



Report to Cabinet Member for Transportation

Key Decision to be taken on or after 21 September 2005

Decision can normally be implemented at least 3 working days after decision has
been signed.

Cabinet Member Report No. **T05.05**

Title: Countywide Speed Limit Review

Date: 13 September 2005

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Electoral Divisions Affected: All

Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Community & Environmental
Services

Summary

This Report sets out the progress to date with the Countywide Speed Limit Review (SLR) and seeks approval to extend the timescale for completion of the review up till the end of 2008.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member is invited to:

1. **APPROVE** the extension of the Speed Limit Review completion date with the effect that speed limits will be installed throughout Areas 1- 14 by the end of 2008.
2. **APPROVE** the publication and promotion of the revised speed limit review programme.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This Report sets out the progress with the Countywide Speed Limit Review (SLR) and the requirements for its completion.
2. The speed limit review is part of a general speed management strategy; to address public concern about excessive and inappropriate speeds and to reduce the number of speed related casualties.
3. The review commenced in April 2003 with a proposed completion date of March 2006. The County was divided into 14 Speed Limit Review Areas, which were prioritised on the casualty rate of the unrestricted A & B roads that pass through them.
4. The review's aims are: -
 - To provide appropriate speed limits on all the County's roads
 - To ensure countywide consistency of speed limits
 - To improve compliance with speed limits.
5. For a positive outcome in terms of public acceptance of new speed limits the review is being carried out in a customer focussed, transparent, thorough and inclusive manner with much participation and consultation with Members and communities.

Project timetable

6. At an early stage in the review it became apparent that the original timescales for the review were too ambitious. The timetable delays arose from the scale of the project, the extent of interaction with the public, the necessity for accuracy in preparing Traffic Regulation Order schedules and the number of processes involved. In particular, the intensity of customer participation had not been fully anticipated.
7. Ways of accelerating the speed limit review process to meet the original timetable were sought. However, it was clear this would not be possible without considerable additional resources.
8. The Acting Head of Transportation was formally made aware of the issues in October 2004. The situation was considered by Senior Managers and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation in February 2005. In addition, the Local Committees were given a brief update in Spring 2005 to raise general awareness of the potential for further delays to the programme. A Report on progress with the review was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Environment of Buckinghamshire on 23rd March 2005.
9. The timetable for the project will need to be extended and a realistic and

achievable target is to implement all the revised speed limits arising from the review by the end of 2008.

Budget

10. An allocation of £500,000 has been approved in this years Local Transport Plan Capital Programme and will enable implementation of the speed limit review during 2005/06 to the proposed revised programme.
11. Funding for implementing the review will be subject to availability of resources from within the Local Transport Plan Capital programme.

A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

Background

12. In 2002, there were over a hundred communities in Buckinghamshire with the national speed limit. There had been considerable pressure from the public to reduce these speed limits, together with many other speed limits within the County. The issue of excessive and inappropriate speed was also identified as a key public concern. It was decided that a Speed Management Strategy was required to set out the way in which the County Council would deal with these related issues.
13. On 23rd September 2002, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the Environment issued a Report to Cabinet entitled ' Review of Speed Management Strategy'. A recommendation of that Report was that implementation of the strategy should be complete by March 2006. Cabinet approved the Strategy in December 2002.
14. The speed limit review commenced in April 2003, with the aim of completion by March 2006.
15. The Speed Management Strategy stated that the review would include de-restricted A and B roads with high casualty rates per kilometre; communities that currently do not have a speed limit or where there is pressure to extend or lower existing speed limits; roads outside schools (in conjunction with Safer Routes to School initiatives); country lanes and other inter community routes.
16. In effect, it has proved necessary to review the limit on every road, in order to ensure, as far as is possible, that there is consistency across the County's road network. Limits imposed on one road inevitably have implications for the surrounding road network in terms of appropriate speed limits. The opportunity has also been taken to review existing signs and Traffic Regulation Orders for speed limits to ensure that all are legally enforceable. The DfT has issued an instruction to all highway authorities to confirm that action is to be taken on this matter. Any anomalies will thus be dealt with as

part of the SLR - if carried out in isolation from the SLR this work would be a significant project in its own right.

17. A set of local speed limit guidelines was established to be used throughout the SLR. These guidelines were based on the current Department for transport guidance (Circular Roads 1/93), but followed recent trends for increased flexibility. New village speed limits guidance issued by DfT in 2004 was also included. The aim of the guidelines was that each speed limit set should be appropriate for the road to which it applied and also that there should be consistency countywide.
18. A key part of the SLR has been extensive consultation with the public, local councillors, road user organisations and other interested parties. This has taken place at various stages in the review process and has added to the overall timescale of the review. Having said this the extent of public interaction with reference to changes to speed limits is welcomed and is an indication of the importance of speed limits for our customers.

Review Areas

19. The County is divided into 14 Areas for the review (see Background Paper A).
20. Some Areas are being completed in association with other initiatives, as follows:
 - Work on part of **Area 1** (A422 and associated villages) had already started before April 2003. The remainder of Area 1, (consisting of the more rural, minor roads), is to be incorporated within Area 14.
 - **Area 2** is the Central Chilterns Traffic Management Project (CCTMP), which, as a major pilot project for rural roads within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is managed as a separate project from the rest of the Speed Limit Review.
 - Work in **Area 3** is largely associated with the Calvert Development traffic calming works.
 - **Area 5** is being co-ordinated with the joint Wycombe District Council/Bucks County Council 'Tranquil' project.
 - Part of **Area 12** will be implemented early to tie in with the completion of the Stoke Hammond bypass.
21. The 14 review Areas have been prioritised on the casualty rate of the unrestricted A & B roads that pass through them. Exceptions to this may include situations where there is a clear and obvious need for revised speed limits to be introduced earlier, such as in conjunction with significant schemes (e.g. Stoke Hammond Bypass, A404 Handy Cross High Wycombe, A41 Berryfields' development), or local safety schemes.

Area Working Groups

22. Speed limit proposals are decided through Area Working Groups. Each Group comprises a Transportation Policy Advisory Group Member, several Local

Member(s), a Thames Valley Police Traffic Management Officer, Buckinghamshire County Council (B.C.C.) Traffic Management Officers, B.C.C. Safer Roads Officer and B.C.C. Area Managers/Area Co-ordinators.

23. The Working Groups' role is to recommend speed limits that are appropriate for each road length whilst ensuring countywide consistency. Each Working Group meets several times:
 - to gain an overview of the review process and principles
 - to decide initial proposals,
 - to review responses from formal consultation
 - to review responses from public advertisement and make final recommendations for speed limits. These recommendations form the basis of a Key Decision Report for the Cabinet Member
 - after implementation to discuss effectiveness and consider modifications
24. The Working Groups provide an effective means of considering the diverse range of views related to speed limits. By comparing roads on an Area -wide basis a more consistent approach to speed limits is possible than would otherwise be the case.
25. The Working Group meetings require a great deal of preparation to ensure that the members can make informed decisions and take into account the diverse views that abound on the subject. The many other commitments of all the participants mean that dates of meetings can be difficult to arrange, again contributing to the overall timescale of the review.

Programme and Progress

26. It is vital for a positive outcome that the review is carried out in a customer focussed, transparent, thorough and inclusive manner with much participation and consultation with Members and communities. Taking this into account, it has become increasingly apparent that the original timescales for the review were too ambitious. In particular, the intensity of customer participation had not been fully taken into account. Revised timetables have therefore been produced at intervals, drawing on the experience gained as each new phase of the review has been completed for the initial Areas tackled.
27. An initial programme was drawn up in 2003, which anticipated implementation of Area 4 by early 2004. However, it soon became apparent that, because of the scale of the review and the extensive consultation and other processes involved, each Area would take more than a year to complete. Therefore, it became necessary to run several Areas concurrently, in order to retain any possibility of completion by March 2006. This resulted in slower progress on the initial review Areas as efforts were diverted in order to start developing other Areas.
28. One of the consequences of commencing work on so many review Areas before completion of those Areas initiated in the early stages of the SLR , is

that long delays have arisen for many Areas between certain stages of the Review.

29. At present, work is taking place, at different stages, in Areas 3-14. Progress to date is as follows:
- **Area 1:** speed limits for A422 & associated villages completed in 2004. (The rest of Area 1 has been incorporated within Area 14)
 - **Area 2:** Central Chilterns Traffic Management Project Area. Speed limits will be implemented - Autumn 2005
 - **Area 3:** public consultation (advertisement of Traffic Regulation Orders) took place in Summer 2005. Speed limits will be implemented - February /March 2006
 - **Area 4:** public consultation took place in Feb/March 2005 and, following a Key Decision Report; speed limits will be implemented towards the end of 2005.
 - **Area 5:** public consultation will take place in November 2005.
 - **Areas 6 to 11:** formal consultation with local councils and road user representative groups has already taken place. Preparations are underway, at different stages, for public consultation in these areas.
 - **Area 12:** Formal consultation to take place in Summer 2005.
 - **Areas 13 & 14:** Work is in the initial stages
30. The timetable delays have arisen from the scale of the project, the extent of interaction with the public, the necessity for accuracy in preparing Traffic Regulation Order schedules and the number of processes involved.
31. As work commences within each Area this generates considerable interest from local public, Parish District and County Councillors, with a subsequent influx of enquiries, requests and petitions. Although attempts have been made to manage this workload, for example through the development of standard responses which can be used by Highways on Call to deal with many of the more general enquiries, the SLR team still needs to deal directly with more specific enquiries. It is often the intensity of these specific enquiries that diverts the SLR staff from progressing the review.
32. In the initial stages of the review, meetings were held with individual Parish/Town Councils in order to explain the principles and process of the review and discuss the specific proposals for their local area. This proved extremely time consuming so the consultation process was refined to include, from Area 6 onwards, a single 'Briefing Meeting' for each Area to explain the speed limit review process to local Parish, District and County Councillors. These meetings have been generally well received and help to achieve a

wider awareness of issues in relation to speed limits as well as dealing more efficiently with the initial stages of consultation. In Area 5 local exhibitions were held in conjunction with the Tranquil Project and a few exhibitions have also taken place at the request of Parish Councils /Residents' groups.

33. Progress reviews have been issued to all County Councillors, relevant officers and Local Committees several times a year. Over time, these indicated that the SLR team were having difficulty meeting the anticipated deadlines. The Acting Head of Transportation was formally made aware of the issues in October 2004. A Report was given to the Transportation Board on 3rd February 2005 and a Report to Local Committees in Spring 2005 raised general awareness of the potential for further delays to the programme. A Report was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Environment of Buckinghamshire on 23rd March 2005.
34. It is now envisaged that the duration of the project will need to be extended to the end of 2008 to enable all the revised speed limits arising from the review to be fully implemented - see Speed Limit Review Programme: Revised September 2005 (Background Paper B). Monitoring of the effectiveness of the new limits would need to continue into 2009/10 for the last review Areas.

Promotion/Marketing

35. The value of raising public awareness of speed related issues and achieving improved compliance with speed limits through 'encouragement', rather than relying on enforcement, must not be underestimated. The Police have limited resources to carry out enforcement countywide and there are strict restrictions on the use of safety cameras.
36. The Road Safety team have been involved in a range of activities to increase the general public's awareness of speed related issues. The 'Make the Commitment' campaign is already underway, to encourage drivers to make a conscious commitment or 'pledge' to keep within speed limits and this will be more extensively promoted as each speed limit review Area is implemented. Work to support the speed limit review is very much part of other on-going activities carried out by the Road Safety team.
37. It is intended to use the County Council's public web site to promote, explain and consult more widely on the speed limit review. A comprehensive speed limit review site has been developed, which makes available information on the background to the review, the programme for implementation, the processes involved and provides plans showing the latest proposals for each Area. Although this was recognised as an important task, this work was not progressed before because of more critical demands on staff time.
38. The Area Briefing meetings held with Parish/Town/District Council representatives have been an opportunity to increase participants' awareness of current speed limit regulations and issues relating to speed and safer driving, as well as to improve understanding of the complex issues

surrounding choice of appropriate speed limits. The participants have then been able to spread this information to a wider audience.

39. Evidence from Reading University and from Norfolk County Council indicates the effectiveness of mobile Speed Indicating Devices (SIDs) and similar Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS). Effective 'encouragement' to comply with speed limits should be regarded as an integral part of the review particularly with regard to obtaining compliance with reduced speed limits.
40. The County Council currently owns 5 SIDs. These are currently loaned by the Road Safety Team to Parish Councils and similar groups who express concern about speeding traffic. On average, SIDs are used in this way for 77% of the time. The Road Safety team are about to purchase a further 3 SIDS to use in conjunction with the SLR. They will be used proactively and intensively within each SLR Area to encourage drivers to keep within new & existing speed limits. It may be desirable to purchase further SIDs in support of SLR activities from within existing resources – as the review progresses.

B. Other options available, and their pros and cons

See Resource implications

C. Resource implications

41. An allocation of £500,000 has been approved in this years Local Transport Plan Capital Programme and will enable implementation of the speed limit review during 2005/06 to the proposed revised programme.
42. Funding for implementing the review will be subject to availability of resources from within the Local Transport Plan Capital programme.

D. Legal implications

43. Public advertisement of TROs is a legal requirement. Costs are incurred for the advertisements in the local press and also from Legal Services' fees. There is a possibility that the legislation may change so that advertisements could be less detailed in future, reducing the costs considerably. However, there is no certainty regarding this and so no actual cost savings can be identified at present, although Legal Services are currently re- examining possible ways of reducing these advertising costs. DfT is being lobbied to progress the necessary legislation.
44. The opportunity is being taken during the SLR to check existing speed limit signs and Traffic Regulation Orders for all existing speed limits, (for which no changes are proposed), to ensure that all are legally enforceable. The Department for Transport has issued an instruction to highway authorities to confirm that action is being taken on this.

E. Property implications

None identified

F. Other implications/issues

Department for Transport Guidance

45. The Department for Transport (DfT) is updating its current guidance (Circular Roads 1/93) on setting local speed limits and the final version of this is due before the end of 2005.
46. Additional work may be required to ensure that new speed limits implemented after its publication are in accord with its recommendations. However, the speed limit proposals have been developed in the knowledge of the DfT draft guidelines and in this context it is anticipated that any effect upon the speed limit review will be minimal.

G Feedback from consultation and Local Member views

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Report

47. On 23rd March 2005 Anuradha Fitzwalter (Acting Group Manager, Traffic Management, Systems and Parking) and Pat Francis (Project Leader, Speed Limit Review), attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Environment of Buckinghamshire. A Report was prepared for the Committee
The Committee was asked to consider ways to : -
 - Improve the review process
 - Reduce costs
 - Reduce the duration of the review
48. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee set out its views formally in a letter, dated 29th March 2005, to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation (See Background Paper C).

H. Communication issues

49. The content of this Report has not been the subject of any formal consultation process. However, there has been considerable correspondence on the progress of the SLR and it is therefore important to release information on the proposed programme as soon as possible.
50. A summary of the revised SLR programme will be circulated to all Parish, Town, District and County Councillors and relevant County and District officers within one week of the decision being taken.
51. In addition, it is proposed that a press release should be written in order to inform the public of the decision made as a result of this Report.

I. Progress Monitoring

52. The progress of the review will be tracked by means of the 'TRANstat' performance management process within Transportation. Performance indicators are already in place.
53. Feedback will be formally requested from Parish Councils using a standard proforma and it is anticipated that unsolicited feedback from the public will also be forthcoming. The results of this monitoring in the early review areas may lead to modified proposals in the latter review Areas to be implemented.
54. An update on progress with the SLR will be issued to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the Environment of Buckinghamshire by the end of September 2006.

J. Review

55. A Report is to be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee by the end of September 2006. On-going assessment of progress and financial profile will also take place at the monthly 'TRANstat' performance-monitoring meeting.

Background Papers

[This section should include unpublished documents on which the report has been based and documents which have been relied upon to a material extent in preparing the report. Exempt or confidential information should not be listed, as any background papers must be made available for public inspection if requested.]

It is good practice also to include published papers. However if you do so, please indicate where they can be obtained, eg Internet, Library.]

Background Paper A: Plan 1 the 14 Areas

Background Paper B: Speed Limit Review Programme: Revised September 2005

Background Paper C: Letter from Overview & Scrutiny Committee 29th March 2005

For further information please contact: Pat Francis on 01296 382437

Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.

If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on Tuesday 20 September 2005. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 383610), Fax (to 01296 382538), or e-mail to cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk

CABINET MEMBER REPORT NO. T05.05

DECISION TAKEN:

I have taken into account any representations received concerning the contents of this report.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

DECISION NOT TAKEN:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Reason: _____

For Reference

Professional advice supporting the decision was provided by the following Officers

Name	Signed	Date
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