

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: ASSESSMENT OF TRAFFIC CALMING SCHEMES
Meeting: ENVIRONMENT and COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE
Date: 12th May 2009
Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the method proposed for assessment, prioritisation and evaluation of traffic calming schemes on all urban public roads in Falkirk Council.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Since Local Government re-organisation in 1996, Falkirk Council has implemented a number of traffic calming schemes. The schemes have been successful in reducing traffic speeds and lowering accident rates, however, feedback from the public, Local Members, emergency services, bus companies and other services within Falkirk Council has been mixed. This prompted the start of a review of the policy titled "Traffic Calming for Falkirk Council" dated February 1998. This document was approved by the Strategic Services Committee 6 March 1998.

- 2.2 Before and after accident statistics have been reviewed for the schemes which have been implemented. A 50% reduction in accidents was evident as an overall average for schemes implemented by Falkirk Council. This figure is representative of traffic calming schemes installed in many other Local Authorities and statistics quoted by the Royal Society of the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA).

- 2.3 Falkirk Council Development Services' Local Transport Strategy 2006-2009 sets out the Council's overarching transport vision:

"to provide a transport network... which allows people a reasonable choice of travel options as part of a safe, reliable, convenient, accessible and sustainable transport system".

3. REVIEW

- 3.1 The review of the policy for traffic calming commenced after mixed feedback was received from the public, Local Members and other Council Services to the existing arrangements. Officers from all roads disciplines contributed to a workshop to discuss a review of the assessment methodology, assess existing scheme performance and question the strategy for traffic calming works.

- 3.2 The Department for Transport's Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/07 March 2007 "Traffic Calming" provides guidance on all aspects of traffic calming. The LTN brings together a summary of research commissioned by the Department for Transport together with contributions from external sources to provide invaluable guidance on the use of traffic calming measures. It covers relevant legislation and the design, effectiveness and installation of measures. Traffic calming can assist in delivering the Government's vision for a modern, safe and high-quality transport network which better meets people's needs and provides better access to services and increased choice for everyone. Sustainability and an emphasis on efficiency and value for money are important underlying principles of the LTN 1/07.
- 3.3 An action plan was formulated to allow a comprehensive evaluation of the Council's strategy towards traffic calming. There was a consensus that the following points had to be considered:
- The mechanism for rating schemes should be investigated
 - Consultation methods should be reviewed to encourage public support
 - Monitoring of schemes to be reviewed
 - How to highlight instances where traffic calming is not a viable option at an early stage
 - Review of design features

The proposed amended policy and assessment process addresses the points listed above. Priority schemes will be designed and implemented in accordance with LTN 1/07 ensuring modern, effective and cost effective traffic calming schemes can be implemented in the Falkirk Council area.

- 3.4 Around 150 requests for traffic calming from Members and the public have been recorded. It is proposed that these sites are included in this assessment and rated alongside the other public roads within Falkirk Council. A new comprehensive assessment process has been formulated which compares each relevant section of road in an objective way.
- 3.5 The Scottish Government has issued guidance on the setting of speed limits and requires all Councils to review speed limits on all A & B class roads by 2011. This was reported to Members at the Community Health and Safety Committee on 21st August 2002. This guidance makes it clear that the desirable speed limit for strategic roads in towns should be 30 mph. Following this guidance, a key outcome of the review is that traffic calming should not be used on A, B or other strategic routes. On strategic routes it is proposed to treat specific problems from the general road safety budget rather than to install a traffic calming scheme.
- 3.6 There is a proven benefit, in road safety terms, for all road users and the review has highlighted the need to target accident reduction as the prime objective of any future schemes. The Traffic Calming Assessment for Public Roads (appendix A) details the two stage procedure for highlighting schemes requiring treatment and listing them in order of priority.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 It is now broadly recognised that the public road is not just a road network for sole use by motorised vehicles. Within the urban limit the priority is not to minimise vehicular journey times or to promote more sustainable forms of transport at the cost of road safety. The consensus is to ensure that the public road network is recognised as part of the public realm. Promotion of traffic calming to improve road safety reducing the frequency and severity of accidents should be the priority of any scheme. Additional benefits include:

- Reduced traffic speeds
- Improve people's quality of life
- Introduce crossing facilities improving links within communities
- Improve accessibility to public transport, local shops, public services for pedestrians, disabled persons, the elderly and infirm
- Improve safety for cyclists
- Improve street lighting

4.2 The assessment process utilises site specific data to highlight, prioritise and evaluate schemes requiring treatment. This will ensure that schemes with high accident rates are given a higher priority.

- Stage 1 utilises personal injury accident (pia) data and the length of the site being assessed. A pia/kilometre figure is formulated which allows a direct comparison to be made in a list for all urban public roads. The derived list will demonstrate where roads have a high accident history and these roads are taken forward for further detailed analysis and investigation. It is recognised that the higher priority locations will be taken forward to stage 2.

Stage 1 will identify the sections of road with the highest risk of accidents per kilometre.

- Stage 2 requires identified locations to be analysed in greater detail utilising the following factors:
 - Vehicle speed
 - Vehicle flow
 - Severance (difficulty in crossing the road)
 - Accidents (level and severity)
 - Generators of vulnerable road users

Stage 2 may also highlight alternative treatments to address an accident problem at a specific location. It may be proved on further investigation that traffic calming is not the most suitable option. In this circumstance the site should be considered for inclusion in an alternative programme for implementing road accident reduction works, funded from the general road safety budget, and removed from this assessment.

The assessment within stage 2 will produce a rating for each location in accordance with the assessment process. It is recognised that the number of sites to be implemented will be dependent on available budget. The evaluation of the assessment criteria has also established a threshold below which it is extremely difficult to demonstrate measurable benefits for traffic calming. It is proposed that locations which do not reach this trigger level will not be taken forward.

Stage 2 will identify a priority rating

Appendix A “Policy for Traffic Calming on Public Roads within Falkirk Council” details the process in full.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Road Traffic Act 1988 section 39 places a statutory duty on Falkirk Council to carry out studies of road accidents and to take measures that appear appropriate to prevent accidents.

5.2 The Council’s Local Transport Strategy’s (2006-2009) goal is to:

“Provide a transport network both within the Council area and linking to surrounding areas, which allows people a reasonable choice of travel options as part of a safe, reliable, convenient, accessible and sustainable transport system. To enable people to travel when and where they wish, regardless of their level of income, physical ability or whether they have access to a car. To achieve a transport system that caters for the car, but is not dominated by it.”

Annex 1 of the LTS “Road Safety Review and Plan” retains the Council’s target of reducing casualties by six per year. This figure is derived from the need to achieve casualty reduction target rates set by the Department of Transport’s Tomorrow’s Roads: Safer for Everyone to be achieved by 2010.

5.3 The Council’s key goals are:

- Further developing a thriving, sustainable and vibrant economy;
- Continuing to improve the health, safety and well being of our citizens and communities;
- Increasing our efforts to tackle disadvantage and discrimination; and
- Enhancing and sustaining an environment in which people want to live, work and visit.

5.4 The provision of traffic calming links very closely with the stated duties and aims of the Council. Accordingly, it is proposed that the Council’s policy on traffic calming be:-

“The Council will promote the implementation of traffic calming measures in support of its Corporate Goals and Values and Local Transport Strategy when sections of the public road meet the criteria set out in the “Assessment for Traffic Calming on Public Roads within Falkirk Council”.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In previous years traffic calming schemes have been funded from the Quality of Life budget. The last schemes constructed were in 2003-04. Typical schemes have cost in the region of £150,000 - £300,000.
- 6.2 The road safety capital budget is now the only available budget source for schemes of this nature. This budget has traditionally been used to address a variety of road safety issues. This budget, currently £250,000 per year, is fully committed for 2009/10 to road safety improvement measures, however, discussions are underway to consider the available budgets for next year with a view to recommendations being made to members in the next budget process.

7. LARBERT ROAD, BONNYBRIDGE

- 7.1 The decision of the Policy and Resources Committee on 7 April 2009, based on the recommendation of Environment and Community Safety Committee, was to remove the speed cushions from the Larbert Road traffic calming scheme and make necessary design changes to accommodate their removal.
- 7.2 The road safety programme for 2009/10 includes work on the B902 at the Davids Loan and Bankside traffic signals and improvements to Carronshore Cross. It is considered that these projects are of higher road safety priority than the removal of the speed cushions at Larbert Road and it is recommended that Larbert Road is deferred and reviewed for delivery along with road safety schemes, other than those three schemes at Falkirk and Carronshore described above, to be delivered beyond 2009/10.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Elected Members are asked to approve:
- referral of the policy set out in 5.4 and assessment procedure set out in Appendix A to the Policy and Resources Committee
 - the removal of the speed cushions at Larbert Road is deferred for future consideration along with other road safety schemes as referred to in paragraph 7.2.

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Date: 5th May 2009

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List of background papers:

Appendix A Assessment of Traffic Calming on Public Roads within Falkirk Council
Local Transport Strategy