

Council has no cash for research on speed limits

A review of speed limits and work to create safer routes to schools across West Lothian will not happen for at least another year due to a lack of funding.

The council's Executive heard that outside consultants would have to be brought in to compile the comprehensive reviews needed before any work could begin, at a cost of £90,000.

Internal reviews by council roads staff of safety around schools will still go ahead.

The Welsh government has already decided to reduce speed limits in towns and villages to 20mph from 30mph and there are growing calls for a similar decision in Scotland.

In his report to the Executive Gordon Brown, the Roads and Transportation Manager, said: "There is currently no funding available to carry out an extensive review of speed limits in West Lothian at this time.

"A review of this nature would require to be carried out with external consultancy support at an estimated cost of £30,000 – £40,000."

And on safer routes to school, there was similar: "There is currently no funding available to carry out an extensive review of suitable routes to school, roads and parking in West Lothian. A review of this nature would require to be carried out with external consultancy support at an estimated cost of

£40,000 – £50,000.

“An internal review will be carried out by officers to ensure that the school attendant locations and numbers remain current.”

Of all the measures introduced under Spaces for People it was the introduction of apparently random 20mph zones which brought the biggest complaints. In towns such as Bathgate councillors were besieged with public discontent from drivers.

A petition attracted 5,000 signatures asking for the new speed limits to be scrapped. Even driving instructors complained that it was making it difficult to teach skills properly to learners.

However many small communities found benefits from the apparent psychological impact on drivers of 20mph being more effective at slowing traffic than the traditional 30mph signs.

The Spaces for People trial also threw up anomalies in rural areas as communities in the Bathgate Hills called for greater speed restrictions on narrow and winding country roads.

A two year long campaign to have the speed limit cut from 40mph to 30mph on Cathlaw Lane, around Westfield, and at a dangerous junction at Slackend came to nothing after roads engineers estimated that speed bumps and other traffic calming measures at all three locations would cost more than £100,000.

Rural dwellers and villagers in Torphichen fought a long running campaign for work to make the roads safer citing blind bends and summits, poor lighting verges as well as concealed exits and farm and field access.

by Stuart Somerville *Local Democracy Reporter*.

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Starlet Rounabout, Bathgate. Councillor Harry Cartmill and driving instructor Ronnie Malcolm. 20 mph speed restrictions. Driving instructors complaining to Harry about being unable to teach people how to drive to the Highway code because of the reduced speed zones. Picture by Stuart Vance.