

ANGUS COUNCIL

ROADS COMMITTEE

22 NOVEMBER 2001

ANGUS COUNCIL SPEED LIMIT POLICY

REPORT BY THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF ROADS

ABSTRACT

This report discusses the criteria involved in choosing appropriate speed limits and recommends a policy for the introduction of new speed limits in Angus.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee agree to the guidelines set out in Appendix A for the setting of speed limits in Angus.

2 DETAILS

Concerns are often received from the general public about the speed of vehicles. On investigation these complaints are very often about inappropriate speed rather than illegal speeds.

The relationship between speed and road safety is a complex one but from research there is overwhelming evidence that lower speed results in fewer collisions of lesser severity. Despite the obvious benefits from reduced speed limits it is important that speed limits are realistic and consistent throughout the country. The latter is achieved by government guidance on the setting of speed limits. Although the government guidance does allow some flexibility in the setting of speed limits it is important that local authorities do take account of the national criteria when setting their limits.

The current guidance for speed limits is contained in the Scottish Office Circular No.1/93, Speed Limits - Guidance for Local Authorities. There has also been a more recent circular issued by the Scottish Executive which specifically deals with 20mph speed limits (SEDD Circular No. 6/2001 20mph Speed Limits).

Appendix A sets out the guidelines which are recommended by the Scottish Executive for the introduction of speed limits and indicates any areas where local policy in Angus might differ from this.

In Angus the setting of speed limits has in general followed the guidance issued by central government although a fairly liberal interpretation of the criteria has been adopted in some cases. For example the criteria recommends that the length of any speed limit should be a minimum of 800 metres. Some smaller settlements in Angus which are shorter than this have been provided with speed limits where the protection

of village life has been considered more important than exact compliance with the criteria.

It is considered that this pragmatic approach to the provision of speed limits should continue.

Nevertheless for the sake of national consistency any moving away from the national criteria should be the exception rather than the rule and this should only be done where particular local circumstances can justify it.

Enforcement of speed limits is the responsibility of the Chief Constable and so any proposal to change a speed limit is first of all discussed with the police. Clearly this enforcement requires resources in manpower and time and this is a further reason for ensuring that any proposed limit is reasonable and likely to be observed by the majority of the road users.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications as a result of this report. Future specific speed limit proposals would be the subject of further reports to the Committee as appropriate.

4 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no human rights implications arising from the proposals in this report.

5 CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration, Director of Finance and the Chief Constable have been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

Ronnie McNeil
ACTING DIRECTOR OF ROADS

NOTE

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report:-

SOID Circular No. 1/93, Speed Limits - Guidance for Local Authorities issued by the Scottish Office in February 1993.

SEDD Circular No. 6/2001, 20mph Speed Limits - issued by the Scottish Executive Development Department in August 2001.

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APPENDIX A

50mph	<p>On suburban roads the Scottish Office circular (No. 1/93) suggests the use of 50mph limits on lightly built up roads with some frontage development. In Angus there are now no such limits. In recent years the 50mph limits in villages with fairly limited frontage development have been reduced to 40mph or even 30mph in the interests of improving village life.</p> <p>In the rural situation the circular suggests this limit where there are features that attract traffic eg parks, sports grounds and perhaps cafes and filling stations.</p> <p>The only 50mph limit in Angus is on the A92 Dundee to Arbroath road where the limit is a temporary measure until the construction of the dualling scheme has been completed. This limit was imposed to address a particularly difficult accident problem which will only be fully solved by the road improvement.</p> <p>The national speed limit of 60mph is generally appropriate for the open countryside and it is unlikely that any new 50 mph limits could be justified in Angus.</p>
40mph	<p>Circular No. 1/93 states that 40mph limits should be used where the frontage is partially built up (usually exceeding 50%) ie where important traffic routes have become partially developed. 40mph limits are also appropriate on main roads through some villages and in built up urban areas on main traffic routes or bypasses with good road widths.</p> <p>In recent years in Angus there have been cases where a 30mph limit has been implemented in a village where by strict application of the criteria a 40mph limit is justified (see also 30mph limits below). Although this has been done to improve village life such limits are not always successful in reducing speeds to 30mph. Westmuir is an example where further traffic calming measures (rumble strips) have been found necessary to supplement the speed limit signing.</p>
30mph	<p>This is the normal urban speed limit to be used where there is development in depth on both sides of the road where there are a large number of pedestrians. A traffic regulation order to impose a 30mph limit is only required for urban A-class and B-class roads. All other roads which are street lit automatically have 30mph limits.</p> <p>In recent years the Council have introduced a number of 30 mph limits to protect village life where strict application of the criteria was not appropriate. This relaxation is permitted by the Scottish Office guidance notes but care is required to ensure that any proposed limits are realistic and enforceable.</p>
20mph	<p>Scottish Executive Circular No. 6/2001 issued on 17 August 2001 restated the guidance from previous circulars for legal 20mph limits and provided further guidance on the use of advisory 20 mph speed limits.</p>

There has been considerable public interest in the use of 20mph speed limits and this is an area where a robust policy requires to be set.

20mph Zones - These require traffic calming features to bring down vehicle speeds in order that the legal limit in these zones is effectively self enforcing. The Clifftown scheme is an example of a 20 mph zone. Such schemes can be very expensive and this level of expenditure can normally only be justified where a significant number of accidents have occurred.

It may be appropriate in new developments for developers to consider the introduction of 20mph limits from the outset and this is an issue which will be considered when approving proposed layouts.

Mandatory 20 mph speed limits. Where there are no traffic calming features the guidance says that 20mph limits should only be introduced where vehicle speeds are already low (no higher than 24 mph 85%ile speed *). However the following quote from the guidance is of particular relevance:- “Authorities may regard mandatory 20 mph speed limits without relatively expensive speed reduction features as an attractive option, but such limits should not be introduced where there is no realistic expectation that they will achieve the required decrease in traffic speeds, or where the police are unable to give an undertaking to provide an effective level of enforcement”.

In situations where speeds are low there is little benefit in introducing a mandatory limit simply to provide a “feel good factor”. It is not considered best value to spend limited resources on providing such limits where speeds are already low (for example in town centres).

Advisory 20 mph limits are suitable for areas where the existing 85%ile speeds are in the range 25 to 30 mph. By their nature, advisory speed limits cannot be enforced and therefore the guidance recommends that consultation to gain the support of local residents is crucial. The SEDD guidance recommends that monitoring of the effectiveness of advisory limits be carried out and that consideration be given to the possibility of introducing mandatory limits if speeds have been reduced below 25mph. If the advisory limits are not successful then they should be removed or traffic calming measures introduced.

In residential areas where there is an accident problem it would be more appropriate to provide traffic calming to bring down traffic speeds and in this case a 20mph zone should be created. The use of an advisory 20mph limit in other residential areas may be worth considering where there are local concerns about vehicle speeds. The blanket use of such signing throughout Angus would be costly however so it is recommended that an initial trial programme at selected sites be considered to establish the effectiveness of such measures. This proposal will be the subject of a separate report to the Committee.

* The 85%ile speed is the speed at or below which 85% of vehicles are driving.