# Welsh Government faces rising backlash over unpopular 20mph speed limit ahead of Senedd election



### Discontent Brews as Welsh Government Faces Backlash Over 20mph Speed Limit

As the countdown to the 2026 Senedd election intensifies, campaign groups critical of the Labour-led Welsh Government’s controversial 20mph speed limit are mobilizing voters to hold their representatives accountable. These groups accuse the administration of being increasingly out of touch and inattentive to public opinion, as evidenced by an unprecedented petition that has gathered nearly half a million signatures opposing this blanket rollout of reduced speed limits across Wales.

Mark Baker, the leader behind this initiative, voiced his exasperation with the government's blatant disregard for public sentiment. Reflecting on the large turnout at a Senedd debate concerning the petition, Baker remarked, “That moment made it clear. They weren’t just ignoring the petition—they were ignoring the people.” This anguish resonates widely, as polls reveal that only 33% of Welsh citizens support the 20mph policy, while a striking 61% are vehemently opposed to it.

Moreover, the Welsh Government’s recent decision to expand the Senedd by 36 members at an estimated cost of over £120 million has sparked outrage among critics. This move has been labelled a “tone-deaf action” given the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. A member of Action Against 20mph Speed Limits pointed out, “They tell us there’s no budget for hospitals or transport, yet they magically find money for more politicians and vanity projects.” Such perceptions of fiscal irresponsibility have intensified community frustrations as essential services hit the breaking point.

Grassroots coalitions, including "20 IS NOT PLENTY" and "United Voices," argue that the government’s actions signify a stubborn "culture of wilful ignorance.” They have employed Freedom of Information requests in a bid to uncover the actual costs behind the speed limit initiative, raising valid concerns that funds could be better spent on essential services rather than misguided environmental initiatives.

A spokesperson from United Voices aptly asserted, “The Welsh Government claims to be listening, but their actions tell a different story. You can’t profess to value public opinion while pushing through untested policies that lack genuine support.” This growing dissatisfaction closer to the elections spotlights a significant crisis of accountability in Welsh governance.

Criticism of Labour doesn’t end here; the collaboration between Plaid Cymru and Labour has also drawn scrutiny for enabling unpopular policies that have incited public discontent. Even the Welsh Conservatives, who have historically opposed Labour, are now facing mounting pressure to offer a credible alternative. Campaign representatives emphasize that all political entities, regardless of affiliation, must authentically engage with the electorate's concerns as they approach the election.

Baker encapsulated the broader implications of this disillusionment, stating, “It’s not just about roads. It’s about who makes decisions, how they’re made, and whether our voices truly matter. It also speaks to transparency and accountability to the electorate.” These reflections serve to highlight the urgent call for an overhaul in governance and a refocused commitment to the populace.

In response to increasing discontent, campaigners are employing creative methods to galvanize support, including the launch of a song titled “The Call of the Valleys” on platforms like YouTube, designed to inspire voter engagement. A representative from 20 IS NOT PLENTY noted, “Your vote is your voice. If we don’t use it wisely, we’ll only invite more of the same—more unwanted policies, continued silence in response to public outcry, and more squandering of taxpayers’ money.”

While the efficacy of these grassroots movements remains uncertain, the sheer volume of petition signatures—outpacing even Welsh Labour’s total votes in the last election—signifies a critical shift in public sentiment. The 20mph law has become a potent symbol of the urgent need for governance reform and accountability in Wales.

As the 2026 Senedd elections loom, grassroots groups are dedicated to harnessing this momentum, urging voters to reflect on their experiences under Labour’s lengthy reign. They advocate for a democratic renaissance that prioritizes constituents' voices over political convenience. Whether these burgeoning sentiments translate into impactful political change remains to be seen, but the escalating dissatisfaction mirrors visible trends in elections throughout the UK, suggesting that a strong desire for change is becoming the prevailing narrative among voters.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiygFBVV95cUxNMUxhaGd5M3hka0FPaTRjSjdEbXI3clgxWjBwUXUxbklELUsxUHo2YWVqUzV6R0hCbzVHOVZVc216QU9OM2RXRDJtYzZOazg4MTNkOFBoUV9EcXBCYUpMRTJ2V1ItQ0Q5cGk1b1BHcVVUdlpETE1WVTJ4VDRhTnRHUVlfejVXNDI4ODZDNGUyOUtLRDdBUGM3cWx3TFJNVEVkNm5iQUdsUmxidDlEbjNpT2tQcUcxVTNUQ0hsRFhWS0JVZkZPeV9uNER3?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/96c8fc18-99c8-410b-997f-3455aef2b507> - In August 2024, UK Transport Secretary Louise Haigh announced full support for local councils wishing to implement 20mph zones and low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs). This marked a shift from the previous Conservative administration, which had attempted to limit such schemes. Haigh emphasized that decisions on these initiatives should be made at the local level, with the UK government providing backing to councils pursuing them. The move aimed to facilitate increased walking and cycling, with future Department for Transport policies aligning to support these efforts.
3. <https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/petition-calling-wales-20mph-limit-27735799> - A petition opposing the new 20mph default speed limit in Wales garnered over 56,000 signatures within days of its launch. The Welsh Government's initiative aimed to improve road safety by reducing the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph in most areas. However, the policy faced significant public backlash, with concerns about its economic impact and effectiveness. The petition, started by Mark Baker, highlighted public dissatisfaction and called for the reversal of the new speed limit law.
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2023-09-28/20mph-petition-surpasses-number-of-welsh-labour-votes-in-last-election> - A petition calling for the reversal of the new 20mph speed limit in Wales surpassed the number of constituency votes Welsh Labour received in the last Senedd election. The petition, which became the most signed in the history of the Welsh Parliament, had 443,200 signatures, exceeding Welsh Labour's 443,047 constituency votes. The policy, introduced to improve road safety, faced significant public opposition, with a poll revealing that just 33% of people supported it, while 61% were opposed.
5. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/welsh-government-welsh-senedd-covid-welsh-conservatives-b2414232.html> - A petition opposing the new 20mph default speed limit in Wales received over 150,000 signatures, setting a record for the most signed petition in Senedd history. The Welsh Government's initiative aimed to improve road safety by reducing the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph in most areas. However, the policy faced significant public backlash, with concerns about its economic impact and effectiveness. The petition called for the reversal of the new speed limit law, highlighting widespread public dissatisfaction.
6. <https://www.herald.wales/national-news/welsh-conservatives-push-for-senedd-vote-to-scrap-20mph-speed-limit/> - The Welsh Conservatives planned to bring forward a motion in the Senedd calling for the repeal of the default 20mph speed limit, marking one year since its introduction by the Labour-led Welsh Government. The move followed growing public backlash and concerns over the policy's economic and environmental impacts. The petition against the speed limit change had nearly half a million signatures, reflecting significant public opposition. The debate in the Senedd was expected to reignite tensions over the policy, which had been divisive across Wales.
7. <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/mapped-people-signed-petition-calling-27744309> - A map detailing the areas in Wales with the highest number of signatories to the petition calling for the reversal of the 20mph speed limit showed significant opposition in the north-east and the Vale of Glamorgan. Constituencies such as Alyn and Deeside, Vale of Clwyd, and Wrexham had the most signatories, indicating concentrated public dissatisfaction with the new speed limit policy. The petition, which became the most signed in Senedd history, highlighted widespread concerns over the policy's implementation and its impact on communities.