
Meeting: Traffic Management Meeting

Date: 20 October 2009

Subject: Petition to provide a Vehicle Actuated Sign on the A600 at Deadmans Cross.

Report of: Basil Jackson

Summary: To report to the portfolio holder for safer and stronger communities that a petition has been received from residents in Deadmans Cross requesting the placing of a Vehicle Actuated Speed reminder sign in Deadmans Cross on the A600 and to recommend a course of action arising from the request.

Contact Officer: Nick Chapman
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Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: Maulden and Houghton Conquest

Function of: Council

Reason for urgency
(if appropriate)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

that the contents of the petition be noted and the lead petitioner be advised that the request to provide a Vehicle Actuated Sign in Deadmans Cross is not in accordance with developing Central Bedfordshire practice in respect of Vehicle Actuated Signs.

Background

1. In late 2008 a petition was sent to Bedfordshire County Council on behalf of residents Deadmans Cross regarding the request for a vehicle actuated sign on the A600 to address the speed of vehicles through the community. In accordance with the process in operation at that time an acknowledgement was sent to the lead petitioner.
2. The procedure in place at that time was for Bedfordshire Highways staff to undertake investigation into the grounds stated on the petition and to report the petition together with a proposed course of action to the first available meeting of the Bedfordshire County Council Development Control Committee.

3. Due to the changes in local government arrangements in Bedfordshire that were taking place at the time there was no opportunity to do this within the life of the outgoing County Council and the arrangements for presenting to members of the new Central Bedfordshire Council were not available at that time, and indeed for some time subsequently.
4. This petition was reported to Executive Committee on the 15 September 2009 and referred back for a further report.
5. Deadmans Cross is a small community situated on the A600 to the southwest of Bedford. The speed limit through the community is currently set at 40mph. The road surface is in good condition and there are gateway features at each change in speed limit.
6. Speed measurements show that 85% of vehicles are travelling through Deadmans Cross in excess of the 40mph speed limit and that during the week that speeds were measured between 8.5 and 11.25 percent of vehicles exceeded the prosecutable limit.
7. These speeds are not unexpected and are within the capabilities of the road. The community is very small with only a handful of properties.
8. Currently there are a great number of vehicle actuated signs on the Central Bedfordshire road network. These are variously owned by the highway authority and Parish Councils that have funded their installation over a number of years from Parish funds or grant monies. In order to remain effective these signs require, at least, annual maintenance and calibration. Signs that actuate at the wrong speed or not at all rapidly lose credibility with drivers. Operating signs do have a limited value in reminding drivers of the speed or hazard and can be beneficial in the right circumstances. This work is costly and an increasing burden as signs age.
9. The environment of Deadmans Cross on the A600 is such that it is unlikely that a VAS would initiate a noticeable change in driver behaviour. Given the small size of the community the sense of 'place' is reduced and that would normally reinforce the message to drivers that they are in an inhabited area. It is therefore considered that little or no benefit would result from this sign. Furthermore, there has been only one slight injury accident recorded in the area in the last three years.
10. The approximate installed cost of a new sign is £5,000 to £6,000 assuming that electricity is available close by and over £8,000 for a solar powered example. Routine defect maintenance for 5 years is included in this cost but thereafter will cost on average £350 per sign. Any non routine items, vandal or vehicle damage is at the Councils cost. There are currently 135 such signs in Central Bedfordshire.

Conclusion and Next Steps

11. It is not considered appropriate to install a vehicle actuated sign in this location at this time.
12. It is recommended that no further action is taken at the current time.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

N/A

Financial:

None as a result of this report

Legal:

None as a result of this report.

Risk Management:

None as a result of this report.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None as a result of this report.

Equalities/Human Rights:

None as a result of this report.

Community Development/Safety:

None as a result of this report.

Sustainability:

None as a result of this report.

Background Information

Copy of petition