

Vehicle Activated Signs Policy



Speeding is a major concern for residents in Shropshire. This document sets out the criteria for use and funding of vehicle activated signs on the highway and specifically the cost sharing arrangements with parish and town councils for particular circumstances. This document forms the second in a series of the Council's Speed Management Strategy for Shropshire following the publication of the Village Speed Limits Policy in October 2007.

Background

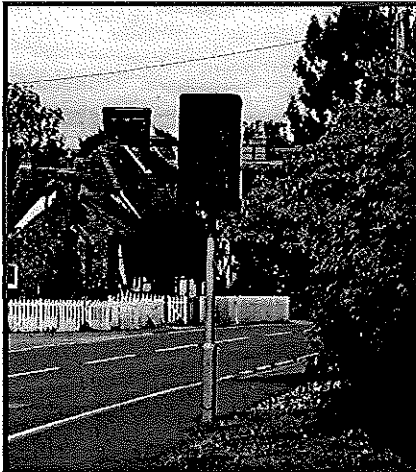
Speeding was identified as a major concern by the residents of Shropshire during the consultation for the Local Transport Plan and continues to be raised on regular basis in correspondence to officers and members.

Studies show that when drivers reduce speed, collisions are less likely and if there are collisions, at lower speeds there will be less serious injury. This is particularly true for vulnerable road users i.e. children and older people.



In August 2006 the Department for Transport published Circular 01/2006 Setting Local Speed Limits which has been used as the basis for reviewing the Council's position in respect to speed limit policy and strategy. In September 2007 Council approved a Speed Management Strategy that covers three areas:

- Village speed limits
- Rural speed limits
- Urban speed limits



A key tool in delivering the Speed Management Strategy is the use of **vehicle activated signs**. There are two types of vehicles activated signs; signs which warn of a specific hazard e.g. a junction or a bend, and those which reinforce the speed limit. This policy relates to the use of **speed enforcement signs only**.

The signs remain blank until they are activated by approaching vehicles that are travelling at or above a particular threshold.

We currently have 10 vehicle activated (speed) signs in Shropshire and three of these have been partially or wholly funded by the local parish council.

Policy approach

Locations where speeding concerns have been identified by parish councils and others will be assessed and vehicle speeds will be covertly monitored by officers using handheld laser devices. (See Appendix A).

Funding principles:

The following table sets out how the funding criteria for sites will work:

Mean speed in 20 mph zone	Mean speed in 30 mph zone	Mean speed in 40 mph zone	Funding arrangements
20 mph or lower	30 mph or lower	40 mph or lower	Parish Council 100%
21 to 23 mph	31 to 34 mph	41 to 45 mph	Shropshire Council 50% Parish Council 50%
24 mph or higher	35 mph or higher	46 mph or higher	Shropshire Council 100%

Subject to funding being available vehicle activated signs will be installed in line with the following criteria:

The vehicle activated signs will be rotated on the following basis:

- Maximum time at any one site 6 weeks
- Minimum time at any one site 2 weeks
- Minimum of 2 weeks between rotations

During the rotation of vehicle activated signs they will be replaced by fixed signs which indicate that speeds are monitored in the area.



The current costs of providing a vehicle activated sign are as follows:

- Initial cost - £500 (one off payment)
- Operating costs - £60 per site, per week

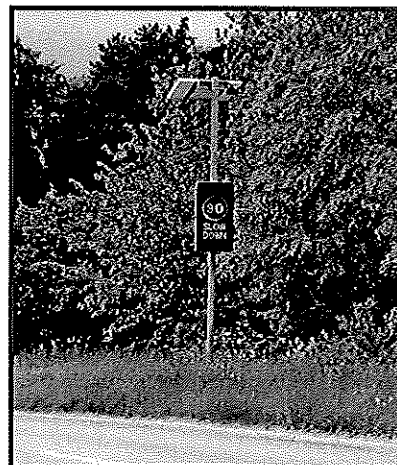
Any cost due to be paid by the Parish Council will be invoiced annually. The cost per annum will vary depending on the rotation with other sites either within the same parish or another.¹

Other considerations

Each sign will be rotated across a minimum of 2 sites. The area across which signs will be rotated will be restricted in order to ensure that use of the sign is practical and cost-effective. It will therefore be necessary to identify 2 or more sites within a parish or neighbouring parishes before an agreement can be put into place. The agreement will be for a minimum of 12 months.

Vehicle activated signs will only be used in main speed limits and will not be used in buffer zones unless there is no appropriate site within the main speed limit. The signs will be procured and installed by Shropshire Council and will conform to a standard specification.

The cost of sign repairs and maintenance are included in the operating costs which will be reviewed annually in March for the subsequent year.



Practical constraints may restrict the siting of a VAS if insufficient verge space.

Signs will remain in the ownership of Shropshire Council throughout their effective life.

Conclusions

The adoption of this policy should reduce speeds and casualties in rural communities, thereby addressing many of the concerns which are expressed by those communities to officers and members.

The policy complements other aspects of the Council's Speed Management Strategy, including the Village Speed Limit Policy and policies being developed for urban and rural areas.



¹Costs will be reviewed annually and adjusted if necessary based on supplies & labour costs.

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Appendix A – Vehicle Speed Monitoring

Locations where speeding concerns have been identified by parish councils and others will be assessed and vehicle speeds will be covertly monitored by officers using handheld laser devices.

Once a Parish Council has identified a location(s) for consideration of a Vehicle Activate Sign (VAS), a site visit will be carried out to determine a suitable location to record vehicle speeds.

Ideally this will be carried out from within a vehicle, parked off the live carriageway, and will involve pointing a hand held laser gun at a vehicle to obtain the speed it is currently travelling at. On busy routes 100 free flowing vehicles will be recorded in each direction and the average speed will be calculated for each direction. On quieter routes a minimum of 1 hour will be spent recording vehicles in each direction to calculate the average speeds.

In locations where it would be unsafe to park a vehicle to obtain this data, an Automatic Traffic Counter will be laid for a 1 week period to gather vehicle speed data.