

16 Oct 2012

To All Hampshire City Councillors, and others.

Dear Councillors,

Further to my September email pointing out serious injuries (SI) had risen in the first two years of its 20mph scheme, and especially so in comparison to falls elsewhere, I have now managed to obtain the accident and casualty data for the 3rd and 4th years - despite formal Reports for those years having been abandoned.

The whole of that data is now available at <http://www.fightbackwithfacts.com/portsmouths-20mph-area/> together with my graphs for SI and Slight injury trends based on those numbers and comments (the last 4 documents listed at the foot of that page). For your convenience I also attach those documents here.

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.

I will continue to monitor Winchester's 20mph results to see if the same applies here - unless of course you see these Portsmouth results as reason enough to abandon these plans and spend the money on other more cost effective measures.

Yours sincerely

Idris Francis