

Understanding . . .

Speed management in Kent



As the highway authority for Kent, many people ask us for local speed and traffic-management schemes. These typically include requests for us to change speed limits, introduce traffic-calming measures, put up electronic signs, install safety cameras, and introduce new warning signs and lines. Any request for us to make improvements to the road must be supported by the local community in that area (for example, through a known local group or a parish or town council).

This leaflet helps to explain what we do when we receive a request for measures to control speed.

We take speed management very seriously. We work closely with other appropriate agencies to continually review the measures that we use to control speed, and make sure that they are effective and do not create more problems. We also work with others (for example, the police and other emergency services) to invest in education and training aimed at the people most likely to be involved in crashes.

How we investigate a potential problem on a stretch of road

We first carry out a detailed check of the record of accidents on that road. We get these details from Kent Police. We then monitor traffic flow and speeds on that stretch of road. If this information suggests that we need to investigate the matter further, we inspect the area and, when appropriate, consult local people to assess the full extent of the problem. These investigations can take a lot of time and be expensive.

What happens next?

If our investigations find that there is a problem that could be solved by us introducing measures, we will set out our proposal. This will provide an estimate of the cost of the work. If our plans would be a high priority, they are put into a programme of work which we will consider at our annual meeting for these matters. If our proposal is successful the measures should be introduced within 18 months.

The measures we can introduce

In the rest of this leaflet we explain the measures we can introduce, and give you some basic information on the rules and policies we must follow for some measures.

Reducing speed limits

This may seem a simple solution, but we must act under the policies set by the Government to make sure there is a consistent approach across the country. The Government has asked all highway authorities around the country to check the speed limits on A roads and B roads to see if they meet the policy, and then make any necessary changes by 2011.

It is important that any new speed limit strikes a balance between the needs of the local community and those of drivers. If a speed limit is too high, this will affect the quality of life of the local residents. But if it is too low, drivers will find the limit unacceptable and may ignore it.

Electronic speed signs

These signs target speeding drivers. When the sign detects a vehicle that is going over the speed limit, the speed limit for that road is displayed with flashing amber lights above and below the sign. These signs are used where the speed limit reduces and so targets those drivers who have driven into a lower limit without reducing their speed. These signs cannot be used everywhere and we have specific policies for when and where they can be used.

Electronic warning signs

These signs work in the same way as the ones above. They are used at sites where there have been several crashes to alert drivers to specific dangers such as a bend in the road or a crossroad. These signs can only be used where more traditional measures have failed to reduce the number of accidents.

Speed indicating devices

These are electronic signs that, when triggered by a speeding vehicle, light up to show the driver their actual speed. These signs are currently being used with education posters.

Speed Watch

This is a police scheme using speed indicating devices signs operated by local volunteers. You can get details of this scheme from Kent Police.

Safety cameras

The use of safety cameras is strictly controlled and they can only be used at locations where there has been a record of crashes that have killed or seriously injured people. For more information on the use of safety cameras visit the website at www.kmscp.org or write to:

Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership
Phoenix House
London Road
Maidstone
ME16 8PZ

Traffic calming

This usually means road humps and 'chicanes' (where the kerb extends into the road on both sides) so vehicles have to slow down. However, these measures may create other problems, such as noise, vibration and increased pollution. Please see our leaflet 'Understanding Traffic calming in Kent' for more information.

For more information about any of the issues in this leaflet, or to report a fault on the highway, please contact Kent Highway Services on **08458 247 800** or visit www.kent.gov.uk/highways

Your call will be answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Please contact the police direct if you are calling about an emergency.

Kent Highway Services deals with most of the roads in Kent. However, the motorways and trunk roads, such as the A21 and A2070, are managed by the Highways Agency, who you can contact on 08457 50 40 30.