

The Highland Council

**Transport, Environmental and Community Services Committee
6 February 2014**

Agenda Item	8
Report No	TEC 6/14

Blanket 20mph Speed Limits

Report by Head of Transport and Infrastructure

Summary

This report advises Members of the current position with regard to the regulations on speed limit orders and reports on recent developments in relation to blanket 20 mph speed limit orders.

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2001 Scottish Enterprise & Development Department issued circular No 6/2001 which set out guidance for the introduction of 20 mph limits that could be applied in residential areas and in other situations where there was a particular risk to vulnerable road users. This included guidance on the use of 20mph zones, mandatory 20mph limits, advisory limits, and allowed the introduction of part-time 20mph limits at schools.
- 1.2 In August 2006 the Department for Transport published a revised speed limit circular (Circular 01/2006) which built on the underlying principles set out in the 1993 circular. This circular included new guidance on setting 20mph limits and zones with revised speed limit thresholds based on average speeds. This however only applied to England and Wales.
- 1.3 Scottish Government also published this guidance but excluded the guidance for 20mph limits and instead retained their 2001 guidance. They did however change the speed thresholds from 85%ile values to mean values to match DfT guidance.
- 1.4 The general guidance from this document is that - "speed limits should not be set in isolation, or unrealistically low, as they would become ineffective and lead to the possible disregard of the reduced speed limit. In addition to increased enforcement demands, this may result in substantial numbers of drivers continuing to travel at inappropriate speeds thus increasing the risk of collision and injury."
- 1.5 In August 2009, a paper was presented to TEC's committee outlining the various types of 20mph speed limits available and how they could be applied. To various streets.
- 1.6 A further paper, presented to TEC's committee in January 2010, set out the methodology for prioritising the introduction of 20mph limits in town/village centres and residential areas.

2. Practice in England & Wales

- 2.1 On the basis of the 2006 speed limit guidance south of the border, Portsmouth Council sought agreement to pilot a blanket “Signs Only” 20mph speed limit on all their residential roads with the aim that the limit would be self-enforcing as outlined in the circular 1/2006. As most of the streets in the city were quite narrow with extensive parking, the through speeds were already below the guidance threshold of 24mph and leant itself to this treatment. There were however a number of streets where before speeds did exceed the threshold 24mph mean speed. The overall cost of the scheme implementation was about £570,000.
- 2.2 The imposition of this 20mph limit was accompanied by extensive before and after monitoring as well as wide-ranging public consultation. However the trial produced mixed results with some areas showing significant speed reductions while others actual showed a speed increase.
- 2.3 On the basis of this pilot scheme a number of other Towns and Cities in England are also progressing with blanket 20mph limits in their residential areas. These include Oxford, Bristol, Warrington, Islington, Hackney, York, Brighton, Norwich and Birmingham.
- 2.4 These schemes have also had mixed success both in terms of their effectiveness in reducing speeds and in the general acceptance of the residents within these schemes.
- 2.5 In January 2013 the Department for Transport published a revised guidance document for setting local speed limits. One of the main features of this document is that it relaxed the guidance for setting 20mph limits based on the trials in Portsmouth. This revised document has not however been adopted by Scottish Government who still rely on the 2006 guidance.

3. Scottish Experience

- 3.1 As outlined above, Scotland still uses Circular 1/2006 to set local speed limits including all 20mph limits. Councils have generally used the thresholds outlined in this guidance to set their limits, introducing traffic calming where “before” speeds exceeded the guidance level.
- 3.2 Edinburgh City Council in partnership with Transport Scotland recently piloted a blanket 20mph scheme to the south of the city. There was extensive before and after speed surveys carried out to show the effects of the scheme on speeds. As with other similar pilots, the effect on speeds was mixed and some parts of the scheme will have to be reviewed. However as the scheme is quite new, the long term effect of the scheme has still to be assessed.
- 3.3 Scottish Government are about to review the speed limit guidance for Scotland. This review will take account of the various 20mph trials in Scotland and England as well as the DfT Circular 2013 on setting local speed limits. This new circular will provide best practice for setting local speed limits across

Scotland.

4. Highland Experience

- 4.1 Highland Council, along with all other councils in Scotland, introduced 20mph limits at schools. Many of these limits are part-time limits which come on when children are going to or leaving school but there are also a number of full time mandatory 20mph limits and a few 20's plenty speed limits.
- 4.2 Following on from the completion of this school speed limit program, it was agreed that the Council would continue with the implementation of 20mph limits in town centres and residential areas based on the 2006 speed limit guidance. Committee papers in 2009 and 2010 set out the various types of 20mph limits available and a methodology for prioritisation of these schemes.
- 4.3 A budget of £50,000 per annum for 5 years was identified for the implementation of 20mph schemes.
- 4.4 In August 2013, a paper was presented to TEC's committee, which outlined a programme of proposed 20mph schemes. These are based on the current guidance and the prioritisation criteria agreed in previous papers.
- 4.5 The paper also identified a number of schemes already introduced in town centres and residential areas in Highland. These schemes have included roads where speeds have been above and below the thresholds outlined in the national guidance. Where before speeds have exceeded the threshold, various forms of traffic calming have been used to reduce speeds to an acceptable level as part of the scheme.
- 4.6 From monitoring carried out on some of the schemes it has been found that speed reductions have been quite variable even within traffic calmed sections. Often speeds have only been reduced by as little as 1-2mph. The most effective form of traffic calming is the vertical calming features such as road humps and speed cushions where reductions of 10mph or so have been achieved. However these are the least popular form of calming for drivers who have to pass across these features regularly, such as bus drivers.
- 4.7 Highland Council planning guidelines have also been amended to include the requirement that developers design new schemes to provide for 20mph speed limits to be introduced as part of the road layout.

5. Blanket 20mph limit in Highland – Benefits and Dis-benefits

- 5.1 The introduction of blanket 20mph limit in all Town/Village centres and residential areas throughout Highland can produce many benefits within the various communities. These include:-
 - Improves quality of life particularly for local residents
 - Improves residential and shopping environment
 - Encourages more walking and cycling
 - Encourages use of healthy sustainable transport & travel

- Helps reduce carbon emissions
- Can reduce accidents and their severity.

All the roads within a scheme would be assumed to be 20mph unless there were specific exclusions due to road type or usage.

5.2 Although there can be many benefits from the introduction of a blanket 20mph limit in town centres and residential areas, there can also be some dis-benefits which have to be considered:- These include:-

- There will be an increase in journey times for all forms of transport. This could have a significant impact on public transport both in terms of service delivery and possible cost implications.
- 20mph schemes are promoted to help reduce accidents but “signs only” schemes have shown only marginal speed reduction. Pedestrian expectation is that drivers are travelling much slower than they actually are. On roads with high “before” speeds, this could have an adverse effect on accident reduction.

Where an accident group has been identified on an individual street or a small group of streets within a scheme, it is proposed to expand the proposed 20mph scheme to encompass as many surrounding streets as possible as long as traffic calming is either not required or is very limited in its extent. This will provide a speed limit continuity with the various housing areas rather than having changes in speed limit from street to street.

5.3 As well as reviewing the benefits and dis-benefits of the proposal, there are also a number of implications that have to be considered which could have an influence on any final decision to introduce blanket 20mph limits.

- The proposal does not fit in with current guidance and would need Scottish Government support to allow it to be implemented.
- Police Scotland would need to be consulted and they would need to support the proposal and agree to enforce the blanket limit.
- Not everyone supports the introduction of blanket limits so there would need to be significant community consultation to get the support of residents and businesses to these changes. As outlined above this could have a significant effect on service delivery.
- There will be significant funding required to allow implementation of the proposal.
- There will also need to be additional funding available to review the schemes “post” installation to monitor their effectiveness and where necessary install speed reduction infrastructure to reduce speeds where the “Signs Only” scheme has not provided the required speed reduction.

6 Conclusions

6.1 At present the legislation is not available to introduce blanket limits in town centres and residential areas unless the before speeds meets the threshold criteria set out in circular 1/2006.

6.2 Scottish Government is about to review the guidance on the setting of speed limits. This is likely to relax the criteria that is required to be met and could permit the introduction of blanket 20mph limits.

6.3 Await the revised guidance from Scottish Government on 20 mph speed limits before reviewing council policy on setting speed limits. Any revised Council policy will need to conform with Scottish Government guidance.

7. Implications

7.1 There is no funding implication to this report

7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report

7.3 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7.4 The report has no effect carbon emissions.

7.5 There are no risk implications arising from this report.

Recommendations

Members are invited to agree to:

- a) note the current strategy of developing 20 mph speed limits in accordance with the approved programme set out at TECs committee in August 2013
- b) Review Council policy on 20 mph speed limits and report to committee once Scottish Government has issued its revised guidance on the introduction of local speed limits.

Designation: Head of Transport and Infrastructure

Date: 28 January 2014

Author: Hugh Logan, Road Safety Manager

Background Papers: TECS Committee – 13 August 2009 – 20mph Speed Limits (TECS 57/09)
TECS Committee – 21 January 2010 – 20mph Speed Limits – Assessment Criteria (TECS 08/10)
TECS Committee – 15 August 2013 – 20mph Speed Limits – Proposed Schemes (TECS 60/13)