
Tonbridge Town wide 20mph zone trial

To: Tonbridge Joint Transportation Board, 20 September 2021

By: Tim Read – Head of Transportation, Kent County Council

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary

This paper provides an update on the DfT's Emergency Active Travel Fund relating to the Tonbridge town-wide 20mph limit trial and specifically the feedback received to the public consultation.

This report is for information only and will be followed by a full report with project recommendations at a future JTB meeting.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) was awarded £1.6 million from the Department for Transport's (DfT) Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) (tranche 1) to invest in walking and cycling initiatives across the county. This was in response to the Covid 19 pandemic and the social distancing restrictions that were in place, which reduced the capacity of public transport.
- 1.2 Demand for cycling has been growing nationally, with cycling retailers experiencing high demand over the past 18 months. There has been an increasing demand across the county for town-wide and area specific 20mph schemes too. In response to the opportunity of EATF a decision was made by the KCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation to progress East and West Kent town-wide trials, to assess how these schemes work for large scale areas before similar schemes are considered elsewhere. Tonbridge and Faversham towns were chosen as the trial areas.
- 1.4 Due to the 'emergency' nature of the fund, the DfT informed all highway authorities that works must be started within four weeks of providing the funding, and then completed within eight weeks which meant the "go live" date for the trial needed to be in place by 18 September 2020.
- 1.5 The trial was introduced through an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) which can be utilised for 18 months if required. This allows for changes to the highway to be implemented quickly and consulted on throughout the trial, whilst the public are experiencing the change. It also means KCC can test the impact and monitor to see how it performs.

- 1.6 The trial 20mph zone was agreed following discussion with the Leaders and respective portfolio holders of both KCC and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC). The zone was defined on the ground using signing and road markings alone. No traffic calming measures such as buildouts or road cushions/humps were installed.
- 1.7 The aim of the town-wide 20mph speed limit is to encourage active travel by reducing vehicle speeds, which helps to support the sharing of road space with cyclists, especially where other dedicated measures can't be provided due to a lack of available highway land and other constraints. This scheme can support walking and cycling, as part of a range of network improvements which will be confirmed in the forthcoming borough Active Travel Strategy.
- 1.8 Supporting walking and cycling especially for local journeys can also help to improve physical and mental health, reduce traffic congestion, contribute towards improved air quality and compliment ongoing infrastructure upgrades which include the recently opened cycle hub at Tonbridge Station.
- 1.9 The success of the trial will be determined by analysing several sources of information, which include pre, during and post-trial surveys and other monitoring data:
- Consultation feedback (1,123 responses received)
 - Attitudinal surveys (face to face questionnaires – approx. 600).
 - Pedestrian counts in certain locations
 - Cycle counts in certain locations
 - Average speeds in certain locations
 - Crash collision data although this ideally would need to be over a longer period, usually 3 years.
 - Air quality although this ideally would need to be analysed over a longer period as many factors can affect air quality. There are only air quality monitoring stations in Tonbridge High Street presently and none in Faversham.
- 1.10 It should be noted that the trial has been implemented in an extremely unusual year for collecting and analysing data, compared with previous years due to the pandemic, the restrictions that have been introduced and the implications these have had for travel demand and commuting patterns. In most cases only 8–10 months' worth of data has been collected, the majority through the autumn, winter and spring months which historically do not encourage take up of walking and cycling in England due to inclement weather. Despite having similar climates some other European countries currently have a higher propensity to cycle year-round and have better networks to support this.
- 1.11 A full scheme report will be prepared and submitted to the November 2021 JTB, for discussion with recommendation on how to proceed with the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, it will include analysis of all available

data being collected including the consultation feedback. This is a first look at the consultation data only as requested by some Members.

- 1.12 The ETRO allows for changes to be made during the trial as long as additional roads are not added, as they would not have been consulted on. The three scheme options for JTB consideration will be:
- Make the whole trial area a permanent 20mph zone.
 - Reduce the area to be made a permanent 20mph zone by withdrawing some of the roads in the trial.
 - Revert back to the existing speed limits pre-trial period.
- 1.13 A plan of the 20mph zone can be seen in **Appendix A**. The buff-coloured shading shows the extent of the trial area, the existing 20mph roads are highlighted in green and the extents of the arterial routes into and out of Tonbridge included in the 20mph zone are highlighted in blue.

2.0 The Consultation Report and feedback

- 2.1 The formal public consultation started on 31 July 2020 and closed on 3 March 2021 and took place online via KCC's website, this was promoted by both KCC and TMBC.
- 2.2 The consultation questionnaire can be seen in **Appendix B**. The promotion of the consultation was supported by a well-resourced communications plan to raise awareness of the trial, its aims and how people could provide feedback.
- 2.3 A Healthier, Safer, Cleaner logo was chosen to accompany all communications which included the production and delivery of:
- Posters offered to businesses and displayed on information boards.
 - Banners placed through the town centre.
 - Car park signs displayed in the town centre.
 - Car stickers made available.
- 2.4 In addition, a campaign took place through the consultation period with the objective to raise awareness, educate (provide information on the benefits of a 20mph speed limit), engage with the community and encourage behaviour change. This included:
- Newsletter delivered to residents and businesses in the TN9 and TN10 postcodes.
 - Social media campaign managed by KCC and promoted by TMBC.
 - Media releases (local media outlets).
 - Radio BBC Kent, KM Group and Community Radio.
 - Email to electronic stakeholder list.
 - Webpage on KCC website www.kent.gov.uk/tonbridge20mph – trusted source of information.
 - KCC's Consultation Directory hosted the consultation questionnaire.

- 2.5 KCC commissioned an independent consultancy to support with analysing the feedback received. The detailed analysis of the consultation feedback can be seen in **Appendix C**. This is a standalone report and has its own appendices – Appendix 1,2,3,4,5 & 6 – see **Appendix D**
- 2.6 The consultation received 1,123 responses. The key findings are:
- The majority of the people who responded to the questionnaire object to the idea of a town-wide 20mph scheme, with 7.4 out of 10 people disagreeing with the scheme.
 - The most common reason given for their objection was that the proposed area was too extensive and 20mph for major arterial routes was unsuitable, and likely to cause additional traffic and safety issues.
 - Most people also disagreed that the 20mph limits will make Tonbridge healthier (64%), safer (56%) and cleaner (63%).
 - Those who supported the idea primarily felt it would improve safety, while others also mentioned environmental benefits and noise reduction.
- 2.7 All respondents who completed the online questionnaire or submitted a response by email will be made aware of the consultation feedback following the September JTB meeting. The detailed analysis report will be made available online on KCC's consultation portal [Let's Talk Kent](#). In addition, a wider communication of the feedback report will be provided via social media.

3.0 Recommendation

- 3.1 The Joint Transportation Board is asked to note the content of the report.
- 3.2 A full report will be brought to the November JTB for discussion and recommendation and will include analysis of all the data captured during the trial.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Plan of extent of town-wide 20mph trial area

Appendix B – Consultation questionnaire

Appendix C – Consultation Report

Appendix D – Additional appendices to Consultation Report – appendices 1-6