

20 miles per hour is what government should be all about

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I noticed a [report in the Guardian this week](#) that suggested that insurance companies providing policies for drivers in Wales have noted that the cost of car repairs in that country have fallen by 20 per cent since the introduction of a mandatory 20 mph speed limit in urban areas.

I am aware that there are petrol-heads who are deeply opposed to this speed limit. I know this from my own, local experience, where such a limit has been introduced after a local consultation which almost everybody in the local community ignored, except for those who seemed to wish for such a limit, me included.

What I hope is that three further pieces of data might now be provided.

The first would relate to the quality of urban air in Wales. We know that this has risen in London, which may be because many of its roads have 20 mph limits.

I would also be keen to see figures for the number of accident and emergency admissions as a result of road accidents. I very strongly suspect that these will have fallen. If cars are suffering reduced damage as a result of urban road accidents, I have little doubt that people are as well.

Finally, I would be interested in the road fatality data. If this policy can be shown to have saved lives, and I strongly suspect that it will have done, then I defy those who decry it to keep up their opposition.

One of the jobs of government is to counter the failure of markets. The externalities that are created by motoring are amongst the market failures that cars create. If a saving in car repair costs can be passed on to drivers by way of reduced insurance premiums in Wales this would be a very tangible indication that these failures can be addressed. However, that is the least important of the gains. The others I note would be even more significant.

The signs are good. Governments can do good things by changing speed limits, and I hope that this policy becomes universal throughout the UK.