

Devon County Council Traffic Management Procedure

VEHICLE ACTIVATED SPEED WARNING SIGNS

TMP04.1/A

REVISIONS

v1.0 11/08/2020
v1.1 29/09/2020

Vehicle Activated Speed Warning Signs TMP04.1/A

Background

There are a number of different types of road signs that display a digital message. The three main types are;

- Variable Message Signs (VMS), which provide information by continually showing a message to all motorists. These can be mobile or fixed.
- Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) are commonly deployed for speed compliance reasons. They detect a vehicle's speed with an internally mounted radar and display a message if the speed exceeds a set threshold. VAS have been found, in certain circumstances, to be more effective than traditional signs, as their luminance provides a contrast that has more of an impact on motorists. They are popular as they only target those who are considered to be going too fast for circumstances. These can be mobile or fixed.
- Speed indicator devices (SID) are a form of vehicle activated sign, which displays a motorist's current speed (accompanied sometimes by a frowning face or message to slow down where applicable). They aim to raise a motorist's awareness of their own speed, positively reinforcing those travelling within the limit and warning those who are not. These devices can achieve speed reductions.

Benefits of VAS

It has been established that correctly sited VAS can reduce vehicle speeds which in turn could lead to fewer and less severe casualty collisions. As with all warning signs an over proliferation can reduce the impact of this type of sign. Consequently, a clear justification for erecting them must be established.

To preserve their effectiveness as a speed reduction tool, VAS should be moved regularly between locations. Deployment periods of between 2-8 weeks have, generally, been found to be effective for mobile VAS, with a similar period elapsing before return. These signs should not be deployed permanently at one location.

Vehicle activated signs also benefit from public support and are relatively low cost.

Mobile VAS cannot take the place of non-digital signs rather they should be seen as supplementary to the fixed signs.

Implementation

Devon County Council (DCC) will continue to deploy either fixed or mobile VAS in accordance with the current Speed Compliance Action Review Forum (SCARF) process. Where a site does not meet the criteria for a DCC supplied sign, the local council may apply for permission to deploy mobile VAS at its own cost. All applications will be considered through the SCARF process.

1. Any mobile VAS device can be considered for approval by DCC. However, they will need to be UK approved and certified.
2. Mobile VAS cannot be used where a permanent vehicle activated speed sign is already operating in the same direction on the same section of route.
3. Mobile VAS should be located away from junctions and complex road layouts to avoid driver distraction.
4. Mobile VAS should not be used in close proximity to a speed limit change that would result in the sign being activated by vehicles outside the relevant speed limit.
5. All deployment locations and positions (on and over the highway) must be agreed with DCC to ensure the safety and suitability of each location. This will include any necessary permissions before being attached to street columns or other street furniture.
6. The location and installation methodology (for safe deployment and maintenance) must be agreed with the local Neighbourhood Highway Team and Traffic Management Team.
7. DCC will provide support in setting the speed threshold for activation. This will never be lower than the speed limit itself.
8. Responsibility remains with the local council for
 - a. purchase & installation costs (a warranty of 5 years is recommended)
 - b. ongoing maintenance and calibration which will need to be carried out in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations
 - c. insurance (including insurance for working on the highway).
 - d. all repairs.

DCC welcome and encourage the sharing of either new or existing equipment between Local Councils. This could help reduce costs and provide more sites for the relocation of the signs.

DCC reserves the right to withdraw consent for specific sites where there is reason to do so, and generally subject to discussion between interested parties. Devices may be removed directly by the highway authority in exceptional circumstances, for example, where they constitute an immediate danger to users of the highway.

DCC will collate details of all mobile VAS type, deployments, (including location; dates; direction; threshold settings) and any data collected by the device for inclusion on the countywide database. These details enable valuable information to be captured, building a cohesive picture across the County of all VAS sites.