TRAFFIC CALMING

Scheme Assessment Process

Kent Highway Services

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Introduction

People regularly contact the county council about the dangers caused by drivers travelling at excessive speed. Our task is to assess whether excessive speed is a problem and if so, to recommend what should be done about it. Both Members and the public need to have confidence that we will recommend the most appropriate measures.

This document describes how we carry out speed management in the county.

Two further documents address the needs of the public and practitioners:

1. A public leaflet providing information and guidance;
2. A detailed practitioners guide to road humps and chicanes which looks at the whole process from scheme identification, through consultation, to implementation and monitoring.

Deciding what should be done

Whether a problem is highlighted by the public, elected Members or officers, we follow a standard investigation process, we look at crash statistics to see if there is a pattern which could be altered by some kind of intervention, which could include changes to the road, publicity or enforcement. We may need to carry out further investigations for example speed surveys, traffic flow surveys, HGV flows and noise levels. These are not always necessary, as the initial analysis of the crash data may produce a clear picture of what should be done. We also look at the road surface, lighting or signs and road markings.

If engineering measures need to be introduced, small low cost ones are often more effective than major reconstruction. Heavy engineering should be seen as a last resort. If a junction can be improved by simple signing and road marking this should be done before traffic signals or roundabouts are considered. Similarly, if road closures and reworking of parking arrangements can bring about reductions in through traffic and speed, then these should be considered before road humps and chicanes.

Typical Measures

Driver education

These include a wide range of measures from broad based public information and publicity campaigns, to community based projects and training programmes aimed at resolving specific problems. Measures of this kind can be delivered on a countywide or local basis.

Speed limits

These are currently subject to the rules set out in the 'Department of Transport's Circular Roads 1/93' document. A revised version of this document is likely to be published in the spring / summer of 2006.

Interactive speed signs

These signs are located shortly after the start of a lower speed limit area and are used to remind drivers, who have not reduced speed, what the limit is. These have proved very effective with studies indicating reductions in speed of up to 6mph. The council has a policy, which sets out the criteria for implementing these signs and has a forward programme of some 50 potential sites. Each year some 12 sites are funded from the small improvements budget. Parish Councils can fully fund a sign providing it meets that criteria. Bids for these signs should be made through the Divisional Office.

Signs and road markings

These are subject to rules laid out in the 'Signs, Road Markings and General Directions 2003' issued by the Department of Transport (DfT). Only signs and markings contained in this document can be used, although special authorisation for a particular sign can be sought through the DfT. However, this can be a lengthy process.

Safety cameras

These include fixed site, and mobile cameras for enforcing speed, and red light running cameras at traffic signal junctions. The use of these cameras is strictly controlled by the DfT and is operated locally by the Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership. Bids for cameras are made annually through the Divisional Office to the DfT, via the partnership, that ensures that current acceptance criteria are met. The criteria governing the use of safety cameras can be found on the partnerships' website at www.kentandmedwaysafetycameras.org.uk

Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO)

These cover changes to one ways streets, road closures, parking restrictions, etc. The Divisional Office deals with these.

Pedestrian / traffic islands

These are used to provide assistance to pedestrians in locations where zebra or pelican crossing cannot be used. They can also be used to prevent overtaking and are often used on right turning lanes to protect drivers waiting to turn.

Mini roundabouts

These are best used in residential areas and can only be used where the road is subject to a 30mph limit. All mini roundabouts must be lit. If sufficient deflection is not provided then some drivers will drive over the central roundel or pass on the wrong side. Cyclists also dislike them.

Road humps

The DfT has produced regulations and guidance on the use of these measures, these being ‘The Highways Act 1980’, ‘The Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1999’, and ‘Traffic Advisory Leaflet 7/96’. Details of the above and the councils’ existing policies and guidance on these measures can be found in the newly published ‘Practitioners Guide to Vertical and Horizontal Deflections’. These regulations and guidance cover many aspects, from the maximum height of a hump through to issues such as signing and street lighting, limitations of use such as roads with a maximum speed limits of 30mph and on to consultation with the emergency services and the public.

Road humps are primarily for use in residential areas where excessive speed, and or injury crashes involving vulnerable road users are found. They should be used to maintain slow speed rather than reduce it. There are also problems associated with their use, which need to be taken into account when this measure is considered.

Chicanes / narrowings

These are used in similar circumstances to road humps and are often used in conjunction with them. They are not subject to the same strict rules as road humps.

Funding process

We need to prioritise schemes so that the most effective ones are completed first. A priority assessment, which balances the costs of schemes with the expected benefit, has therefore been developed. This assessment should be done as early as possible so that we do not waste resources on schemes of low priority.

Conclusion

Many measures can be used to reduce crashes and excessive speed. These include education, enforcement, minimal engineered changes, complete reconstruction, or combinations of all these. All solutions should be considered so that the most appropriate and effective solution is implemented. Following implementation, schemes must be monitored to enable continuous improvement and provide feedback on the schemes effectiveness.

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