

## A38 Plymouth Parkway – response to consultation

Safety remains our highest priority, and our ongoing commitment is that no one should be harmed while travelling or working on our roads.

The A38 Parkway plays a key strategic role in the South West region while also acting as an informal local distributor road for the city of Plymouth.

Recent validated collision data has identified 157 incidents on this stretch of road between 2020 and 2024, resulting in 226 injuries. Our safety review found that the collision rate is more than twice the national average for similar roads, with speed identified as a contributing factor.

To help reduce the number of serious injuries and fatalities, we are proposing to lower the speed limit from 70mph to 60mph. While we recognise this change may not address all concerns, we are confident that it represents a meaningful first step toward improving safety. The impact on journey times is minimal, with an estimated increase of just 49 seconds.

During the consultation period, National Highways reviewed all feedback and grouped objections into the following key themes:

1. Supporting data for the proposal
2. Impact of speed reduction
3. Consideration of additional safety measures (e.g. slip road improvements)
4. Journey times, congestion, and economic implications
5. Driver behaviour
6. Road surface concerns
7. Consultation process

A detailed response to each of these themes is provided in the appendix titled *Detailed Response*.

After careful consideration of all responses received, we have decided to proceed with the proposals outlined in the order document.

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## Appendix – Detailed Responses

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### **1. Data used for the scheme**

Our proposals are based on collision and risk assessment data. Using collision data, research and risk assessments, we identify patterns and types of collisions causing harm to our road users. Using this evidence and knowledge, we review the speed limits of our roads, to ensure they are suitable for the characteristics and usage of the road.

We also take into consideration changing weather conditions, using all year-round data. This approach supports our work to help reduce the total number of collisions on that route.

The latest validated collision data identified a total of 157 collisions on the A38 Parkway, resulting in 226 injuries between 2020 and 2024. A safety review revealed that the collision rate is double the national average and that speed was the contributor.

### **2. Speed reduction won't bring improvements**

Higher speeds are directly linked to more collisions. Even a small increase in speed significantly raises the risk of serious injury or death. Slowing down increases both the stopping distance and the amount of forward visibility a driver requires.

Research undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) shows that the percentage reduction in collision frequency per 1mph reduction in average speed is 3% for higher speed urban roads.

Road safety is a shared responsibility, and all drivers must adhere to the speed limit. These limits are clearly marked and serve as maximums, not targets. The Highway Code reminds drivers to adjust their speed based on the situation, taking into account traffic flow, weather conditions, unexpected hazards, and the presence of vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists.

Plymouth Parkway plays a dual role in allowing strategic traffic to flow whilst servicing many sectors of Plymouth City. The busy nature of the road, coupled with the alignment and topography, contributes to what is an appropriate safe speed. Having reviewed the road, travelling at 60mph is an appropriate speed for this section of the A38 at this time and is close to

the speed most drivers are doing of 64mph, the average recorded speed of most drivers.

Whilst we appreciate a speed limit reduction on its own will not resolve all issues on the A38, it is part of a safer system approach to help address the current issues on this route. In addition, changes to the speed limit can be made quickly and the aim is to reduce the number of people being harmed in the area, which is our priority for improving safety on this route.

### **3. Additional safety enhancements need to be considered i.e. slip roads**

Our speed management proposals form part of a broader, targeted strategy developed by National Highways to enhance safety for all road users across our network. This strategy also includes potential future safety improvements separate to this work.

At National Highways, we carry out annual collision reviews and periodically assess network risk using the recognised [International Road Assessment Programme \(iRAP\)](#) methodology. These evidence-based approaches enable us to systematically prioritise safety schemes, ensuring our interventions deliver maximum impact where it's needed most.

When there is a clear need to implement additional safety measures at a junction, our regional teams evaluate a range of location-specific options – from junction upgrades to targeted speed reductions.

National Highways has adopted the Safe System approach – a leading road safety management framework that integrates best practices across key areas: road design, vehicle safety, human behaviour, speed management, and post-collision response. As the highway authority, we are primarily responsible for the infrastructure components, but we also contribute to all other aspects of the system. The Safe System recognises that preventing deaths and serious injuries on our roads is a shared responsibility, requiring close collaboration with partner organisations and stakeholders, as well as road users themselves.

### **4. Journey times, congestion and economic impact**

A speed limit defines the maximum legal speed – not a target to aim for. In adverse conditions such as fog, rain, or heavy traffic, even driving at the speed limit may be unsafe. While the majority of drivers respect signposted speed limits, a minority choose to exceed them, unnecessarily endangering themselves and others on the road.

Currently the national speed limit on this dual carriageway is 70 mph. A reduction of 10mph will lead to an approximate maximum increase in

journey time of 49 seconds over the extent of the new 60mph speed limit. The increase will be less for drivers that don't travel the full extent of the Parkway. We will regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our safety interventions and also look to identify any unintended outcomes which can happen through changes, acting accordingly where necessary.

## **5. Driver behaviour**

Road safety is a shared responsibility that cannot be achieved in isolation. Our road users play an active role in road safety through the way they drive on our roads and are key to helping us achieve a safer network for everyone. We work closely with our police partners and the Vision Zero South West road safety partnership as we have a shared aim to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

One initiative is known as Operation Tramline, where we supply HGV camera cabs to police forces. From the HGV cab's elevated position, officers can spot and record evidence of risky driving behaviour – whatever vehicle the motorist is driving. The overall aim of the initiative is to reduce the number of incidents on our roads where unsafe driver behaviour was a contributor.

Another example of our road safety work is through our national and regional safety campaigns. These are long-term behaviour change campaigns, designed to address and improve driver knowledge, capability and confidence to drive safely on our network. Our website – <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/road-safety/> – provides advice, information and details about our road safety campaigns to help keep drivers safe when travelling on our roads.

## **6. Road condition**

Defects, such as potholes, are identified on our roads and prioritised for repair in line with the Defect Category Guidance Note. The speed of mitigation will depend on the severity and the risk that they pose and are prioritised as such.

In addition to the repair of critical defects we also have a prioritised programme of schemes to ensure surfacing of roads and other assets are being addressed and renewed. Due to the size of the road network, we ensure the highest priority need is addressed first within the renewals programme, along with constant monitoring in the event of changing conditions.

Please be assured that this safety scheme is carried out in addition to our regular maintenance activities and will be in addition to any future schemes that are focussed on addressing road condition issues.

## **7. Consultation process**

Any permanent speed limit change to an A-road needs to go through a statutory process to ensure that our proposed plans are made available to the public, to allow for feedback. Schemes will only be taken forward to construction if the statutory process has been successful.

A statutory notice period lasting a minimum of 21 days started on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2025, when we submitted our formal application, where formal objections could be made to us.

As part of this formal process, we made information publicly available in person, at local venues, as well as on our dedicated web page. Had any significant changes been needed we would have reviewed and restarted the process.

Following a full review of all information and objections, we are now formally making the speed limit order. A notice of making will be published to inform the public and once made, the speed limit will be changed from the specified dates.