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Mr Mark Ruskell MSP
MG. 17
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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12th July 2017

Dear Mr Ruskell,

Members Bill on reducing default urban limit to 20mph

I am writing to you following the publication of your safer streets consultation which proposes a reduction in the default speed limit in urban areas across Scotland. Firstly, may I congratulate you for bringing this debate forward and your commitment to reducing road traffic accidents. The RAC shares your commitment to reduce casualties and our overall objectives are to make motoring more affordable, more enjoyable and safer.

Each year the RAC publishes its Report on Motoring. Now in its 29th year, it is the UK's most comprehensive measure of motoring opinion and motorists' concerns and informs our campaigning and advocacy. Because the report is published annually, we are able to track attitudes towards issues such as speeding and how they may be changing over a period of time.

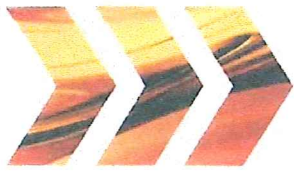
In the 2012 Report on Motoring, 36% of UK motorists admitted to breaking 20mph speed limits. In Scotland, this figure was 34%. However, by 2016 the proportion of UK motorists admitting to breaking the 20mph limit had risen to 46%, while in Scotland the figure rose to 39%. Perhaps of more concern in Scotland is the number of motorists who believe that the 20mph limit should be higher – this has risen from 28% in 2012, to 33% in 2016. In September, we shall publish our 2017 Report on Motoring which I would be happy to share with you when it is released.

The RAC is supportive of 20mph limits in areas where they are most needed, targeted in densely populated residential areas where there are schools, hospitals and care homes for example. However, we are concerned that setting it as the default limit in urban areas would have the effect of desensitising motorists. We have seen compliance of 20mph speed limits decline as they have been rolled-out in a blanket approach suggesting that they may be losing the support of motorists. With increasing congestion, the average speed in urban areas has declined significantly in recent years but to maintain traffic flow, keep down journey times and reduce the impact on business we believe that a common sense approach is required where through roads and major roads in urban areas are not subjected to 20mph limits unless there is solid evidence to suggest otherwise. Unless there is a clear and relevant road safety benefit such as in accident hot-spots or locations where there are high volumes of potentially vulnerable road users such as around schools and hospitals then we believe that it is not appropriate to take a blanket approach to the imposition of 20mph zones.

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While we would not specifically want to oppose your Bill, we are concerned that blanket 20mph urban roads will be counter-productive, and we believe that Scottish councils should focus their resources on improving road safety, road layout and imposing 20mph limits in areas where there are high incidents of road traffic collisions or near misses and where they deliver tangible benefits.

I would be more than happy to discuss this with you in more detail should you wish to get in touch with me.

Yours sincerely,

Nicholas Lyes

PUBLIC AFFAIRS MANAGER

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