

Edinburgh councillor blogs – Councillor Lesley Macinnes

Councillor Lesley Macinnes, Convener of Transport and Environment for the City of Edinburgh Council writes for us on the need for traffic to slow down and for drivers to take heed of the 20 mph speed limits.



“One of the comments often made by people who aren’t fully persuaded yet of the need to slow down traffic in our city is that they “support it around schools but don’t see the need for it on other roads”.

“There’s a glaring hypocrisy in such statements. If 20mph is suitable around schools, it must be because it’s safer. And if it’s safer around schools, which account for only the last 100m of a child’s journey to school, what about the streets in the rest of their journey? Isn’t it just as important to keep children – and all vulnerable road users, for that matter – safe for the whole of their journey? And now we’re into the summer holidays, aren’t children more likely to be out and about away from, rather than close to, schools?

“Slower speeds in built-up areas are fast becoming the norm in cities and towns all over the world. And the World Health Organisation recently made a call for 30kmph (slightly slower than 20mph) to be the limit wherever motorised traffic mixes with pedestrians and cyclists.

“Here in Edinburgh, in response to public support for 20mph, we’re just over halfway through a roll-out of the lower limit to all residential and shopping streets in the city, as well as the city centre.

“This is still a transition phase, as different parts of the city get used to spotting 20mph repeater signs reminding them where the new limit applies. Many streets are of course remaining at 30mph or even 40mph – contrary to false claims about it being a ‘blanket’ scheme, we’ve designed the project deliberately to retain a strategic 30mph and 40mph network.

“Clearly improving safety is one of the main benefits of slowing traffic down, but it’s far from the only one. As we saw from our successful South Edinburgh pilot, slower speeds encourage people to walk and cycle more, improving the environment and calming traffic noise. And because they feel safer, people are happier to spend time in 20mph streets, boosting community cohesion and wellbeing.

“We know from positive feedback sent in that these benefits are already being felt in the first zones of our rollout. People welcome reduced traffic noise in their streets, celebrate feeling safer travelling on foot or by bike and report finding driving more enjoyable with more consideration from other motorists.

“We also know, from surveys and public consultations, that most people in Edinburgh do support 20mph, however loudly opponents may shout. We need this quieter majority to speak out and make their voices heard. Talk about it to your family and friends, your work colleagues and the person you sit next to on the bus! 20mph is here to stay and it’s going to be great for us all.”