

Dear Deputy Rondel & Scrutiny panel,

Thank you for the opportunity to add this opinion into the debate about Island speed limits.

The points below are basically those that I used in a debate at Grouville Parish Hall a few years ago, in successfully opposing a 30mph speed limit on Grouville's main road from Gorey to La Rocque. Whilst the arguments are biased toward this road, the principles apply to the wider Island debate, and I am certainly in favour of a set of limits that apply Island-wide.

1. ROAD SAFETY

No-one would argue with the desire to improve road safety, especially for pedestrians and cyclists on our roads. However, I believe that the idea of simply reducing speed limits to achieve this aim is fundamentally flawed, as it assumes that these limits are effective – which they are not. Existing 30, 20 and 15 mph limits are routinely broken by the majority of drivers, the majority of the time. Road safety is only improved if drivers ACTUALLY drive slower. The key in my view is only to attempt to reduce speeds where it is actually reasonable and necessary to do so, and not as a blanket limit.

2. INEFFECTIVE LIMITS

Some years ago, a 30mph limit was applied to the Faldouet main road from St. Martin to Gorey. Speed monitoring on the road at this time found that this had the impact of reducing the average speed by less than 0.5 mph – basically nothing at all. The reality is that drivers will ignore a speed limit if it is unreasonably low, driving at a speed they consider reasonable for the road and the conditions. All this limit actually achieved is making a number of unlucky – but otherwise generally safe and sensible drivers into law-breakers, adding to the Parish coffers, but adding little or nothing to the safety of this road. There are many examples of this across the Island, such as the underpass, upper Trinity Hill, parts of the new limit on St. Clement's main roads – all of which are regularly flouted, as these are wide, well-lit roads with street lighting. There are sections of Grouville and St Clement's coast road where it would be completely unreasonable to impose a lower limit, with some 'pinch-points' that certainly do warrant a lower limit. This pragmatic approach was eventually and successfully used in Grouville.

3. TARGETING THE ACTUAL PROBLEM

My observation is that most of the traffic accidents or near misses are caused by people driving much too fast for the road conditions – these people are no more likely to observe a 30mph or 20mph limit than the one they are already breaking. This would of course include the 'boy racer' and amateur car rally contingents. What is needed is a collection of limits appropriate to the road in question, with a more effective policing of those causing the greatest danger to others. A good yard-stick would, I suggest be that if a particular road attracts a constant trickle of speeding fines, then the limit is too low.

CONCLUSIONS

I am broadly in favour of the proposals put forward, with a few caveats, as follows:

- A limit of 30mph is sensible in built-up areas and minor roads. However, the definition of a built-up area is the problem – St. Clement's coast and inner roads are not built up areas, nor is Faldouet road, or upper Trinity Hill, or the underpass, Gorey coast road or many others. If a road is a major route, has pavements and/or street lighting, plus a central white line, it should NOT have a general limit of 30mph, except at specific pinch-points or black spots, where some sort of traffic calming is appropriate. All main roads should have a 40 mph general limit.
- Green lanes may have to remain at 15mph for the sake of the tourism campaign, but again, the problem is that some of these are really not green lanes. For example, whilst Vallee des Vaux might be a pretty walk, it has a white line for much of its length, pavements and street lights – hardly what the scheme intended and a constant source of frustration for drivers.
- For the pinch-points or black spots, a combination of electronic speed (smiley) signs, rumble strips and pedestrian crossings is a much more effective method of solving the actual problem, rather than the blanket approach, which will be largely ignored.

I hope this is helpful and I do wish you success in bringing some logic and sense to this long-running problem.

Best regards,

Chris Parlett