

Since I am yet again missing a SCARCE meeting as more and more of my life is spent in Welsh Wales, I thought the least that I could do was to send you my thoughts on the latest 20mph limit in Wales and, as ever, I shall make it controversial! It is a fact according to the relevant Government statistical departments in both England and Wales that if you are: Hit by a vehicle travelling at 35mph, you are twice as likely to die than if you are hit at 30mph. Hit by a vehicle travelling at 30mph, you are five times as likely to die than if you are hit at 20mph.

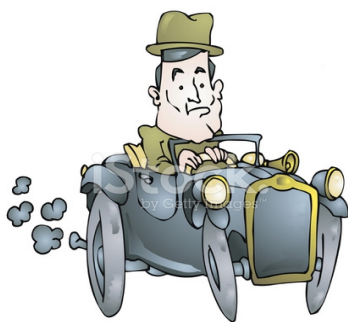
By extrapolation, and I am sure there will be members present on Wednesday evening who can either confirm or deny my conjecture, if you are hit by a vehicle travelling at 35mph (which, lets face it is probably an average urban speed) then you are TEN TIMES more likely to die than if you are hit at 20mph. All of a sudden the idea doesn't seem so potty after all. I have found that my own journey to Beaumaris driving on Welsh roads for probably half the time of the journey is only very marginally inconvenienced by the few urban areas affected by the 20mph limit.

Obviously, if I were a delivery man operating in a fairly confined area this could have some impact, though there would be much less chance of it (Sorry, can never resist a pun)! However, it must also be remembered that since currently the majority of delivery vans are running on diesel the air pollution argument also comes into play, particularly in urban areas. Can our boffins confirm that pollution from a diesel engine is significantly higher travelling at 30mph than at 20mph per volume of area covered, if you see what I mean (differing speeds, quicker through a certain distance) as I am not so sure. I would have thought that a diesel engine running at a slow speed may not have reached optimum 'burn' efficiency but I guess I must be wrong. The history of motoring in the UK has been one of changing speed limits often accompanied by outrage: In 1865 the Red Flag Act required a pedestrian to walk 60yards in front of a vehicle. The 1878 Act laid down a speed limit of 2mph (true!) in towns and 4mph in the countryside though an escort (no longer carrying a red flag) was still required to walk 20 yards ahead to warn of your (slow) arrival so you could fling yourself out of the way.

The Locomotives on Highways Act 1896 released the poor driver from this penury as National speed limits were abolished and local authorities were empowered to decide on their own limits. The average was around 14mph and in celebration the Emancipation Run was organised to engage drivers in a mad dash from London to Brighton. In 1927, this idea was revived as the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run open to vehicles built before 1905. In 1903, a National speed limit was again introduced set at 20mph only to be abolished again in 1930. However a spate of deaths and serious injuries soon brought a return of limits set at 30mph in built up areas.

I could go on with more timelines but the point is that whereas most people are very happy to have 20mph limits on the stretch of road outside their own house, where their pets and children may be trying to cross the road, a lot of people are unhappy about the national adoption of this limit. Personally, after examining what facts I have collated I am surprised to say that I am all for it. I'll bet you didn't expect the Chairman of a classic car club to come out with that.

Drive carefully, Tony.



Just a brief observation as I am roaring down the motorway shortly! Where does one stop with this idea? Urban road deaths would probably be zero if you reduced the urban speed to say 5 mph? Pollution will probably increase due to the speeding up and slowing down rather than an economical steady speed, as with speed bumps.

This week on Anglesey, I experienced 20mph roads with not a house or pedestrian in sight. It antagonises drivers and makes them question the whole idea. However, as our cottage is on a road that is now 20mph, I think it's great (once I get there)! I must say though, a neighbour has a very good point — he is miffed as it now takes him longer to drive to his favourite pub!

Cheers, Mikey