

# Speed limits in our communities

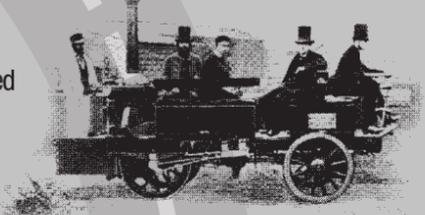
SPEED LIMIT  
mph

Number of  
road deaths

1861



▶ 1861 Locomotive Act introduced speed limit of 10mph on open roads in towns.



1865



▶ 'Red Flag Act' of 1865 reduced the speed limit to 2mph in towns and required a man with a red flag or lantern to walk ahead of each vehicle to warn horse-drawn traffic that a self-propelled machine was approaching.



“Warning! A self-propelled machine is approaching!”

1896



▶ Locomotives on Highways Act 1896 raised the speed limit to 14mph and removed the need for an escort.



1903



▶ Motor Car Act 1903 raised the speed limit to 20mph. Most cars didn't have a speedometer fitted.

The Motor Car Act of 1903 also introduced motor vehicle registration and driver licensing. A driving licence cost 5 shillings (about £15 in today's money) and drivers did not need to pass a test to get one.



1930



▶ All speed limits for cars and motorcycles were abolished under the Road Traffic Act 1930.

“The existing speed limit is so universally disobeyed that its maintenance brings the law into contempt.”  
Lord Buckminster MP



7305

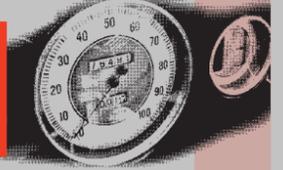
1935



▶ Road traffic Act 1934 introduced a speed limit of 30mph for cars and motorcycles in built-up areas (places where there was street lighting)



In 1937 it became compulsory for all new cars to be fitted with speedometers



6502

1940



▶ A 20mph night-time speed limit was brought in during WW2 to try to reduce the number of road casualties during blackouts



8609

1941

1941 saw the highest number of road deaths in any one year: 9196

9196

1956



▶ Road Traffic Act 1956 30mph speed limit for built-up areas became permanent



5367

1991



▶ The first 20mph speed limits for residential areas were introduced in 1991



4568

2011



A parliamentary briefing paper published in 2011 stated that a 20mph speed limit or 20mph zones should apply: “In streets that are primarily residential and in other town or city streets when pedestrian and cyclist movements are high, such as around schools, shops, markets, playgrounds and other areas, where motor vehicle movement is not the primary function.”

1901

2017



20s Plenty for Us formed in 2007 to campaign for 20mph to become the default speed limit on residential and urban streets. Many authorities have now set 20mph as the speed limit for their streets. Around 400 local campaigns are running across the country. [www.20splenty.org](http://www.20splenty.org)

Sources  
<http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN00468.pdf>  
 Reported Road Accident Statistics Standard Note: SN/SG/2198 (2013)  
<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN02198#fullreport>



Road Safety Week

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