Introducing 20mph Speed Limits

Following the Senedd's approval of legislation to lower the default national speed limit on residential roads and busy pedestrian streets from 30mph to 20mph, Wales will become the first UK nation to make the move - helping to save lives, develop safer communities, improve the quality of life and encourage more people to make more sustainable and active travel choices.

The new legislation will not apply a blanket speed limit on all roads, it will simply make the default limit 20mph, leaving local authorities, who know their area best, to engage with the local community to decide which roads should remain at 30mph.

Currently, just 2.5% of Welsh roads have a speed limit of 20mph, but from next year this is expected to increase to approximately 35%, helping to create safer roads and communities across Wales.

Speaking after the vote, Minister for Climate Change, Julie James said, "The evidence is clear, decreasing speeds not only reduces accidents and saves lives, but helps improve people's quality of life - making our streets and communities a safer and more welcoming place for cyclists and pedestrians, whilst helping reduce our environmental impact.

"We know this move won't be easy – it's as much about changing hearts and minds as it is about enforcement – but over time 20mph will become the norm, just like the restrictions we've introduced before on carrier bag charges and organ donation.

Once again Wales is leading the way for other UK nations to follow."

Find out more about 20mph speed limits in Wales here.

IN THIS ISSUE:

20mph Legislation Approved
Horse Safety Awareness
Road Safety Investigation Branch Launched
Swansea Increases EV Charging Points
National Eye Health Week
New TrawsCymru App

Promoting Safer Driving Behaviour Around Horses

Road Safety Wales is highlighting the vulnerability of horses and their riders through a campaign which reminds drivers of their responsibilities when sharing road space with equestrian road users.

From the initiative's beginning in Carmarthenshire, the new campaign posters, aligned to the latest Highway Code, have now been made available to all 22 Local Authorities in Wales.

Teresa Ciano, Chair of the partnership said, "Road Safety Wales is grateful to Carmarthenshire County Council for instigating a driver awareness campaign which can now be implemented across Wales, with the support of the Welsh Government.

"Our thanks also to the British Horse Society for providing invaluable data via the incident reporting section of their website, bhs.org.uk.

"This has helped ensure the advice can be located where most needed, at incident hotspot locations as well as on routes frequently used by the equestrian community."

Carmarthenshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services Cllr Edward Thomas said, "I am delighted that this campaign, which was launched in Carmarthenshire last summer, is now being extended across Wales.

"It is important that drivers, particularly in more rural areas in Wales, are aware that there are likely to be horses on the road and that they treat them with respect by not driving too fast and giving them plenty of space."

The Minister for Climate Change with responsibility for Transport, Julie James said, "Motorists often need reminding of the dangers posed to horses and riders, particularly when driving on country roads during the holiday season and I am grateful to Road Safety Wales for introducing this very important campaign."

Road Safety Wales is encouraging the ongoing reporting of incidents and accidents in order to expand the knowledge base of equine-related events. Capturing more accurate data on the frequency and severity of incidents will assist in identify trends and can be used to more effectively highlight and address the risk faced by equestrian road users.

Incidents can also be reported quickly and easily using a phone or tablet device, via the free BHS Horse i app.

New Investigation Branch Focused on Road Safety

Following a period of consultation, the Department for Transport has confirmed that a Road Safety Investigation Branch (RSIB) is to be formed. A specialised team of inspectors will be recruited to investigate incidents on roads in the UK and provide insight into what needs to change to help save lives.

The move will help ensure some of the highest road safety standards in the world continue to be met as the road network is modernised. It comes as the latest effort to reduce casualties and fatalities, boost safety and reduce the cost of road traffic collisions to our NHS and economy – around £30 billion annually.

The branch will investigate themes in the causes of collisions, as well as specific incidents of concern, to learn valuable road safety lessons. It will make independent safety recommendations to organisations, such as government and police forces, to better shape the future of road safety policy and provide better, greener and safer journeys.

The specialised unit will also provide vital insight into safety trends related to new and evolving technologies, which could include self-driving vehicles and electric vehicles, to ensure the country maintains some of the highest road safety standards in the world and exciting new technology is deployed safely.

The branch will not identify blame or liability and so does not replace police investigation. It will instead draw on all the available evidence to make recommendations to improve road safety and mitigate or prevent similar incidents in the future.

Council Installs New Electric Vehicle Charging Points

Nineteen new electric vehicle charging points have been installed at 12 council-owned car parks around Swansea. The latest additions means there are now 43 EV charging points at 25 locations around the county operated by the council.

Andrea Lewis, Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Service Transformation said the charging points will be a real boost for current electric car owners and aims to encourage more people to consider switching from petrol or diesel vehicles in the future. She said, "The newly-installed charging points have been chosen following discussions with ward members and others and are specifically located for convenience for day-trippers and people shopping in local communities.

She added, "Swansea Council has a commitment to be a net zero carbon council by 2030 and for the city as a whole to achieve that target by 2050. The new crop of EV charging points are the latest step in the right direction and it's our plan to increase their numbers over the coming years. This is just the start."

Swansea Council is also leading by example on electric vehicles, aiming to complete its switch from traditional petrol and diesel to ultra-low emission vehicles in the next few years.

The council already has the biggest public sector fleet of electric vehicles in Wales and aims to add 25 more vehicles in the coming months to the 60 it already operates.

National Eye Health Week

The annual event took place between 20th and 25th September 2022, aiming to promote the importance of eye health and the need for regular eye tests.

Good eyesight is vital when using the road, no matter what your age. Drivers and motorcyclists must be able to read a vehicle registration plate from a distance of 20 metres (or 20.5 metres if the vehicle was registered before September 2001) wearing glasses or contact lenses if required.

If you're finding it difficult to read road signs, particularly those with text, it could indicate that your eyesight has deteriorated and you may require corrective lenses. If you're finding it harder to see clearly in the dark, this may also mean you need to wear glasses or contact lenses.

Although eyesight often gets worse as we get older, eye conditions can develop at any age. Glaucoma and cataracts are well-known but other age-related diseases, if left untreated, can also affect your ability to use the road safely. During an eye test, other health conditions that you may not yet be aware of, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, could also be detected – another reason to have regular checks.

Teresa Ciano, Chair of Road Safety Wales, said, "We would recommend having an eye test every two years, or more often if your optician suggests it. This can not only help to make sure you meet the minimum eyesight standards for driving or riding but may also identify some conditions early before they develop. Please be aware that if you drive with eyesight below the minimum legal standard you could face a fine of up to £1000.

"Road Safety Wales supported National Eye Health Week through its website and social media channels, giving reminders of the importance of regular eye tests and common conditions that could compromise the safety of all road users."

Transport for Wales Unveils New TrawsCymru App

Transport for Wales has launched a new app for its TrawsCymru long distance bus network that will make it easier for people to travel by public transport.

The new app will help customers with journey planning and bus timetables and will provide live vehicle tracking options, so they can check where their bus is on the network. It will also offer mobile app ticketing, providing digital access to TrawsCymru services and display the carbon savings made by choosing to travel by bus.

By providing clearer information on a more accessible digital platform, the app will support Welsh Government's aim of achieving a bus system that boosts social equity and is capable of delivering the scale of modal shift needed to combat the climate emergency.

TrawsCymru is an integral part of the bus network in Wales, providing links between major towns and cities and helping people connect to work, education, health and leisure destinations.