

West Lothian Council backs launch of local 20mph zones

Councillors have backed plans to begin the roll-out of the national 20mph strategy across communities in West Lothian.

Consultation will begin in the largest communities on streets selected for the new speed limit before a community consultation begins.

But there remain questions about long term Holyrood funding for the scheme, and how the new 20mph zones will be policed.

Kenneth Brown, the Roads Network Manager told a meeting of the council's Executive that a review of the 586 residential areas considered under the 2024/25 Accident Investigation and Prevention Programme shows that this tackles the areas with most residential casualties first.

The plan is to introduce the Scottish Government scheme in three tiers. The first tier includes Livingston (including Polbeth and West Calder) and Bathgate and Blackburn.

The second phase would include Broxburn and Uphall; Linlithgow; Armadale; and Whitburn. The third phase would include all other remaining settlements.

Funding for the introduction of the scheme has been guaranteed for the next two financial years.

Mr Brown said all nine local area committees covering

communities across the council areas would be consulted and provided with maps and streets proposed for the change. Alongside local member consultation and that with community councils the council will also conduct an online public survey.

Broxburn Conservative Councillor Angela Doran-Timson: "How much will it cost the council for subsequent years if funding isn't forthcoming?"

Mr Brown said it was the council's intention to get as much funding from Transport Scotland as possible to implement the scheme, but should it fall short it could use its own Accident Prevention fund to roll out the scheme. There are other funding schemes within Transport Scotland which can be tapped into as well.

Councillor Damian Doran-Timson, Conservative group leader, said "I would be concerned if funding doesn't come from Transport Scotland as the council would have to find funds elsewhere. If no money's forthcoming I would not want to see the council spending a penny of its own money on this. How effective this scheme will be with regard to management of these 20mph speed limits is open for debate."

Angela Doran Timson said it was "unfortunate that the Scottish Government had not given the council money to fix potholes before unwanted and unwarranted 20mph speed limits are introduced."

Pauline Stafford, the SNP deputy group leader said: "I really welcome this funding coming forward from the Scottish Government and I also welcome the fact that they have left it up to every local authority to determine what's right for their communities unlike the experience in Wales."

She added that, as a mother, she welcomed speed reductions which would help make children safer. She pointed to her experience of living in the Netherlands where children

travelled much more independently, cycling on safer roads.

Councillor Tom Conn's motion to introduce the temporary traffic restriction orders and start the consultation process was accepted by the meeting. He again stressed that the speed limits would be introduced only on appropriate roads.

Councillor Conn also criticised an amendment put forward by Damian Doran Timson calling for the final decision to come to full council rather than the executive stressing that local councillors would have a say at local area committees.

After the meeting, Councillor Conn, the Executive councillor for the environment and sustainability added: "Evidence shows that driving at 20mph can drastically improve a person's chances of surviving an accident or escaping serious injury.

"The common-sense approach to the implementation plan, in appropriate urban areas, being taken in West Lothian will see speed limits reduced in the busiest areas first.

"This will improve road safety for the maximum number of local residents, as soon as possible."

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter