

Intro

Friends, Cyclists, Pedestrians, and even Horse Riders.

Many of you will know that I have been banging on about 20 mph for all residential streets for some years. About 18 months ago I recognised that whilst many voluntary and campaign organisations had 20 mph on their radar, nobody had it in their sights. There had been 20's Plenty initiatives but no sustained campaign that provided the focus and resources to assist local communities campaigning for lower speeds.

And so a year ago 20's Plenty For Us was born. And in that time we have set up a website, visited Portsmouth, given evidence to the Transport Committee, the national Audit office and recently the London Assembly. We have have been working with local 20's Plenty campaigns, created a 20's Plenty For Us newsgroup of active campaigners around the country, presented at speed management and other conferences.

Later this month will be presenting at the Political Conference of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations as one of the best examples of voluntary organisations creating maximum impact with minimal resources.

We have also launched our 20's Plenty by 2010 campaign to put a timescale on our goals with 20th of the 10 month being our annual action day. During that time we have also written thousands of emails in support of our aims.

And the support for 20 mph is growing as more and more in our community declare their support for 20 mph. In questionnaires we find that 80% of the public want 20 mph residential and even 70% of drivers support it according to The Audit Commission.

Background

But it wasn't always that way. If I go back to 2004 when I was on my personal Road to Damascus (well cycling to Warrington's twin town, Hilden actually) that I realised that the foundation of high levels of cycling and walking in Northern European towns was not high quality cycle facilities but low motor vehicle speeds. I distinctly remember that my report in the local paper was responded to by a letter that mocked my suggestion of 20 mph and claimed that it was a good job I hadn't gone to Cairo otherwise I would be suggesting "Camel" Lanes.

I take delight in the idea that if in 2004 I had suggested that in 4 years time the son of a Black African would be sitting in the White House then I would probably have been taken to the "funny farm" and shut up for the rest of my life.

And all of this was done because of the will of the people to do what previously had been thought of as impossible..

Trends

And so it is with our current dependence on the motor vehicle. Societies develop, cultures change and one very precise indicator of this is the advertising world. We no longer see open roads advertising the freedom of the steering wheel, but much more likely comic 4x4's that can climb buildings or Astra's driven by Dolphins. The motor dream is giving way to the dawn of a new reality and its essence of freedom, independence and self determination is epitomised by a bicycle. But advertisers do not change a culture, what they do is to very quickly tap in to the trends and find the "sweet spot" of our aspirations.

Our society is increasingly receptive to alternative solutions to the motor car.

Recent research by Bristol and Sheffield Universities has looked at all the deaths over the last 24 years. The report shows that if you are under 15 the most likely cause of death is as a pedestrian and being hit by a motor vehicle. It is not till you reach the age of 35 that motor vehicles cease to be largest killer. If death by impact were classed as a disease it would be treated as the greatest medical challenge we face today.

Let us put those deaths into perspective. On June 9th our country had lost 100 servicemen in Afghanistan since 2001. The Daily Telegraph headlined it as a moment for sober reflection. Reflect further that over the same period we killed 5,475 pedestrians on our roads and injured 50,000.

Government perspective

So what's our government perspective.

Well as recently as 2007 in its 2nd review of Government Road Safety Strategy its opening sentence proudly proclaimed :-

"Great Britain continues to be a world leader in road safety."

And

"Progress has been good on pedestrian deaths - a reduction of 33% below the baseline. Pedestrians accounted for about 21% of deaths and 22% of serious injuries in 2005."

European perspective

Compare this with that of our European neighbours. The SUNflower report looked at road safety in Sweden, UK and Netherlands.

It identified :-

- UK less clearly defined speed management system
- High motorised density leads to high pedestrian casualties
- Most reductions in walking and cycling due to less walking and cycling.

- UK has greatest scope to improve vulnerable road user safety
- Dutch and Swedish models are required to reduce traffic flow and speed needed to reduce UK pedestrian casualties.

And concluded ;-

- UK roads poorly engineered for cyclists and pedestrians
- UK has a higher proportion of fatalities on low speed roads than other countries
- UK needs to extend 30 kph to residential roads
- UK needs to find engineering, speed management and traffic management to enable pedestrians and vehicles to co-exist
- Britain, however, still has a substantial pedestrian casualty problem.

Here you can see that per distance travelled it reported nearly twice as many fatalities in the UK.

And in his evidence to the Transport Committee this year, Fred Weggman of the Dutch Road safety Institute commented that

“Until 2000 we were always looking to the United Kingdom when it came to road safety. You were the inventors of many good activities and policies. All of a sudden, somewhere in 2000, you stopped doing things and we [the Netherlands] continued with our efforts.”

Just one of the comments that led the Committee to entitle its report “Ending the Scandal of Complacency”

Our contempt for the lives of those who dare to walk in our streets is perhaps best shown by looking at how our road deaths are skewed toward the most vulnerable of our road users.

In Southern Europe 14.2% of their road dead are pedestrians.

Move to Northern Europe which predominantly uses a 30 kph as its residential and urban speed limit and we find this reduces to just 11.7%.

Whilst in the UK a default speed limit set to 60% higher leads to a staggering 21% of our road deaths being walkers.

Our Observation

When it comes to sharing our roads for vulnerable road users :-

- UK has the poorest record in Western Europe
- We have failed to engineer our roads for cyclists or pedestrians
- We maintain speed limits in residential and urban roads 60% higher than our neighbours

- We are failing in either obtaining or setting conditions for modal shift
- We must question the morality of modal shift encouragement without changing risks for VRU's

And the communities perspective.... Well :-

- Parents cite vehicle speeds and volume as reason why children dare not be allowed to walk or cycle
- We find 80% of residents support 20 mph on their streets
- Audit Commission found 75% of drivers supported 20 mph on residential roads (PACTS report)

Current 20 mph limits and zones

Now I know that you may say that much of what I have talked about with regard to danger on our roads will not be changed by 20mph residential roads because such roads only represent a proportion of where our deaths and injuries occur.

That would be true if the interaction between driver and road and speed limit were a simple one. If one noticed a speed limit sign and immediately responded by compliance of varying degrees. And then beyond this point reverted to the "normality" of driver behaviour on the rest of the road network.

The very transitory and limited length of current speed limits, confined to a few hundred yards, marks them out as the "abnormal", the "slow" and the "unnecessary". And as you drive through such an area there seems to be no justification as to why these residents should have lower speeds than those outside your own home. It is they who own the benefit and not the driver's family.

Short length and minimal area speed limits (or zones) that are the "exception" rather the "rule" create an arbitrary need to slow down. Drivers are excluded from the reasoning behind the limit.

Where we have 30 mph as the default speed limit for residential roads, then a 20mph stretch will be seen as the slower exception and to be "got through" as quickly as possible so that "normal service" can be resumed. And after that you wish to "make up" the time lost on the rest of your 30 mph journey. In fact small scale 20 mph streets legitimise travelling at 30 mph in the rest of the network regardless of whether this is appropriate.

Compliance becomes a reactive decision made whilst behind the steering wheel and from a driving rather than a resident perspective.

This is the reality of the engineering, implementation, use and compliance of current short and minimal 20 mph limits and zones.

Authority wide scheme

So what happens when a community implements an authority wide scheme.

Firstly it springs from the community aspirations. Whether that be for environmental or safety or civic amenity or child enablement reasons is irrelevant. It is the people who influence elected members of the needs of the community. And then a debate ensues. The various points of view are aired, the press oil the wheels of that debate and eventually a democratic community decision reached. A budget is set, the community re-inforce the decision with leaflets to all households and schools, the engineering work is done and everyone knows that "20 is plenty where people live". And this time the driver knows that his family benefits from 20 mph. The most important aspect is that the decision for compliance gets made within the house, when talking to friends, when your son or daughter brings the new "safer roads" map home. And that commitment to compliance is far more enduring rather than temporary. It reflects the will of and concern for the family and community.

And this was the most striking thing I observed when I visited Portsmouth. Everybody was aware of 20 mph and how it applied to the whole community. They had made a "collective community commitment" to lower speeds and safer roads in their town. And most importantly that commitment spreads over into all their driving on 30 or 40 mph roads.

20's Plenty is therefore not just an end in itself but the implementation of an authority wide default of 20 mph is a catalyst for a "paradigm shift" in the way people use their roads.

DfT Circular 01/2006

So that's the theory, what about the practice so far.

Well the trigger for all the implementation of authority wide 20 mph schemes was the change in Department of Transport Circular 01/2006 which set the guidelines for setting local speed limits.

I will not go into all the details, but the most important paragraphs were these:-

Objectives

Para	Text
4	This guidance supersedes 01/93
20	Local speed limits that better reflect the needs of all road users , not just motorised vehicles. Improved quality of life for local communities and better balance between road safety, accessibility and environmental objectives.
21	Together with education, driver information, training and publicity

Underlying Principles

Para	Text
24	It is important that traffic authorities and police forces work closely together
27	Some form of enforcement may be necessary
28	Traffic authorities should include conditions and facilities for vulnerable road users
33	Need of vulnerable road users must be fully taken into account
36	Mean speeds should be used as basis for determining local speed limits (this replaces 85 th percentile in old circular)
38	Minimum length of a speed limit should be 600m

Urban Speed Management

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What this means for Vulnerable Road Users

AD lib

When 20's Plenty for Us was formed a year ago, Portsmouth was in the process of implementing an authority wide 20 mph speed limit. It recognised that Circular 01/06 was guidelines rather than rules but still used these as the basis for its implementation.

- Portsmouth CC used it for :-
 - Authority wide speed limit – not zones
 - No additional physical calming
 - Public support and ~~consultation~~ engagement
 - Excluded main roads and arterial roads
 - Completed in 9 months
 - Cost £475,000 for 1200 roads
 - Accomplished by traffic orders, 200 roads at a time
 - Transitioned via de-restriction
 - No Secretary of State approval required
 - Already speed dropped by 3 mph +
 - Created a collective community commitment to Road Safety

Pictures of Portsmouth

And this was followed in Feb 2008 by Norwich and Oxford, and I thank Paul and Richard for their explanation of the progress made in their towns. Just last month Leicester joined the ranks of 20's Plenty Authorities .

And this week it was announced that Newcastle will introduce a mandatory signed only 20 mph speed limit on all neighbourhood streets.

David Ord, Newcastle's project engineer for traffic management, said the council had initially wanted an advisory scheme, but Portsmouth's scheme highlighted the success of a mandatory scheme and drew attention to the new government guidance.

'Fortunately, we have avoided a great deal of abortive and costly engineering work, and now have an opportunity to implement a mandatory scheme for the same cost as an advisory scheme,' according to a report submitted to committee.

In our own quiet British way, in Town Halls across the land attitudes are changing, the voice of the people is being heard and responded to. With Newcastle we now have nearly 1m residents who live in a Local Authority committed to 20 mph as the default for residential streets.

But as I say this I note that very few of us are in that 1 million people. Not us in Warrington or Manchester or Nottingham or Belfast or Watford or Cardiff.

And that is our opportunity and our challenge. For if we can swell the numbers of local authorities who are implementing 20's Plenty then we take that community aspiration and commitment to lower speeds from the homes, to the streets, to the wards, to the boroughs, to the counties and to the whole country.

Within our hands and dependent upon our commitment we have the ability to create a domino effect as each additional 20's Plenty shows that change is desired and deliverable. 20's Plenty can become the catalyst that creates the paradigm shift in the way that everyone uses our roads.

And you know there is every bit of evidence that this is possible. My experience of the 20's Plenty debate is that those who are against never argue that 30 mph is a better default speed limit for residential roads. Their argument is "why we can't" have 20 mph rather than why 30 mph is better.

Their negativity stems not from a vision of what's best but merely the continuation of the current. And I can understand this. In civil and traffic engineering terms 20's Plenty is as boring an initiative as you can get. How can it compare to a new bridge, road scheme or a multi sequential, state of the art, traffic light system, or even cycle infrastructure.

The only benefit of 20's Plenty from a Traffic Authority perspective is that it will save lives, lead to modal change and that paradigm shift in the way roads are used. And that its cheap, lowers pollution and noise, and is exactly what 80% of residents want.

So 20's Plenty for Us has the vision and objective of lifting that 1m in 2008 to 5m in 2009 followed by 30m in 2010.

So how can you help achieve that objective for your town:-

- Understand Circular 01/06. In particular the section on Urban Speed Management.
- Start to create a community based and non-modal campaign for 20's Plenty. 20's Plenty For Us will support local campaigns with action packs, ideas, assistance with public meetings, display panels to borrow and advice.

- That campaign should start by awakening community aspirations and press interest and be followed up by Councillor communications.
- Are you in a “can do” authority that has vision, commitment and responsibility to its constituents or a “make do” authority that will do the least possible and be satisfied with “not too many people” dying on their roads.
- Avoid the “sops” to road safety such as 20 mph around schools. This is favoured only because to drivers with all those children around it seems dangerous to them. For children statistically they are far more likely to be injured or killed closer to home where drivers do not see the same danger. 20 mph around schools also legitimises the driving at 30 in those areas away from schools.
- Resist the idea of pilot schemes. The key characteristics of an authority wide scheme is the community commitment and benefits to all drivers from their homes also being 20 mph. Education, consultation and enforcement is also far more successful across a whole town. Therefore pilots cannot model town wide implementations. At best they defer implementation and at worst provide compromised evidence of the benefits.
- Recognise that this is apolitical and has support from all parties. But equally recognise that some politicians do not understand the real support at community level and fear upsetting motorists. We generally find universal support especially once initiated by another party. Whilst not being a political issue as Paul and Richard have mentioned you do have to understand the local politics.
- And most of all be focussed. 20's Plenty could transform the way we use our roads. As cycle and pedestrian campaigners your time is valuable and limited. This campaign gives the maximum return on that time and the greatest synergy between campaigns across the country.

20's Plenty has made huge strides in being accepted as the way forward for our streets in Great Britain. At local and national level it is being supported but is most successful when driven by community aspiration and demand.

In conclusion, if I can make reference again to the last couple of weeks.

We need that change in the way we use our roads.

- Portsmouth said – Yes they can
- Oxford and Norwich said – yes they can
- Leicester and Newcastle said- yes they can
- And for you and your town – yes you can

Thank you for your time and remember

Rome wasn't built in a day,

But it would have been built quicker if the Romans had bicycles