

## IS THIRTY A DIRTY WORD?

Councils up and down the country are clamouring to introduce 20mph zones, and while this may be politically popular, their overall impact on road safety is at best unclear. In fact, many of these schemes have been introduced with little evaluation of their road safety benefits.



We know that drivers use clues from the environment around them to judge the correct speed. In narrow roads with parked cars and pedestrians the vast majority of drivers reduce their speed anyway. Drivers are slower and more cautious around schools and on busy high streets. This won't come as a surprise for Advanced Drivers, as all I'm really saying is that good drivers adapt their speed to the conditions.

Where speed limits do not match the environment, there is uncertainty and confusion. At a very detailed level, all roads are different and the limit should reflect this. That's why the IAM does not favour a blanket approach to speed limits, or a wholesale change in the urban limits from 30 to 20.

The evaluation of large-scale 20mph areas, such as in Portsmouth, confirms the findings of similar schemes. There are small reductions in speed in the short-term, but little evidence of a reduction in casualties. In Portsmouth there was an overall average reduction of just 1mph.

The limited safety benefits are not unexpected, because in many areas there was a not a road safety problem to start with. Local politicians and campaign groups may even be over-estimating the road safety benefits in order to push schemes through. Only a truly independent, evidence-led and objective analysis of the scheme can prove the real impact.

Then there's the cost and implementation. Detailed design and high-quality material in traffic calming features and signposting are an obvious requirement. A shrinking police force is not going to have much time to police 20mph zones.

We aren't against 20mph zones – far from it, But schemes should not be promoted on spurious road safety grounds. Where the need can be demonstrated with clear evidence and in an open and honest way, let's have them.

**Simon Best**  
Chief executive



## NRG Meeting

The next National Representatives Group (NRG) meeting will be held on the 15th June. Don't forget to talk to your representative if you would like any particular issues to be raised.



## Advanced motorcyclists get skilled

Last week we published our latest research report, *'Transforming riding: An evaluation of Advanced Motorcycling'*.

The report shows that coaching motorcyclists to advanced standard comprehensively improves their skills and attitudes. Respondents said undertaking the IAM advanced riding course made them feel safer, more confident, more attentive, more observant and more decisive in their riding. By doing so it also adds to their enjoyment on the road.

### The top five reasons for taking the IAM advanced test were:

- To improve general standard of riding
- To become a safer rider
- To reduce the risk of being involved in an accident
- To become a more confident rider
- For achievement/challenge

### Other results showed:

- Ninety-nine per cent of riders said the IAM advanced test had a permanent positive effect on them as a rider.
- Ninety-seven per cent of respondents said that the IAM advanced test had increased their enjoyment from riding.
- Ninety-four per cent of respondents said that the IAM advanced test had made them safer riders.
- Sixty-one per cent of respondents said that taking the advanced test had helped them to avoid a specific accident or incident.

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