



## Portsmouth – changing the way we share our streets.

The presentations made yesterday in the Guild Hall in Portsmouth may well have been a pivotal point in road safety and danger reduction in the UK.

Until now, speed management has mainly been implemented by means of localised interventions on streets to make the driver slow down. Whether they are speed cameras, or speed bumps the essential engagement has been with the driver on the road whilst he or she is driving.

Yesterday Portsmouth City Council and the Department for Transport reported on the results from the completely different approach taken by Portsmouth when in March 2008 they completed their setting of all residential roads, bar arterial routes, with a speed limit of 20 mph. No bumps or humps, but most importantly a decision not just made by Traffic Officers but the whole community as they sought a way to deliver lower speeds and a better quality of life for their residents. Quite simply, Portsmouth people decided to slow down wherever people live!

Of course, setting lower speeds with traffic calming is so expensive that one only usually does it where you have excessive speed problems. But when you make the decision as a community to slow down wherever people live then it is inevitable that many streets will already have speeds below 20 mph. In fact in Portsmouth they monitored 159 sites. 102 already had mean speeds of 20 mph or less. 36 were between 20 mph and 24 mph, whilst on a further 21 the mean speed was above 24 mph.

And because of that mix it was found that overall the mean speed for all the roads did not change very much. In fact it reduced by just 1%. But what was very significant was the fact that in those streets where speeds previously were 24 mph or above then a huge 7mph reduction in mean speed was recorded.

Whilst casualties also fell by 15% and total accidents by 13%, more time will be needed to establish statistically significant collision figures. However, the presenter noted the changes in child and elderly casualties in before and after numbers :-

	Children (0-15)	Elderly (70+)
Pedestrians	-4%	-25%
Passengers	-22%	-25%
Driver/Rider	-9%	-36%
All Casualties	-8%	-31%

Portsmouth's success is as a community that has debated how the streets should be shared more equitably and go through the due political, democratic and administrative process to take that community commitment and turn it into a framework within which everyone can take their part in making their city a better place to live. One where casualties reduce and people have quieter streets with more opportunities for cycling and walking.

The spaces between our houses, which we call streets, will never be the same in this country. Portsmouth has shown that communities can change their behaviour and sensibly embark on a **20's Plenty Where People Live** initiative that delivers real benefits to every road user. More and more towns, cities and villages are following this trend to put citizenship back into the way we drive and share our roads. People in Portsmouth are perhaps no different from us all. But what they have found is a way to enable them to turn an aspiration for safer and more pleasant streets into a reality. I suspect there will be plenty more similar communities saying 20's plenty for them as well.

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