



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Wednesday 6 March 2019

Session 5



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RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE
8th Meeting 2019, Session 5

CONVENER

*Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con)

*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

*Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con)

*Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)

*John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)

*Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD)

*Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab)

*Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

*Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Chief Superintendent Stewart Carle (Police Scotland)

Andrew Easson (City of Edinburgh Council)

John Finlay (Scottish Government)

Pete Grant (Scottish Government)

Kevin Hamilton (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland)

Dr Ruth Jepson (University of Edinburgh)

Michael Matheson (Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity)

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

Walter Scott (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland)

Donna Turnbull (Scottish Government)

Stuart Wilson (Scottish Government)

Brian Young (Scottish Borders Council)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Wednesday 6 March 2019

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:01]

Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1

The Convener (Edward Mountain): Good morning and welcome to the eighth meeting in 2019 of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. I ask everyone to ensure that their mobile phones are on silent. No apologies have been received.

Agenda item 1 is two evidence-taking sessions on the Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Scotland) Bill. In the first session, we will take evidence from Police Scotland, local authorities, an academic and the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland; in the second session, we will take evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity and Scottish Government officials.

I welcome to the meeting our first panel: Walter Scott, vice-chair, liaison committee, and Kevin Hamilton, member, traffic and road safety working group, Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland; Chief Superintendent Stewart Carle, divisional commander, road policing division, operational and specialist support, Police Scotland; Dr Ruth Jepson, reader in public health and principal investigator on research into the impact of 20mph speed limits in Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh; Andrew Easson, road safety and active travel manager, City of Edinburgh Council; and Brian Young, infrastructure manager, Scottish Borders Council.

You have all probably given evidence to or attended a meeting of a committee of the Parliament before—or not, as the case may be—but I will try to make things easy by going through some of the rules. First, you do not need to touch anything on the panel in front of you—that will be operated by the gentleman on your left. If you want to answer a question, you should catch my eye, and I will bring you in. Once you have caught my eye, the secret is not to look away while you are talking, because I will have to interrupt you if you go on too long. If I think that you have made your point—and are probably labouring it—I will waggle my pen to give you a good indication that I want you to wind up so that I can bring someone else in. With so many of you on the panel, it will be

difficult for all of you to answer every question, so do not be offended if I do not bring you in. I will try to balance things as best I can.

I should also say that it is incredibly dangerous for you to look away when someone asks a question, even if that is a clear indication that you do not want to answer it, because I will just pick one of you—and it will probably be the one who looked away first. I hope that you will all get a chance to answer a question during this session; we have a lot of questions, but there are quite a lot of you, too, so I will appreciate short answers. We will try to keep things moving so that you all get a chance to respond, but if you want to speak, the secret is: catch my eye and I will bring you in.

The first question is from the committee's deputy convener, Gail Ross.

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): Thank you, convener. You will no doubt appreciate short questions, too.

Good morning, panel. I will start with a very simple question: do you support or oppose the bill's proposals to lower the speed limit on restricted roads to 20mph? I would also like you to give a brief reason for your view.

Walter Scott (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland): SCOTS is generally supportive of the bill and certainly the intentions behind it. However, as with many things, the devil will be in the detail, and I hope that we will be able to touch on that issue today. We have been working on the preparations for the bill, and we hope that certain areas of concern will be picked up as it progresses through the parliamentary process.

Kevin Hamilton (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland): As Walter Scott said, SCOTS is generally supportive of the bill and its aims. Given that the biggest proportion of those who are killed or seriously injured in urban areas are pedestrians and cyclists, there is a road safety argument for having this legislation. Crucially, the way in which the bill is framed probably provides the most cost-effective mechanism for local authorities to introduce widespread and consistent 20mph limits across the whole of Scotland.

Chief Superintendent Stewart Carle (Police Scotland): Police Scotland supports any measures that will reduce road casualties, and plenty of evidence suggests that lower speed limits achieve that aim. Like previous speakers, we want to see some more detail, but I should say that, where we can, we already support existing 20mph zones that have been promoted by local authorities.

Dr Ruth Jepson (University of Edinburgh): I have two answers to this question. In my role as

the person evaluating the 20mph limit in Edinburgh, I must be unbiased and therefore have no particular view on the matter. However, as a public health academic, I support what are called upstream interventions such as legislation, as they can have a big impact on the health of the population.

Andrew Easson (City of Edinburgh Council):

The City of Edinburgh Council is supportive of the bill. Given that we have already implemented widespread 20mph limits, it will not make a lot of difference to what is happening on the ground in Edinburgh, but it will make it a lot easier for other local authorities that want to take a similar approach to do so in future. We also think that it will go a long way towards building acceptance and understanding of, and increasing compliance with, the limits; that will be important for Edinburgh as we move forward.

Brian Young (Scottish Borders Council):

Scottish Borders Council is entirely supportive of any measures that support road safety, and we also broadly accept the bill's intention to make it easier for local authorities to introduce 20mph limits. That said, we remain very concerned about the bill's one-size-fits-all approach, because we feel that that will disadvantage some rural areas. Moreover, as it stands, it will have a significant financial impact on the council; it is unlikely to make any appreciable impact on accident numbers, mainly because they are already very low in these areas; and it will have only a limited impact on speed.

Gail Ross: Kevin Hamilton said that, on balance, the bill perhaps presents the most cost-effective mechanism for councils. Bearing in mind what we have just heard from the Borders, is that the view of all councils?

Kevin Hamilton: The answer to that is no—there is no unanimous view among local authorities. However, in my opinion and from the evidence in the financial memorandum and the work that I have done for West Lothian Council, which is the council that I work for, the bill provides a cheaper way of doing this for an authority that has not already gone down the road of implementing a widespread 20mph limit.

The Convener: Sorry, Kevin. I know that Walter Scott wants to come in, but first perhaps you could clarify what you said about there not being a majority. Are councils in favour or against?

Kevin Hamilton: I said that it was not unanimous.

The Convener: What was not unanimous? Can Walter Scott clarify that?

Walter Scott: Yes, I can. We have undertaken a poll of sorts—it is not necessarily statistically

valid—of our members on certain aspects of the bill and its progress. There is a bias towards being in favour of the bill and regarding its measures as cost effective. Around 50 to 60 people were in favour and 40 to 50 were against, depending on how the don't knows are considered.

Gail Ross: Do you find that there is a split between rural and urban areas?

Walter Scott: The analysis does not show that. There has certainly been interest from the local authorities. The respondents included Fife Council and the City of Edinburgh Council, both of which are already experienced in rolling out 20mph limits. One of those authorities is probably in favour, while the other is less so, therefore we cannot think of any split in such straightforward terms as the areas being rural or non-rural. However, the premise has always been that it would be more straightforward to implement such a limit—and that it would be more understandable—in an urban environment than a rural one.

Gail Ross: Perhaps Brian Young could go into a little more depth about the difficulties that his authority, which is a rural one, might face.

Brian Young: The difficulties go back to a point that is made at paragraph 40 of the financial memorandum:

“Thus, while it is expected that local authorities would incur some costs under the Bill relating to using the order-making process to introduce a network of roads with a higher speed limit, these costs would be lower than they must currently incur to achieve a similar outcome”.

It is saying that no costs will be involved in that aspect, because it is equitable. However, that makes the basic assumption that all authorities are looking to introduce widespread 20mph limits in their areas, which is not the case. In the past, most local authorities have looked at the issue and made a decision to introduce what they had already intended to introduce, so this would be very much a case of additional work.

Gail Ross: Would you prefer to see the status quo, whereby you are able to choose which areas, streets, housing estates or schools should be taken down to a 20mph limit as and when you, as a council, see fit?

Brian Young: Yes, that would be our preference.

The Convener: Gail, I am afraid that you have pushed the envelope on questions. I must move on to the next one, which is from John Mason.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): The bill is called the Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Scotland) Bill. My question is on why only restricted roads, as opposed to a whole area, should be limited to 20mph. I understand that

Edinburgh has gone for zones, so that even the A1 could be part of a 20mph zone. On the other hand, the bill applies only to restricted roads. If we were to take the example of a small town such as Hawick, presumably the limit on the main road through the town would stay at 30mph and those on the side roads would all be 20mph. Would it not be easier just to make the whole thing have a limit of 20mph? Could we hear your thoughts on that, Mr Scott?

Walter Scott: The premise is simplicity of approach, as far as what is or is not a restricted road is concerned. How consistently that is applied across the country varies slightly. A boundary must be set on that, so that what is a restricted road is defined. The roads that John Mason talked about—A and B roads that run through towns but are not restricted roads—would not default to a 20mph limit. SCOTS would look for the time and resources to undertake more detailed assessment. The powers would be available to local authorities through the traffic regulation order process and they could then incorporate such areas into 20mph zones where that was appropriate.

John Mason: Are you happy for that to be done through the TRO process, or would it be simpler to put it in the bill so that the whole area would have a limit of 20mph?

Walter Scott: I suggest that it would be more complicated if you tried to put it into the bill. If you did, there would have to be local consideration about A roads and B roads, which might be deregulated or have speed limits of 50mph, 40mph or 30mph. Strictly applying a 20mph speed limit for all roads in such an environment would be overly restrictive on local authorities in demonstrating the local applicability of that limit.

09:15

Andrew Easson: Edinburgh's approach to a blanket roll-out of the 20mph speed limit was to apply it only to city centre roads. A cordon was put around the city centre and every road within it was made a 20mph road. Outwith the cordon, we made judgments based on the type of street, how it functioned and its use. We applied the 20mph limit primarily to residential streets, streets with high numbers of pedestrians and cyclists, and shopping streets. There are arterial routes that are still 30mph for part of their length, but are 20mph for the rest. A bit of route consistency is to be achieved there.

As my colleague said, if the bill were to go through, local authorities would still have the option of tailoring the speed limit using TROs. In our road network, for instance, about 80 per cent of the roads are now 20mph so, under the current legislation, we have to do TROs for 80 per cent of

our roads. If the bill were to go through and we wanted to retain a network of streets with a 30mph limit, we would only have to do TROs for, say, 10 per cent of the road network. That is where the difference comes in with the process.

Kevin Hamilton: I want to give a bit more information about the restricted road issue. I have had a look at the situation in West Lothian, and most of the A and B roads that run through built-up areas in West Lothian are already covered by an order under section 82 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, which designates them as restricted roads. In effect, if the bill were to be passed, those roads would default to 20mph.

I understand that that position is probably similar in other authorities that made a restricted road order in 1985, after the 1984 act was enacted. There was a historical situation whereby, on enactment, it was not clear whether A, B and C-class roads were included in the definition of restricted roads. The regulations that made A and B roads unrestricted roads came some time later; in the intervening period, local authorities made restricted road orders that designated many of the A and B-class roads in their urban areas as restricted roads.

The Convener: I will bring in Stewart Stevenson. We are all looking confused—certainly, I am confused—by this, as we have never heard it before.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): It is just a technical question. Did one road order achieve the redesignation of all the A and B roads as restricted, or did you have to redesignate the roads individually?

Kevin Hamilton: I can speak only for the Lothian Regional Council order, as that is the one that I am familiar with. One order designated all the A and B roads that the then authority wanted to make restricted roads. Since that time, certainly in West Lothian, we have continued to vary that order when new built-up parts of A and B roads have come on stream.

The Convener: That does not shed any light on what other councils did.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): I hope that members of the panel can help me out with my question. I am in favour of 20mph zones where we can have them, but the question is whether the bill is the best way of achieving that.

We have already received evidence on this. The City of Edinburgh Council—which, under the current law, has basically done what the bill aims to achieve—said that, if the bill is passed, it will cost up to £1 million in Edinburgh to remove all the repeater signs and do everything else that would have to be done.

We spoke to Highland Council, which said that it would cost a great deal of money. The council gave the example of Wick in the north of Scotland. I asked whether the bill would make their lives easier work-wise, if not cost-wise. The response was that it would not, because there would be a similar amount of work to do to change the roads that go through Wick.

If we are all in favour of reducing the speed limit to the appropriate level to make roads safer, is the bill the best way to do that, considering that the councils' evidence to the committee is that it will cost a lot more than the amount in the financial memorandum and it will not save them any work?

Brian Young: The intention of the bill is to make the process simpler, and to make it easier for authorities to introduce a widespread 20mph speed limit. The difficulty is that not all authorities have decided to do that. My authority has researched the matter and we have introduced 20mph speed limits at schools and on routes to schools. We believe that that is where the limits can be most effective, and where people are most likely to understand and comply with them. It would not be our choice to extend the 20mph limits further than that. Part of the reason is that we fear that, as with other road safety initiatives, the wider we spread them, the more diluted they become. We feel that introducing 20mph limits through all our towns and villages may impact on the places where they are in place just now.

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): The potential for the speed limit on A and B roads passing through towns and villages to go down to 20mph is new evidence that we have not heard before. I have concerns about that. People need to get about their business, lorries need to deliver stuff and folk need to get to their work. I am concerned that it is a step too far, but how do the police look on it? Will they actively enforce 20mph limits on A and B roads through the middle of towns and villages? If not, I think that 90 per cent of people will break the law and we should not put folk in that position. Will Stewart Carle comment on where the police stand on that possibility?

The Convener: Mr Chapman will have to apologise to Mr Finnie afterwards for asking his question but, as the question has been posed, I will bring in Stewart Carle.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): He can apologise now, if he likes.

The Convener: We will sort it out afterwards.

Chief Superintendent Carle: I am thinking back to what Mr Mason asked about his area of Glasgow, where the Edinburgh Road is a three-lane divided carriageway with a speed limit of 30mph. To the driver, that road would appear to have a higher speed limit, but it is 30mph for a

very good reason, which is that there are a lot of side streets and heavy traffic. However, as you travel along that route, the speed increases at certain places. I can think of numerous other examples. I met Mr Ruskell in Stirling, where I live, and the A9 runs through Stirling. There has already been a reduction from 60mph to 40mph for the main route into Stirling, as part of the work undertaken by local authorities. I have concerns that the bill might seek to impose 20mph as a blanket speed limit.

Mr Chapman asked specifically about police enforcement. If the law is enacted, the police will play their part in upholding the law, but 20mph zones will not be a priority, because the majority of casualties are on faster roads. We will continue to focus our finite resources on those areas. In the meantime, our safety camera units, which come under the programme, will continue to be deployed on roads with limits of 30mph and above, because the equipment is not calibrated for 20mph. Do not expect to see the cameras suddenly switching into urban areas. We will uphold whatever law is passed, but that will be done proportionately.

John Finnie: I have a number of questions for Mr Carle. Good morning, and thank you all for your evidence. In previous sessions, we have heard from a range of speakers, many of whom said, with a grin on their face, that the speed limit is not enforced. I appreciate that the evidence from Police Scotland was probably historical, rather than responsive to that, but I was surprised by Mr Carle's answer. I thought that you would take the opportunity to stress that your obligation as a police service is to enforce legislation that is passed, including the existing 20mph zones. However, you tell us that camera enforcement is not possible because the cameras are not calibrated. Why is that?

Chief Superintendent Carle: It is down to the type of equipment that is used. We can go through a process to recalibrate that equipment but, in the meantime, the safety camera vans that you will see out on the roads—the flexible sites—will go to prominent crash locations and those locations where they will have the greatest influence on reducing speed and detecting speeding motorists. We detect between 4,000 and 6,000 speeding motorists across the country using those measures.

We uphold the law. The inspector sitting behind me just now is the unit commander for Edinburgh city and he works with the local policing teams—primarily with community police teams—to enforce the 20mph zones.

John Finnie: There seems to be a bit of a catch-22 situation. I note what you say about casualty prevention and reduction, which is very positive. You talk about maximising the potential to

do that and then you talk about the numbers killed and seriously injured and traffic offence data as factors that you use. If you are not treating the 20mph areas as a priority, you will not have traffic offence data from those areas. We have already heard that the camera vans do not monitor that. You talk about routes that attract higher offending rates, but if you are not actively working in the 20mph areas, that factor will be discounted, too.

I find it deeply offensive, but there is a calculation of the cost of an injury or death. What would it take by way of child injuries and—heaven forbid—child fatalities to change the priority to ensure that there was enforcement or more rigorous enforcement of the current 20mph areas, never mind any new ones?

Chief Superintendent Carle: I must operationally prioritise where I can have the biggest impact with the finite resources that I have. We currently see the greatest number of casualties on some trunk roads and roads with the national speed limit. We use a mix of resources and tactics. We are working towards reducing the number of child casualties along with other partners in the 2020 framework. However, in the meantime, suddenly switching lots of resources away from faster roads into urban areas would not give the same gain. That is why I have to prioritise the faster routes.

John Finnie: You talk about the faster routes, but if someone is going 27mph in a 20mph zone the implications are potentially more significant than someone going 75mph on a motorway.

Chief Superintendent Carle: The figures do not bear that out. The greatest number of casualties so far this year have been motorists—typically motorists who lose control of their car at high speed on rural routes.

John Finnie: That is because of irresponsible driver behaviour.

The Convener: Mr Finnie, you may ask one more question and then we must move on.

John Finnie: Okay. I am surprised by your comment that the perception of enforcement is that it is “overly punitive”. How do you gauge that and what do you mean by saying that the 20mph must be “self-enforcing”? Does that apply to other speed limits?

Chief Superintendent Carle: First, on enforcement being punitive, we have already heard that the public have to see a law as being fair if they are to comply with it—that is where we get the greatest level of compliance. Secondly, a method of self-enforcement is a road layout that conveys a signal to the driver that there is more risk and greater danger. Road engineers use signage, paint and other engineering methods to

convey to motorists that there is greater risk. Such self-enforcement tends to happen around housing estates. Where new housing estates are built, we would expect to see engineering measures that convey to drivers that they should be travelling at less than 20mph.

We started with the twenty's plenty campaign and now we are seeing local authorities promoting 20mph. The driver needs to recognise the type of road that they are travelling on and comply with that, rather than expect to see a police officer on every corner.

Mike Rumbles: I have a supplementary question that relates to my first question, and perhaps Walter Scott can answer. Let us be kind to the financial memorandum. When the bill was lodged, it said that there would be costs up to £10 million. The evidence that we have received is that the City of Edinburgh Council would have to spend £1 million and rural councils in particular would have to spend millions of pounds. It is not a robust financial memorandum. Are you convinced that it will be value for money for councils if we operate 20mph areas in the system that is proposed by the bill? I am particularly interested in whether councils will get value for money.

09:30

Walter Scott: We were involved in the development of the costings for the financial memorandum. The figures in the cost report that SCOTS prepared last summer—I was the author of that—were £19 million at the low end and £33 million at the upper end. That is fairly consistent with some other figures that you have no doubt heard from local authorities. The people who drafted the financial memorandum took those figures and applied certain considerations and assumptions.

We stand by the figures that we produced. We used a pretty rudimentary model to develop the cost for implementation. As I said, that model would not suit every situation or council, but we felt that that was the appropriate way forward for the range of councils that we considered.

When it comes to the value to local authorities of the policy, local authorities have shown that, under the current powers, there is a reluctance to roll out 20mph limits more widely. We have evidence of that across the board. There seems to be a smattering or a smooth area and then less smooth areas. The passing of the bill would give local authorities a duty to have such zones. They would then be required to look at the issue, or, at the very least, to write it out. That is the stage at which the funding for local authorities that is attached to the bill is essential.

Dr Jepson: I want to make two comments from a public health perspective. We are doing an economic evaluation of the 20mph schemes in Edinburgh and Belfast. Unfortunately, the results will not be available until next year, but we are interested in the cost effectiveness of the policy.

With regard to whether the policy is a cost-effective public health intervention, I can talk only from a public health perspective. The proposal is seen as one that has high up-front costs. However, you need to think about the gains that you would have as a result of that investment over 20 or 30 years in terms of a reduction in mortality and the number of non-fatal accidents. That brings the cost into perspective. There is a cost of enforcement, but most of the costs are up front. That is unusual for a public health intervention. Often, the costs are on-going.

The Convener: Jamie Greene has a question that is linked to this issue.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): It is, but I also think that we are moving around a bit in our conversation this morning, which is fine.

Dr Jepson, are you saying that, once you pay the up-front costs of putting in signage, you can stop there and simply expect safety to improve, casualties to reduce, behaviour to change, enforcement to improve and data collection to get better? It strikes me that there is not enough evidence to suggest that sign-only speed-limit schemes are enough. If the bill is introduced, local authorities will have to foot the majority of the cost, and many are telling us that they would not have the cash to do so. Do you agree that another approach might be taken, such as rolling out schemes across the country as and when they are required and when it is affordable to do so?

Dr Jepson: That is another option. We know that road architecture measures such as road humps would be more effective. However, in public health, we look at issues at a population level, and we talk about the whole of Scotland being affected in some way by a policy. The proposal costs a relatively small amount of money in terms of total budget and, even if there is only a small gain, it can still be a cost-effective measure. It would be better to put in road humps everywhere, but that would be more expensive. The proposal that we are discussing is cheaper but could still have a public health benefit and be cost effective overall.

Jamie Greene: I do not want to get bogged down in a discussion about whether we should have road humps or signs or both. I was struck by what Mr Young said earlier about the notion that, in areas where there is an obvious reduction of speed—any hotspot around a school or another area that the local authority has defined—there

must be traffic-calming measures. Do you think that there is an issue with removing the obvious shift from a 30mph limit to a 20mph limit? Do you agree that, at the moment, drivers know that there is a reason why they should be slowing down at the hotspot and that, if we take those temporary reductions away, we might somehow lose some of the benefits that we get at the moment?

Brian Young: Yes—that is very much the fear. People who drive along see what are sometimes temporary, part-time limits that apply during the day when schools come out, or—depending on the area—more permanent 20mph limits. However, they can see the reason for them being there and we think that they are more accepting and more likely to comply. We worry that a widespread introduction would dilute that effect.

Jamie Greene: Is there any evidence on whether the behavioural shift of going from 30mph to 20mph in designated areas has a positive effect, and whether their removal would alter that behaviour?

Chief Superintendent Carle: We probably see greater compliance with 20mph limits when they are around schools. There has been a lot of enforcement around schools not only of speed limits but in relation to parking, and we see that drivers react to that. Drivers need to understand what road they are on, the area that they are travelling through and why the speed limit is at the level it is and thereby self-enforce that responsibility rather than rely on hard punitive enforcement.

Walter Scott: I will not get bogged down in the question of road bumps or no road bumps. I want to pick up the suggestion that, if 20mph limits were rolled out, everything would stop and nothing would happen after that. Each of the traffic authorities is administering and managing the network. We are picking up accident hotspots and we are looking at the data. We would still need to do the day job. It would just be slightly different because the baseline would change in certain areas. We would still look at those hotspots and then target further interventions—be it the road hump or the engineering—to suit the location and its particular need. To apply that more generally across every single restricted road and across every single 20mph area would be disproportionate. However, proportionality and, perhaps, further reinforcement of the 20mph limits around schools and hotspots are still needed.

Andrew Easson: I have a brief point on the issue of 20mph limits outside schools. We are trying to encourage children to travel actively to and from schools. For that to happen, parents have to feel that children are safe over their entire journey, not just the 200m outside the schools. Although there is an argument that drivers may be

more compliant directly outside the school, there is also the portion of the journey that is outwith that part-time 20mph limit. If the limit is restricted to a short length of road, it has less of an encouraging effect in that regard.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I want to return to a point that Mr Young made on the current Scottish Borders policy that focuses on areas around schools, which is an approach that is initially adopted by a lot of local authorities. Do your current casualty figures show that most accidents involving pedestrians and cars are around schools, or are they in other residential areas?

Brian Young: Thankfully, there are not a lot of pedestrian casualties at all. Statistically, there is no difference between the areas around schools and other areas. As my police colleague said earlier, most of our issues are on the 60mph or national speed limit routes. Within towns—touch wood—pedestrian accidents are very unusual, and those that occur tend to be at very low speed and to involve reversing vehicles.

Colin Smyth: There is no real evidence that there is a bigger problem around schools than in a residential area next to a play park.

Brian Young: No, there is no evidence and, statistically, the numbers would not allow any evidence to be presented on that basis.

Colin Smyth: The other point that you made as a council in the policy statement is that rolling these limits out involves a cost issue. The feedback from people in my area is that there is frustration that the process is so bureaucratic and takes so long. Can the existing process of designating 20mph limits be improved to lower the cost, to potentially widen the areas and to make it quicker for you to roll them out, or have you decided that, for a variety of reasons, it will happen only around schools?

Brian Young: It is a national process that we have to go through—

Colin Smyth: Can it be improved? Can changes be made to the national process?

Brian Young: I am sure that they can, to make it more streamlined. Obviously, as with any traffic regulation order, there is a process to go through and things such as statutory consultation have to happen. It is a long and relatively bureaucratic process.

Colin Smyth: Given your council's policy of focusing on schools, do you envisage that, if the bill goes through, you will pass orders to go to 30mph on lots of restricted roads in your area? Will you just accept that the limit will be 20mph? I appreciate that you cannot say what councillors might decide in future, but is it your judgment that,

because your policy focuses on schools, you will pass orders that will turn what would automatically be a 20mph limit back to 30mph away from schools?

Brian Young: That would be a policy decision for the council. If the bill is passed, we anticipate that there will be widespread 20mph limits. We would perhaps look at arterial routes through towns, but only the arterial routes.

The Convener: I will bring in Mark Ruskell, because I want us to focus on the national picture rather than on a particular area.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Thank you, convener.

Scottish Government guidance is that 20mph should be the norm in residential areas, but how seriously the guidance is taken varies considerably. Why is that the case? Why do some local authorities, such as Scottish Borders Council, not really want to implement the guidance, while others, such as City of Edinburgh Council, are going a lot further?

Walter Scott: Let me speak on behalf of Brian Young: I do not think that it is a case of Scottish Borders Council not wanting to implement the guidance; the council is taking the 20mph roll-out seriously, as are many authorities.

To a degree, there is an issue of timeliness and willingness in regard to looking at the guidance. I am sorry, but I am going to quote figures—I am happy to make them available to the committee for your consideration. Eighty-six per cent of the councils that responded to us have a policy, plan or strategy in place for dealing with 20mph zones, but we do not see that transferring to actual roll-out of the policy. About 20 per cent have rolled it out completely, 20 per cent have rolled it out in most places, 30 per cent have it in some places and 30 per cent have it hardly anywhere.

Therefore, the implementation of the guidance is subject to some kind of filter. I do not believe that that is necessarily related to the complexity or timescales involved in the process for making traffic regulation orders—the democratic process, I hasten to add; it is not just a bureaucratic process. It takes a certain degree of guidance and something to shake things up.

The policies that were in the guidance that initially came from Transport Scotland brought the issue to the fore. Councils considered the issue. It has been more than five years, on average, since they updated their plans, and it is more than five years since they looked at 20mph zones seriously.

This is the opportunity for councils to reappraise their position. They require every encouragement in relation to the aspirations in the bill and its implementation, but it is for local councils to

determine how best to implement the approach locally.

Kevin Hamilton: I was involved in the working group with Transport Scotland that developed the most recent 20mph guidance. Since then, one key issue for local authorities has been funding and another has been knowledge, experience and staff resources in councils. A lot of knowledge and experience has disappeared over the past five years, and that has been a barrier, along with the fact that funding for such initiatives has been very thin on the ground.

Colin Smyth: I have a brief question for Ruth Jepson. You mentioned that you are carrying out assessments of the impact in Edinburgh and Belfast. Unfortunately, that work is on-going and is not available at the moment. Do you have any current assessments of the effectiveness of 20mph zones where they have been rolled out?

09:45

Dr Jepson: We started two years ago, during implementation in Edinburgh, so we have been collecting data for the past two years and we are due to report in August 2019. We have just started analysing the data from one full year after implementation; we want to see the effects at various time points for as long as we can. I cannot tell you much at the moment, apart from the fact that speeds have reduced by about 1.5mph, as expected. In some areas—mainly on some of the main roads in the initial zones 1, 2 and 3—the reduction is a bit higher than that.

We also look at perceptions. At the beginning, about 25 per cent of people did not want the new limit, but a year later that has reduced to one in five. With public health or transport interventions, people often think that they will not like something, although when it happens, it is not as bad as they thought that it would be.

I am afraid that that is all that I can tell you at the moment. We are starting to do work on casualties, although that has already been reported by others. There has been a reduction in casualties, but that is a long-term trend.

The Convener: For clarification, did you say that, on some roads, speed has dropped by 1.2mph?

Dr Jepson: No. I am sorry that I do not have the numbers in front of me, but the reduction is about 1.6mph. That is the average for the city, so it will be different in different areas.

The Convener: It is important that we look at the speed that people have reduced from. What speed were people travelling at that has seen that reduction?

Dr Jepson: We looked at it in two different ways. We looked at the average reduction and then at people who were going over 24mph. The reason why we chose that figure was that we assumed that people tend to go 20 per cent over any speed limit. The reductions in that group were higher—they were up to 2.3mph.

The Convener: Sorry, but I think that you misunderstand me. I am trying to identify what the position was when the speed limit was 30mph. You have seen a reduction, so I presume that you did an assessment to show that when the limit was 30mph, for example, 90 per cent of drivers travelled at 23mph, because that was all that they could do in Edinburgh, and the average speed has dropped by 1.6mph or whatever. Is that the way that you have looked at it? I am slightly confused, and I am trying to work out how many people travelled at the speed limit of 30mph in Edinburgh so that we can see how big a reduction there has been and therefore how big a change the bill will make.

Dr Jepson: Before the introduction of the 20mph zone, the average speed was about 25mph, but that was over the whole of Edinburgh.

The Convener: So that was the average on the faster roads as well as the slower roads.

Dr Jepson: Yes—that was the overall average, and it has now reduced by about 1.5mph, as an average over the whole of Edinburgh. However, there will be variations in different places. We have not yet done all that analysis, because it is incredibly time consuming.

The Convener: I am sure that it is incredibly time consuming. I am trying to find out how many people were doing 30mph in Edinburgh before the introduction of the zones.

Dr Jepson: We have not done that analysis yet.

The Convener: Therefore, it is difficult to see how much of a shift has happened.

Stewart Stevenson: Forgive me, but we are talking about means and to be honest, as a mathematician, I am more interested in medians. I do not care if the law-abiding people reduce their speed—that has no impact on safety that we need to worry about. I am interested in the people who significantly exceed the speed limit. I want to know what effect changing the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph has on those people, who are likely to be the source of greatest risk. The speed could come down by 1.9mph or whatever as a result of the conformist people reducing their speed, while those who significantly exceed the limit have not reduced their speed by a single mile an hour. Will your research ultimately tell us whether that is the case?

Dr Jepson: I think that I was answering the wrong question last time. In response to your question, when we considered those who went over 24mph—so more than 20 per cent over the limit—we saw that there was a reduction of around 2mph. Therefore, the speed reduced more for those who drove at higher speeds. That is what we want.

I completely agree with you; I would like to do more analysis of that sort, as well. Just saying that the speed reduces by X amount an hour over the whole city is too blunt an instrument. We need to know whether the speeders are reducing their speed.

The Convener: I think that Stewart Carle ought to answer that question, as well. Has the number of people who seriously exceed the speed limit reduced since the introduction of the 20mph speed limit?

Chief Superintendent Carle: That is a difficult question for me to answer. I do not have those figures in front of me. Those are the people whom we are most concerned about, and we will target them.

We see the greatest compliance with speed limits where engineering and average speed cameras are in place. The compliance levels are very high for all motorists on Old Dalkeith Road in the city of Edinburgh, which has the first urban average speed camera system. However, there will always be motorists who will choose to break the law and drive at high speeds in a dangerous manner. Those are the individuals whom we are most interested in catching.

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Good morning, panel. My question is mainly for Ruth Jepson and follows on from what she has said. Have you done any work on finding out whether 20mph speed limits help to increase levels of walking and cycling?

Dr Jepson: We are definitely doing work on that; that is one of the issues that we are looking at. A year from now, I could give the committee lots of results. Unfortunately, I cannot give it those results yet, but we are definitely looking at that issue as one of our major outcomes.

Maureen Watt: Anecdotally, is there any evidence at all of that having happened?

Dr Jepson: We can only really go back to the Edinburgh pilot, the evidence from which suggested that there were increases in cycling and walking. From other evidence, we know that there have been small increases. However, at the moment I cannot give members information about that from our study, unfortunately.

Andrew Easson: The pilot study that we did in south-east Edinburgh several years ago showed

an increase in walking and, in particular, a fairly significant increase in cycling, primarily because of the increased perception of safety on the road network for pedestrians and cyclists.

Maureen Watt: I am particularly interested in whether the bill will have any impact on placemaking and in whether neighbourhoods will feel safer and people will feel that they can let their children out to play more safely. Have any of you considered that aspect in relation to the bill?

Walter Scott: The placemaking element is certainly a huge opportunity. The questions have rightly focused on casualties, safety and some of the numbers, but there is an opportunity to make an impact on local placemaking with a more general roll-out of 20mph limits.

Across the board, we will still need to be focused in certain areas and, as has been identified, we would still need to engineer. When placemaking with engineering, we would be looking at using TROs, as we currently do, to bring the speed in those areas down to 20mph. Ultimately, that would encourage us to see the issue more widely and therefore make the most of our streets and the places in which we live, play and work.

Where the roads are not suitable for that, the characteristics will be slightly different, and there will need to be local consideration in those areas. That local consideration should be not just by traffic engineers; it would have to involve lots of different aspects, including placemaking. If we had more time and resources to do a more detailed assessment, I would hope that the guidance would identify other areas that we could open up and bring into full consideration, and placemaking is certainly one of those areas.

Andrew Easson: Our policy is that any new residential street should be designed for a 20mph speed limit. Widespread 20mph limits allow us to design our roads in a different way so that they are more people friendly and more oriented to pedestrians than to through traffic. With 20mph limits, we can widen footways, cut down radii at junctions and make crossing points narrower. We might hesitate to do those things on 30mph roads, but with 20mph limits we can roll out a different road layout that is more people friendly.

Maureen Watt: In some places, there are now shared spaces where there is no distinction between the pavement and the road—the space is there for everybody. Surely there must be 20mph limits in such areas.

Kevin Hamilton: The current design guidance from the Government very much points towards designing for placemaking and a design speed of 20mph. The problem that that creates for local authorities is that they have to promote orders to

put those 20mph limits in place. If the bill is enacted, the limit will default to 20mph so, in the long term, there will be less administration for new streets that are built.

Maureen Watt: We have heard today and in previous evidence sessions that what is proposed would make things easier, given all the rigmarole and bureaucracy that people have to go through at present. Going back to the finance, I note that we have heard that the proposal would cost local authorities such-and-such but, to me, that does not take into account what has already been spent. How much has Edinburgh spent on 20mph limits? What has been the budget for that over the past five or 10 years?

Andrew Easson: We have rolled out 20mph speed limits under the current legislation. The cost of the recent roll-out, which covered about 30 per cent of our streets, was about £2.5 million. We have not done a direct costing of how much that would have cost us under the proposals in the bill, but it would probably have been less than £1 million, because of the way that the work would have been done. If the bill becomes law, there will be significant savings for other local authorities that have not already rolled out 20mph limits in the way that we have.

The Convener: Thank you. The next question is from Jamie Greene.

Jamie Greene: My question is on a different topic, but I am intrigued by a theme that came up in Maureen Watt's line of questioning, which is the concept that roads will somehow be safer if we reduce the speed limit. I am not talking about, for example, the point of impact in an accident; I am talking about the concept that a road with a 30mph limit is for cars whereas a road with a 20mph limit is much more of a shared space. Surely roads with 20mph limits and roads with 30mph limits are both dangerous for pedestrians.

Chief Superintendent Carle: I do not think that we can apply that generally. We have spoken about young people, but elderly people make up the greatest number of casualties. We have heard about the risks around large vehicles moving through cities and the risks in car parks, where even a very low-speed collision can lead to a fatality or serious injury. We have also spoken about placemaking and making our town centres attractive. A large part of that is about tourism and the night-time economy, and that is where we see a greater risk to pedestrians, who may be distracted and/or intoxicated.

The scientific data tells us that a collision at a lower speed is less likely to result in serious injury, so if the general principle is to lower speed limits from 30mph to 20mph, and if speeds come down,

that may over time have the public health benefits that we are seeking.

Jamie Greene: That is helpful. Thank you for clarifying that.

Walter Scott: Where the speed limit is reduced to 20mph, accidents clearly have less impact and fewer consequences, and the frequency of accidents also reduces. There is evidence, which I think the committee has heard, that a 1mph reduction in speed results in a 6 per cent reduction in the likelihood of contact being made. We then have to factor in the consequences of that as well.

10:00

Jamie Greene: Thank you for that. From the evidence that we have been given, it sounds as if the majority of fatalities occur at higher speeds anyway.

There is a lot of discussion about the environmental aspects when we talk to people about the bill. There seems to be a suggestion that cars that are driven more slowly pollute the environment more. There are numerous academic reports on that, some of which run to hundreds of pages, and we have heard every side of the argument, which leaves us all the more confused as a committee.

I do not really want to get into the in-depth science behind that, but I would like a general view—if there is an overarching view—on whether driving at 20mph has more, less or the same effect on emissions and local air quality.

Dr Jepson: Last year, we asked two masters students to look at that issue. They looked at both particulates and emissions in 20mph zones and non-20mph zones in Edinburgh. Basically, the results were inconclusive. The effect is likely to be minimal and could go either way, but it is not a big problem. That is the best information that we have. We are replicating that study later this year to get some more data.

Brian Young: It is not about the percentage reduction from the 30mph speed limit down to the 20mph speed limit; it is about the 2mph reduction in speed. It is almost a moot argument, as it will be overtaken by the reduction in diesels and the increase in electric cars. It is not the most important argument to consider.

Stewart Stevenson: On the maths, is the pollution emitted by a petrol or diesel engine not related to the number of ignition cycles? It has nothing whatsoever to do with the speed. In other words, if you are operating in a lower gear because you are driving more slowly, the number of ignition cycles for distance covered increases and therefore, the amount of emissions coming out of the tailpipe per mile increases—or is that to

misunderstand the mechanics of how things actually work?

The Convener: You have managed to get everyone to look in the opposite direction, Stewart. Maybe Kevin Hamilton would like to try to address that question along with Jamie Greene's question.

Kevin Hamilton: I am a civil engineer, not an automotive engineer, so I have no idea what the answer is to Mr Stevenson's question.

Jamie Greene asked whether there is an overarching view. I think that Brian Young's point is probably one of the most important points. The vehicle fleet is changing and will continue to change dramatically over the next 20 years, so the emissions issue will be dealt with in other ways.

The Convener: As no one else wants to comment on that, we will move on to the next question.

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): Cultural change has taken place over a number of years on various issues, including drink driving and smoking in pubs. If we make the twenty's plenty initiative national, could there be a cultural change in attitude over the years about driving at 20mph rather than 30mph? I am looking for a simple yes or no answer to that question.

The Convener: Andrew—do you want to give a yes or no answer?

Andrew Easson: I was not going to, but the answer would be yes.

The Convener: You do not have to give a yes or no answer.

Andrew Easson: For Edinburgh, it is one of the most important benefits that we see coming from the bill. At the moment, decisions to introduce 20mph speed limits are made locally. An element of the local population will not agree with those decisions and may not put the same value on a local decision as they would on a change in national legislation. National legislation carries far greater weight. It also brings the possibility of national advertising and national promotional behaviour—

Richard Lyle: That was going to be my next question.

Andrew Easson: It brings a lot that is outwith the reach of local authorities. So, yes, I think that making it national is very valuable.

Chief Superintendent Carle: My answer is yes. I would say—to borrow a phrase from the violence reduction unit—that road violence is preventable, not inevitable. We need to make inappropriate speeding and exceeding speed limits as socially unacceptable as drink driving.

Richard Lyle: At the end of the day, this is not rocket science. People are speeding and going faster and faster. If you are hit by someone driving at 20mph, you will have more chance of surviving than you would if you were hit by someone driving at 30mph.

Chief Superintendent Carle: That is correct.

Richard Lyle: Nowadays, we do not see adverts on television that tell us that speed kills. We all see the nutters on the motorways who drive at 80mph or 90mph.

I was criticised on Twitter because I asked a question about bus times in a previous evidence session, but we have received conflicting evidence about the effect of reducing the speed limit to 20mph. Some members have touched on that. Are you aware of any evidence that 20mph speed limits result in longer journey times or increased traffic congestion for buses and people who are going to their work?

Dr Jepson: We have been looking at that issue in our evaluation. I spoke to John White about two weeks ago, and I think he was going to put out a statement saying that introducing 20mph speed limits has not made any difference to bus journey times. I cannot say anything about passengers, but he thought that many other things in Edinburgh, such as road works, are having more of an impact on bus journey times than the 20mph speed limit.

Andrew Easson: In Edinburgh, as part of the development of our network, we consulted bus operators on that issue quite a lot. It was one of the factors to which we gave a great deal of consideration when we were thinking about which strategic routes to leave with a 30mph speed limit, and we decided to leave the ones that carried heavy bus services. Part of the reason why there has not been much impact on bus services might be that, for much of the length of many bus routes, there is still a 30mph speed limit.

Chief Superintendent Carle: Buses tend to restrict traffic flow and reduce speeds, and we do not want people overtaking at high speeds. Although it is still at a very early stage, the early indications from an average speed camera system in Mill Street in Rutherglen, where the speed limit has been reduced from 40mph to 30mph, are that traffic flow has improved. Transport Scotland reports better traffic flows on trunk roads where traffic behaviour is regulated so that speeds come down.

Richard Lyle: So, reducing the speed limit to 20mph will make no difference to people's journey times but could help to ease the traffic flow and ensure that people get to where they want to go safely.

Chief Superintendent Carle: That could be the case during the busiest times, but the issue is in getting drivers to comply with the speed limit at 2 o'clock in the morning. As I said earlier, the risks are not removed just because the roads are quieter and higher speeds can be achieved. In the past year, there have been a number of pedestrian fatalities due to drivers travelling at high speeds and not seeing a pedestrian.

Walter Scott: There is rightly a focus on the city environment, where there is a denser population, but there will need to be local consideration of bus routes. The arterial routes that have been mentioned are likely to stay as 30mph zones to allow bus services to get from A to B. Reducing the speed limit to 20mph would be advantageous to buses when they got into the urban environment to do their pick-ups and drop-offs.

Stewart Stevenson: We have had a fair bit of discussion about TROs, but I want to briefly explore some other aspects of them. Andrew Easson suggested that it cost City of Edinburgh Council £2.5 million to do what it has done using TROs and that it might—I put it no stronger than that—have cost £1 million under the new arrangements. That is 40 per cent of the cost. Would it be possible to simplify the traffic regulation orders to make the cost of an order 40 per cent of the current cost? That would be an alternative, cost-effective way of introducing the legislation.

Andrew Easson: The cost of the TRO process is only a very small part of the implementation costs, which are mainly to do with signage. The bill would change the signage requirements, so that is where the main financial saving would be.

It would be possible, through legislation, to change the TRO process to make it cheaper, quicker and easier, but there is a balance to be struck with regard to local democracy and giving people the opportunity to view, comment on and object to proposals. As I have said, the cost of the TRO process is not massive, but the process itself involves a lot of work and takes a lot of time. The city-wide TRO that we introduced in 2016 to implement speed limits on 30 per cent of our network involved listing 2,500 sections of street individually. Just to put that in context, someone had to go out and schedule up those individual lengths of road.

Stewart Stevenson: Can you give us an understanding of the number of people involved and the number of person hours that were worked?

Andrew Easson: As far as person hours are concerned, I cannot. However, our TRO team is fairly small, with three or four members of staff, and they are working on TROs for all sorts of

things. The city-wide order was prioritised to get it through, but, because its implementation across the whole city took us several years, what with the number of streets and signs that were involved, we had to create a second TRO for each phase to account for the fact that the street network changes over time. New streets get built and others get altered, and, over the period, we had to run four separate supplementary TROs to amend the original TRO. As was alluded to earlier, developers are building new streets in the city on an on-going basis, and every new street that gets built needs a TRO to put a 20mph limit in place.

Stewart Stevenson: Let me pick up on the point that Kevin Hamilton made—that, in West Lothian, the A and B roads were designated as restricted. Do you think that, had the same approach been taken in Edinburgh, it would have reduced the signage cost, which you have identified as the big cost associated with the present system?

Andrew Easson: The signage cost is based on the current regime, under which we have to sign every 20mph road with repeaters. The question is not really about whether the road is restricted or unrestricted; it is just about what the speed limit is.

Stewart Stevenson: So, if 20mph is the default, the requirement for repeater signage goes away. That is my understanding, anyway—I see you nodding, so I must be correct. Given that fact, could the bill's provisions, had they been implemented at the time, have led to a significant reduction in cost? If so, is that why your £2.5 million figure goes down to £1 million? I am getting a nod, so that is fine.

I think that I have probably covered my questions, convener.

The Convener: In that case, we move to the next question, which is from Peter Chapman.

Peter Chapman: I want to continue on the issue of repeater signs. As we understand it, if the bill is passed, there will be a requirement to take down those signs where this sort of thing has already happened—in Edinburgh, for instance. Is that worth the cost? Is there any real reason to remove signs that have already been put in place under current schemes if the bill, which removes the requirement for repeater signs, is passed? In short, is there any real reason to take them down if they are already up?

Walter Scott: Speaking from a national perspective, I think that it is all about consistency. We do not want to undo any great work that has already been done in the city of Edinburgh, but the people there recognise the benefit of having consistency across the Lothians and, indeed, across Scotland to ensure that people are not confused. If they think, "I keep being reminded by

repeater signs in this location that there is a 20mph limit," and they then go somewhere else that also has a 20mph limit but does not have any repeaters, they might be lulled into a false sense of security and think, "I haven't seen any repeaters, so I can drive a little bit quicker." Such signage needs to be rationalised.

I would point out that the issue is not just the signing but the lining. However, there is a reasonable presumption that, if the bill were passed, we would not suggest that those lines be burned off. Instead, we would just let them degrade over time. The signs, on the other hand, are readily removable. It would be a relatively costly exercise to remove them, but I think that national benefits would accrue from there being consistency when moving from one local authority area to another.

10:15

Andrew Easson: There are other options. As things work currently, we sign by exception: we do not put up repeater signs for the default speed limit but we sign everything else. It would be entirely possible to change that and sign everything, although there would obviously be an additional cost associated with doing that. The issue could be dealt with differently, but, as things work currently, we would have to take the signs down.

Chief Superintendent Carle: Good signage is worth investing in, as it tells drivers what the speed limit is, although I appreciate that applying signage consistently is very expensive. Signage is something that we consider after fatal and serious accidents—we look at the signage that leads up to the location and how well it is maintained. There is nothing better than stopping a speeding driver at a repeater sign and asking them, "What was it that told you to go faster?" It is about fairness and getting people on board, so that they understand the speed limit, but the finances of that are outwith the police's remit.

Peter Chapman: If the bill is passed, the repeater signs will need to come down, which goes against what you just said about signage always being good. You said that it is never a bad thing to have a sign in place to remind people, but repeater signage in Edinburgh, for example, will need to come down if the bill is passed.

Richard Lyle: Traffic lawyers could make a good business out of this, could they not? Maybe Stewart Carle can answer that question.

Chief Superintendent Carle: They might, but, if the bill is properly enacted, as I am sure it will be, whatever form it takes, that issue will be taken care of. When people are building a defence, they will rely on, for example, the default—

Richard Lyle: "There wisnae a sign, Chief Superintendent. I never saw a sign."

Chief Superintendent Carle: That generally is not a defence just now if someone is driving on a restricted road.

I appreciate the importance of giving clear messages to motorists—without clutter, which is an issue that can arise if we have too many signs. Speed roundels on roads help.

The Convener: Richard Lyle has tested his defence and it is not going to work.

Richard Lyle: I do not drive that fast.

John Mason: Most funding for local authorities is local authority funding, of course, but does Sustrans or Transport Scotland provide financial or technical support to authorities that are rolling out 20mph zones?

Walter Scott: There are a range of funding mechanisms, and local authorities are pretty adept at tapping into them. If there are such funds in Transport Scotland, we will be there, and the same goes for Sustrans. The beauty of the Sustrans bidding is that the bid inevitably builds in opportunities to consider placemaking as well as speed limitation, so a project that has a Sustrans element opens itself up to opportunities for cross-funding, which serves both purposes. However, there are no specific requirements that link the funding that is currently available—or that has been available—to the 20mph limit.

Andrew Easson: When we were working towards the initial implementation of 20mph zones, we made use of quite a lot of funding that came in through Sustrans or through Scottish Government grant funding from the cycling, walking and safer streets fund. I am not sure that we would be able to use that funding stream to alter signs to comply with changed signage requirements resulting from a bill that, in effect, meant that we would keep the same speed limit and just alter the signage.

John Mason: The financial memorandum refers to savings for Police Scotland of between £320,000 and £562,000 if the bill were to lead to there being fewer serious accidents. I would have thought that the police would just do something else, so there would not be a saving. Will you comment on that, Chief Superintendent Carle?

Chief Superintendent Carle: Yes, the resource would switch to other areas, but we would still have to investigate the accidents that took place. The saving is negligible when we look at the bigger gains that are to be had here.

John Mason: The figures are quite small. Is it fair to say that there would be no saving at all? The overall police budget would not change,

regardless of what we did with the speed limits, would it?

Chief Superintendent Carle: No, it would not. That figure is ascribed to the cost of attending and investigating accidents. If there were fewer collisions, that element of cost would be taken out of its current budget line but would still be spent elsewhere.

John Mason: Thank you very much.

John Finnie: I have a question that is primarily for Dr Jepson. How do the road safety, health and placemaking policy aims of the bill measure up against the financial costs? Clearly, there is an overlap across a number of issues.

Dr Jepson: I am not sure that I can answer that question at the moment. We are looking at some aspects again, and we are particularly interested in what we call liveability, which is about how safe and pleasant our streets are to live in. As yet, though, we have not done any economic analysis of that. I am sorry, but I cannot answer your question.

John Finnie: Okay.

Jamie Greene: That leads nicely into my next question. Given that a comprehensive and substantial piece of work is being done on Edinburgh's experience of 20mph zones—which, as far as I can tell, is the largest study to date in Scotland—would it be sensible or prudent for the committee and for Parliament to wait and see what comes out of that analysis before we take a view on whether the approach should be rolled out across the rest of Scotland?

Dr Jepson: That is an interesting question. I suppose that the Edinburgh study is one of the biggest that has been done anywhere. We are also looking at Belfast. It is difficult for me to respond, partly because Edinburgh is Edinburgh and the analysis is context specific—what happens in Edinburgh might not be the same as what happens in smaller urban or rural areas. The analysis will give us indicative estimates of overall effectiveness and cost effectiveness, of which we are doing some robust analysis. However, I would not like to make a judgment on that now.

Jamie Greene: Does anyone else have a view?

The Convener: I will bring in Brian Young. Do you feel that the analysis would help to inform your position?

Brian Young: There is already enough evidence from across the country. I do not expect the Edinburgh information to differ greatly from that, but we can never have too much evidence. I am not sure that the fact that we are waiting for the analysis would be a good reason to delay things, though.

Walter Scott: We have already used City of Edinburgh Council's experience in our cost reporting and the work that we have done, to see how it would apply against a typical authority or range of authorities, so the analysis would not give us anything more on national applicability. If time were to be allowed to get more evidence, I suggest that it should be used to direct local authorities and that resources should be provided for looking at implementation in the 31 other local authorities, so that we would have something much more definitive.

Jamie Greene: By then, it would be too late. We would have passed the bill, the provisions of which would be being rolled out nationally, and our capital city could then produce a report containing evidence to the contrary. Would it not be better to see the Edinburgh analysis first, before taking a view on the model's applicability to the rest of the country?

Dr Jepson: We are at an interim stage just now. The direction of effect is roughly the same as what has been found elsewhere, so I do not think that the analysis will contain anything surprising. It is just that some of the effects that have been found elsewhere are likely to be replicated. I do not want to say too much, because, as a researcher, I have to keep in mind that these are interim results. However, at the moment, we are seeing similar reductions in speed as there have been in other areas that have done the same thing. I cannot imagine the outcome being hugely different. The information that you will have is likely to be about the economics of the approach. That work has not been done elsewhere and will be pretty robust. We are also doing that work for Belfast, which has a different model that looks only at the city centre. In a way, looking at the cost effectiveness of one model versus the cost effectiveness of the other provides a good comparison.

The Convener: We will have to leave it there, purely because we are short of time. I know that a couple of people wanted to come in, and I apologise for not reaching them.

I thank the panel members for coming in this morning and for giving evidence to the committee. It is always very helpful to hear the views of a wide variety of people. Thank you very much for giving us your time.

I suspend the meeting for five minutes to allow the panel to depart.

10:25

Meeting suspended.

10:33

On resuming—

The Convener: I welcome our second panel of witnesses this morning: Michael Matheson, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity; and Donna Turnbull, road safety policy manager, and Stuart Wilson, national operations manager, from the Scottish Government. We will go straight to questions.

Richard Lyle: Good morning, cabinet secretary. Will you outline the Scottish Government's view on the proposals in the bill and advise whether and how that view has changed since the publication of the Atkins and Department for Transport research into the effect of 20mph speed limits?

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): The bill is trying to achieve two things: to introduce a standard 20mph speed limit across restricted roads; and to support greater provision of active travel and the benefits that can arise from a 20mph speed limit.

We have been considering several challenges in relation to the bill. For example, we do not know the number of restricted roads in Scotland. There are some restricted roads that we would not want to be 20mph zones and there are roads that are not restricted that we might want to have as 20mph roads. As the bill stands, we do not think that it is the most effective way to take forward the agenda of getting a greater number of 20mph roads and zones in the right places.

One of the key things that the Atkins report confirmed was that in looking to introduce a speed limit on a road, several measures must be put in place to achieve that effectively and to encourage compliance. Speed limits are self-enforcing to a large extent, as the police will tell you. The design of the road and other measures are important elements in supporting compliance with the speed limit.

To some extent the report reinforces our view that taking a blanket approach is not necessarily the best way to ensure that we achieve what we are trying to get from introducing 20mph zones.

Richard Lyle: On 30 October 2018, you wrote to the committee and said:

"we believe that more evidence and more detailed analysis is needed before the measure proposed in the Restricted Roads (20 mph Limits) (Scotland) Bill can be fully supported."

Do you stand by that?

Michael Matheson: Yes.

Richard Lyle: Thank you.

The Convener: I am mindful that that is very similar to the question that John Finnie wanted to ask. I will bring Mark Ruskell in first and then come back to John Finnie.

Mark Ruskell: I have a brief question on the Atkins report, cabinet secretary. Have you or your team engaged with the report's conclusion that there is better compliance when 20mph is rolled out over a wider area, rather than just implemented in small, discrete zones outside schools and so on? Do you recognise that it is better to have an area-wide limit?

Michael Matheson: Are you referring to 20mph zones as opposed to 20mph roads? That is not what the bill proposes.

Mark Ruskell: I am referring to the approach that Atkins studied, which is 20mph limits across wider areas—including in Brighton—which the report concluded was more effective than discrete little zones outside schools.

Michael Matheson: In Edinburgh, it has been done by having 80 per cent of the roads covered by 20mph speed limits. However, in coming to that decision, the council used different criteria and a range of different characteristics from those proposed in the bill. The Atkins report reinforces the point that a range of different factors come into play in getting effective 20mph limits on roads and compliance with speed limits, and that zones are one of the elements that can help to support that. That is the approach that has been taken in Edinburgh. Some of the 20mph roads in Edinburgh are not restricted roads and the criteria used in Edinburgh are very different from the approach taken in the bill.

John Finnie: In the letter that you sent to the committee, you talked about analysing some evidence and working collaboratively with the Department for Transport and others. Who are those others and will you update us on the information that you have received as a result of that exercise?

Michael Matheson: There is the Atkins report itself. One of the drivers for the bill—this came up in discussions with Mr Ruskell—is concern about how the TRO process operates. Some local authorities are more proactive than others in relation to TROs and there are concerns about them being overly bureaucratic and taking too long.

Part of the work that we have been doing with SCOTS and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities looks at the existing TRO process. The feedback that we have had so far is that they believe, by and large, that it is a robust mechanism that allows local communities to engage in the process—so it is an effective

mechanism—but we could streamline it in some way to make the process quicker.

We have had the discussions with SCOTS and COSLA and we are about to issue a questionnaire to all local authorities, to get further details from them around the TRO process; that will take place in the next couple of weeks. Once we have the feedback, we will be in a position to distil the information and have the evidence to decide what other measures we can take forward to support and encourage the introduction of 20mph zones or roads in areas where it is appropriate to do so.

John Finnie: Will you confirm the timeframe for that? You said that the questionnaires will go out in the next couple of weeks. What is the turnaround period and the period for analysis afterwards?

Michael Matheson: Before I ask Donna Turnbull to say a bit more about that, as far as I understand, the questionnaire has now been drafted—that was through one of the working groups. It will go out in the next few weeks and I would expect to get feedback over the next couple of months and to have all the information—as well as the outcome of our discussions with COSLA and SCOTS around what measures we could look at taking forward—collated in autumn this year.

Donna Turnbull (Scottish Government): I think that that timeframe is realistic, but it depends on what comes back from the questionnaires. We hope that the questionnaires are a trigger for more intensive, on-going engagement with local authorities, so that we can better understand and get into the detail behind some of the processes, and get their views and thoughts on any mechanisms or parts of the process that we can streamline or make consistent across Scotland. I think that autumn is probably a good timescale.

Michael Matheson: It is fair to say that part of the feedback that we have had from some local authorities is that additional guidance on some aspects would assist them with consistency of approach. That is something that we can look at doing. Once we have distilled all the information, we will be in a position to look at the measures that we can take forward.

John Finnie: Would it be possible to share the questionnaire and the feedback with the committee?

Michael Matheson: I am more than happy to do that.

John Finnie: Many thanks.

Jamie Greene: I thank the cabinet secretary for answering the question that I had not yet asked; that is an excellent talent. Maybe I should rephrase the question.

Michael Matheson: I will answer it again; maybe I could do it better the second time round.

Jamie Greene: I am sure that it was adequate the first time.

Currently, a local authority needs to go through a process to alter a 30mph road, if it thinks that it would be better suited as a 20mph zone. In effect, the bill seeks to do the reverse: the default will be 20mph and if a local authority feels that a road should have a 30mph limit, it will have to go through a similar process. Part of the reason for the bill is the fact that there is criticism of the current process—the timescales, the cost and so on. If the bill is not passed, will the cabinet secretary give a commitment that if local authorities have any concerns about implementing 20mph zones in their areas, the Government will make it easier for them to do so and will help to roll those out, when and where required?

Michael Matheson: The member raises a fair point. Part of the reason why we have engaged COSLA and SCOTS in the process is to understand what the issues of concern are.

I will give a practical example. One of the concerns that has been raised is the length of time that it takes to go through the TRO process, a significant part of which is spent on the consultation exercise. I am keen not to see communities lose the opportunity to be involved in the consultation exercise, but there are two parts to it: a statutory consultation element; and a public consultation element—the statutory consultation takes place first, followed by the public consultation. One of the suggestions that I have made is to bring the two together, so that they run simultaneously. If we can do that, I am more than happy to look at taking that potential option forward. However, I do not want to see communities curtailed in their ability to engage in the consultation process. There is a balance to be struck.

I am certainly open to looking at how we can improve the system. If we can identify how to speed it up and get greater consistency of application, I give an undertaking to be prepared to do that. The exercise that we are undertaking is to try to achieve that.

10:45

Jamie Greene: I have spoken to a lot of local authorities about the bill, and they have fed back their concerns about not having done a road mapping exercise, which they have neither the resource nor the time to do.

Might there be a general issue around whether speed limits are being put up or brought down? Would seeking to take a 20mph limit back up to

30mph come up against more opposition in a consultation process, even if that was just because of how such a change would be perceived?

Michael Matheson: Jamie Greene's latter point is a good one. I rarely get representations from communities in my constituency who are opposed to the idea of moving to a 20mph speed limit or zone. However, I suspect that if they were expecting to go to a 20mph zone or speed limit and they were told that it was going up to 30mph, I would get a significant level of representations from people who opposed that. As ever, people would feel that they were losing out on something. Jamie Greene makes a reasonable point.

Over the past couple of weeks, I have listened to some of the debate on the bill in the media. People have often referred to cities and towns where a blanket approach has been taken, but it is important to recognise that the bill intends to apply limits not to a town or a city, but to a country. The situation is that our local authorities do not have information on restricted roads, and there are thousands of restricted roads in Scotland. Most of them have been noted down on paper over many, many decades. It would be a massive undertaking for individual local authorities to identify, go through and collate all the information.

I return to my earlier point. In Edinburgh, the speed restriction did not apply just on restricted roads; it applied on those roads where the council thought it most appropriate to reduce the limit to 20mph. There will be roads where, in my view, it would not be appropriate for councils to go to 20mph and where I think that we would be creating an unnecessary process.

It would be better if matters were driven at a local level, by councils identifying the roads and areas that they think should be 20mph zones or have 20mph limits.

John Finnie: I am always very frustrated by the phrase, "We don't know." Local authorities have an obligation to have an asset register; they are obliged to know what they own; and they are obliged to inspect things and repair them. I know that you will say that that is nothing to do with you and that it is a local authority matter, but you are the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity. Does it not seem passing strange that we do not know the categories of roads across Scotland?

Michael Matheson: Local authorities will not know because of how the records have been kept historically. Prior to the disaggregation of councils in 1996, the previous authorities had a whole host of restricted roads, but now that the current local authorities have responsibility for them, because they have not had to deal with them, they will not

have collated the information. As I said, a paper exercise has been done over many, many decades.

I agree with you that that is frustrating and that it would be easier if the information was in a single database, but the reality is that it is not. Identifying restricted roads would be an extremely time-consuming and detailed exercise for individual local authorities to undertake—that is just the reality of the situation.

John Finnie: In that case, you would not anticipate that councils will make representations to you for funding to maintain those roads.

Michael Matheson: These are already local authority roads, and they will have unrestricted roads for which they are responsible. We are not just talking about restricted roads; they are responsible for a whole host of different roads. Identifying them would require them to go through a process, in order to get a database with a level of information that allows them to understand what impact the bill would have on their areas.

The Convener: On a general point, it is difficult to manage the questioning if we are all struggling to ask the questions that we want to ask. I ask members to be careful to keep to the agreed lines of questioning. Not doing so means that some members will feel aggrieved, because their question has been answered before they get to ask it.

Mark Ruskell: I am glad that the cabinet secretary has mentioned the work of the implementation group. I have been working constructively with Donna Turnbull, COSLA and SCOTS for some time. I do not think that the cabinet secretary has seen some of the early survey data that has come back ahead of the autumn, when more work can be done. About 21 per cent of local authorities have responded to say that they have already identified the roads that they would wish to switch to a 20mph limit and those on which they would retain a 30mph limit. Another 29 per cent say that they have the asset data to allow roads to be identified. There is already some progress being made in local authorities.

How do we ensure consistency? Information is coming back from local authorities to the effect that they would still not necessarily, even if the process was simpler, stick to Scottish Government policy and introduce 20mph limits in residential areas; for example, we heard that clearly from Scottish Borders Council this morning. The cabinet secretary's local authority, Falkirk Council, has introduced virtually no 20mph limits in residential areas, whereas across the Kincardine bridge, Clackmannanshire Council has made 20mph the limit in virtually every residential area. The idea

that a simple change to the TRO process will have any effect at all contradicts the evidence that we are hearing from some councils.

Michael Matheson: You said that about 21 per cent of local authorities already have the data to hand. I am not dismissing your point, but that means that nearly 80 per cent do not have the data. It is a major undertaking for any local authority to collect the data. It is good that some local authorities have the information, but the vast majority do not. We should not dismiss that.

We are doing work on inconsistency in approaches. We are trying to understand why neighbouring local authorities take different approaches to 20mph zones, and what we can do through processes, guidance and information to achieve a more consistent approach. Once we have had feedback on that from councils, we will understand better what we can put in place that would assist in achieving greater consistency across local authorities' approaches.

Maureen Watt: The argument is made that creating a national 20mph limit on restricted roads would result in cultural change and a change in attitudes to vehicle speeds, which might produce better results than the current piecemeal implementation of 20mph limits. What is your view on that argument?

Michael Matheson: It is clear that drivers take a number of factors into account in relation to the speed at which they go, including the design and layout of the road and whether it has lighting. All those issues need to be taken into account in trying to achieve compliance with any speed limit, including a 20mph speed limit. One of the biggest challenges that we will always face in trying to change behaviour is in creating a cultural shift. By and large, that takes a long time and can be difficult to achieve.

The best way to achieve the cultural shift that we are looking for is to have 20mph limits and 20mph zones in areas where we can most effectively ensure compliance, and to put in place the range of measures that need to be in place to support that. We know that just changing the speed limit does not work in itself, and that the other factors that have to be taken into account to encourage compliance are extremely important. That is why it is better to introduce 20mph limits where we think that that is most appropriate and where compliance can be achieved. In that way, we will get the cultural shift that is necessary to go along with the changes—but that always takes time.

The Convener: From the evidence that we are hearing, there seem to be different views on 20mph speed limits, depending on whether a council has large rural or large urban areas. A lot

of councils with large rural areas feel that a blanket 20mph speed limit is not appropriate. I want to push you on that, cabinet secretary. Councils are in a position to amend TROs, so are not councillors the best people to make decisions about the roads that they control, on the basis that they have local knowledge about where there should be 20mph speed limits?

Michael Matheson: Yes. However, there is inconsistency in how local authorities do that. I am conscious that some councils, such as Highland Council, have long rural roads—restricted or not—that would be affected by the proposed change, so councils might have to look at changing the restrictions. My view is that, in order to achieve compliance and the benefits that come from it, the best approach is a local process that identifies the relevant roads and areas and introduces measures that help to improve compliance with the speed limits, rather than a blanket approach being taken and having to unpick from that the roads on which we do not want 20mph speed limits.

Colin Smyth: We have talked a lot about the process and issues of consistency, and about whether the existing TRO process can be improved to speed it up and bring greater consistency across local authorities. However, I am not clear what the Government's vision of the final outcome on speed limits in residential areas is. Do you believe that we should, across Scotland, have something like what has been done in Edinburgh, with, in effect, all residential areas being 20mph zones? Should we have something that is more like what has been done in the Borders, where there are 20mph zones only around schools? What is the Government's position? We can talk about the process and how we get there, but what do you want to achieve?

Michael Matheson: "Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020" sets out the Government's approach. It includes 20mph zones and 20mph speed limits, and all the work on reducing casualties and injuries that are caused by road traffic accidents. We do not intend to direct local authorities to do X, Y or Z in their areas. There are different environments: different approaches will be appropriate.

What I hear is that local authorities have an issue with the tools that they have. They feel that they could be improved and that more or clearer guidance would support a more consistent approach in application of 20mph speed limits and 20mph zones. In the process that we are undertaking with them just now we are asking what we can do to help them to take a more consistent approach.

However, it is for them to decide how they will apply that in their areas. It is not for the

Government to tell the Borders Council, for example, where it should put 20mph zones, but we should give as much help and support as possible, and we should provide guidance and information to assist councils in making decisions.

We should also look at the process, to ensure that local authorities feel that it is fit for purpose and helpful to them. In the end, it will be local elected members who decide exactly where in their areas to put 20mph limits and 20mph zones.

Colin Smyth: There will be differences between rural and urban areas, but we have a situation at the moment in which a housing estate in one town does not have a 20mph zone while an almost identical housing estate in Edinburgh does. I am keen to know whether the Government believes that 20mph zones in residential areas are the right thing, or that they should not be put in some areas? I know that we have talked about local decisions, but we have a situation in which two identical places have different speed limits. I am keen to know on which side the Government comes down on that issue, because that will guide whether your desire for consistency is about increasing significantly across Scotland the number of 20mph zones—which I believe is needed—or is just about improving the speed of processing a TRO.

Michael Matheson: We are in favour of 20mph zones where there is good evidence that they should be introduced, and we would encourage local authorities to do that. However, there is inconsistency in how local authorities go about that. Stuart Wilson will go through some of the criteria that we ask local authorities to look at in making decisions. One local authority might decide to make a housing estate a 20mph zone while another chooses not to do the same in a similar housing estate, so we need to ask whether they are applying the same criteria so that there is consistency in outcomes when authorities consider these matters.

11:00

Stuart Wilson (Scottish Government): The key message that we would like to send is that authorities need to have the right limit for the right place. The current speed limit guidance makes it clear that consistency and legibility are important. A driver in North Lanarkshire and a driver in Falkirk should have a common understanding of a road, given the environment there. However, I worked for Falkirk Council for five years and for North Lanarkshire Council for the preceding five years, so I know that those two local authorities came to different positions on advisory 20mph limits, despite having exactly the same evidence base, because of resources and because their

plans set out the merits and non-merits of doing the same thing.

Transport Scotland has sought to deliver 20mph limits on parts of our network where we have felt that evidence supported it, but in other places we will not do it because we think that the evidence does not support it. It is important to local authorities that they can choose, based on the evidence that is available to them and their community inputs. One of the thresholds that we used in the pilot 20mph schemes was that there should be average speed on the road of 24mph or less, which reflects the guidance that such limits should be self-enforcing. The input that we got from the police was that limits have to work without additional enforcement.

We come back to the key question of whether, if we do something, we expect it to have a benefit. In general, it is reasonable for speed limits in residential side streets to be 20mph: there is no argument about that. However, there might be, running through groups of residential streets that are restricted roads, main roads for which there is a less sound case for that. In such situations, there will always be a margin—a one-size-fits-all approach cannot be taken. Our current guidance, the road safety framework and the “Strategic Road Safety Plan 2016” talk about the right limit for the right place being key.

Colin Smyth: At the moment, no one would dream of having anything more than 30mph as a maximum in a housing estate in a very built-up area. That is national policy. You are saying that the Government’s desire is that, in such areas, the limit be set at 20mph.

Stuart Wilson: The “Strategic Road Safety Plan 2016” has 20 actions in it, nine of which talk about speed management. We recognise completely that managing speed effectively is a good thing to do. However, managing speed effectively and changing speed limits are not necessarily the same thing.

There are plenty of places on the road network that we could say should obviously be 20mph zones and be restricted roads, or about which we could decide—as the City of Edinburgh Council has done—that although it is not a restricted road, it is perfectly appropriate for the speed limit to be 20mph. However, at the moment we are not in a position to draw a map of the network that would give you the picture of what that looks like.

Michael Matheson: Mr Smyth asked how, of two identical housing estates in different local authority areas, one is a 20mph zone and one is not. Our approach is to think that such estates should most likely be 20mph zones. However, local authorities do not always arrive at the same decision, so part of the work that we are doing is

to look at what we can put in place to achieve greater consistency, so that the authority that decided that the housing estate should not be a 20mph zone would be in a position in which it would decide that it would be better for it to be a 20mph zone.

Colin Smyth: That consistency is about getting authorities to have 20mph zones, is it not?

Michael Matheson: In areas where there is a good evidence base to justify a 20mph limit, that is what we would expect to happen.

Jamie Greene: We have heard a lot about the financial memorandum and the level of support that the Government might, or might not, offer local authorities to implement the bill if it is passed, and we have heard concerns that the cost of implementing the bill might have been underestimated. Do you have any views on that? Would the Government be minded to give additional support—specifically financial support—to local authorities to implement the bill if it is passed?

Michael Matheson: We think that the costs have been underestimated. The reality is that we do not know what the cost of introducing the proposals in the bill will be. That is largely because of issues around restricted and unrestricted roads: we do not know their numbers, so we do not know what the cost of implementation would be.

We have to keep it in mind that there are also for councils the additional process costs of collating the information. If councils were to choose to have some restricted roads with a higher limit of 30mph, they would have to go through the TRO process to take them up to 30mph, and there are costs associated with that.

We can give you a couple of examples of costs that we do not think have been considered. In the trunk road network we have identified about 40 areas of concern—Stuart Wilson can give the committee some insight into the costs associated with introducing a 20mph limit on those roads.

The Convener: I encourage you to be brief, Stuart.

Stuart Wilson: We have put in a couple of 20mph limits. If we extrapolate from the cost of that, just the change would cost about £1 million. If we add buffer zones that are needed to reflect the fact that it is not advisable for national 60mph speed limit roads to come straight into roads on which there is a 20mph limit, that cost would double to £2 million. That is our current approximation of changing restricted roads on the trunk network to 20mph.

Jamie Greene: I am sorry to interrupt, but I want to go back to my original question. If the Parliament chooses to pass the bill, will the

Scottish Government give local authorities the additional funding that they think they need to implement it? Local authorities are saying to us that they do not have the money, but it has to come from somewhere.

Michael Matheson: There is no allocation in my budget for delivering the bill. If Parliament is of a mind to support the bill and passes it, any financial support that we would have to give local authorities—I recognise that we would have to give them financial support to assist them in implementing it—would have to come out of current budget allocations. That would have to be determined at the time.

Maureen Watt: We heard earlier that the City of Edinburgh Council had accessed support through Sustrans and active travel funding. Is there an opportunity for that to be rolled out further?

Michael Matheson: Do you mean is there the opportunity to use the active travel budget for such work?

Maureen Watt: Yes. Dr Jepson suggested that if there were 20mph zones there would be more active travel—in particular, cycling.

Michael Matheson: Just for clarification, are you asking whether we could use the active travel budget to pay for implementation of the bill if it were passed by Parliament?

Maureen Watt: Yes.

Michael Matheson: That could be an option. However, we do not know what the costs of the bill would be, and we think that they have been significantly underestimated. If we did use active travel money for implementation, that would have an impact on all the other active travel measures; it would be to their detriment.

Peter Chapman: Should the bill be passed, an effect of that would be that there would be a requirement in places including Edinburgh to remove the repeater 20mph signs. Would the Government consider changing the regulations so that there would be no need to remove the 20mph repeater signs? There is a cost to put them up, but there is also a cost to take them down.

Michael Matheson: As it stands, repeater signs are not used for 30mph roads—there is no requirement on councils in that respect. It seems to be logical that if the default limit were to become 20mph, the requirement for repeater signs should be removed. However, there are issues related to shifting the culture and around compliance that suggest that we should keep repeater signs or even increase their number. We would give that due consideration if the bill were passed. Mr Chapman is correct to say that there will be a cost attached to that.

John Mason: I would like to pursue the point that was made by Mr Chapman. At the moment, we have guidance that 30mph repeater signs are not allowed in 30mph zones. You may be familiar with Clyde gateway, which is a major new road in the east end of Glasgow. It is a dual carriageway with two lanes each way and no parking. It feels like a 40mph or 50mph road and people drive at 40mph or 50mph. The community would like there to be 30mph repeater signs on that road, but the council says that it is not allowed to install those. Would you be willing to look at that issue, whichever way we go on speed limits?

Michael Matheson: We are getting into the technical regulations on speed limits, so I ask Stuart Wilson to comment.

Stuart Wilson: The question arises again of whether that is the right limit in the right place, if people's impression is that it is a road on which they would be able to go faster. I am not familiar with the detail of the reasons why we do not put 30mph repeater signs in; that is to do with the long-standing regulations. However, as Mr Matheson said, if the bill was passed, a generally similar principle could apply to 20mph signs. I would have to come back to the committee to give a more specific answer on 30mph signs.

John Mason: That is okay—I realise that the issue is wider than the bill.

Michael Matheson: I know the area that you mean and I understand why you have concerns.

John Mason: I made the point in passing.

The financial memorandum refers to £450,000 for marketing. That is based on the cost of previous campaigns on cancer and all sorts of things. If the bill was passed, even if the Government was not keen on it, would the Government be willing to roll out such marketing or promotion across the country? Is that figure reasonable? Having a default limit of 20mph instead of 30mph would be a major change.

Michael Matheson: When I was the Minister for Public Health—I am conscious that another former Minister for Public Health is here—we often had a variety of public information campaigns on a range of conditions. By and large, a six-week campaign costs about £500,000 for preparation, research work, media work and assessing its impact at the end. That applies to cancer information programmes, for example.

The culture was talked about earlier. Creating a cultural shift takes much longer. I suspect that, if the bill was passed and we went to a default limit of 20mph, the campaign would need to go way beyond six weeks; it would need to take place over an extended period to reinforce the message. As a result, the cost would increase. I do not know

how long the campaign would have to be, but I suspect that it would have to be carried out over an extended period of months, if not a couple of years, to drive the message home.

John Mason: It is difficult to predict the time or the cost—the smoking ban, for example, came in more easily than many of us expected. Can you put a cost on the marketing or promotion in relation to the bill?

Michael Matheson: I cannot—it would be unfair for me to do so. As I said, when I was the Minister for Public Health, the average cost of a six-week campaign was about £500,000. A campaign on the bill would have to be sustained over an extended period; you can do the sums.

John Mason: Could the cost be £2 million?

Michael Matheson: I suspect that we would be talking about several million pounds for an information campaign over an extended period.

John Finnie: What is your view on the cost benefit ratio of a national 20mph speed limit on restricted roads, given the casualty reductions that organisations such as the Glasgow Centre for Population Health predict?

Michael Matheson: I am aware of the centre's work. To an extent, it reinforces our view that 20mph limits should apply in the places that can gain the biggest benefit and get the greatest level of compliance, which reduces the risk of casualties from road traffic accidents. Benefits come from having 20mph speed limits and zones. The evidence base should be used locally to determine where such limits can best be achieved and complied with.

John Finnie: For the avoidance of doubt, will you confirm that the benefits include financial benefits? You have talked about the downside, such as the administration costs of TROs.

Michael Matheson: Do you mean the cost benefit of having a 20mph zone?

John Finnie: Indeed.

Michael Matheson: Having fewer accidents reduces the associated health costs. Depending on the nature of an accident, it could have a long-term financial impact on an individual if they were significantly disabled or injured. There are cost benefits.

11:15

John Finnie: It might seem unpleasant to ask this—I touched on it briefly with Police Scotland—but what is the cost of a life? What is the cost of a child fatality?

Michael Matheson: Are you asking about the financial cost?

John Finnie: Yes, indeed.

Michael Matheson: I will ask Stuart Wilson to give you some detail on that.

Stuart Wilson: The costs for local networks are a little less, but the cost of a trunk road fatality is a little over £2 million; if you were to monetise the cost of such a death, that is the figure that you would put on it.

John Finnie: In Wales, between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2013, 14,639 people were killed or injured on 30mph limit roads. The projection is that reducing the limit from 30mph to 20mph could prevent six to 10 deaths and between 1,203 and 1,978 injuries per year, with a total prevention value of £58 to £94 million. The cost is clearly wider than the cost of signs and some administrative inconvenience.

Michael Matheson: Yes, of course it is.

Mark Ruskell: Do you acknowledge that, if we move to a national default 20mph limit on restricted roads where people live, work and play, there will be a greater reduction in casualty numbers and more lives will be saved than is the case under the current piecemeal approach to what is in place today?

Michael Matheson: That is potentially the case. The evidence shows that drivers take into account a range of factors in complying with the speed limit, including road design, road features and the location of a road. For example, if there is no housing on a road, people feel that they can go faster on it. That is why we think that it is better that we address that at a local level by identifying the areas where we can get the greatest level of compliance, with the greatest benefits.

Mark Ruskell: I appreciate that you wish to drive compliance further—I wish to do the same—but do you acknowledge that, even with a modest speed reduction of say 1mph to 2mph, which the bill is predicated on, we will still save more lives by proceeding on a population-level basis than we would by taking a piecemeal approach with lots of lumps and bumps outside schools?

Michael Matheson: Our view is that the greater use of 20mph zones on roads is the right thing to do in order to help reduce risk and casualty numbers and to make people feel safer. We think that that should be taken forward at a local level in areas where we can get the greatest benefits from it, rather than taking a blanket approach, which the bill proposes. If we can do that in a way that achieves greater levels of compliance, rather than just doing it on a blanket basis in areas where compliance might not be good, we will reduce the potential casualty impact and health impacts.

The police have said that road speed limits are effectively self-enforcing—we should not ignore

that. That is why it is important that we take an evidence-based approach to the areas in which we choose to locate the zones in order to get the maximum benefit. That is to some extent the approach that the City of Edinburgh Council has taken. It has used different criteria from those in the bill; it looked at a range of factors in determining where it thought that the 20mph zones should be—they were not restricted to restricted roads—in order to address areas where it thought it could get better compliance.

Mark Ruskell: With all due respect, Edinburgh has rolled that approach out on a sign-only basis, but it has also invested a limited amount of funds in putting in additional infrastructure in areas where there are potentially high casualty rates and high footfall. Do you not see that, within an area-wide 20mph limit across Scotland, on restricted roads, it is still possible to target resources to areas where compliance is poor, whether that be through police enforcement activity or additional investment by councils in speed reduction measures? The two are not mutually exclusive. We have a blanket 30mph limit at the moment. It is possible to switch to a blanket 20mph limit and then invest in those areas where we see continued compliance issues.

Michael Matheson: Part of the challenge that we have is that we do not know the extent of the network that will be affected by the bill.

Mark Ruskell: Fifty per cent of councils do.

Michael Matheson: We do not know—that is the reality. You say that we should focus on addressing compliance issues, but to what extent? We do not know the extent of the network that will be affected.

The Convener: I thank Mark Ruskell and the cabinet secretary. We are slightly ahead of schedule, and I think that one of the cabinet secretary's officials is due to turn up shortly. With the committee's agreement, I will move away from items 2 and 3 and move straight on to items 4 and 5. That will allow the cabinet secretary to rearrange his officials. We can move back to the other items afterwards. Is the committee happy to do that?

Members indicated agreement.

Subordinate Legislation

Equine Animal (Identification) (Scotland) Regulations 2019

11:20

The Convener: Item 4 is consideration of one negative instrument. The instrument will enhance the controls of the issuing, use and quality of horse passports. No motions to annul have been received in relation to the instrument. Does the committee agree that it does not wish to make any recommendations in relation to the instrument?

Members *indicated agreement.*

European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

Environment (Miscellaneous Amendments and Revocations) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

11:21

The Convener: Under item 5, there are two notifications in relation to United Kingdom statutory instruments. They cover European regulations and directives related to spirits, food labelling, wines, genetically modified organisms, animal health and pesticides. All the instruments are being laid in the UK Parliament in relation to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 are categorised as category B, to the extent that the transition from a European Union framework to a UK framework would be a major and significant development.

We need to agree a course of action. Does the committee agree to write to the Scottish Government to confirm that it is content for consent for the UK SIs that are referred to in the notifications to be given and to note the wider policy implications?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: We will take a five-minute pause to allow the cabinet secretary to rearrange his officials. In fact, we will have a suspension until 11:30.

11:22

Meeting suspended.

11:30

On resuming—

Subordinate Legislation

National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2019 [Draft]

The Convener: Item 2 is to consider one affirmative instrument, the draft National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2019. The committee will take evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity. There have been no representations to the committee on the instrument.

I welcome back Michael Matheson, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity. He is joined by Pete Grant, bus policy team leader; and John Finlay, customer services and communications manager, from the Scottish Government. I invite the cabinet secretary to make a brief opening statement.

Michael Matheson: The draft order sets the reimbursement rate and capped level of funding for the national concessionary travel scheme in 2019-20. In doing so, it gives effect to an agreement that we reached in December 2018 with the Confederation of Passenger Transport, which represents the Scottish bus industry.

That agreement is based on an economic model for reimbursement that was developed in 2013 on the basis of independent research commissioned by the Scottish Government, following extensive discussions with the CPT and our respective advisers. With the CPT and our respective advisers, we have reviewed and updated the model and the forecasts and indices in it so that we can use the model as the basis for the proposed terms for 2019-20.

The proposed reimbursement rate for 2019-20 is set at 56.5 per cent of the adult single fare. We believe that that rate is consistent with the aim, set out in legislation establishing the scheme, that bus operators should be no better off and no worse off as a result of participating in the scheme. It is only marginally different from last year's rate of 56.8 per cent, which we believe provides a welcome degree of stability for bus operators.

On the basis of that reimbursement rate and our expectations for future journey numbers and fares, we forecast that claims for reimbursement may come to around £213.65 million over the next year. That figure is reflected in the draft order as the budget cap.

The order is limited to the coming year. Our work to update the model during 2017 identified

significant uncertainty around what should be the impact of changes in the relative level of the adult single fare. We agreed with the CPT that we would leave that key element of the model unchanged for the time being.

The economic model relies on good forecasting and therefore Transport Scotland has built relationships with the industry based on transparent forecasting procedures.

We know that older and disabled people greatly value the free bus travel that the scheme provides. It enables them to access local services, visit friends and relatives and gain health benefits from a more active lifestyle. The order provides for those benefits to continue for a further year on a basis that is fair to operators.

I commend the order to the committee and I am happy to answer any questions.

The Convener: Thank you, cabinet secretary. A few members of the committee—I will not name them—may be eligible for concessionary bus travel. I will spare their blushes by saying that there is no need for them to declare an interest. The first question is from Richard Lyle.

Richard Lyle: I welcome the proposal to extend the scheme for a further year and to make no change to who is eligible or to what benefits the scheme confers. That is contrary to comments that were made by certain political parties in this place when the system was going to be reviewed.

I welcome the fact that the Government is not raising the age criterion or changing the system, because of the public consultation. In August 2018, the Scottish Government confirmed that there would be no change to the age of eligibility for the scheme, which would remain at 60—that is on the record. The Scottish Government also confirmed that it would make a welcome minor amendment to make disabled children aged under five eligible for a companion card under the scheme. I thank you for that, but I note that the proposal extends the scheme for only a year. What discussions are you entering into with the various bus companies in Scotland—I think that our papers tell us that there are more than 200 of them, which surprised me—to ensure that in future this excellent scheme remains the way that it is?

Michael Matheson: The member is correct to say that we have not changed the eligibility and that we have extended the scheme to include disabled children under the age of five. That is taken account of in this order.

We go through an annual process with the industry. The economic model that we have is one that was agreed with it, which means that there is a consistency of approach. We will go through the process with the industry in the coming year, too.

The process that we went through to come to the particular figure that we are talking about today and that led up to the agreement in December was collaborative and the industry welcomed the way in which we went about it. We will conduct the process in that way in the year ahead, too.

Richard Lyle: People wonder how we spend their taxes. How much will the scheme cost the Scottish Government?

Michael Matheson: The cap for the investment in the scheme in the existing financial year was £202.1 million; for the coming year, the figure will go up to £213.65 million.

Richard Lyle: So, £213 million. Thank you, cabinet secretary. Well done.

The Convener: I am sure that the cabinet secretary appreciates that comment, Richard.

Stewart Stevenson: In the past year, was the cap reached? If so, at what point in the calendar year?

Michael Matheson: Pete Grant can give you details on that.

Pete Grant (Scottish Government): The cap was not reached in the past year.

Stewart Stevenson: How far short of it were we?

Pete Grant: Can I be clear which year you are talking about?

Stewart Stevenson: I have temporarily forgotten what you said that the figure is for the current financial year, but it was around £200 million. I am asking what the actual expenditure was under the scheme.

Pete Grant: For the year that we are in, that has obviously not been resolved yet. That is why I was asking for clarification. If you are talking about 2017-18, the cap was £196.16 million and the actual scheme payments were £194.8 million. If it helps the committee, we can send details of the caps and the payments for the past several years.

Stewart Stevenson: I accept that the Government and the bus companies have come to a shared view of what the cap should be, so that tells us quite a lot. Is there an expectation that the current year's cap will be reached?

Pete Grant: Yes, it is fair to say so. We have communicated openly with the Confederation for Passenger Transport and individual bus operators and have taken actions accordingly.

Stewart Stevenson: Does that reflect an increased number of journeys that are being made using the scheme, or are there other factors?

Pete Grant: It is fair to say that there is a range of factors that influence things. It is worth noting that, in the past year, we have had quite a clement summer and winter, which influenced journey numbers and, therefore, expenditure on the scheme. Again, we have had open dialogue with the industry, looking back on what was forecast and what came to pass. We are as open as possible in that regard.

Jamie Greene: My questions are about what is being reported in the media today, which perhaps the cabinet secretary can clarify as being accurate or inaccurate. If the information is accurate, it is of concern to me.

We are hearing reports that operators are being told, with regard to what will be available to them in the last four weeks of this financial year, that the reimbursement rate has been cut substantially because the budget is close to being used up, as Mr Grant confirmed. Can you give me some numbers? How close are we to the budget being used up and what is the reduction in the grant being offered to bus operators? The reason why I mention it is that we are getting feedback from some of the large operators, including McGill's Bus Service Ltd in my region, that they simply do not have the revenue to deliver services, due to the potential reductions in the subsidy, and that they are looking to make savings that could include fare reviews and cutting services. Is that true?

Michael Matheson: Are you asking me what McGill's is looking to do? You would need to ask McGill's.

Jamie Greene: If it is true, is it not of great concern to you?

Michael Matheson: It would always be a concern if a company is looking to reduce services, but you would have to ask McGill's if that is what it is intending to do.

Jamie Greene: Has the company approached you with any concerns about this? Has no operator expressed concerns about reaching the budget cap early?

Michael Matheson: I am not aware of having received any correspondence from McGill's. If the company has written to me about the matter it may be in the system, but I have not received a letter as yet.

Jamie Greene: Why does the policy document that accompanies the order say that

"The cap is not welcomed by the bus industry"?

Michael Matheson: From the outset, the industry has never accepted the idea of a cap on the concessionary fare scheme budget, which I

think has been in place since the scheme was established. Is that right?

Pete Grant: Yes, I believe so.

Michael Matheson: The industry has never accepted the idea of a cap, which is in place to protect the taxpayer.

Jamie Greene: I understand that it protects the taxpayer, however if the cap is being reached and we are running out of budget before the end of the financial year, surely next year's budget needs to reflect that? Obviously, it means that bus operators throughout the country will receive no subsidy, or a reduced subsidy, to provide services during the last part of the financial year. Surely that would have an effect on what you foresee as being required next year.

Michael Matheson: The figures for the year ahead are forecasts, so in the economic model that was agreed with the industry to try to get as accurate a picture as possible, there will be variances from one year to the next. If we look over the course of the past 10 years, I think that there have been a couple of occasions when the cap was reached, from what I can see, and there are other years when the cap was not reached. It is a forecasting exercise as we go into the next year. We have amended the model in the past couple of years to take into account some of the changes that are taking place and we will continue to work with the industry on how we can improve the model, but it is a forecasting exercise. However, the mechanism for establishing the cap was agreed with the industry, although I recognise that, from the outset, the industry has not accepted the idea of a cap.

Colin Smyth: Cabinet secretary, you said that the order covers the extension of the scheme to carers with disabled children. I am a bit confused by that because, from what I have read so far, I cannot see where the order actually says that. Does the order cover carers with disabled children and, if so, how much of the £213.65 million will cover that?

Michael Matheson: I was incorrect; the order does not include that, as it has not been rolled into the scheme yet.

Colin Smyth: What is the target date to extend eligibility to carers with disabled children?

Michael Matheson: We are looking to undertake that work during the coming year of the scheme. I hope that we will be in a position to introduce it into the scheme in the following year.

Colin Smyth: Not until the following year.

The Government has indicated that it supports in principle the roll-out of the scheme to modern apprentices—when will that happen?

Michael Matheson: We have to do a bit of work to understand the details and the figures around that. I hope that that work will also be undertaken over the course of this year's programme.

Colin Smyth: Is the view, therefore, that the scheme will also be extended to modern apprentices in the next financial year?

Michael Matheson: If we choose to extend it, yes.

Maureen Watt: In the past, constituents have told us that, although they were going from A to B, their ticket said that they were being charged for going from A to C, D or E. How much has that practice of bus operators been curtailed?

Michael Matheson: John Finlay is better placed to tell you about the range of work that is undertaken as part of Transport Scotland's fraud strategy to deal with the issues and engage directly with operators. I have also heard such comments from constituents.

11:45

John Finlay (Scottish Government): The fraud strategy is being refreshed with measures that we can take with bus operators. We have a fraud analysis team that looks into constituents' complaints. Some journeys are overstaged, but a lot of cases involve confusion among cardholders. Some customers do not understand bus operators' fare stages; if a customer says, "I'm going to Asda," they might expect the ticket to say "Asda", but the ticket might go to the next fare stage, because fare bands apply.

We always look into and respond to any inquiries that we get from cardholders. We have mystery shoppers who go out on buses and undertake exercises on routes that constituents have highlighted. Because we had received a few inquiries about First Glasgow, my colleagues met the company last week. A lot of the inquiries arose because First Glasgow has recently changed its fare structure; a lot of services now have just two fares, so cardholders thought that they were being overstaged, but analysis showed that that was not the case and that the issue was the way in which First Glasgow records journeys. We have engaged with First Glasgow's communications team, which will refresh the driver training and, I hope, provide more information to cardholders, whether that is through posters on buses or on social media.

We always investigate any inquiries that we receive. We have a freephone number that cardholders can phone if they have any queries or if they want to report instances in which they think that they have been overstaged.

Maureen Watt: Is the problem reducing, increasing or staying the same? Do you still

encourage our constituents to get in touch with us if they have reason to believe that an issue exists or if they would like to query their fare?

Michael Matheson: Absolutely. Anyone who has concerns can raise them with us under the process that exists, and their concerns will be investigated. When there is a pattern of concerns, we often use our different mechanisms to assess how the operator is behaving on a particular route or as a whole. If it is necessary and appropriate because we believe that criminal activity—fraud—has taken place, the operator will be reported to the procurator fiscal. That has happened in the past, and prosecutions have been successful.

The Convener: Members have no more questions, but I have been asked to raise a question by a lady who has a long-term disability and is entitled to a concessionary travel pass. She is concerned that, every two to three years, she must go to a library to prove her disability. She has received correspondence in the past that states that her disability entitlement needs to be reviewed, because her circumstances could improve, but she has a long-term disability that will not improve. She would like long-term conditions to be recognised so that she does not have to keep proving her disability. Will you look at that and resolve the situation?

Michael Matheson: If you pass on the details, I will be more than happy to look into the matter.

The Convener: I will ask the clerks to pass on the information—thank you. Do you wish to make closing remarks?

Michael Matheson: No.

The Convener: Item 3 is formal consideration of motion S5M-15754, in the name of the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity.

Motion moved,

That the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee recommends that the National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2019 [draft] be approved.—[*Michael Matheson*]

The Convener: Does the cabinet secretary wish to make further comments?

Michael Matheson: No.

The Convener: Do members wish to comment?

Richard Lyle: The order implements option 2 from the consultation. It is good news but, as usual, certain parties in this place wish to debase what is being done. The system costs senior citizens nothing, but we must remember that they were taxpayers, so they are entitled to the service. I remind people that the scheme costs the

Government more than £200 million. I support the motion.

The Convener: As no one else has any comments, the question is, that motion S5M-15754 be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee recommends that the National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2019 [draft] be approved.

The Convener: That concludes our consideration of item 3.

11:51

Meeting continued in private until 12:10.

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