

Arguing against the 20mph limit



The decision to change the speed limits on some streets to 20mph was taken earlier this week by the Transport and Environment Committee. The only dissenting voices around the committee room were those of the three Conservative councillors.

They were firm in their view that the council was making a mistake. They have shared their views with us so that we can share them with you.

Councillor Joanna Mowat said:

“The decision to impose 20mph limits across 80 % of Edinburgh’s roads was premature – a decision was taken without knowing what the plans would cost or how this would be funded and how this would impact on the future budget for roads and pavements. Everyone is in favour of safer streets and pavements, but with limited money to spend it is important that decisions should not be taken “in principle” and divorced from implementation costs. There are also differing views about what makes a street or road safe – is it a smooth road surface and uncracked pavements or a 20mph speed limit? If roads are in poor repair and funds are limited it is right to question how a major new project will be funded and what impact this will have on the current roads network before approving the decision in principle.

“Whilst the Vice Convenor and Convenor made much of the evidence backing this decision we should recognise that large scale 20mph zones are new and that there is little evidence on how this impacts on road safety and reduction traffic

accidents. Given the mercifully small numbers of serious accidents it takes at least 3 years to show how measures taken to improve safety affect the trend so it is too soon to measure this in Edinburgh from the Southside pilot.

“The Local Transport Strategy recognises that if new 20mph zones are introduced into areas without public support then it will not be possible to enforce them without the support of the police. The police have said that they will not take special measures to enforce the new speed limits but will enforce them as they currently enforce existing limits. Bristol tried a zone that was too extensive and has had to roll back from that. We have experience in Edinburgh of the introduction of over enthusiastic measures to restrict traffic which after proving a complete failure had to be expensively scrapped (CETM).

The Conservative group is in favour of road safety, in favour of enjoyable streets but not in favour of the wholesale introduction of an uncosted scheme over 80% of our streets.”