

**Decision Session – Executive Member
Transport and Planning**

12 May 2016

Report of the Director of City and Environmental Services

**School Crossing Patrol Improvements – Flashing Amber Warning
Lights (Wig-Wags)**

Summary

1. This report details the review of Wig-Wags used at school crossing patrol sites across the city. It also seeks a decision on a programme of removals and replacements of Wig-Wags including moving forward with the procurement of new units under a remote management system.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Executive Member approves Option (i):
 - Approve the Wig-Wag policy as described below:
 - Wig-Wags (flashing amber warning lights) in association with the school warning sign (Diag No. 545) should be used to indicate the presence of a School Crossing Patrol unless the patrol operates on a controlled crossing.
 - The lights should only be active during the patrol's working hours.
 - Wig-Wags may be used at sites without a School Crossing Patrol in extenuating circumstances, i.e. busy city centre school site which is not easily identifiable as a school.
 - Approve the programme of work shown in **Annex A**. Including approval to carry out a procurement exercise based on

providing a remote management system for the control of the Wig-Wag units.

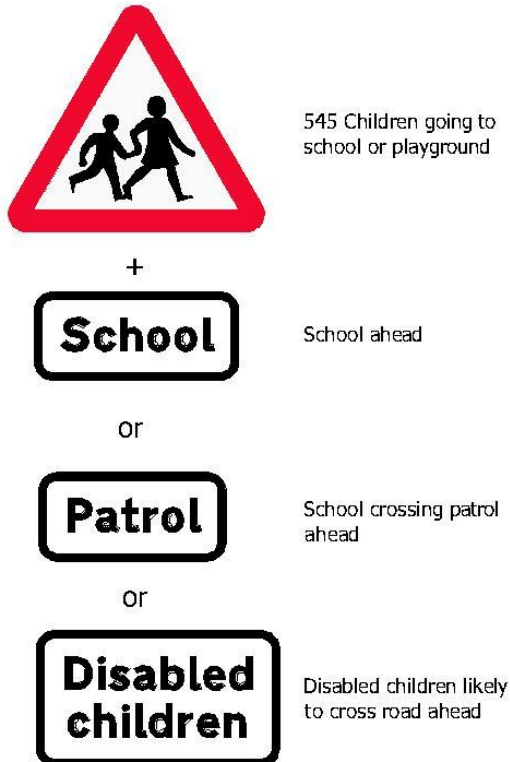
Reason: To rationalise the use of Wig-Wags in relation to the school crossing patrol service and introduce a responsive online system to manage the activation of the lights, whilst improving safety and reducing ongoing maintenance costs associated with wig-wags.

Background

3. Any site or school in York can be assessed for a Council funded patroller. This happens when:
 - a current patroller leaves
 - if a current site alters
 - at the request of the school
 - at the request of a parent or resident

This means that all schools/sites are checked as required.

4. CYC have found that the National Guidance provided by specialists at Road Safety GB is appropriate and relevant in terms of assessing the School Crossing Patrol (SCP) needs across the city, which determines which sites are eligible for a Council funded SCP. Where a school or site is not eligible for a council funded patroller there is a volunteer or third party option, the criteria of which is shown in **Annex B**.
5. The amber warning lights (Diag No. 4004) as prescribed in the Traffic Signs Regulations, Guidance and Directions (TSRGD) must be used in combination with sign Diag No. 545 and one of the supplementary plates as shown below. When provided at sites with a school crossing patrol, the lights should only be active during the patrols working hours.



Wig-wag lights can be mounted below the sign assembly or at the side usually as part of a backing board.

- City of York Council currently has 49 Wig-Wag units for school sites in the city. They have been installed over a long period of time, were sourced from numerous manufacturers and utilise a number of different activation methods.

Investigation / Discussion

- All of the current Wig-Wag sites and SCP sites (both active and vacant) have been reviewed by an Engineer from the Transport Projects team and a Road Safety Officer to evaluate the site and consider the need for Wig-Wags at the location. In doing this they have used the Road Safety Great Britain (RSGB) National Guidance document as recognised best practice for the assessment criteria. Sites are identified in **Annex A**.
- The current Wig-Wag activation methods are not consistent. Some are activated by a timer which has to be programmed annually to ensure it correlates with the school calendar and some are manually activated by the SCP (who is paid extra for this duty). Manually activated lights at sites with no SCP are activated by a member of school staff as an additional duty. The current Wig-Wags are a mix of various sorts, and in some cases very old and difficult to source parts for repair. This means that there is a growing safety issue for both staff and children who are working

and crossing at sites where warning lights are out of action for long periods of time because of breakdown.

9. Wig-Wags have historically been provided at sites with a school crossing patrol, but over time patrols have left, and after review against the RSGB criteria in certain circumstances, the site has been disbanded, but the Wig-Wag's have remained. Sites with Wig-Wags but no patrols create three problems:
 - i) Devalues the message.
 - ii) Creates an unnecessary maintenance liability.
 - iii) Manually activated lights require alternative staff provision for activation.
10. Additionally the active SCP sites with automatic Wig-Wags have no override on training days and will activate without the presence of the patroller and children crossing which can further devalue them with motorists.
11. There is currently no CYC policy on the provision and maintenance of Wig-Wags but it is suggested that a criteria be adopted that Wig-Wags are used, to indicate to drivers that they are approaching a site where a patroller is working, unless there are extenuating circumstances. This would ensure that a clear message is given to drivers, that they are likely to encounter the patroller stood in the road with children crossing, thus helping to establish an understanding of what the lights mean and thus a "value" in having them.
12. Where patrols operate on signalised crossings or at signal junctions Wig-Wags should not be provided as they can distract from the traffic signals which take precedent. Patrols operating on zebra crossings should be reviewed individually and Wig-Wags provided if they are considered to be of benefit.
13. To reduce the maintenance liability Wig-Wags should be removed from the sites which no longer have a patrol. These have been identified as part of the review (**Table 2 of Annex A**), with 21 individual units identified for possible removal. Some of these sites will require alterations to the existing signing to ensure they are showing the correct supplementary plate.

14. Two of the sites investigated have an active SCP but no Wig-Wags. To be consistent with the newly proposed criteria Wig-Wags should be provided at these sites. A total of four new units (**Table 3 of Annex A**).
15. To further reduce ongoing running and maintenance costs at the sites at which Wig-Wags will be retained the units should be replaced with a single type of Wig-Wag from one manufacturer, which operates on an online system allowing CYC officers control of the activation (**Table 1 of Annex A**). This would allow all 32 units to operate automatically on a pre-programmed cycle but alterations could be made as required via an online portal.
16. SCP's which currently activate their Wig-Wags and are paid for their time would continue to be paid and will be expected to check the lights are operating rather than switching them on and off. The day to day management of the control system would be incorporated into the SCP Supervisor role within the Transport team.
17. Vacant SCP sites without Wig-Wags have not been considered for Wig-Wag installation at this time, but could be reviewed if patrols are recruited.
18. If a new SCP site is established or a vacant site reactivated these would need to be assessed and Wig-Wag equipment provided as required.
19. As part of the review zebra crossings at five school sites have been identified for improvements. This work is to be funded from the Safe Routes to School 16/17 budget and will be carried out as soon as possible. The sites are:
 - Fishergate Primary, Fishergate
 - St. George's Primary,
 - Rufforth Primary, B1224 Wetherby Rd
 - St. Barnabas Primary, Salisbury Terrace
 - Wigginton Primary, Main Street

Options

20. Option (i) -

- Approve the Wig-Wag policy as described below:
 - Wig-Wags (flashing amber warning lights) in association with the school warning sign (Diag No. 545) should be used to indicate the presence of a School Crossing Patrol unless the patrol operates on a controlled crossing.
 - The lights should only be active during the patrol's working hours.
 - Wig-Wags may be used at sites without a School Crossing Patrol in extenuating circumstances, i.e. busy city centre school site which is not easily identifiable as a school.
- Approve the programme of work shown in **Annex A**. Including approval to carry out a procurement exercise based on providing a remote management system for the control of the Wig-Wag units.

Option (ii) -

- As Option (i) but with revisions as the Executive Member deems appropriate.

Option (iii) –

- Do nothing, and reallocate the funding to other programmes of work.

Analysis

21. The use of Wig-Wags at school sites has not previously been reviewed and therefore the flashing light units have been installed without any sort of local policy to justify or support their use. This is now causing a safety issue for staff operating sites and children crossing. Option (i) seeks to address this and provide a new system of Wig-Wags across the active SCP sites in the city. This new

system would improve safety and allow full control of the Wig-Wags by CYC officers. The system would also be flexible and remove the need to visit some sites to programme the lights each year.

22. If nothing is done to upgrade the existing Wig-Wags, safety issues will be more frequent, maintenance costs will increase and sites could be without working lights for sometime. Through a suitable procurement exercise a new system of Wig-Wags can be purchased with a warranty to significantly reduce maintenance costs moving forward.
23. The proposals in Option(i) are based on a policy moving forward which rationalises the use of Wig-Wags at school sites. Providing flashing amber warning lights in line with this policy will improve motorists understanding of the lights and ensure there are not overused leading to them being devalued.

Council Plan

24. The potential implications for the priorities in the Council Plan are:
 - **A Prosperous City For All.**
The proposed works seek to offer a long term saving for the Council by reducing the ongoing maintenance costs for Wig-Wags.
 - **A Focus On Frontline Services.**
School crossing patrols are a frontline service and ensuring they operate safely for all users is an important part their role. The proposals seek to make their role easier and provide a more flexible approach to the activation of the associated Wig-Wags.

Implications

25. Implications of the proposed work are listed below:
 - **Financial** – The budget for the school crossing patrol review in 16/17 is £89k. Estimated costs for the proposed work including fees are £81k. So the works are affordable based on current estimates. This will be reviewed following the procurement exercise if the scheme is approved.

- **Human Resources (HR)** – There are no HR implications.
- **Equalities** - There are no equalities implications.
- **Legal** - There are no legal implications.
- **Crime and Disorder** - There are no crime and disorder implications.
- **Information Technology (IT)** – The centralised activation method for the new Wig-Wags may have some IT implications. This will be explored further during the procurement exercise if the scheme is approved.
- **Property** - There are no property implications

Risk Management

26. In compliance with the Council’s risk management strategy, the following risks associated with the recommendations in this report have been identified and described in the following points, and set out in the table below:
27. Competition and Procurement: Risk associated with undertaking a procurement exercise as recommended in the report could impact on scheme costs. Contingencies have been included in the estimated costs to cover this possibility.
28. Systems and Technology: Risk associated with relying on technology to control the activation of the new Wig-Wags. If the technology fails lights may not be active when needed which could lead to accidents. Fail safe options will be investigated as part of the procurement exercise.

Risk Category	Impact	Likelihood	Score
Competition & Procurement	Minor	Possible	9
Systems & Technology	Minor	Possible	9

Contact Details

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Report
Approved

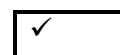


Date 22 April
2016

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Road Safety GB School Crossing Patrol Guidelines 2015

Annexes

Annex A – Wig-Wag proposals by site.

Annex B – Volunteer or third party funded site criteria