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Speed limit review merely infantilises us all

BELIEVE it or not, this is my 150th column for Business MK. I don't know whether to be proud of having achieved such a high number or sad that so many of the issues I have written about over the past few years remain unresolved.

It is evident that the planned marvel that is Milton Keynes continues to suffer a death by a thousand cuts and those with the power to influence change here appear utterly rudderless. This month's column casts a wary eye over the apparent efforts to infantilise us as we use the redways and grid roads.

So let's start by stating the obvious. Yes, driving fast can kill. So can so many things that make life worth living. I'll leave you to compile your own mental list. And surely driving fast and legally on roads specifically designed to be driven on fast and legally is fine?

Given the recent efforts of Milton Keynes Council to slow us down, disrupt our journeys and otherwise impede us, however, I'm genuinely surprised that they have yet to introduce a new city-wide speed limit of zero miles per hour.

In my mind's eye I can see our illustrious council leader being interviewed on TV declaring that he has permanently solved the problem of road accidents in Milton Keynes before risibly going back to his office on his skateboard.

Precious

Indeed, recently the council admitted to spending £108,000 - I suspect more - painting meaningless hatched lines and installing solar-powered central islands on sections of the H7 Chaffron Way. This so-called local safety scheme work - roughly from V7 Saxon Street to V11 Tongwell Street - is most noticeable at the junctions of Woolstone and Woughton on the Green, Oakgrove-Monkston Park and Middleton to Monkston.

The justification given for this particular phase of infantilism is cumulative accident statistics along the stretch of road, including at least one fatality and several others with serious injuries and cars overturned.

I happily acknowledge that every life is precious. But would it not perhaps have been better to find out who is having these

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accidents and if particular groups are identified - for instance, persons who obtained their driving licences abroad under different road use laws or young people who are overly confident - then address the issues by retraining them?

As part of its ongoing efforts to infantilise us all, it has emerged that the council is now conducting a semi-secret speed limit review of all horizontal and vertical grid road speeds in Milton Keynes.

Slashed

Readers will be aware, of course, that several grid roads have already had speed limits slashed drastically - mostly, it seems, because of a few accidents generally caused by people doing stupid things. These include pedestrians being in collision with vehicles while attempting crossings on grid roads when there are perfectly good, useable and safe underpasses or overpasses.

Surely we have all seen people pushing infants in pushchairs across 70mph roads, often with several more tiny children in tow? I know I have. Shouldn't these people be penalised or at least trained in safely crossing roads?

Other accidents have involved vehicles turning right where the driver appears to have not bothered looking before doing so.

So because of the unthinking actions of these few, Milton Keynes - arguably the most user-friendly city in Europe - must slowly grind to a halt?

A Freedom of Information Act 2000 request has revealed that the review will look at the national speed limit on the grid roads that still enjoy them and will be for a

10mph reduction from 70mph to 60mph on dual carriageways and from 60mph to 50mph on single carriageways.

The full criteria being used to assess appropriate speed limits are based on the January 2013 Department of Transport guide to setting speed limits. However it appears to make no distinction for Milton Keynes' unique grid roads, grade separated crossings and safe redways for cyclists and pedestrians.

Interestingly there are currently no plans whatsoever for public consultation on the

proposals that emerge from the review as the "document is still in draft". In my opinion, this needs to be out in full public awareness before the council gets the idea that it can do the whole thing out of sight and spring it on us as a completed project in a few months time.

Whether you agree with me or not, I wonder whether you are happy being treated like an infant?

Just asking.

Cheerio.



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