

From: Oxfordshire County Council

Subject: Media release: Oxfordshire town brings in widespread 20mph speed limits

Witney brings in widespread 20mph speed limits

- **Town becomes first to take advantage of council's £8 million programme**

Read the story on the Oxfordshire County Council [website](#) or below:

Just over a week after Wales voted to make 20mph the default speed limit in residential areas to create safer, healthier, and quieter streets, an Oxfordshire town is following suit and implementing new 20mph restrictions.

Plans for dozens of 30mph roads in Witney to have their speed limits lowered to 20mph have been approved. It becomes the first town wide location in the county to make the change as a direct result of Oxfordshire County Council's 20mph policy change and associated programme which was announced earlier this year.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, approved the measures at a meeting on Thursday [21 July]. The changes are expected to be implemented and new signage installed later this year.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways Management, said: "This is a landmark moment for our ambitious 20mph policy, which we are spending up to £8 million on over a three year period. Witney is the first and the biggest project we are undertaking in this phase of the programme and we believe these changes will make the town a safer, quieter, and less polluted place and will encourage more people to cycle and walk – reducing the county's carbon footprint."

Councillor Liz Duncan, Mayor of Witney and Chair of a Town Council Working Party set up to develop the scheme, said: "It is exciting to see this comprehensive 20mph scheme coming to our town, bringing improved road safety for residential streets, reducing the risks of death and injury. We have received many requests from residents for the reduced speed limit and this whole town approach will bring huge benefits.

"As well as safer streets, other similar schemes have seen reductions in traffic noise, better air quality and increased physical activity because with roads feeling safer, people are happier to leave the car at home and walk or cycle instead."

The county council has been inundated with requests from towns and villages to bring in 20mph zones since it [launched the policy](#) in February. The first two phases of the project are now fully booked, although communities can still apply to be part of the third delivery phase which takes place in 2024 - 25.

Cllr Gant added: “Witney is just the start, and more than 70 other towns and villages will be benefiting from reduced speeds in the next financial year – followed by hundreds more in the next two years.

“The recent decision in Wales shows that 20mph is becoming the accepted speed limit for residential areas, and Oxfordshire County Council is at the forefront of bringing about that change. It is well-known that the survival rate for people involved in accidents increases as speeds are reduced.”

There is a clear link between the speed of traffic and the likelihood of accidents happening in which people are killed or injured. You are seven times more likely to survive if you are hit by a car driving at 20mph than if you are hit at 30mph.

The scheme is free to town and parish councils, with the county council funding sign-only changes for areas wishing to be part of the changes as long as locations meet the agreed criteria for 20mph restrictions.

Town and parish councils will be expected to fund any traffic calming measures or speed-activated signs that may be required to support the new limit in their areas.

Applications for 20mph streets and roads need to be supported by the parish or town council and by the relevant local county councillor. More information, including a timetable of where and when forthcoming projects are taking place, is available on [Oxfordshire County Council's website](#).

Oxfordshire County Council has already implemented five 20mph pilot sites to test the impact of the policy in Cuxham, Long Wittenham, Wallingford Central, Wallingford North, and Kirtlington. Early data has shown these measures have had a positive impact on reducing speeds.

While the council has been working alongside Thames Valley Police – who did not object to the 20mph proposals for Witney – the emphasis is on drivers adhering to the new limits through a change of mindset, rather than enforcement. It is hoped that as 20mph areas become more common, breaking the limit will become socially unacceptable for drivers.

The council is also committed to working with key stakeholders including bus, taxi, and haulage companies, as well as major businesses, throughout the process. Officers will work with the bus companies to ensure that the impact on services is minimal.

The changes, which had the backing of West Oxfordshire District Council as well as Witney Town Council, will also involve the reduction of some speed limits from 50mph to 40mph and from 40mph to 30mph around the town.

County council officers have said they will look to minimise potential street clutter by making sure only the legally required amount of signage is placed around the town.

The 20mph programme also fits in with the council's [vision zero](#) policy, which aims to eliminate all deaths and serious injuries from Oxfordshire's roads by 2050.

Ends

For more information about this release contact Oxfordshire County Council's communications team on 01865 323870 or email press.office@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Marc Evans
Communications and Media Officer
Oxfordshire County Council