

Circular Roads 1/2006 Setting Local Speed Limits, Update

A report by the County Transportation Manager to the Highways Advisory Board on 8th January 2008

Summary

1. The results of the work carried out on the speed limit review to the south of Maidstone are set out.

Introduction

2. This is the latest in a series of HAB reports (September 06 & January 07) on the speed limit review. It explores the results of the demonstration area south of Maidstone and a "rough sort" of the remaining "A" and "B" road network to establish the way forward. The principle aim of this project is to provide a consistent standard for speed limits across the county. This report also considers the circular as a potential policy document for the county.

Demonstration area

3. The demonstration area lies to the south of Maidstone and includes a total of 12 roads. Key to the work being undertaken was that it should produce the opening statement of Circular Roads 1/2006 that being "Speed limits should be evidence led, self explaining and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel. They should encourage self-compliance and not be seen by drivers as being a target speed at which to drive in all circumstances." It is essential that the right balance between the needs of local residents and drivers is met. In the past, some lower speed limits have produced little or no change in driver behaviour and in some cases brought into disrepute previously well observed speed limits.
4. The reports are split into three specific areas. Speed limit changes, signs and TRO's. They indicate changes to some 27% of existing speed limits, improvements to signs and this issue is covered in greater detail in Item 9 on the agenda plus modifications to TRO's. Work on improving signing, particularly gateways will take place over the next two years. Detailed design and full consultation of the demonstration area will take place during the next financial year 08/09 with implementation of the demonstration area in 2009/10.

Rough Sort

5. This work indicates that the county should be split into three areas on a rolling programme with completion in 2012/13 starting in Mid Kent.

Enforcement

6. In communications with the parish councils it is clear that enforcement is a key issue. Although enforcement of speed limits rests with the Chief Constable it is clear that all limits must be properly signed. Of equal importance is that all speed limits are understood and accepted by drivers so that enforcement levels are kept to a minimum.

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Consultation with the Chief Constable

7. Meetings with Kent Police have taken place and, they have accepted the methodology used to determine the speed limits within the demonstration area. They have in the past raised concerns and objections regarding the implementation of some lower speed limits.

Local Communication

8. Local communication with Parish Councils in the demonstration area has been through John Wilson of East Farleigh PC who has agreed to act for all councils within the demonstration area. His role is to reassure the Parish Councils within the area that the County Council's approach is robust and in line with the Government's guidance.

Wider Consultation

9. During 08/09 once detailed designs and draft TRO's have been produced then full consultation will begin. This will follow the normal Kent process with adverts and a formal request to statutory bodies. We will also discuss the methodology used with formal groups and organisations.

"C" class and unclassified roads

10. At this time there is insufficient time and funding to also consider "C" and unclassified roads although they should not be completely ignored. Where a crash analysis indicates that a lower limit is wholly or partly the measure required to reduce crashes then a crash remedial report can be produced and funding for that scheme provided through the Transport and Safety Package PIPKIN.

Circular Roads 1/2006

11. One key objective of the report was to test circular roads 1/2006 to see if it is fit for purpose. The report concludes that in the main the document provides a consistent standard to be applied. There are a few issues to resolve and further work will be undertaken along with consultation with the DfT, other highway authorities and Kent Police to see if national or local flexibility is required.

Conclusion

12. The work carried out indicates that although the review of the counties "A" and "B" road network will be completed by 2011, implementation of the recommendations will not be completed until 2012 / 2013 at the earliest. Bids for the funding of this review will need to be included within the LTP process but it must be noted that with limited crash savings likely to come from this review PIPKIN assessments may be low. Funding for this should not therefore be at the expense of crash remedial works as to do so might endanger the chances of achieving the government's 2010 target of reduced casualties.
13. It is also clear that Circular Roads 1/2006 offers us the chance to achieve a consistency of standard for speed limits on Kent's Roads. We will need to ensure that the balance between the needs of residents and drivers is fairly maintained. Further work, assessment and consultation is needed before 1/2006 can be recommended as a county policy.

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Recommendations

14. Members are asked to note the recommendations of the reports and the progress towards the 2011 target.

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