeds are likely to not only reduce

accidents, but to reduce the perceived risks associated with walking and cycling and, thus, are likely to encourage more people to walk and to cycle.

Recommendations

- GCPH support the introduction of a mandatory 20mph limit in Glasgow city centre.
- Additionally, we recommend that a 20mph limit is extended across the city or at least to areas where pedestrian and cyclist casualties are highest and where young people are most vulnerable to traffic. This would have the potential to reduce inequalities in health outcomes caused by accidents.
- We recommend that these changes should take place as part of a wider process of improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists in city centre areas, including addressing pollution levels in identified hotspots, streetscape improvements and through greening measures.
- We recommend that any proposed changes are sufficiently enforced by the police in the early stages of implementation to ensure that driver behaviour changes.

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