

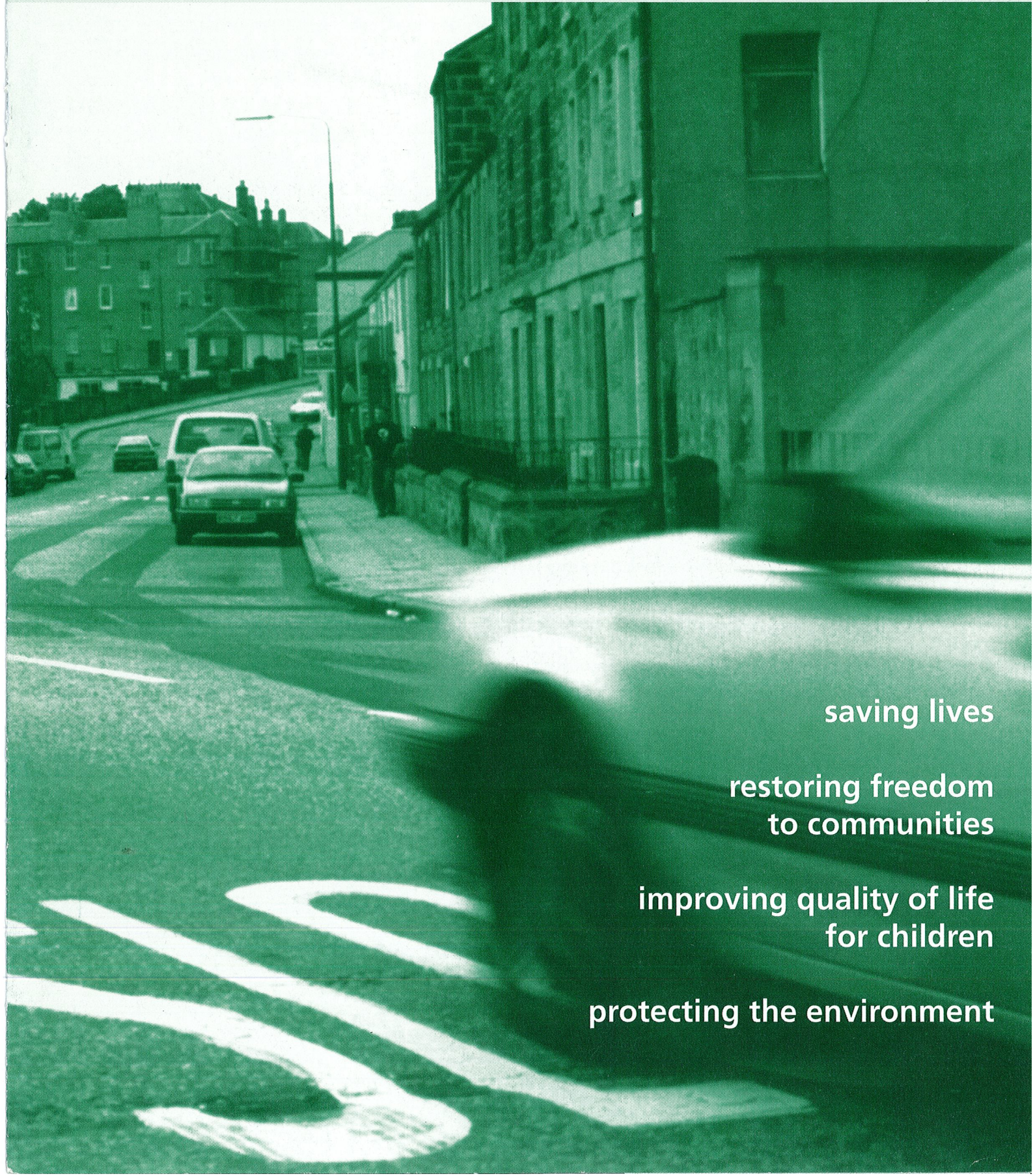
slowdownscotland



FRIENDS OF THE EARTH SCOTLAND

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TRANSform Scotland
the campaign for sustainable transport



saving lives

restoring freedom
to communities

improving quality of life
for children

protecting the environment

slowdownscotland

Do you want the traffic to go more slowly in your street?

You're not alone: this is rapidly becoming one of the top local concerns all over the country.

For too long transport policy has focused on promoting mobility - building new and expensive roads allowing some people to drive further and faster.

But this wasteful policy has been to our country's detriment. Streets plagued by speeding motorists, noise and polluted air must be reclaimed for public use. Residential areas must be reclaimed for the people who live in them.

Lower traffic speeds will help save lives, protect the environment, and restore the freedom of the streets to communities endangered by speeding vehicles.

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This guide presents ways in which you can help in the campaign to restore streets for people by slowing down traffic. Action at both local and national levels will make decision-makers aware that no longer can they avoid grasping the nettle of making streets a place to live - not just routes to drive through.

Of course, you will be taking on a motoring culture which glories in performance cars and in the freedom of the road. While "accepted" for cars, life-threatening behaviour in other spheres of everyday life is not tolerated. Yet there is no doubt that a key to success is changing motorists' attitude to speed - just as has happened with drink driving.



why cut speeds?

The obvious reason for wanting to cut speeds is road safety.

Road casualties have fallen steadily as cars have been made safer, accident blackspots have been tackled and drink driving has been discouraged.

Yet death or serious injury is still more likely to be inflicted by a vehicle than any other cause - the risk is far greater than the risk from beef on the bone, handguns, or nuclear waste.

Most crashes are caused by driver error. The biggest source of error and the biggest contributor to casualty severity is excessive speed.

Yet slower speeds would also mean wider benefits:

A safer countryside. Slower speeds on country roads will improve quality of life for rural communities, and reduce the impact on wildlife and important habitats.

Better quality of life for children. Children no longer walk to school because of road danger: slower speeds can help restore the independence of children.

Quieter, safer and more pleasant local streets. Slower speeds can open up streets as a public space for all residents.

Reduced emissions from vehicles. Calmer, slower driving - especially if cars are designed for slower speeds - is far more fuel efficient. This can help reduce urban air pollution and help tackle climate change.

do you have a problem?

First a note of caution. Most people who think they have a road danger problem, don't. A few highly publicised tragedies don't make a statistically significant record over several years. Crashes tend to occur more randomly these days, scattered all over the road network.

You will need a consistent record of "innocent victims" such as multi-vehicle collisions or "vulnerable road users" - children, elderly, pedestrians, cyclists - suffering to make a solid case for local action. Funds for traffic calming are scarce and every scheme has to deliver value for money.

What you may have is not a special, local, actual problem, but a fear of crashes. This "perceived risk" is perfectly justifiable and very real. Road crashes are in the paper all the time. Not usually on the front page since they aren't news like train and plane crashes. Just there every week.

So many people, especially the vulnerable and those with families, are worried, increasingly to the point of stopping going out (the infirm trapped in their homes), giving up driving, not letting their children play outside or go for bike rides. Unfortunately most drivers still believe they are perfect, or immune; or simply aren't good at assessing risk; some are just plainly anti-social.

why do motorists speed?

Motorists speed because they underestimate the risk to themselves and the danger they pose to others through their behaviour. Motorists do believe that they are better than most other drivers on the road.

Some motorists speed because they think they won't get caught, or if they are "unfortunate" enough to get caught that other people won't disapprove.

Some motorists consciously decide to speed because other things are considered more important - whether this is rushing to a meeting, or because speeding is thought to be exciting.

However, all motorists are responsible not only for their own safety - *but for the safety of others*. But unlike drunk driving, speeding is often not yet seen as being socially unacceptable.

Even if they do crash, they may simply be regarded as unlucky. Indeed, crashes are often referred to as "accidents", with the implication that they are not avoidable. Yet over 90% of crashes are due to poor driver behaviour.

some facts on speeding

In 1998, 385 people were killed in road crashes in Scotland, with 22,460 road casualties in total. There are five times as many road deaths as murders. Road crashes are the biggest cause of accidental death and injury for young people.

At 20mph, 9 out of 10 pedestrians will survive being hit by a vehicle.
At 40mph, 9 out of 10 pedestrians will be killed when hit by a vehicle.

Speeding is a contributory factor in a third of all road casualties.

For every 1mph reduction in average speeds, there is a 5% reduction in casualties.



what should the speed limit be?

The first step is to identify the lowest reasonable speed limit for your street or area. It has to be reasonable, or it will be abused, and ultimately the police and courts won't wear it.

Traffic engineers traditionally look at the "85th percentile speed" as the reasonable figure for a speed limit. This simply means the speed most drivers are going anyway, and targets the anti-social 15% of real speed merchants for enforcement.

Pause to reflect on the good common sense of this approach: we don't want speed limits that most motorists are breaking. But this does assume that most motorists go at reasonable speeds!

A hierarchy of speeds is a good idea. Current thinking is moving towards:

- 70 on motorways and "safe" dual carriageways
- 60 on the best rural roads
- 50 on rural main roads with problems
- 40 on main roads entering built-up areas
- 30 on most main streets in towns
- 20 on residential roads

In some areas, very low speeds may be more appropriate. On the continent, for example, 'Home Zones' - residential areas where pedestrians have priority and cars travel at no more than walking pace - speed limits as low as 5 or 10 mph might be appropriate.

Of course there is plenty of room for discussion on whether these are the right speeds, as we will see, and on where your own case fits in.

if motorists won't stop can we make them go

You have agreed on the right speed for the road. Now you have to make it stick.

This is the real problem. The cost in manpower of police enforcement of speeding is so prohibitive that motorists know they can speed with impunity most of the time. If they are "done" it's just a modest fine and be careful the points on the licence don't tot up too quickly.

Speed cameras can be effective in special situations like the A1 or red-light jumping. However, they are very expensive. Mobile patrols with roadside radar guns or in fast cars can target problem stretches or motorway excesses, but will never be the answer in your street or village, day-in day-out.

However, if the "normal speed" on your road is around 40 but you want a 30 limit, you have a problem. You need "traffic calming" to bring the reasonable speed limit down.

"heavy duty" solutions

These are engineering measures intended to slow traffic physically with humps and chicanes. Most new developments should have them (but check in your area!) but for councils to "retro-fit" them is impossibly expensive unless there is a real, serious problem. They do work, but they can create problems for buses, emergency vehicles, cyclists and Lada drivers: worse still, they can encourage boy racers to seek their thrills.



Back to the limit, how to slower?

"Traffic calming" comes in two grades: 'heavy duty' and 'psychological' solutions - see *below*.

It helps if speed reducing measures can also achieve other aims - like central refuges near bus stops, "buildouts" or pavement blisters to make the road less wide to cross, cycle priority lanes, or some welcoming trees and flowers.

On-street parking is usually a good way to achieve natural traffic calming! Just create bays with widened pavements at bus stops and crossing points.

Zebra crossings are making a come-back. Cheaper than pelicans, they make motorists more alert - and slow the traffic.

Most Councils have introduced a variety of schemes, and there are several publications illustrating good examples - contact your council's transportation department or your library. The Scottish Executive have tackled speed problems in villages on trunk roads.

"psychological" solutions

The idea here is to send visual signals to drivers that they are entering a different area - such as "gateways" - and to go more slowly because the road appears narrower or twistier. The effect is achieved with white lines, hatched areas, contrast red or buff surfaces, pinch points, and planting. What the driver on autopilot sees in their "cone of vision" is vital - so painting speed roundels on the road, transverse bar markings, anything to shorten or interrupt the view ahead is good.



some other ideas to consider

Not every speed problem can be solved by traffic calming alone.

Some of the simplest and most radical steps to campaign for are:

a general reduction in speeds by 10mph. Effective enforcement alone would almost do this.

presumption in favour of 20 limits on residential streets which carry only local traffic (even lower speeds in "Home Zones") and in selected town centre streets

abolition of the "derestricted" 60mph limit and setting of appropriate limits on all roads (so country lanes might be 20 or 30)

30 means 30 (and so on). At present legal guidelines suggest you can do almost 40 before you can be prosecuted. A 10% tolerance (33 in a 30 area) would make a huge difference to actual speeds - if enforced

speed wardens? In some areas, traffic wardens are being privatised, with councils keeping the parking fines to pay for more wardens. A speed warden in every town, day and night, could make a huge difference to driver behaviour, with the right balance of deterrence - but would your community vote for them?

earliest possible introduction of **smart on-board technology** to prevent cars exceeding speed limits. This last is the ultimate solution: it was hinted at in 1998's Transport White Paper and needs a full discussion of its own. It is at least (or only!) 5-10 years away. Every year that it can be brought forward means many lives saved.

how you can help **slowdownscotland**

The UK Government has recognised speed as an important issue, and has launched a review of speed policy. However, it remains to be seen whether this review will go far enough - the man or woman in the red hatchback is seen by all parties as an important voter.

But without a sea-change in attitudes to speed across the country, local measures can only nibble at the problems caused by speed. So if you want speed limits to mean anything, you will have to also campaign nationally for these important changes to come about.

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The **slowdownscotland** campaign is run by TRANSform Scotland and Friends of the Earth Scotland in conjunction with the Sunday Herald newspaper.

It is certainly the case that the media has an important role in promoting more sensible attitudes to speed - not least to balance out some of the gratuitous promotion of the gas-guzzling over-powered monsters we see in most car adverts!

The campaign is collecting nominations from individuals and communities across Scotland for measures to slow down traffic in their area. So far **slowdownscotland** has collected hundreds of nominations from all parts of Scotland.

The Scottish Parliament must also play its part in making Scotland slow down. Your nominations will also be used in a petition to the Scottish Transport Minister so that the Scottish Parliament knows that it has to take up the challenge to tackle speed.

take action now!

Nominate your street for traffic calming.

slowdownscotland is collecting nominations of streets which you think councils should carry out traffic calming measures in order to slow down traffic.

Petition the Scottish Parliament.

We will also use your nominations as a petition to the Scottish Parliament to take action to reduce the number and speed of vehicles on our streets.

Nominations should be sent to the following address:

**FoE Scotland, FREEPOST,
SCO 2500, Edinburgh, EH6 0BR.
Or by e-mail to
slowdown@sundayherald.com**

Local action

You can influence your Council to try harder.

Look to see what measures your council is proposing to carry out in their Local Transport Strategy: If they're proposing to spend more on road-building than they are on road safety then they're on the wrong tracks!

Write and ask what your local Councillor, your MSP and your MP are doing to promote slower speeds.

And you might even want to consider holding a street party - to see what your street could be like without traffic tearing down it.

useful contacts

The Slower Speeds Initiative

The Slower Speeds Initiative, PO Box 746, Norwich, NR2 3LJ. Tel. 01603 504563.

The Slower Speeds Initiative was launched in early 1998 with the aim of working towards generally lower and better enforced speed limits. The Initiative is a coalition of community and transport organisations who believe that lower speeds would bring a wide range of safety, amenity and environment benefits. A major aim of the Initiative has already been achieved with the Government launch of the UK Speed Policy Review in October 1998.

The Initiative is looking for organisations and individuals to endorse their campaign.

Scottish Road Safety Campaign

Scottish Road Safety Campaign, Heriot-Watt Research Park, Riccarton, Currie, Edinburgh, EH14 4AP. Tel: 0131 472 9200. e-mail: info@road-safety.org.uk

The SRSC raises public awareness of road safety issues through production of road safety education, training and publicity materials. It runs the 'Foolspeed' advertising campaign, which is aimed at changing driver behaviour and attitudes to speeding.

The SRSC can also put you in touch with your council's road safety officer.

Government contacts

Roger Peal is Head of the Road Safety Division at the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, Zone 2/14A, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DR.

Alan Brown is Head of the Road Safety Branch at the Scottish Executive Development Department, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ.

The DETR is responsible for the UK speed policy review. Mr. Brown is the contact for Scottish input to the speed policy review.

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195 Albion Street, Glasgow, G1 1QP.

tel: 0141 302 7800

fax: 0141 302 7809

e-mail: slowdown@sundayherald.com

web: www.sundayherald.com



FRIENDS OF THE EARTH SCOTLAND

Formed in 1978, Friends of the Earth Scotland is campaigning for environmental justice. No less than a decent environment for all; no more than a fair share of the Earth's resources.

Friends of the Earth Scotland is a member of Friends of the Earth International which campaigns for the environment in over 60 countries worldwide.

72 Newhaven Road, Edinburgh, EH6 5QG.

tel: 0131 554 9977

fax: 0131 554 8656

e-mail: campaign@foe-scotland.org.uk

web: www.foe-scotland.org.uk

TRANSform Scotland

the campaign for sustainable transport

TRANSform Scotland is the national sustainable transport campaign, bringing together 56 organisations - including transport operators, local authorities, environment and conservation groups, chambers of commerce and local transport campaigns.

72 Newhaven Road, Edinburgh, EH6 5QG

tel: 0131 467 7714; fax: 0131 554 8656

e-mail: campaigns@transformscotland.org.uk

web: www.transformscotland.org.uk

