

These speed limits will achieve nothing

SIR — I am astonished and appalled that, now of all times, when many taxpayers are hanging on by their fingertips, pensioner bankruptcies have doubled and social services are cut, Hampshire County Council plans to spend £350,000 (and who knows how much more?) on unenforceable 20mph speed limits in Winchester that at best will achieve nothing and at worst will increase risk by making people feel safer when they are not.

Much of the blame for these and similar schemes elsewhere rests, however, with Portsmouth City Council and the way they cherry-picked numbers from data for only one year in one small city's streets to announce "encouraging signs", when, properly compared, trends were mostly worse, or much worse, than nationally. How curious, too, that the planned third year report has been abandoned and the data ignored. I wonder why.

Cost-effectiveness should surely be the watchword when spending public funds. At a time when 60,000-plus people die in hospitals every year through infection, incorrect medication, dehydration, starvation and inadequate monitoring, how many more lives would be saved or much improved if these huge sums were spent instead in Hampshire's hospitals, even on mops, buckets and disinfectant, let alone on training, equipment, or operations?

Having spent tens of thousands of hours studying road safety policies and results, I believe, as do other engineers with whom I share information, that while improved road and vehicle engineering have made massive contributions to the lowering of road risk (deaths relative to traffic volume are some 20 times lower than in 1950), most other policies, whether from the DfT or councillors with bees in their bonnets, have been, when not positively harmful, hopelessly uncompetitive in cost-effectiveness terms in relation to other ways of improving our lives.

**Idris Francis,
Church Lane,
West Meon.**

Ignoring evidence would be negligent

SIR — How appalling that £200,000 of ratepayers' money is about to be squandered by Hampshire County Council on "experimental" 20mph zones (*Chronicle*, August 30). Have some councillors not studied Portsmouth's 20mph experiment?

HCC has a statutory duty to improve road safety and it would be negligent to disregard Portsmouth's evidence, which proves that 20mph zones worsen road safety.

They increase accidents for the following reasons:

- They frustrate drivers and cause anger and lost concentration.
- Many drivers divert around 20mph zones and drive faster to compensate for the extra distance.
- When average speed drops, road users get complacent. All too often, we read about pedestrians stepping into the road from between very slow-moving traffic, only to be killed by overtaking vehicles.

How many children is Hampshire County Council willing to kill or maim to satisfy its urge to "experiment"? Parents of young children must resist its dangerous 20mph "experiments", if necessary by voting them out at next year's elections.

**Peter Stewart,
Beaver Drive,
Bishopstoke.**

The perils of speed bumps

SIR — Over the years, Keith Webb has made many suggestions, all of which are extremely sensible, and the one regarding the repairs to Winnall Manor Road (*Chronicle* August 23), even more so.

As every careful motorist knows, it is foolish and dangerous to drive straight over speed humps, as it can rip the inside of a car's tyres. The correct way is to go one side or the other — all a great nuisance when driving down Winnall Manor Road.

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