
From: Bryan Sweetland, Cabinet Member – Environment, Highways & Waste
John Burr, Director of Highways and Transportation

To: Environment, Highways & Waste Cabinet Committee

Date: 4 July 2012

Subject: Policy Development for 20mph Schemes in Kent

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This paper sets out the work the County Council and the Government are doing in developing new policy on the implementation of 20mph schemes. It recommends that whilst this work and the associated trials are ongoing, Members re-affirm their support for the existing County Council policy. This states that 20mph schemes will only be introduced where they can produce crash reductions as part of a Casualty Reduction Scheme. A full review of this policy will be brought to this Committee once the trials have been evaluated for Members to consider.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to note the existing policy and that new 20mph schemes are promoted only as part of a Casualty Reduction Scheme until the current trials have been evaluated and a new formal policy has been adopted by the County Council.

1. Background

The number of requests Highways and Transportation receive for 20mph limits is increasing, especially since a recent cycling safety campaign run by The Times newspaper encouraging blanket 20mph limits in residential areas. The County Council has an existing policy which allows the introduction of 20mph limits or zones at locations where such measures can be justified in saving crashes. This is documented in the Highway Advisory Board reports dated 14 November 2006 and 12 July 2008.

Approximately fifty 20mph schemes have been implemented across the County in the last decade. All new residential roads in Kent are being designed to keep traffic at or below 20mph, although they do not necessarily have formal Traffic Regulation Orders and the associated signing clutter. This paper sets out the work that both the Government and County Council are currently undertaking to determine ways of implementing cost effective 20mph schemes which improve road safety, but do not over burden the Police with unrealistic enforcement demands or increase driver frustration, delay and impatience. This work will feed in to a paper to be presented to this Committee next year for a formal policy to be adopted by the County Council.

2. Zones and Limits

There are currently two different types of 20mph schemes that the County Council can legally implement. One requires traffic calming to make the limit self enforcing. These are referred to as “zones”, whilst 20mph “limits” do not require traffic calming but simply rely on signing. These “limits” however must have existing traffic speeds at or around 20mph before a formal Traffic Regulation Order can be introduced and make the limit legal to avoid criminalising large numbers of motorists, presenting the Police with an unrealistic enforcement problem and generating driver frustration and impatience due to delays.

3. Current Government Advice on the Introduction of 20mph Schemes

Local Authorities are able to use their powers to introduce 20 mph speed schemes in (a) major streets where business on foot is more important than delaying road traffic and (b) lesser residential roads in cities, towns and villages, particularly where this would be reasonable for the road environment, there is community support and where streets are being used by pedestrians and cyclists. Evidence suggests that in residential streets, and in town centres where there is likely to be a conflict between vehicles and pedestrians, carefully implemented 20 mph zones can contribute to an improvement in road safety.

Over the last twelve months the Government has announced some changes to the way local Traffic Authorities can implement 20mph schemes to reduce time-consuming and costly bureaucracy. The changes are intended to reduce the costs for Councils wanting to use 20mph schemes and act faster to respond to the needs of their residents while still ensuring drivers know what speed they should drive at. The changes include :-

- Expanding the list of specified traffic calming measures allowable in 20 mph zones to include repeater signs and mini-roundabouts. This would allow zones to be introduced with fewer road humps or chicanes where appropriate;
- Allowing Local Authorities to use speed limit symbols painted on roads more often as repeater signs in 20 mph zones and limits. Upright signs will still be required to indicate the start and end of 20 mph schemes.
- Allowing Local Authorities to place signs at the entry and exit of variable speed limits – e.g. outside schools – on only one side of the road rather than on both sides of the road as is currently the case;
- Allowing the use of either flashing warning lights or specified flashing lights with a static sign at the entry to variable speed limits which are cheaper for councils to buy;
- Allowing the use of a sign design for advisory 20 mph limits using flashing school warning lights.
- Councils will now be able to request council-wide authorisations for these measures to be used in 20 mph schemes on residential roads where cost-benefit analysis has shown that such schemes would be worthwhile. This will

mean that councils can apply these measures without getting approval from Government in each case.

The Department for Transport is also working with Coventry City Council to trial a significantly different 20mph zone, within their city centre, as part of the Coventry Olympic Legacy Project. This scheme aims to provide a 20mph zone without physical traffic management features by designing out speed using many of the principles set out in the Manual for Streets. The 20mph zone requires a special sign authorisation from the Secretary of State and a new gateway sign has been designed for this purpose. The scheme will be monitored to determine the effectiveness of the measures provided.

4. Primary School Speed Reduction Scheme Trials

In response to a petition submitted to the local Maidstone Joint Transportation Board last year requesting the County Council implement blanket 20mph limits outside all schools and residential areas it was agreed to run a trial of cost effective speed management schemes outside Primary Schools in the Maidstone area. This trial, funded by local Members via their Member Highway Fund, includes some formal and advisory 20mph schemes and will provide invaluable evidence as to whether increased use of 20mph schemes near schools provides cost effective road safety benefits. It must be noted that these sites do not have an existing crash problem and therefore a key objective of the trial is to establish whether road users' perception of safety will change as a result of the schemes.

The proposed trial has been limited to Primary schools within 30mph speed limits. The following trial methods and locations have been agreed with Kent Police

- Experimental (up to 18 months) TRO 20 mph at B2163 Leeds and Broomfield Primary School (from George PH to just north of bend by the churchyard)
- Advisory 20mph during school hours (using static signs and flashing lights) combined with a campaign to publicise this at Ham Lane Lenham (Malt house Lane to Cherry Close)
- Advisory 20mph limit at school times using interactive Vehicle Activated Signs St Francis School, Queens Road, Maidstone
- Minor signs and lines enhancements within current speed limit at, Hunton Primary School, West lane
- Experimental (up to 18 months) 20 mph limit and Vehicle Activated Signs with school warning and school plate (Diag. 545 and 546 plate) within existing 30mph limit at Postley Road Southborough
- A control (do- nothing) site included in pre and post evaluation at Allington School, Hildenborough Crescent.

The 20mph limits are to be introduced by the use of an experimental Traffic Regulation Orders which would operate for a minimum of a six month assessment

period and would need to be either removed or made permanent after a maximum of 18 months in operation. Implementation of the trial methods are to be completed by summer 2012 and evaluated over the subsequent 8 to 12 month period. By the summer of 2013 the success of the trial will be determined. The decision to make permanent or remove the trial methods would then need to be made by the Highway Authority in consultation with Kent Police. The success criteria will be :

- Changed perception of danger to children on roads adjacent to schools as perceived by various groups to include Members, general road users, residents, and school users
- Change perception of traffic speeds adjacent to schools as perceived by various groups to include Members, general road users, residents, and school users
- Influencing a modal shift of journeys to schools
- A manageable impact on traffic speed and Police enforcement requirements
- Increase in motorists' awareness to travel at appropriate speed outside schools

The results of these trials will be evaluated and included in the overall 20mph scheme policy review which will be presented to this Committee next year.

5. Kent Police Views on 20mph Schemes

The increased introduction of 20mph schemes without self enforcing traffic calming could leave to greater dependency on Kent Police to enforce these limits. During the discussions with Kent Police it was made clear that Kent Police do not support 20mph limits unless they are self enforcing. The following is a statement from PC Geoff Bineham from Kent Polices Traffic Management Unit explaining their current view:-

Current guidance DETR Circular 05/99, states that Extreme caution should be exercised when considering making 20 mph limits using speed limit signs with no supporting speed reducing features. The key to a successful 20 mph zone is to have in place speed reducing features of a significant number and appropriate design to be able to reduce the speed of most traffic to 20 mph or less without the need for police enforcement.

DfT Circular 01/2006 States that successful 20 mph zones and 20 mph speed limits should be generally self-enforcing. Traffic authorities should take account of the level of police enforcement required before installing either of these measures.

Kent Police will not support 20mph speed limits unless the average speed of vehicles are 24mph or less (Supporting evidence is gained by collecting speed data over a 24-hour 7-day period). Research has shown that signed only 20 mph limits where natural traffic calming is absent have little or no effect on traffic speeds. The Transport Research Laboratory found that signed only 20 mph limits achieved average speed reductions of about 1 mph and did not significantly reduce accidents.

Kent Police will not support the introduction of 20mph zones without sufficient traffic calming measures being in place and of appropriate design, that reduce the speed of most traffic to 20 mph or less thereby making them self enforcing.

6. Conclusion

Due to recent press publicity requests for the County Council to implement 20mph schemes has increased. Both the Government and County Council are conducting trials into cost effective speed reduction schemes that, if successful, may enable the introduction of further 20mph schemes without the need for prohibitively expensive traffic calming or presenting an enforcement burden on the Police. While these trials are being conducted it is recommended that the existing policy for 20mph schemes should be promoted only as part of a Casualty Reduction Scheme be reaffirmed.

7. Recommendations

Members are asked to note the existing policy and that new 20mph schemes are promoted only as part of a Casualty Reduction Scheme until the current trials have been evaluated and a new formal policy has been adopted by the County Council.

8. Background Documents

Highway Advisory Board committee reports dated 14 November 2006 and 12 July 2008.

Maidstone Joint Transportation Board report dated 27th July 2011.

Contact Information

Name: Andy Corcoran
Title: Traffic Schemes and Member Highway Fund Manager
Tel No: 01233 648302
Email: andy.corcoran@kent.gov.uk