

Why Worthing CLC should prioritise a consultation on *20's Plenty*

Summary:

1. The Community supports *20's Plenty*

Residents associations, schools, shops, community groups and individuals have all expressed their strong support for the campaign. In addition over 650 people have signed a petition calling for a 20 mph default speed limit on Worthing's residential roads, and Keith Taylor, MEP for SE England has written to express his support.

2. Worthing needs safer streets for children, pedestrians and cyclists

Worthing has the highest numbers of deaths and serious injuries to pedestrians and cyclists of any town in West Sussex – almost double the number of the next worst, Crawley. Only 3 % of the 271 children injured on Worthing's roads (2005-2010) were in areas covered by School Safety Zones. More must be done to protect our children, pedestrians, cyclists and older people.

3. It would save Worthing money

On average, Worthing suffers 2 fatalities, 37 serious injuries and 239 slight injuries EVERY year on its roads. Official Department for Transport costings value this at **over £12 million**¹, so if this figure was reduced by just 8 % then the scheme would pay for itself in less than four and a half months.²

If the scheme gets more people walking and cycling, then it will also reduce physical inactivity costs (such as obesity, heart disease etc.) to the NHS. Total tax payer costs of this plus dealing with road collisions amounts to £6.3 million (NHS, medical, ambulance and police costs). An 8 % reduction in these costs to the tax payer would mean the scheme paid for itself in less than one year.

Every year after that, all these cost savings are completely free!

4. It would benefit Worthing's economy

Apart from reducing the lost economic output due to injuries and premature death, *20's Plenty* would improve the quality of life in Worthing by providing cleaner, safer streets for everyone. Evidence has repeatedly shown that towns and cities that implement measures to make them more attractive places for people to live and work do better economically.

¹ Using current Department for Transport estimates for total costs of accidents.

² Note: Portsmouth achieved a 22 % reduction in injury collisions, but with a background fall of 14 % in similar areas, meaning that it is reasonable to assume an 8 % reduction was associated with the introduction of 20 mph.

Background

Worthing County Local Committee has £520,000 of Section 106 funds which it can spend on improving infrastructure. The recent West Sussex County Council report on *20's Plenty* for Worthing estimated the cost at about £420,000. (This is made up of: £50,000 for consultation, traffic surveys, and preparation; £64,000 for preparation and supervision; £305,563 for implementation). This briefing sets out why implementing default 20 mph speed limits on Worthing's residential roads would be popular, improve safety and quality of life, and would represent excellent value for money.

1. The Community supports *20's Plenty*

The *20's Plenty for Worthing* campaign has been working hard to engage with the people of Worthing. Almost everyone we speak to is in favour of 20 mph speed limits on Worthing's residential roads. Despite limited time and resources, the campaign has collected over 650 petition signatures already. In addition, following presentations by the campaign, support has been expressed by:

- Worthing Central residents association
- Tarring residents association
- Thomas à Becket residents association
- South Broadwater residents association
- Worthing High School
- Worthing Youth Mayor and Council
- Transition Town Worthing
- Sustrans
- Worthing Revolutions Cycling campaign
- Worthing SCOPE
- The Vale School in Findon
- Pieter Montyn, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transportation, West Sussex County Council

A survey in the Worthing Herald also showed 59% in favour (despite a negative opinion piece from the paper itself).

Every year the British Social Attitudes Survey asks randomly selected households across the UK, whether they are in favour of 20mph limits for residential roads. Every year from 2002-2010, 70 to 80 % of people have responded "Yes"! Given Worthing's higher than average numbers of older people (who are amongst the most vulnerable in road crashes), it would be reasonable to expect even higher numbers in favour in Worthing. For instance in Heene Ward (the 8th most deprived ward within West Sussex), 51 % of people do not even have a car (see page 2 [here](#)).

2. Worthing needs safer streets for children, pedestrians and cyclists

Pedestrians and cyclists: Worthing has the highest pedestrian and cyclist road casualties of any town in West Sussex, according to figures obtained from West Sussex County Council. 111 people have been killed or seriously injured walking or cycling in Worthing. This is almost twice that in Crawley (62) and more than double that for Littlehampton (47). Since 2006 walkers and cyclists have accounted for 83% of deaths and 60% of serious road injuries in Worthing.

Children: A common response of those people who disagree with *20's Plenty* is 'I agree with it outside schools but not on every residential road'. However, the vast majority of road injuries to children do not occur outside schools. Data obtained by the *20's Plenty for Worthing* campaign shows that 97% of road collisions that injure Worthing's children do not happen in the areas covered by the School Safety Zones.

From 2005 to 2010 there have been 271 injuries to children (0-16 years old) on Worthing's roads, 32 of them serious. Of these, 163 (60 %) have been to children who were walking or cycling (data [here](#)). The *20's Plenty* campaign obtained [this map](#) showing exactly where all these injuries occurred and then compared this to the locations of the School Safety Zones which now cover 21 schools in Worthing. Only 8 of these injury locations were covered – and even these may have happened during school holidays or outside the times when the School Safety Zone lights were flashing.

3. It would save Worthing money

The costs of deaths and injuries

On average, Worthing suffers **2 fatalities, 36 serious injuries and 231 slight injuries** EVERY year on its roads. (This is based on reported figures for the last six years – the Department for Transport estimate that actual figures for casualties are somewhere between three to four times higher - [see this article](#)).

According to the Department for Transport's figures **this costs Worthing £12.2 million every year** (including a financial estimate of the 'grief and suffering' costs).

Excluding the economic estimate for 'grief and suffering' the annual cost to Worthing is £2.9 million. This is made up of lost economic output (i.e. the time that those injured are unable to work and the years of work lost when someone is killed) plus the medical, ambulance and police costs of dealing with these collisions.

Excluding the lost economic output and **just looking at the costs to taxpayers the annual cost to Worthing is £700,000** (i.e. medical, ambulance and police costs).

Before/after casualty figures for Portsmouth's *20's Plenty* scheme saw a 22 % reduction. However other similar areas saw a 14 % reduction in casualties over the same period, so it is reasonable to attribute 22-14 = an 8 % reduction in casualties to *20's Plenty*.

An 8 % reduction of the total costs would mean the scheme would pay for itself in less than 4.5 months.

The costs of physical inactivity

However there are further 'hidden costs' of the current dangers imposed by traffic in Worthing. More than two thirds of West Sussex residents would like to walk and cycle more and use their cars less, yet many are put off by the danger posed by traffic (see [WSCC Travel Survey](#) p.13). As a result many people do not get enough physical exercise. The costs of physical inactivity in Worthing are

estimated at £23.5 million every year.³ This is made up of costs to the NHS treating diseases related to physical inactivity (obesity, heart disease, cancer etc.), as well as lost economic output due to sickness and premature death.

If *20's Plenty for Worthing* reduced these costs by just 2 % then the scheme would pay for itself in one year from these savings alone.

20's Plenty reduces costs to taxpayers

If the combined costs to taxpayers (police, ambulance, medical, NHS) of deaths, injuries and physical inactivity are examined, then they **amount to £6.3 million every year**. By reducing collisions and making streets safer for walking and cycling, *20's Plenty* can reduce these costs. If *20's Plenty for Worthing* reduced these costs by just 7 % then the scheme would pay for itself in one year from these savings alone.

4. It would benefit Worthing's economy

In the next five years we are going to see rising fuel prices, potentially coupled with falling real incomes. At the same time our town centre is suffering from increasing congestion, pollution and pressure on parking. Meanwhile more and more people are turning to the internet and home deliveries for their shopping, rather than their local town centre. In order to thrive economically, Worthing must maintain high footfall in its retail centre and be able to attract businesses to provide employment despite these pressures.

The best way to do this is to create the most attractive environment and best quality of life. We need a vibrant street life in Worthing – with cafés, street artists and greenery, and streets which are safe for people. Our town will then become a more desirable place in which to shop, to visit and to live. This will benefit local businesses by not only increasing trade, but enabling them recruit the best people and in turn new businesses will be attracted to be based here.

Worthing will never be able to provide enough parking for everyone to be able to drive to the town centre, and even if it could, it would gridlock the roads and the resulting congestion, pollution, noise and danger would make the centre an unpleasant place to be. In fact it has been suggested that “to attract the smart business money, a city should restrict traffic and regulate ruthlessly”.⁴

So how can people get to Worthing town centre, when fuel costs are rising, parking is at a premium and congestion is getting worse? At a time when budgets for public transport are having to be cut, services slashed and fares raised, the only other alternatives to car use are walking and cycling.

Fortunately walking and cycling are cheap and space efficient. You can park ten bicycles in the space required to park one car. More importantly perhaps, West Sussex residents want to walk and cycle more. In the 2008 WSCC Travel Survey, 73% of respondents said “I like to walk and/or cycle as it is better for my health” and 65% said “I would like to reduce my car use but there are no practical

³ Based on Department for Transport figures for English urban regions, adjusted according to Worthing's population.

⁴ New Statesman (2001), *A city ablaze in green and gold*, Ben Plowden
<http://www.newstatesman.com/200101080012>

alternatives”.⁵ However 43% also said “roads are too dangerous for me to consider walking and/or cycling”. By reducing traffic speeds and creating more pleasant environments for walking and cycling we can change that.

The seafront cycle route has been hugely popular and is a welcome step in the right direction, but at the moment many people do not feel safe enough on Worthing’s roads to be able to cycle to the seafront to use it.

Better for drivers too

Of course many journeys will still need to be made by car, but *20’s Plenty* will reduce congestion, improve traffic flow, and make the road environment safer for drivers and their passengers. By providing an environment where journeys that do not need to be made by car can safely be walked and cycled, then there will be fewer car journeys. Fewer car journeys means less congestion, pressure on parking, pollution and noise. Slower speeds also help improve traffic flow at junctions by making it easier to pull-out and has been shown to reduce tailbacks at peak periods.⁶

20’s Plenty is the key

20’s Plenty – a default 20mph speed limit for residential roads - underpins everything else, enabling people to reduce unnecessary car use, increase levels of walking and cycling, and creating a vibrant, people-centred town, with a healthy, thriving economy.

The alternative is worsening congestion, pollution, noise, deaths and injuries and a town-centre which will slowly suffocate and die.

Which would you prefer?

⁵ WSCC Household Travel Survey 2006-2009 main results

<http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=b862c676-7b56-4669-aabe-eb2e4c43f161&version=-1>

⁶ Ben Hamilton-Baillie, Phil Jones, 2005, *Improving traffic behaviour and safety through urban design*
<http://www.rosipa.com/RoadSafety/conferences/congress2006/proceedings/day3/baillie.pdf>