

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

DATE: 22 MARCH 2018

TIMED 20MPH SPEED LIMITS NEAR SCHOOLS

Report of the Director of Local Services, Paul Jones

Cabinet Member: Councillor Glen Sanderson, Environment & Local Services

Purpose of report

To respond to a discussion which took place at a recent Local Area Council Chairs Briefing meeting about the introduction of timed temporary 20mph zones near schools, indicated by flashing amber lights.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Local Area Council note the content of the report.

Link to Corporate Plan

How - "We want to be efficient, open and work for everyone"

Living - "We want to feel safe, healthy and cared for"

Enjoying - "We want you to love where you live"

Connecting - "We want to have access to the things you need"

Key Issues

1. The Council has an ongoing commitment to introduce 20mph speed limits outside all of the County's schools, provided it is feasible to do so.
2. Some 20mph schemes have been widened to cover a larger area around the school during the consultation process.
3. As a result of the experiences gained to date in implementing the 20mph speed limits at schools, the Council is currently in the process of renewing its policy regarding how 20mph speed limits are introduced.
4. The renewed policy will provide guidance on the potential solutions available.

Background

20mph speed limits and zones can be summarised as follows:

20mph Speed Limits - These involve 20mph traffic signs only. They should only be considered where average speeds are already low where the nature of the road tends to result in naturally low average speeds of 24mph or less.

20mph Zones - These involve 20mph traffic signs plus physical traffic calming measures to ensure that the 20mph speed limit is self enforcing. To ensure that drivers are aware of the zones, traffic signs must be erected at every entrance/exit of the zone.

20mph Part-time Speed Limits - These involve advisory part-time “20 when lights flash” signs on main/distributor roads outside facilities for vulnerable road users such as schools that would otherwise be unsuitable for a full-time 20mph speed limit or zone. The normal speed restriction for any road where this type of signage is introduced remains in force as the legally enforceable limit.

Variable 20mph Speed Limits - Similar to an advisory part-time limit, although they require an associated Traffic Regulation Order. The enforceable speed limit is the speed limit shown on the sign. Given the higher costs involved in implementing this type of scheme, it is unlikely that the Council consider this as a suitable option due to the fact that suitable interactive signs would be required on all affected side roads as well as main roads meaning that expenditure can quickly mount up.

Current use of 20mph Part Time Speed Limits

To date, no schemes of this nature have been implemented in Northumberland. However, they are due to be implemented at a number of locations during 2018/19, and we are going to be considering their use more, particularly on main/distributor roads outside facilities for vulnerable road users such as schools that would otherwise be unsuitable for a full-time 20mph speed limit or zone.

The normal speed restriction for any road where this type of signage is introduced remains the legally enforceable limit.

The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSR&GD) 2016 authorises the use of an advisory part-time 20mph limit sign, with flashing school warning signs.

Officers have had contact with a number of potential suppliers to this type of sign, and several of these companies have visited County Hall to demonstrate their product.

One supplier of this type of sign is Westcotec Traffic Safety Systems. As well as conforming to TSR&GD 2016, the Westcotec signs have an additional feature in that it will flash up with a roundel of the legally enforceable limit, for example 30mph, should any vehicle be driving above that speed when the advisory 20mph speed limit is not in operation.

It is our opinion that these signs provide the best value for money due to the fact they are effectively a dual use sign, which could potentially assist in improving road safety at all times, not only during school start and finish times when traffic speeds are likely to be fairly low anyway, depending on the location of the school.

How effective are 20mph Part Time Speed Limits

We have sought advice from other local authorities who have used these types of sign.

South Tyneside Council have been going through a similar process of introducing appropriate 20mph speed limits outside their schools. Colleagues at South Tyneside have informed us that as well as outside schools, they have been located at some School Crossing Patrol sites that have been sites of speed concern. It is South Tyneside Council's opinion that these signs have influenced traffic flow speeds because of the flashing element to raise driver awareness of the speed limit. They feel that a reduction of 5mph has been achieved at these locations, providing support and confidence to the School Crossing Patrols operating the sites, as well as the children and parents/carers using the sites.

Overall South Tyneside Council feel that these signs are a positive investment that has helped to reduce excessive vehicular speed at sites of concern.

Similar views were shared by Warwickshire County Council who have up to 300 flashing signs throughout the County (not necessarily all relating to 20mph part-time speed limits). It is their opinion that these signs have all played an effective part in accident reduction with the County.

Implications

Policy	Consistent with LTP Policies.
Finance and value for money	Any scheme relating to 20mph speed limits, zone or part time limits would incur costs.
Legal	n/a
Procurement	n/a
Human Resources	n/a
Property	n/a
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	n/a
Risk Assessment	n/a

Crime & Disorder	n/a
Customer Consideration	Properties to be notified should they be affected by any signage relating to a 20mph part-time speed limit.
Carbon reduction	n/a
Wards	n/a

Appendix Index

Appendix A - Example of Dual Message School Sign

Background papers:

None

Report sign off

	initials
Finance Officer	N/A
Monitoring Officer/Legal	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Procurement	N/A
I.T.	N/A
Director	PJ
Portfolio Holder(s)	GS

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Appendix A - Example of Dual Message School Sign