



# Introducing 20 mph areas in Dunbar

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Community organisations in Dunbar have been at the forefront of the introduction of 20 mph areas in the town, carrying out extensive community consultation to hear local people's views. East Lothian Council has introduced 20 mph areas in response to local views.





# Background

The introduction of 20 mph areas in Dunbar is a two-part story which is not yet complete. Both parts of the story are community led and are interesting examples of community action working alongside a supportive and enabling local authority.

Dunbar is a town which is bisected by the east coast main line railway, with a lot of new housing development to the south, while the High Street, community centre and other amenities are located to the north. The primary school sits on two sites – the upper school to the south of the railway, with the lower primary in the north, along with the high school.

The upper primary school has no parking or vehicular access (except for staff) and rates of active travel which can be as high as 70% depending on the time of year.

The initial 20 mph campaign concentrated on the south side of the town in recognition that this was a mainly residential area where a large primary school with high rates of active travel was situated.

At the last local government election in 2012 the local Labour Party had a manifesto commitment to the introduction of 20 mph areas. After the election there was a joint Labour and Conservative administration, with the local Conservative councillor becoming Deputy Leader and Transport Spokesperson. At this stage all parties agreed to the introduction of 20 mph areas in principle, on the proviso that communities had to show support for such areas and that they would be introduced for a trial period to test compliance by motorists. This was then included in the Council Plan for 2012-17. Therefore the onus was on local communities to undertake community engagement.


# What happened



## Phase One

Sustaining Dunbar, a local environmental charity which was active on climate challenge issues, led on the community engagement. Sustaining Dunbar was interested in this issue mostly from an environmental perspective, encouraging people to use the car less for local journeys and becoming more active. They were fortunate in having funding support from the Climate Challenge Fund which enabled a paid worker to undertake the community engagement. People were surveyed door to door on their views on 20 mph. This enabled the campaign to get to people who might not ordinarily reply to an online or paper consultation. It also allowed discussion on the issues, and meant that Sustaining Dunbar got a broader understanding of community views and concerns.

The engagement showed a high level of support with 87% in favour of the introduction of the 20 mph limits. A trial 20 mph area was introduced in 2013 and made permanent in 2015.



A number of Tenants and Residents Associations in other East Lothian towns were also working on the introduction of 20 mph areas, and a partnership grouping was brought together – chaired by the Council’s Transport Spokesperson – which reported on issues and progress in the introduction of speed limits. This enabled the community groups to have direct access to officers and political support.

Interestingly, although not official Police Scotland policy, the local Community Police Officers were supportive of the introduction – if they have time they park up at the beginning of the speed limit area. This has been a useful way of getting information out about the introduction of the speed area and showing local people that the limit will be enforced.

The introduction of a 20 mph area within the south side of Dunbar has been overwhelmingly successful and accepted by local people. There are two roads which remain controversial – both are distributor roads although because one has housing fronting the road it fits the criteria for 20 mph while the other does not. There is some local concern about which of the roads should be 20 mph. This shows that criteria for the introduction of 20 mph are not always understandable or appear consistent.






## Phase Two

After the 20 mph area south of the railway was implemented there was continued interest from people in Dunbar about 20 mph and queries about why this could not be extended to the High Street. Dunbar community council considered they were best placed to proceed with this as locally elected representatives with a mandate to act on community concerns. The community council was concerned about pedestrian safety and a lack of safe walking and cycling routes which saw pedestrians – whether young or old - increasingly coming into conflict with traffic. This was seen as being exacerbated by a lack of public transport and the fact that Dunbar’s population was growing due to housing developments.

The community council undertook a survey of the local population to gauge community views on the introduction of a 20 mph area around the High Street to the north of the railway. The community council was fortunate in having a community councillor with experience of using Survey Monkey, and he was able to construct and administer a short questionnaire. At the same time community councillors conducted a survey by approaching people in the High Street, and ensuring that the survey was also placed in churches, local library, local shops, a GPs surgery and other local meeting places. The community council website also carried information.



The Community Council also held a public meeting with representatives from the Police and East Lothian Council present.

There was local interest in the 20 mph limit as the survey progressed, with many people surveyed and at the public meeting asking if other roads could be included. The scheme therefore evolved into a more comprehensive approach to 20 mph in the area north of the railway.

Again there was a good response to the survey with over 60% showing support for the introduction of the 20 mph limits. Interestingly there was a discrepancy between responses to the Survey Monkey and paper questionnaires. The Survey Monkey results showed 45% in favour and against, while the paper questionnaire showed a comfortable 75% in favour. There are a number of possible reasons for this including a rush of those against the 20 mph area completing the online survey.

The community council has a Local Priority Fund which paid for the survey, however there was significant volunteer time from a small band of people.

The local paper – the East Lothian Courier – has been supportive throughout the process, carrying positive articles on the 20 mph survey and proposed area. The Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) has now been approved by the Council's Cabinet and it is hoped that the trial will be in place in 6-9 months.

Partnership working on 20 mph continues, with issues of speed and enforcement being raised at the Community and Police Partnership meetings. At a strategic level 20 mph is raised at the Fire and Police Scrutiny Committee which is part of Community Planning structure.

Although enforcement is limited, there is a feeling that 20 mph is becoming more accepted as the norm in Dunbar by drivers. Peer pressure is acting to change driving behaviour.



# Lessons learned

**The Dunbar example is interesting on a number of fronts – the community led approach which sees local people leading on community engagement and information rather than the local authority; the political leadership at a local and strategic level; and the political consensus across the political spectrum on the chosen approach.**

Dunbar is also interesting in the leadership assumed by two different community organisations on the same issue. There is consensus between the two organisations on the importance of 20 mph areas - safety is seen as an issue as well as the preponderance of the car. Additionally there is a desire to support local people to be more active in local journeys. It is accepted that 20 mph is part of the answer in terms of getting people more active not the whole answer – however it is a ‘step’ along the way to encouraging behaviour change.

- Community leadership and involvement are crucial to the successful introduction of a 20 mph area
- Police support can be available locally although not official policy, and is vital in gaining public perception that limits will be enforced
- Political support and leadership both at policy formulation and implementation are important
- Incremental schemes which see implementation on a staged basis and include a trial period can be an important means of gaining public acceptance





This case study forms part of the Lower Speed Communities Project, which has been funded through the Scottish Government's Road Safety Framework.

**For further information about how to promote walking in Scotland, or to find out more about the Lower Speed Communities Project, please contact Living Streets Scotland at:**

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