

To:  
From: Idris Francis <idrisfrancis@fightbackwithfacts.com>  
Subject: 4 years' accident and casualty figures for Portsmouth's 20mph area - dreadful  
Cc:

**To all Portsmouth City Councillors, MP's, MEP's and others.**

**Dear All,**

In January 2010 I wrote a detailed complaint about your Council's claims of "encouraging signs" after the first year of your £650,000 twenty mile per hour area, and copied it to all then Councillors MP's and MEP's. The substance of my complaint, at that stage, was (a) that there could not be sufficient data after only one year and for a relatively small area to be statistically significant and (b) that to the extent that the data might have any statistical significance, it suggested worsening trends of serious injuries not better.

That complaint and all subsequent correspondence, data and analysis, now amounting to 30 documents in all is available at <http://www.fightbackwithfacts.com/portsmouths-20mph-area/> and in my view demonstrates at best wishful and naive thinking on behalf of the Council, and at worst incompetent and seriously misleading analysis coupled with refusal to face facts when they emerge. Unfortunately your Council is not alone in that regard, because as a result of the publicity given to your Council's seriously misleading claims of succes other Councils - including recently Winchester - have followed your example, presumably because they too are unable to recognise spin, misrepresentation and incompetence when they see it - any more than the DfT (of West Coast Main Line fame) seem able to do.

My purpose in writing to you now however is to advise you that although your Council (perhaps understandably, given the figures) chose not to report casualty trends after the first two years, despite 3 years' data at least being needed to confirm changes in trend) **I recently obtained, albeit with difficulty, the accident and casualty data for the 3rd and 4th years.**

The raw data is on item 24 in the list at the bottom of that web page and is followed by graphs which show more clearly than numbers alone can what has happened on those roads - that although slight (and therefore total) injuries have fallen faster than national trends on urban (or indeed all) roads, **serious inuries have risen significantly despite falling nationally.** I provide more detailed comments in documents 26 and 27. .

**I warned your Council nearly three years ago** that this was what seemed to be happening, and now I have been proved right. **Please review this policy as a matter of urgency.** I would be happy to provide more information or analysis if you need it.

**Yours faithfully,**

**Idris Francis**

**In summary:**

1/ Serious Injuries (SI)

(a) Portsmouth 20mph SI appears to be on an upward trend, while national and national urban roads are both on downward trends.

(b) Separate figures for each of the 3 year "before" period have not been provided. If as seems likely numbers fell in that period as they did nationally, the slight increase shown in 2008 would have been a larger reversal of trend than it appears to be in the graph.

(c) SI in 2011 were 38% higher than they would have been had they fallen at the same rate as nationally.

(d) This assumes no change in traffic volume in Portsmouth, but if (as anticipated in the plan, reported in the first draft of the first one-year Report and found elsewhere) traffic fell by some 10% as drivers avoided the area and took their share of accidents with them, the casualty rate (per vehicle mile) was 52% higher.

(e) These represent 15 (or 23) more serious injuries over the 4 years, compared to national trend.

#### 1/ Slight Injuries

(a) Again the same applies, in the absence of separate numbers for the "before" period we do not know whether the superficially impressive fall in 2008 (on which claims of "encouraging signs" were based) might not have been a fall at all, but a slight reversal of a fall which had already happened, on trend, in 2007.

(b) The fall in 2009 was impressive, though rather less so when adjusted for traffic.

(c) That 2009 fall was however followed by increases in 2010 and 2011, implying that the 2009 fall was something of a freak or "outlier" (due to the volatility of small numbers)

(d) These represent 97 (or 67) fewer slight injuries compared to national trend

#### However

(a) in 2011 SI was 52% higher than national trend while Slight was 38% lower, both adjusted for traffic.

(b) not adjusted for traffic the figures are SI 38% higher , Slight 12% lower.

(c) it is far from clear why SI rose but Slight fell, but increases in SI due to misplaced sense of safety and lack of concentration by drivers have been reported elsewhere.

(d) The adverse differences appear to be worsening in both cases.

(e) Given the wide differences that occur within each category and between them it is not easy to balance increases in serious injuries against falls in slight injuries, but I tend to believe that increasing SI is much the most important of the two.

end

