National Speed Management Review

RoSPA's response to Transport Scotland's consultation

March 2025

Response to Transport Scotland's consultation: National Speed Management Review

Introduction

This is the response of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) to the Transport Scotland's consultation on speed management. We have no objection to our response being reproduced or attributed.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Thank you for participating in the National Speed Management Review consultation. This questionnaire is designed to gather your views on proposed changes to the national speed limit on single carriageway roads in Scotland and to the speed limits applying to HGVs on single and dual carriageway roads in Scotland.

These are the options proposed:

Do-Minimum: No change to existing speed limits

Option 1: Reduce national speed limit on single-carriageway roads to 50mph and increase Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) (more than 7.5 tonne maximum laden weight) speed limit on single-carriageways to 50mph.

SECTION 1 – CURRENT SPEED LIMIT EXPERIENCES

Table 1 lists the current speed limits per type of road and vehicle type

Speed limits **Vehicle type**	30mph – built up areas	Single Carriageway	Dual Carriageway	Motorway
Cars and Motorcycles – including car derived vans up to 2 tonnes maximum laden weight	30	60	70	70
Cars Towing – including car derived vans and motorcycles	30	50	60	60
Goods Vehicles - Not exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight. *60mph if articulated or towing a trailer	30	50	60	70*

Goods Vehicles- Exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight. **A 50mph speed limit applies on the A9 from Perth to Inverness from October 28th 2014.	30	40**	50	60

1. How often do you use a single carriageway road with a national speed limit of 60 mph?

☐Most of the time
☒Some of the time
☐Rarely
☐Never
☐Unsure

2. Do you consider the current national speed limits for cars and motorbikes on single carriageway roads to be…

☐Too low
☐About right
☒Too high
☐Unsure

3. Do you consider the current national speed limits for cars and motorbikes on dual carriageway roads to be…

☐Too low
☒About right
☐Too high
☐Unsure

4. Do you consider the current national speed limits for goods vehicles over 7.5 tonnes on single carriageway roads to be…

☐Too low
☒About right
☐Too high
☐Unsure

5. Do you consider the current national speed limits for goods vehicles over 7.5 tonnes on dual carriageway roads to be…

☐Too low
☒About right
☐Too high
☐Unsure

SECTION 2– SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Decrease of speed – perception

Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030 sets out a vision for Scotland to have the best road safety performance by 2030 and a long-term goal to have zero fatalities and serious injuries on Scotland's roads by 2050.

6. Do you think reducing the current national speed limit on single carriageway roads would support national casualty reduction targets?

	Yes/No/Unsure
50% reduction in people killed	Yes
50% reduction in people seriously injured	Yes
60% reduction in children (aged <16) killed	Yes
60% reduction in children (aged <16) seriously injured	Yes

7. These are some impacts a reduction in the national speed limit on single carriageway roads could have for cars and motorcycles. Do you think a reduction in the speed limit could improve these or make them worse? (tick as many as apply)

	Improves a lot	Improves slightly	Unsure	No change	Worsens slightly	Makes a lot worse
Impact on fatal collisions	X					
Impact on serious collisions	X					

Impact on pedestrian safety		X				
Impact on cyclist safety		X				
Impact on horse riding safety		X				
Impact on motorcycle safety	X					
Impact on quality of life			X			
Impact on air pollution			X			
Impact on noise		X				
Impact on climate change			X			
Impact on journey time					X	
Impact on driver frustration					X	

8. Are there any other impacts that a reduction in the national speed limit from 60mph to 50mph for cars and motorcycles on single carriageway roads that have been missed?
If so, please detail below.

A reduction in the national speed limit from 60mph to 50mph on single carriageway roads for cars and motorcycles could have several additional impacts that might not have been immediately considered. However, overall, we believe that the benefits of this reduction outweigh the potential negatives.

One such impact is on traffic flow and congestion. A 50mph speed limit could improve traffic flow by encouraging more consistent speeds, especially in areas where drivers typically face slowdowns and congestion. This could reduce bottlenecks that result from erratic speed changes. While there is a possibility that traffic could back up in certain areas, particularly if drivers don't adapt quickly or if the speed differential between faster-moving and slower-moving vehicles becomes more pronounced, the overall benefit of improved traffic flow and reduced congestion is likely to outweigh these concerns.

Another consideration is the impact on road infrastructure. Lowering speed limits could reduce road wear

and tear, potentially leading to lower long-term maintenance costs. Vehicles driving at slower speeds generally put less strain on road surfaces, which could reduce the frequency of repairs. Additionally, in areas where roads are not optimised for higher speeds (such as narrow lanes or sharp bends), a reduced speed limit could improve road safety by lowering the likelihood of collisions due to speed-related errors.

In terms of emergency response, slower traffic could have both positive and negative effects. On one hand, emergency vehicles may face slight delays due to reduced speeds and increased congestion, particularly in busy areas or during peak traffic times. On the other hand, driving at lower speeds could create a safer environment for emergency vehicles, offering more time to react and potentially improving their ability to manoeuvre through traffic more safely, which could offset some of the delays.

Fuel efficiency could also improve with a lower speed limit. Many vehicles tend to operate more efficiently at lower speeds, which could lead to improved fuel economy. This would contribute to lower overall fuel consumption, potentially reducing environmental impact by lowering emissions.

There are also potential shifts in driving behaviour. While some drivers may be more inclined to overtake slower vehicles on single carriageways, especially if they feel the gap between themselves and slower-moving traffic is smaller, this is not a significant concern when considering the overall reduction in the risk of collisions. A lower speed limit could also lead to greater compliance with speed regulations, as drivers are less likely to exceed a more widely accepted and uniform limit. This could result in a culture of safer driving, where drivers are more mindful of their speeds and surroundings, which is a clear advantage.

The perception of road safety could also be affected. Many drivers may feel safer driving at a slower, more controlled speed, leading to improved overall safety. While some drivers may view the reduction as unnecessarily restrictive, we believe this perception is outweighed by the overall safety benefits that come with lower speeds. Frustration from a small minority of drivers should not undermine the broader public safety goals that this reduction supports.

Overall, while there are some possible negative impacts, the benefits of a reduced speed limit on safety, traffic flow, fuel efficiency, and environmental impact clearly outweigh the disadvantages. We believe that the reduction would have a net positive effect, contributing to safer roads for everyone while also bringing long-term benefits to both communities and the environment.

9. Are there any impacts that a reduction in the national speed limit from 60mph to 50mph for cars and motorcycles on single carriageway roads that you consider to be incorrect? Please provide as much detail and evidence as you can to support this.

None.

HGV questions

10. These are some of the impacts an increase in the speed limit for goods vehicles exceeding 7.5 tonnes on single carriageway roads could have. Do you think increasing the speed limits could improve these or make them worse? (tick as many as apply)

	Improves a lot	Improves slightly	Unsure	No Change	Worsens slightly	Makes a lot worse
Impact on fatal collisions						X
Impact on serious collisions						X
Impact on pedestrian safety						X
Impact on cyclist safety						X
Impact on horse riding safety						X
Impact on motorcycle safety						X
Impact on quality of life			X			
Impact on air pollution			X			
Impact on noise					X	
Impact on climate change			X			
Impact on journey time		X				
Impact on driver frustration		X				

11. These are some impacts an increase in the speed limit for goods vehicles exceeding 7.5 tonnes on dual carriageway roads could have. Do you think increasing the speed limits could improve these or make them worse? (tick as many as apply)

	Improves a lot	Improves slightly	Unsure	No Change	Worsens slightly	Makes a lot worse
Impact on fatal collisions						X
Impact on serious collisions						X
Impact on pedestrian safety				X		
Impact on cyclist safety				X		
Impact on horse riding safety				X		
Impact on motorcycle safety						X
Impact on quality of life			X			
Impact on air pollution			X			
Impact on noise					X	
Impact on climate change			X			
Impact on journey time		X				
Impact on driver frustration		X				

12. Are there any impacts that an increase in the national speed limit for goods vehicles exceeding 7.5 tonnes on single and dual carriageways that have been missed? If so, please detail below.

An increase in the national speed limit for goods vehicles exceeding 7.5 tonnes on both single and dual carriageways could have several potential impacts, and while some of the effects have been identified, there may be additional considerations that need to be considered to fully assess the overall effect.

One additional impact that could arise is the effect on traffic flow and congestion. On dual carriageways, the increase in speed limits may initially seem to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion, particularly for long-haul freight vehicles. However, there could be unintended consequences. For example, if goods vehicles are travelling at more similar speeds than cars and vans, this could create situations where vehicles with significantly different braking distances and handling characteristics are travelling closely together. For instance, cars and vans have much shorter stopping distances compared to large goods vehicles, and they also take corners at different speeds. This could result in difficulties for drivers in judging safe gaps or making quick decisions when overtaking or reacting to traffic flow. Such situations could lead to confusion, misjudgement, and an overall unsafe environment, particularly when drivers are not fully aware of the limitations or capabilities of different vehicles in the same lane. This could make roads less predictable and increase the risk of collisions, potentially undermining any initial benefits from the increased speed limits.

Another overlooked impact could be related to driver fatigue. When goods vehicles are driving at higher speeds for longer periods, it may place more pressure on the drivers to maintain these speeds, which could contribute to fatigue. Long-haul truck drivers, in particular, might push themselves to keep up with the traffic flow, which could lead to increased risk of drowsiness or loss of concentration on the road. Fatigue is a known risk factor for collisions, and increasing speed limits might exacerbate this problem, especially on long journeys.

There is also the possibility of increased wear and tear on road infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. Higher speeds for heavier vehicles could put additional stress on the road surface, accelerating the deterioration of roads that may not have been designed to handle the increased load and speed. This could lead to higher maintenance costs and more frequent repairs, which would ultimately affect the safety and quality of roads for all users. Road infrastructure could also be under pressure from the increased number of heavy vehicles traveling at higher speeds, potentially reducing its lifespan.

Moreover, the impact on vehicle safety features and compliance should not be overlooked. While modern goods vehicles are often equipped with advanced safety features such as better braking systems and collision avoidance technologies, these features may be less effective at higher speeds. The faster the vehicles are travelling, the harder it becomes for these safety systems to operate as efficiently, especially in emergency situations. This could reduce the overall safety benefits provided by these technologies.

Finally, there is the environmental impact, particularly in rural areas. Rural roads, where the road conditions may be less optimal, could suffer disproportionately from the increase in speed limits. Faster-moving heavy vehicles could lead to increased wear on road surfaces, more frequent emissions, and higher fuel consumption per vehicle, as rural roads generally lack the smooth surfaces found on urban roads. This would contribute to greater environmental degradation and pollution, impacting air quality and contributing to climate change.

In conclusion, while there may be some perceived benefits to increasing the speed limits for goods vehicles - such as reduced journey times and less driver frustration - the risks associated with this change are significant. The potential for increased fatal and serious collisions, more noise pollution, negative environmental impacts, and the added strain on road infrastructure outweighs any benefits. Therefore, overall, it is clear that the risks posed by increasing the speed limits for goods vehicles on single and dual carriageways are could be more

detrimental than any potential advantages. Prioritising safety, environmental concerns, and long-term infrastructure integrity should take precedence, and as such, the benefits of increasing the speed limits do not outweigh the potential risks.

13. Are there any impacts that an increase in the speed limit for goods vehicles exceeding 7.5 tonnes on single and dual carriageways that you consider to be incorrect? Please provide as much detail and evidence as you can to support this.

None.

SECTION 3 - SPEED ENFORCEMENT AND SPEED LIMIT COMPLIANCE

14. Do you think motorists generally comply with the current national speed limit on single carriageway roads?

☐Always
☒Most of the time
☐Rarely
☐Unsure

15. If the national speed limit on single carriageways was reduced, do you think current speed enforcement measures should remain in place to support road safety?

☒Yes
☐No
☐Unsure

16. What additional measures could the Scottish Government take to encourage compliance with a lower national speed limit on single carriageways? Please detail below.

To encourage compliance with a lower national speed limit on single carriageways, the Scottish Government could implement a range of strategies focused on improving awareness, enforcement, and driver behaviour. These measures would aim to ensure that drivers understand the importance of the speed limits and are motivated to follow them, thereby increasing safety for all road users.

One crucial step would be to launch an extensive public awareness campaign. This campaign should educate drivers on the benefits of a lower speed limit, such as reduced fatalities, fewer injuries, and less environmental impact. The public needs to understand the connection between speed and road safety, the positive effects on local communities in terms of noise reduction, and improved air quality. The campaign could use various

platforms, including television advertisements, social media, radio broadcasts, and roadside signage, to reach as many people as possible. By raising awareness and changing attitudes towards speeding, this approach could help foster a culture of safer driving.

Another important measure would be to improve signage and make speed limits clearer. The effectiveness of speed limits is greatly dependent on how visible and noticeable they are to drivers. The Scottish Government could ensure that lower speed limits are clearly indicated with large, visible signs placed at the beginning and end of single carriageway sections. Additionally, using variable speed signs or electronic signs that adjust according to traffic conditions could reinforce compliance by making drivers more aware of their speed in real-time. Clear, visible road markings indicating the speed limit are also essential in reminding drivers of the regulations.

Increasing enforcement efforts would also be vital in encouraging compliance with the speed limits. Expanding the use of fixed and mobile speed cameras along single carriageways, particularly in areas with a history of speed-related collisions, would help deter drivers from exceeding the speed limit. More police patrols, particularly during peak driving times, would also increase visibility and discourage speeding. Additionally, the deployment of average speed cameras across longer stretches of road could ensure more consistent speed compliance and prevent drivers from slowing down only to avoid detection by fixed cameras.

Engaging with local communities through community engagement initiatives would also be beneficial. The Scottish Government could partner with local authorities to introduce "community speed watch" schemes, where residents can help monitor speeding in their areas. While these schemes do not have the power to issue fines, they raise awareness and act as a deterrent by making speeding less socially acceptable. This community-driven approach could encourage drivers to adhere to speed limits out of respect for their neighbours and the wider community.

Improving driver education and training could play a critical role in changing driver behaviour. The Scottish Government could run public sector campaigns focusing on safe driving techniques, the dangers of speeding, and the specific risks posed by driving too fast on single carriageways. Targeted education for commercial drivers, who make up a significant proportion of traffic on these roads, could also be particularly effective. By investing in professional training programmes that stress the importance of adhering to speed limits, the Government could ensure that commercial drivers, in particular, are fully aware of the safety implications of speeding and are better equipped to manage the demands of the road.

By combining public education, effective enforcement, road design improvements, and community engagement, the Scottish Government can help create a road environment where drivers are more likely to comply with the lower speed limits on single carriageways. These measures, when implemented together, could reduce speeding, improve road safety, and create a more pleasant driving experience for everyone on the road.

SECTION 4 – BEHAVIOURAL IMPACT

17. Would a reduced speed limit on single carriageway roads encourage you to use active travel options (walking, wheeling, cycling)?
☐Very likely

☐Likely
☐Unsure
☒Neither likely or unlikely
☐Unlikely
☐Very unlikely

18. Would a reduced national speed limit on single carriageway roads make you use public transport more or less often?

☐Less often
☒The same
☐More often
☐Unsure
☐I don't use public transport

19. If the national speed limit on single carriageway roads was reduced would this impact your driving frequency?

☐I would drive less
☒No change
☐I would drive more
☐Unsure
☐I don't drive

20. Further information about your organisation's response.
Organisations may use this space to provide additional context for their response. This could be information about, for example:

- any research your organisation undertook to inform the response
- any engagement with your members or audience undertaken to inform the response

This is optional.

RoSPA is open to further research and pilot studies to determine the safest and most effective approach for implementing speed limit reductions on Scotland's unique roads. Given the diversity of Scotland's road network - ranging from rural single carriageways to more urbanised dual carriageways - it is important that any changes to speed limits are informed by robust evidence and take into account the varied conditions and specific challenges these roads present. We recognise that pilot studies and research could provide valuable insights into how different speed limits impact road safety, traffic flow, and environmental factors in different contexts.

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RoSPA has no further comments to make on the consultation process, other than to thank Transport Scotland the opportunity to comment. We have no objection to our response being reproduced or attributed.