

Agenda Item	6
Report No	ECI/3/2023

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Economy and Infrastructure

Date: 2 February 2023

Report Title: Speed Limit Policy Update

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents an updated Speed Limit Policy for Members to approve. It recognises the commitment to implementing 20mph speed limits as per the Scottish Government National Strategy.
- 1.2 After Committee approval of the proposed policy, a Speed Limits Manual will be finalised which will provide technical guidance on assessment and implementation.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
 - i. **Approve** the Speed Limit Policy as contained in **Appendix B**; and
 - ii. **Note** that after the policy is approved, the “Speed Limits Manual” will be finalised and distributed, including to the Roads Redesign Working Group.

3 Implications

- 3.1 Resource – Existing resources will be utilised to implement speed limits, with the reminder that Transport Scotland are funding delivery of the early adopter 20mph programme (refer to report ECI/29/22).
- 3.2 Legal – Highland will adhere to relevant legal requirements, including the preparation of temporary and permanent Traffic Regulation Orders.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) – There are no direct implications arising from these proposals.

- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – Traffic speeds can have both a positive and negative effect on emissions from vehicles. Higher speeds in appropriate areas will enable vehicles to be more efficient. Lower speeds can enable modal shifts to walking, wheeling and cycling.
- 3.5 Risk – If an updated policy is not implemented, there is a risk that there will be a continuation of varying applications of limits across Highland. The aim of the policy is to provide clear and consistent direction on the assessment and implementation of limits.
- 3.6 Gaelic - There are no implications arising from these proposals.

4 Introduction

- 4.1 The current “Speed Limits Policy” (see **Appendix A**) was approved by the Transport Services Committee on 5 June 1996. Since then, there have been updates to related pieces of legislation and guidance for the implementation of speed limits.
- 4.2 Members are reminded that Highland was approached by Transport Scotland to be a pilot Local Authority for the roll-out of 20mph speed limits. A recent report, EC1/29/22, at the 10 November EI Committee informed Members of the progress so far. The update to the policy supports this and provides a commitment for rolling out the programme. Details of the 20mph programme can be found on the website at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1523/transport_and_streets/1049/20mph_programme

5 Policy Amendments

- 5.1 The policy has been updated to reflect changes to current practice and terminology. As part of the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) Road Asset Management project, Roads Authorities share good practice and collaborate on documentation which can be adapted and used by all. The proposed Speed Limit Policy has been adapted, with permission, from one which Aberdeenshire Council has approved.
- 5.2 The proposed policy document is contained within **Appendix B**. It sets out the high-level criteria by which Highland will implement speed limits, including the scope of roads to be covered, various policy points and compliance with the policy.
- 5.3 One aspect to note is the introduction of a ‘Speed Limits Manual’. Again, this has been drafted and adapted from Aberdeenshire Council’s document. It is not a policy but sets out guidance for officers to use in the implementation of speed limits. As an example, it will provide guidance on technical aspects such as signing of limits and producing speed limit Traffic Regulation Orders. If the policy is approved, a draft of the manual will be circulated to various technical staff who will be consulted on its contents. Thereafter, it is proposed that the document will be taken to the Roads Redesign Working Group so that Members have the opportunity to view it before it’s finalised. Once implemented, this document will be updated as necessary by the Roads Service.

6 Roads Improvement Project

- 6.1 The update to this policy supports one of the aims of the Roads Improvement Project, to compile a programme of policy renewal. Further policies will be brought to this Committee for approval, as they are finalised.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 5 January 2023

Author: Elizabeth Maciver, Principal Engineer
(Transport Planning/ Road Asset Management and Policy)

Background Papers: [ECI/29/22 Early Adoption of 20mph Speed Limits in Highland](#)
[RDB/09/22 Roads Improvement Project - Update](#)

Appendix A – Current Speed Limits Policy (1996)



ROADS AND TRANSPORT

SPEED LIMITS POLICY

The Council's Speed Limits Policy was agreed at the meeting of the Transport Services Committee on 5 June 1996.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The main purpose of specific speed limits is to inform drivers where it is appropriate to adopt a speed which is lower than the national speed limit.

2. **General Principles**

- 2.1 Speed limits are normally unnecessary where the character of the road itself limits the speed of vehicles to a level at or below that of the limit under consideration.
- 2.2 Accidents should be a factor in determining the necessity of imposing a limit, but they are not a pre-requisite.
- 2.3 Mandatory speed limits should not be used to solve the problems created by isolated hazards.
- 2.4 The minimum length of a speed limit should be 800 metres (½ mile) although relaxation may be permitted in certain circumstances, provided the limit is long enough for the Police to enforce.
- 2.5 The environment of the road is the most important factor to be considered. This is the appearance the road has to the road user and includes such factors as frequent junctions, development, bends, sight lines, schools, etc. Also, to be considered are roads with high traffic levels passing through villages where a speed limit may be desirable to protect the quality of life, always recognising that any limit imposed must be realistic or it will not be observed.
- 2.6 Class III and unclassified roads are automatically subject to a 30mph speed limit if there is a system of street lighting.

3. **Procedures**

- 3.1 The actual speed limit should be based on the existing 85th percentile speed (i.e. the speed at or below which 85% of motorists drive). This is generally accepted as being the maximum safe speed for a road and one which most drivers will observe without undue enforcement.
- 3.2 If the 85th percentile speed is found to exceed what is considered to be a desirable limit by more than 7mph or 20% (whichever is greater) then the lower limit may only be imposed if engineering measures are taken that will reduce vehicle speeds to the required level. Otherwise the limit indicated by the 85 percentiles must be used.
- 3.3 Speed limits cannot on their own be expected to reduce vehicle speeds if they are set at a level substantially below that at which drivers choose to drive in the absence of a limit.
- 3.4 Engineering measures should be introduced to bring about a physical reduction in speed, but this may prove expensive and could be difficult in some locations.
- 3.5 There is little point in establishing a limit, however desirable from an environmental or safety point of view, if it is not going to have any effect on actual vehicle speed. Indeed, a low but inappropriate and incorrectly applied speed limit which cannot be achieved in practice and cannot be adequately enforced could have the very opposite to the desired effect and actually lead to an increase in accidents.
- 3.6 Once approved the necessary plans and schedules will be forwarded to Legal Services who will arrange for the draft Order to be advertised for public comment. If there are no objections, the Order can be made. In the event of objections, however, these must be considered by Committee and either overruled or upheld before the Order can be made.
- 3.7 There was circulated Report No TR27/96 by the Director of Transport Services setting out the criteria to be used in establishing local speed limits. The Report recommended that the Committee accept the criteria of Scottish Office Circular No 1/1993 for speed limits and adopt the procedures set out in the Report for the assessment of speed limits on Highland Council roads.

4 **20mph Speed Limits & 20mph zones**

Roads and Transport Committee meeting on 18 November 1999, it was agreed that 20mph zones and speed limits be in line with the Scottish Executive circular 13/1999 and that any proposed 20mph speed limit be delayed until the results of a National Survey are known in July 2000.

Appendix B – Proposed Speed Limit Policy (2023)



Speed Limit Policy

Roads and Infrastructure

Infrastructure, Environment and Economy

Approval

	Name	Date
Prepared By:	E Maciver/ L MacKellaich	December 2022
Approved By:	T Urry	January 2023

Responsible Officer:	T Urry, Head of Roads and Infrastructure
Committee:	Economy and Infrastructure
Approval Date:	2 nd February 2023

Document Control

Version Number	Date	Comments
1.0	February 2023	Version 1.0 approved. (Previous Speed Limits Policy superseded.)



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Both the general speed limit for restricted roads and the national speed limit are set by the Scottish Ministers and these apply by default across the country in the absence of signing to the contrary. As these default limits may not be appropriate for all sections of a route, local traffic authorities are permitted to set local speed limits suited to local conditions and circumstances.
- 1.2 It is a widely accepted principle that set speed limits should reflect road users' perception of the character of the road. However, road users can have quite different opinions on what the appropriate speed limit for a stretch of road should be, depending on their mode of transport at the time.
- 1.3 This policy aims to promote a reasonable balance between the competing demands of motorised vehicles and active travel user, along with residents and businesses. Compliance with this policy should ensure a level of consistency across the whole of Highland, with speed limits being set fairly and systematically following a quantitatively based approach.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy shall apply to:
 - All adopted and prospectively adoptable roads for which The Highland Council is the local roads authority.
 - Roads not on the adopted list but are managed/ maintained by The Highland Council under other Services such as Property, Housing, Planning and Education.

3.0 Policy

- 3.1 The Highland Council, while acknowledging the need to avoid unnecessary delays and restrictions to motorists, recognises the road safety, community and environmental benefits of lower traffic speeds in both our urban and rural areas.

3.2 We will:

- Provide clear guidance on the assessment and implementation of speed limits in the Highland Council's "Speed Limits Manual";
- Apply the guidance within the Speed Limits Manual consistently across Highland;
- Commit to the Scottish Government National Strategy for 20mph speed limits and ensure all appropriate roads in built-up areas have a safer speed limit of 20mph by 2025. We will continue to maintain a network of routes with an appropriate 30 mph or 40mph speed restriction;
- Rationalise the number of Speed Limit Orders the Authority has and regularly update these through the consolidation process;
- Make all our new Speed Limit Orders publicly available by publishing them on our website; and
- Promote residential road layouts in our standards for Road Construction Consent which deliver more pedestrian and cycle friendly neighbourhoods through lower design speeds.

4.0 Implementation and Compliance

4.1 The Highland Council's "Speed Limits Manual" contains detailed direction on the assessment and provision of speed limits within the area.

4.2 The Roads Service will be responsible for updating this manual to reflect changes in legislation and any other improvements or amendments considered to be needed.

4.3 Road Operations Managers shall be responsible for compliance within their Areas, ensuring that guidance in the manual is complied with. Other teams such as Road Safety and the Traffic Management and Control Team will also be required to comply with the policy and manual.

4.4 The Road Construction Consent process will be used to ensure that roads for adoption comply with the guidance in the manual.