

Delivering on the benefits of lower speeds: An evaluation of the Living Streets Scotland 20mph Communities Project

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1. Introduction

This paper presents findings from the Living Streets Scotland Lower Speed Communities project, a one-year project aimed at exploring the introduction of 20mph limits in five diverse communities. The paper combines findings and insights identified by Living Streets on the progress of the five individual areas with those of an external evaluation aimed at identifying the contribution the project made to progress in each area.

2. Project Overview

The Lower Speed Communities Project was delivered by Living Streets Scotland via funding from the Scottish Government Road Safety Framework. Its aim was to work with communities where speed was an issue and there was a desire to see the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit to explore how this could support the realisation of the objectives of the Scottish Government guidance (i.e. to create a healthier, greener and safer Scotland). Specifically, the project sought to explore how different ways of community engagement could deliver the possible benefits of 20mph. Specific objectives of the project included:

- Delivering progress towards implementation of 20mph by local authorities
- Increasing community support for 20mph areas
- Increasing perceptions of safety in communities
- Exploring different ways of engaging communities

The 12-month project ran from January to December 2017 and worked with community organisations, local authorities, residents and other interest groups to support the introduction of lower 20mph speed limits. The programme comprised a range of community engagement and partnership activities tailored to each area, including the development of community engagement and information sharing activities, supporting data gathering and evaluation, sharing of good practice and partnership working both within communities and between communities and local authorities. The work also included the development of best practice review and a survey of local authority professionals to identify good practice in the delivery of 20mph areas in Scotland.

The review highlighted that the introduction of limits was typically focused on safety benefits and reducing accident or incident risk, and that the focus on the wider health and environmental benefits was limited. This was reflected in lack of accompanying measures to support these wider gains (e.g. around promoting, increasing and measuring active travel in the area). However, it also identified some evidence that such wider benefits are realisable and looked for by local communities.

Within this context, exploring how community engagement and partnership working can support the introduction, and realise the benefits, of 20mph introduction is of key importance.

3. Community Engagement Project Areas

The project was delivered in five areas across Scotland. The aim of the project was to engage in a range of different community areas including urban and rural contexts, different levels of deprivation and different stages of 20mph introduction. Given the short time period of the project, it focused on communities where there was an expressed interest in developing a 20mph speed limit (or where one was in place, but bedding in) and where there was organisational capacity to become involved in the project.

Ultimately five communities were selected:

- Moniaive, a small rural town in Dumfries and Galloway
- Lossiemouth, a coastal town in Moray
- Tillydrone, an area of Aberdeen City
- Inverness City Centre
- Mount Florida, an area in south Glasgow

Given the time taken for recruitment and project set up, each area was provided with approximately 6 months support by Living Streets. The activities within each location are now described in turn:

Moniaive

Moniaive is a small rural community in Dumfries and Galloway with significant levels of through traffic for such a small town (including regular traffic from large forestry vehicles). There were particular issues around issues of narrow streets and few pavements which resulted in challenges in relation to (safe) pedestrian access to the small High Street and the local primary school. The local community council had been trying to get a 20 mile an hour limit in place for 5 years, with no success.

Living Streets worked in partnership with Moniaive Initiative (MI), a community organisation focused on local development. MI had been undertaking a project focused on High Street regeneration and felt that a 20mph limit could contribute to this project. The Living Streets support focused on intensive community engagement principally through Facebook and a steering group to detail the challenges and opportunities for the community in terms of walking and accessing sites in the community. In addition, significant work was undertaken with Moniaive Primary School and with their Junior Road Safety Officers. The pupils organised poster competitions, 'dress a scarecrow competition' to alert drivers of the presence of children on street and undertook a street audit with a Living Streets technical adviser. An 'adult' street audit was also held with the Living Streets technical advisor. Both street audits set out potential solutions at key sites. The engagement activities highlighted a range of supporting measures to slow traffic and support safe walking and pedestrian crossing, with 20 mph introduction remaining an objective for the community. The relationship between the community and the Council has improved and the development of robust local evidence of need through an action plan has resulted in a stronger case for the introduction of 20mph.

Lossiemouth

The project in Lossiemouth had a principal focus on a residential area with two primary schools and a High School where there were concerns about the safety of children's journeys to school.

Key local partners included the two primary schools, the community council, development trust, local Police and Moray Council. Initially, achieving a 20mph area was the main target for the community. However, through the consultation and engagement activity supported by Living Streets, it became clear that improving pedestrian routes and pedestrian safety to promote active travel was the key community concern. This work included significant engagement with the two primary schools to gain evidence and identify solutions, focusing on mapping routes to school, pupil and parent street audit work and promotion of active travel. This work is expected to continue through the Living Streets school programme and will see refreshed school travel plans, aiming for a growth in support for active travel. Moray Council also committed to maintenance and improvement work in the area around two key sites, one of which will be funded and in place within the next 6 months. The other is a bigger project which will require external funding. However, Moray Council is committed to working with the local community to achieve this.

Tillydrone

Tillydrone is a residential community in the north of Aberdeen. It has seen a significant rise in traffic as a result of the installation of a new Bridge across the River Don, which provides a new route into the City Centre (via an improved road through the area).

The Living Streets work focused both on involving residents in scoping issues, priorities and agreeing solutions and developing a more trusting basis for partnership working between the community and Aberdeen City Council. There was a significant level of anger and distrust within the community related to the decision-making process for the new Bridge and a perceived lack of ongoing communication and information. Fundamental to this project was intensive community engagement, led by Living Streets, in mapping and prioritising issues and developing solutions.

This process took a considerable amount of time, but the allowed residents to be clear about their key priorities and to build a partnership and propose solutions to the City Council. The outcome of the project was that Aberdeen City Council has agreed with the community's assessment of need and proposed infrastructure solutions for three key sites in the area. In addition to being committed to deliver these solutions they have also committed to ongoing work with the community and Police to monitor speed and 'rat running' on certain routes. 20 mph remains an objective, but the community agreed that the current solutions were an important first step in achieving this.

Supporting work was undertaken with the local schools by Living Streets, which has involved signing up to the WOW (Living Streets Walk Once a Week) programme and active promotion of active travel and road safety along with Police engagement. Pupils are also making a film with a local media company to talk about their journey to school. Police Scotland has supported community concerns about speed by providing officer attendance at a key crossing.

Mount Florida

Mount Florida is a residential area in south Glasgow based on a key route into the City Centre. Unlike other areas in the pilot it already had a 20mph area in place. The focus here was on support to improve the impact of the area and support active travel.

Living Streets supported significant involvement from parents, residents and schoolchildren who sought to identify issues and prioritise actions. Engagement occurred with the community council, Parents Partnership and Primary School and all have carried out 'walk-about' and issued surveys to gather community insights into the local needs and challenges. This resulted in the Primary School and Parents Partnership developing an Action Plan and school travel plan which will be supported by Glasgow City Council Road Safety Section. This focuses on a range of actions which can be taken locally to support safety and active travel around the school. In parallel, the community council Action Plan dovetails with the school plan but focuses on the wider community. Both Action Plans also contain actions which can be taken in partnership with the City Council and Police Scotland.

Inverness City Centre

As in Glasgow, the work in Inverness focused on the impact of a 20mph area which was already in place (in this case for 10 years). However, despite this long-established area, little impact analysis had been undertaken. As a result, the engagement and support from Living Streets focused on understanding the impact and bringing stakeholders together to understand perceptions.

The engagement work was directed at residents through a Facebook survey on impressions of the impact of the 20mph area which received over 600 responses. This gave a valuable insight into the different views on those who identified as pedestrians and drivers and perceptions of the ease and safety of movement for pedestrians and cyclists. Workshops and individual discussions were held with a range of stakeholders including internal Highland Council staff, Living Streets supporters, cyclists, Access Panel, schools, and the business community. These focused both on the impact of the 20mph

area, potential improvements and exploring what success would look like for the 20mph area in Inverness.

The clear overarching message which came from the workshop was that 20mph should not be seen as an end in itself, rather how 20mph contributes to desired end outcomes. The key outcomes were defined as: Users of streetscape feel safer; Inverness is more attractive; Improved amenity and economy

A range of recommendations were then made to Highland Council, including that: the Highland Council brings together policies, strategies and initiatives affecting the city centre to create an overall vision for the city centre, with a clear statement on the contribution and role of the 20mph area, and; that agreement is reached on the overall outcomes sought in the city centre with buy in from politicians and stakeholders

These also included recommendations around public communications, improved signage and an analysis of potential streetscape improvements with input from pedestrians, cyclists and those with a disability.

4. Lessons Learned within Each Project Area

The engagement across the diverse areas highlighted a number of key themes, lessons and issues that should be considered when consider a 20mph speed limit introductions. These can be summarised as follows:

- *20mph should be viewed as a tool, not an end in itself.* There are many motivations for the introduction of 20mph areas and the majority of these (and in many cases the key focus of communities) concentrate on the benefits which a reduction in speed contributes to.
- It is therefore important to *consider what the end goal is of any 20mph speed limit introduction* and what people expect or want a reduction in speed to bring.
 - The project identified communities that were seeking to use 20mph to support all of the following: Place Making; Enhancing the 'Liveability' of streets; Increasing economic activity or development in an area; Increasing active travel; Increasing local perceptions of safety. Only after that discussion has been had can it be agreed where 20mph fits into these needs and desired outcomes and what other action needs to happen
- The importance of the involvement of residents and other stakeholders is vital in ensuring that local issues, concerns and expectations are fully understood, setting the parameters for any project, and defining what success looks like
- Place is important for people. A discussion on 20mph may allow people to be more overt about what they want the place they live in to be like. This is tied to a widespread desire for a better balance between traffic and other modes of transport

5. Understanding and evaluating the project

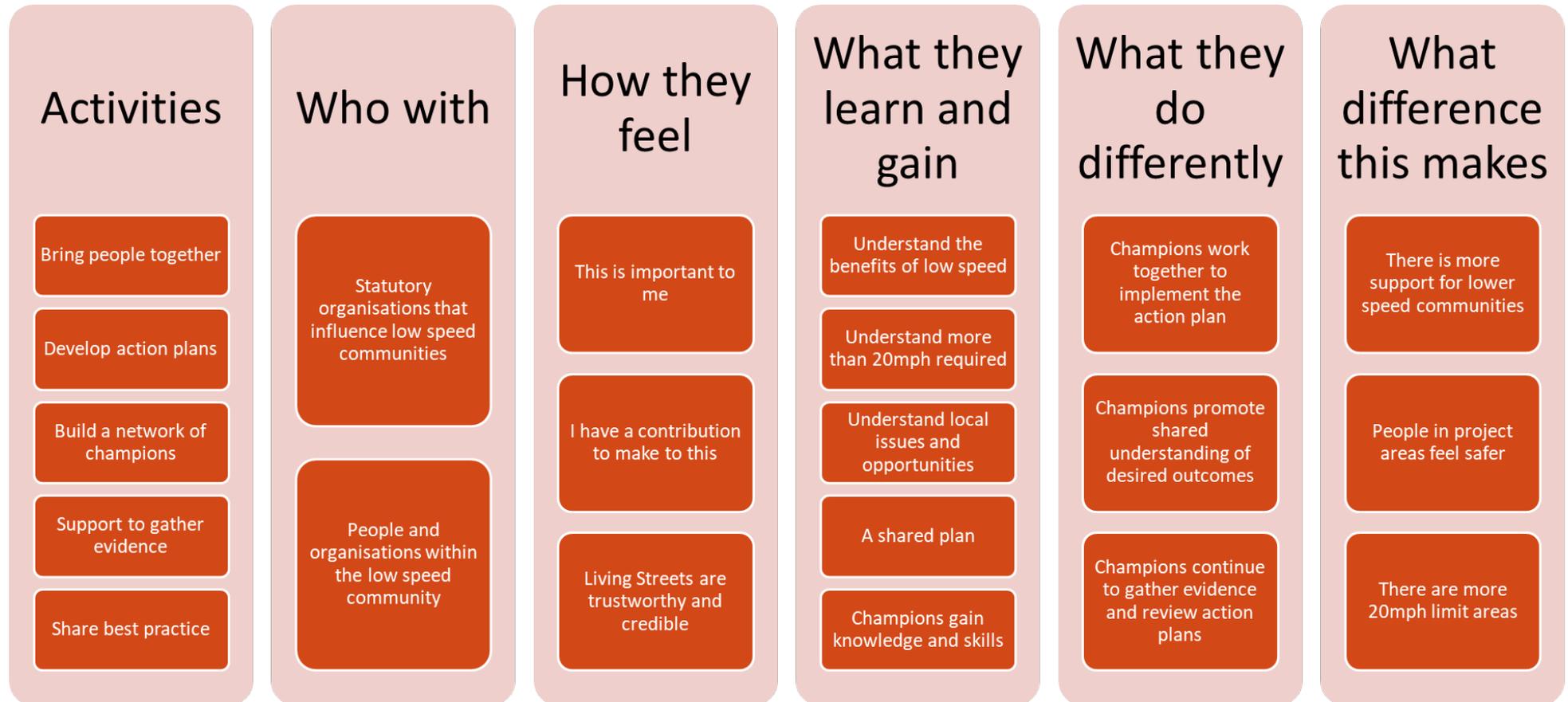
Hilliam Research and Analysis was commissioned by Living Streets to undertake an external evaluation of the project. The key aim of this was to explore the effectiveness of different approaches to developing support for 20 mph limits in the project areas. Specifically, this related to understanding the contribution the Living Streets project made to delivering on and understanding the benefits of 20mph, and the extent to which the project had (within the communities) achieved the Scottish Government's key outcomes for the project, i.e. the extent to which community support for 20mph increased in project areas; that people feel safer and that there is greater support for the introduction of 20mph areas.

In seeking to explore the contribution of this project to the outcomes in each area, the evaluation approach explicitly acknowledged that the support of Living Streets alone could not achieve successful outcomes. Success was a function of the Living Streets contribution *and* the contribution of other local

stakeholders. As a result, the focus of the evaluation work was less on the progress that each project had made in each area (this has been described above in this paper), but more on how Living Streets supported progress to outcomes in each area.

In order to achieve this, a 'theory-based approach' was taken to the evaluationⁱ. This involved working closely with Living Streets via workshops and meetings over the course of the project to develop a 'theory of change' for the project. This was presented as an 'outcomes map' and describes how Living Streets activities contribute to the end outcomes (this is shown in Fig1.).

Fig 1. The Living Streets Low Speed Communities Outcomes Map



The map highlights the key aspects of the project that need to be in place for the project to ‘work’. Although this was not explicitly defined at the project outset, the development of the map supported Living Streets to understand more clearly how and why different activities were being undertaken and to explore the impacts of these activities across the areas. This approach not only informed the approach to engagement but also ‘*tells the story*’ of how the project’s activities contribute to each outcome. This is done via examining each ‘stepping stone’ in the map to identify *activities* and who is *engaged* by these; how they *react*; what these stakeholders *learn and gain* as part of these engagements; what they then *do differently*; and finally, *what difference this makes*. This map also enables the areas where the impact of a project may be more or less successful to be explored. This contrasts with, and provides greater insight than, an approach that is focused on more exclusively on the end outcomes.

The map therefore creates a framework for the evaluation. To inform this a range of data and information was collected to understand:

- the extent to which the identified activities were being carried out
- whether the project was engaging with the right people and how they were reacting
- the difference the project was making to knowledge, attitude and skills
- any differences made to practice and behaviour and
- how this has made a difference to individuals, organisations and the system.

Data was collected via interviews and visits to the 5 areas, including a mix of telephone interviews, focus groups and face-to-face interviews with a wide range of key stakeholders involved in the projects. In addition, materials generated in the pilot, such as reports, community surveys, feedback etc. were also reviewed to identify evidence.

Contact with the communities was undertaken during the delivery of the Living Streets support and also up to three months after the support had ceased to be delivered. This was undertaken to explore the longer-term impacts of removing the Living Streets support on progress in each area. At the time of writing this paper the evaluation is in its final stages and, as a result, selected interim findings only are presented in this paper.

6. Contribution of the pilot to improving outcomes in each area

The findings relating to each stage of the outcomes map are summarised within this section and selected evidence presented. Findings from all areas are presented here collectively. Each element, or stepping stone, of the maps is presented in italics to aid interpretation.

What we do: Living Streets activities

It was very clear that a key type of activity that Living Streets facilitated in every area was to ***bring people together to explore priorities and opportunities***. This was a key part of engagement and was achieved through a flexible and adaptable approach, delivered in different ways in different areas. This ranged from one-to-one meetings, contributing to existing meetings and structures (such as Community Council meetings) to setting up specific project and community meetings. Central to this role was acting as a mediator and translator between a range of different stakeholders to support them to share and discuss the local challenges. There was clear evidence of this in all areas, but particularly in those where there had been tensions or miscommunications previously, or in areas where there had been a lack of focus or understanding of the community concerns in relation to lower speed-related issues.

“They were acting as a voice between the town and the Council”

“it was very good to have a ‘middle-man’ between the council and the community that could look at and communicate to both sides”

“helps us to have a full exploration of the issues and help us to understand the situation and shaped and developed the action plan”

In order to support this engagement a second key activity delivered by Living Streets was to **provide support to the community to gather evidence and information on local context and priorities**. This formed a key element of the project across all areas and was undertaken through a variety of routes, based on and adapting to, local needs and capacity. This included supporting local communities to develop online surveys via Facebook to capture local needs, undertaking street audits with residents, working with schools to develop the mapping of walking routes to school and bringing together local stakeholders and organisations in a workshop setting to clarify priorities. This support was uniformly well received across organisations and settings.

To support this engagement Living Streets also **shared best practice** from elsewhere – both from across the project and from wider experience in developing low speed communities. This again was well received across all areas:

“[they] came and undertook the street audit; it was a really good piece of extra technical help”

“[they] brought ideas from different areas on what could be done”

These insights also enabled Living Streets to **work with communities to develop action plans** for change. An aim of the project was to deliver an action plan for each area on the completion of engagement, but these took different forms in different areas based on local need, capacity and agreed aims of the community. These included: project action plans developed by local community groups and by Living Streets; school travel plans and; Council papers to be delivered to committees.

The project also sought to **build a network of champions** in each area to take forward activities and lead in the community once the Living Streets support had finished. There was clear evidence of champions across all areas, although the fact that that, due to the short-term nature of the project, recruitment was focused on areas that were already interested in progressing this issue, would suggest that champions were already in place. That said, there is some evidence that the champions may not have been fully established as it is clear that actions and activities in some areas appear to lie with a small number of individuals or organisations now the Living Streets support has finished. This appears to be a function of time and resources.

Who with? Engagement

In order to achieve success for this project, engagement needed to occur across a wide range of stakeholders in each community. These can be summarised into two groups:

- Statutory organisations that influence low speed communities
 - Police
 - Local Authority staff
 - Transport
 - Communities
 - Councillors; Community Councillors
- People and organisations within the low speed community
 - Schools & parent bodies
 - Community and special interest groups
 - Businesses; business representatives
 - Cultural organisations

There was clear evidence of engagement with all these groups across all project locations, although engagement and participation varied and not all these stakeholders were present in all areas.

How They Feel or React to Engagement

It was important that all stakeholders that engaged with Living Streets felt that they are **trustworthy and credible**. Clear evidence of this was identified throughout the project, both by those that had similar or related skills, by those that had been frustrated by local community engagement in the past and also by those looking for support in developing their plans:

“independent arbitration is key – there’s lots of overlap with our skills, knowledge and experience, but [Living Streets] independence means that trust can be built between partners”

“They managed a lot of anger and continue to do so”

“They gave the project an idea of what should be looked at”

The project also needed those being engaged to feel that this **project is important** and that they **have a contribution to make**. In all locations this was the case; people felt that the engagement was important and that they could contribute to it, although engagement occurred at different levels across areas. For some stakeholders this engagement was simply the ability to contribute to a consultation or survey (with one location receiving 600 responses to an online Facebook survey), but for others, the collection of evidence in their local area and definition of actions and plans meant that they understood the relevance of the work, understood it in a new way, and this encouraged participation:

“[through the project we developed the] understanding that the community has to be involved in any changes and gave us some new thinking in terms of what we could do and change to improve safety”

What they Learn and Gain

Learning and developing understanding was evidenced across the projects. As has been described above in the section above describing each area, it became clear that **stakeholders’ understanding of the benefits of lower speed** and their **understanding that a 20mph limit will not by itself realise outcomes** became more sophisticated over the course of the project. By the end of the evaluation very few respondents even mentioned 20mph limits in their discussion of the project; these focused very much on

- Placemaking/ enhancing the ‘Liveability’ of streets
- Increasing economic activity or development in an area
- Increasing active travel
- Increasing local perceptions of safety/ reduction of accidents

Many stakeholders were very clear in elaborating on this understanding:

“[It] made me appreciate that stakeholders have different interests. 20 miles per hour is not just stand-alone item and it can contribute to wider objectives”

“We [now] think about 20 miles per hour as one of the things that contribute to wider game; not looking at goals on an individual basis - this gives us a better understanding of each project in our area”

In addition to this understanding, there was clear evidence from ‘champions’ and other participants that had developed an enhanced **understanding local issues and opportunities**.

“It shaped our ideas; that was a real impact...we didn’t know where to start

Mapping the walk to school identified the particular areas or locations where safety was a concern...thinking about it from a child’s perspective”

“The community now have a better understanding of what [the Council] can and cannot do”

Beyond this understanding it was also clear that champions **gained knowledge, confidence and skills** from their engagement with the project, and also **gained a shared plan to make change locally**. This related to a wide variety of community engagement and placemaking skills, including ways to gather data and evidence, possible changes to deliver desired outcomes in their community and, importantly ways in which they could, themselves take action to improve their communities:

“...helped us to consider other ways to make it safer that we wouldn't have thought of”

“helped us to understand where we might have an impact”

“if it was not for this project I would not have sat down and spoken to the group of people...it has helped us to look sideways and backwards at the problem”

By the end of the project each area had an action plan that provided practical actions for a range of stakeholders across their community that was informed by local community engagement.

What they do differently: Changes to behaviour and practice

There was evidence across the projects of champions **working together to implement the action plan**, although in some cases plans were only finalised at the very end of the engagement so there was little time to implement actions. Examples of actions that had taken place included, in one area, a Council setting up a specific subgroup to take actions forward, another had developed reports for Council committees, along with planning other actions. Community stakeholders also demonstrated evidence of taking their plan forward, including, for example, school groups developing posters and ‘scarecrows’ to be presented roadside to encourage drivers to limit their speed. It is perhaps too early to definitively assess if this working together has or will take place.

It is however clear from many areas that there is evidence of **champions promoting a shared understanding of desired outcomes**. Developing and communicating this was a key thread throughout all engagements and projects, as the following quotes demonstrate:

“...this feels different, it feels like there is now a better understanding between the [different stakeholders]”

“the work has given a better understanding of the cross policy aspects and multi stakeholder interests”

It is however, too soon after completion of support to identify the whether or not **champions continue to gather evidence and review action plans**.

What difference this makes: Outcomes

It was clear that there was **more support for lower speed communities in project areas** – a positive response to the engagement and sharing of knowledge was received across all areas:

“[there was] definitely a sort of changing attitudes of [some stakeholders] – they are much more positive”

However, it is not possible to fully assess the projects’ contribution to this and the other longer term outcomes (i.e. **people in project areas feel safer in their streets; there are more 20mph limit areas introduced**), due to the short period since the conclusion of the support.

7. Conclusions: Contribution of Living Streets Low Speed Communities Project

It is clear that the type of support provided by Living Streets has made a significant contribution to the progression of activities within these communities despite the short project timescale. All areas have

participated in a process of relationship building, insight gathering and learning that has resulted in them being more clearly aware of what their community needs and wants. It is also clear, that despite the initial focus on 20mph limits for this project, communities are not (only) seeking lower speed; they are seeking to enhance their communities in terms of placemaking, active travel, enhanced local economy or improved safety. The project has clearly highlighted that, although 20mph is a tool that can contribute to these outcomes, it will not achieve this by itself and that other activities, delivered by a range of stakeholders, are required to realise the communities' desired outcomes.

The project support has been a success in supporting this process, in particular through:

- Generating of open, productive, trusted dialogue
- Incorporating of expertise from elsewhere
- Supporting learning and gathering information within communities, with a focus
- Taking groups 'beyond 20mph' as an end in itself
- Building a shared community with a shared focus, shared understanding of problem, challenge, and shared solutions

This research would suggest that engaging with communities should be a vital consideration of any organisation seeking to introduce a 20mph area; it is important to find out what communities in these areas want and need, and to work with them to understand wider activities required to achieve their desired outcomes. The approaches deployed by Living Streets enabled these communities to progress towards these, but more time is required to understand fully if these will be ultimately realised. However, the project does show how short-term softer interventions can be evaluated via a contribution analysis. This type of evaluation identifies indicators which will influence future progress.

It is also important to note that the experience and expertise within Living Streets and of the staff managing the project were crucial to their success as a credible 'third party' within communities. Living Streets lead officer working on this project had significant experience of community development developed at a local authority level. This understanding of practice allowed the project to adapt to the needs of each area, and to successfully manage competing voices. In addition, access to wider Living Streets resources and experience offered scope for communities to do more local engagement and have greater credibility in the eyes of professional officers and local politicians.

Although Living Streets (formally the Pedestrians association from 1929 to 2001) has a long association with campaigns for speed limits, it is not unique in the support it provides to communities. Similar expertise exists within councils and community development organisations although few prioritise work on road safety projects. Traditionally speed reduction is the preserve of transport professionals. The evaluation shows focusing on broader community engagement can add significant value to traditional transport planning and road safety approaches. Success requires a stronger focus on behaviour change and helping communities define local place based objectives that go beyond speed reduction.

Acknowledgements

Living Streets and Hilliam Research and Analysis would like to thank all participants in the project and those that took part in the research and evaluation activities for their contribution to this study.

ⁱ The process has used the Outcome Navigator approach, developed by Outcome Focus to support the evaluation of complex public service interventions where measurement and attribution can be challenging (www.outcomenavigator.org)