



Call for Action on Default 30 km/h Speed Limit

Background

Recognising the increasing trend in road deaths and serious injuries, especially among vulnerable road users, the Irish Government introduced lower default speed limits in the Road Traffic Act 2024. The default speed limits were lowered as follows:

1. on rural roads, from 80 km/h to 60 km/h
2. on national secondary roads, from 100 km/h to 80 km/h
3. on roads in built-up areas from 50 km/h to 30 km/h

The first phase was successfully completed in February of this year, when speed limits on the vast majority of rural roads were reduced from 80 km/h to 60 km/h. This has happened seamlessly, with local Councils given the option of maintaining the original 80 km/h speed limit on some local roads, with justification.

The second phase, to implement the speed limit reduction on national secondary roads was originally due to be implemented in June this year but has been delayed, though still signalled to go ahead.

The default 30 km/h in built-up areas was also due to be implemented by June 2025, but the Department of Transport has indicated that it will not now go ahead. Instead the Department has stated that the *'proposed speed limit changes will be introduced by local authorities, by way of 'special speed limit bye-laws' rather than by way of a default speed limit'*. This is likely to result in piecemeal and inconsistent urban speed limits across the country.

This is an about turn by the Department, and a reversal of the recommendation of the considered and detailed [2023 Speed Limit Review](#) which recommended the development of an implementation plan and that *'the implementation plan should prioritise the early adoption of priorities, such as the 30 km/h for urban roads'*. This Speed Limit Review was carried out by an expert group comprising members from the Department of Transport, the Road Safety Authority (RSA), An Garda Síochána, City and County Managers Association (CCMA), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the National Transport Authority (NTA).

Love30 and the other NGO signatories of the [letter to the Department of Transport to revert to a 30 km/h urban default speed limit](#) urge the Department to immediately rescind the reversal of the Speed Limit Review recommendation, and **implement the default 30 km/h speed limit in urban areas, as provided for in the Road Traffic Act 2024.**



Default Speed Limits versus Special Speed Limits

As well as defining default speed limits for different categories of road, the Road Traffic Act 2024 allows local authorities to set 'special speed limits' in their area, which can vary the default speed limit. Depending on the road type, these can vary between 20 and 120 km/h.

Frequent changes of speed limits can be confusing for motorists. A default speed limit of 30 km/h in urban areas sends a consistent and clear message to drivers and makes it easier for them to know the speed limit. It also reduces the number of speed signs to be installed by Local Authorities.

Adopting 30 km/h as the default urban speed limit makes a strong statement about road safety and human health, in that vehicles are obliged to drive more slowly by default. Any other suggested speed limit - such as for instance 50 km/h - in a default speed limit area must be argued for strenuously, and justified on the basis of safety considerations.

Prior to the Road Traffic Act 2024, Local Authorities could define special speed limits of 30 km/h for certain roads, and this was widely used to define 30 km/h speed limits in housing estates. However, outside of housing estates the use of 30 km/h special speed limits varied widely between local authorities.

Definition of Built-up Areas

The default urban speed limit applies to 'built-up areas'. The definition of built-up area is based on the areas that were cities, boroughs, or towns under the Local Government Act 2001.

We recognise that the definition of built-up areas needs to be revised to better reflect the reality that quite a few large urban areas were not towns under the Local Government Act 2001, and many towns have expanded beyond the built-up area limits. However this should not delay the implementation of a default 30 km/h in the areas that fall within the current definition of built-up area, and special speed limits can be used for built-up areas outside of these.

Trends in Serious and Fatal Injuries

The primary stated aim of the Government's [Road Safety Strategy 2021 - 2030](#) was to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on Irish roads by 50% over the next 10 years. In 2025, after 4 years of this Road Safety Strategy, [deaths and serious injuries are higher than in 2021](#). This trend is continuing in 2025 and road deaths for pedestrians & cyclists are already higher this year than at the same point in [2024](#).

2 October 2025

Vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and e-scooter drivers continue to be at risk in urban areas where the reduced speed limit of 30 km/h should have been implemented in June 2025. An analysis of road deaths by category has shown that while the total number of deaths on our roads has shown a decline in the last 20 years, deaths among vulnerable road users has increased as a proportion of total road deaths from approximately 21% to 35% in 2025 to date.

Lessons from Wales and Other Countries

Many major cities such as London, Paris, Brussels, Milan, Helsinki and Zurich and countries such as Wales, Spain and the Netherlands have adopted a default urban speed limit of 30 km/h and have seen significant reductions in serious and fatal injuries.

Wales is an example of how a lower urban speed limit can be implemented nationally in a short space of time. Wales passed legislation setting a default speed limit of 20 mph (32 km/h) in July 2022 and fully implemented this across the whole country 14 months later (in September 2023). One year later they found significant drops in casualties and fatal injuries and [the summer of 2024 was the safest since records began](#), including during the pandemic.

The benefits of the lower urban speed limits in Wales include:

- A 28% reduction in casualties and fatalities, with associated cost savings
- Cheaper car insurance if you live in a 20 mph zone (as vehicle damage claims in Wales fell by 20%)
- 20 mph repeater signs not needed (cost saving)

In Ireland the legislation for a default urban 30 km/h speed limit was introduced in April 2024, and now, 17 months later, there is no progress on implementation.

In Spain a 30 km/h speed limit was introduced on all single-lane streets in September 2020. Since then, they have seen a 20% reduction in urban road deaths, and fatalities reduced by 34% for cyclists, 31% for the elderly, and 24% for pedestrians.

Similar benefits have been demonstrated in cities all over Europe - a [Transport for London report](#) spanning 20 years showed

- Total collisions fell by 35%
- All casualties fell by 36%
- Fatal or serious injuries fell by 34%
- **Child casualties dropped by 46%, and children killed by 75%**
- Among people walking, cycling, or riding motorcycles, killed or seriously injured (KSI) figures were reduced by 28%

2 October 2025



Call for Action

We urge the Dept. of Transport to recommit to their original plan of reducing the default urban speed limit from 50 km/h to 30 km/h. This will include:

- Setting a national deadline for the implementation of a default speed limit 30 km/h in built-up areas that all councils will have to adhere to
- Publishing updated speed limit guidelines without delay
- Running a national publicity campaign explaining the new urban speed limits and the reasons for this

Councils should be instructed to apply the default speed limit of 30 km/h to all roads where the current 50 km/h applies, and to define special speed limits for roads for new urban districts that don't fall within the current definition of built-up areas and roads where it is safe to apply a higher speed limit.

This call to action is supported by:

