

Report of the Cabinet Member of City Strategy

Petition: "Reinstatement of Vehicle Activated Sign – Holtby"

Summary

1. A petition was put to Council, by Councillor Jenny Brooks on 11th October 2012 with the following statement.
2. *"Residents of Holtby are concerned that the new Monks Cross development will increase traffic and speeds through their village. The traffic management scheme that they supported last year included reinstating the VAS. That part of the scheme was not carried out. Residents want the VAS reinstated as they feel it was an integral part of what they agreed to and is needed to help the improvements work."*
3. As part of speed reduction measures implemented in 2010/11 the existing VAS on Straight Lane at Holtby was removed. This was because the work entailed moving the 30 speed limit, nearer to the village; the VAS that flashed a "30 sign" would no longer be in the 30 limit. Holtby Parish Council (PC) feel that they were told the VAS would be re-located and the petition is a request for CYC to honour that commitment.
4. There seems to be confusion between the Parish Council and the City of York Council about if and who should fund the re-instatement of a VAS to another location in the Village.
5. Having looked back through the records and correspondence going back a number of years it is would appear that Holtby PC were talking to numerous officers and organisations, including North Yorkshire Police (NYP) at the same time, which may be the cause of some confusion over the VAS.

6. Holtby is a key through route, as it is the only HGV “high load route” to Hull docks identified by CYC.
7. There is evidence of a whole body of village road infrastructure improvements that has been done in the last 10 years even though there is no casualty history for the village.
8. This included improvements to the Village gateways; closure of Panman Lane; Straight Lane junction improvements and a Village Transport Study.
9. These records also include reference to the installation of the original Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) on Straight Lane, which was as part of a CYC funded trial. £25k was allocated from a 2005/06 Planning and Capital Programme budget to enable VAS equipment to be installed on a trial basis, at nine locations across the City and Holtby was one of the locations chosen to take part in the trial.

Background

10. The high level of correspondence with differing organisations and officers has resulted in slightly differing messages and information being given, on some aspects of speed reduction measures, and in particular the removal and re-location of a VAS in Holtby. It would suggest that possibly CYC officers made an incorrect assumption that the PC understands the criteria in place, (since October 2009) and the need to evidence requirement for a VAS.
11. This report attempts to lay out the key facts and communications that have been on going, between a number of parties to explain why we are here and then to give officer recommendations on a way forward.
12. **Annex 1 (A&B)** show Maps of Holtby which may be useful when considering the other issues raised in this report.
13. Key to this confusion seems to be a report sent to the PC in March 2009, called “**Traffic and Vehicle Speed Issue Report**” which put forward various options for possibly slowing traffic. A copy of this report is included at **Annex 2**; unfortunately this report did not make it clear that there was no identified funding for any of these proposals. Funding was only identified, over 12 months later, via the Speed Review Process in July 2010. The important elements

to the decision on whether CYC should fund the replacement of the VAS are as follows:-

- Evidence on the success of VAS in relation to reducing speed, nationally and locally.
- Criteria for a Council funded VAS.
- The development of the Piggeries site which includes section 106 funding to be able to add a footpath and a junction re-alignment which will act as a traffic calming measure.
- Other locations awaiting funding via the Speed Review.

Evidence & Guidance of VAS signs Nationally

14. Checking the new guidance on setting speed limits 2013, (sec 57, pg 16 DfT Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits) the following is stated:-

“Vehicle-activated signs (VAS), triggered by an approaching vehicle, have been developed to help address the problem of inappropriate speed. They must not be used as an alternative to standard static signing, but as an additional measure to warn drivers of a potential hazard or to remind them of the speed limit in force. VAS have proved particularly effective in rural areas, including at the approaches to junctions and bends. The Department has provided guidance in Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/03 Vehicle Activated Signs (DfT, 2003).”

15. Looking at the Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/03 the guidance written in response to large-scale evaluation states:-

“Vehicle activated signs should be considered only when there is an accident problem associated within appropriate speed that has not been satisfactorily remedied by standard signing and where safety cameras and related signs are not a cost effective or otherwise appropriate solution. Inappropriate speeds might include vehicle speeds on the approach to a hazard, such as a bend or junction, that are below the posted speed limit and consequently below the police enforcement thresholds. Before the decision to install vehicle activated signs is made, it is important to undertake an audit of existing furniture, fixed signs, road condition and road markings to assess their standard and

condition. It is not recommended that vehicle activated signs are deployed unless it is clear that the problem cannot be remedied by improving the fixed signing. It should also be noted that vehicle activated signs are not a substitute for conventional signs and they should therefore only be used sparingly. Detailed accident investigation should also be undertaken to identify the dominant accident patterns and confirm that vehicle activated signs are an appropriate remedial measure”.

Criteria for VAS signs in York

16. Following the Trial (that Holtby took part in) evaluation to establish how successful VAS were in York was presented at the Decision Session in March 2009 (as part of the Speed Review Report). That report suggested:-

“The conclusion from follow up speed surveys at all of the nine trial sites was that VAS signs can be effective as a speed reduction tool for approx 3 years. In the right location effects can be instant and sustained at a maximum level for between 6 – 12 weeks. After this time, effectiveness starts to diminish gradually.”

17. Following on from this, CYC formally adopted criteria for the implementation of VAS within the city, both those funded by CYC, but also with lesser criteria if PC's wished to purchase their own. (Decision Session October 2009)
18. The following criteria was adopted by CYC at this meeting:-

“Local transport Plan (LTP) funding will only be used where the 85%ile speed equals or exceeds the signed limit by 10% +2mph (ie 35mph in a 30mph limit, and 46mph in a 40mph limit). This would be consistent with the speed enforcement thresholds employed by the Police. Reason: To ensure a consistent approach and targeted use of LTP resources.

Where the LTP funding criteria is not met, a Ward Committee or Parish Council may still wish to fund the installation of a VAS. In this situation, it is recommended that a threshold of 85%ile speeds being 10% above the speed limit should be adopted (i.e. 33mph in a 30 limit and 44mph in a 40mph limit). Reason: To make sure VAS are used in appropriate areas.”

19. Thus by the time the funding had been identified for any work, at Holtby (July 2010) the **Traffic and Vehicle Speed Report (Annex 2)** submitted to the PC (March 2009) had been superseded by other criteria documents, which make it clear that CYC funded VAS signs should be implemented where there is an evidenced speeding accident issue and with criteria set for minimum 85th percentile speeds.
20. However it appears that these facts have not been communicated to the PC in a way that has clearly explained that getting a CYC funded VAS was not simply a matter of putting in a request.
21. It is accepted that the most recent speed surveys taken on Holtby Lane, at Willow Court (November 2011) show that the 85th percentile speeds of 37/38mph are still above the criteria for a VAS, by 2 – 3mph, although casualty injury accidents recorded for Holtby in the last 10 years, stands at one “slight injury” caused when a parked car door was knocked by another vehicle. It is not considered by officers that this location is of a higher priority than other similar locations on the Projects list.
22. Despite Holtby PC feeling that they have been promised a VAS, there are copies of correspondence, which can be made available if needed, which illustrate that although the intention was to re-locate the VAS, this was subject to criteria and funding. It was also made clear, as far back as the **Traffic and Vehicle Speed Report** (March 2009) that Holtby, was not priority for funding of traffic calming measures. It is also important to consider this in the context of the amount of work Holtby has received in terms of traffic routes and calming over the last 10 years, in relation to the low casualty history in the village.

Development of the Piggeries

23. On investigation of this issue it has become apparent that work in Holtby is due to start on the installation of a footpath and improved junction lay out between Holtby Lane and Warthill. (see Plans at **Annex 3**) This is because planning consent has been granted subject to the signing of a S106 agreement. One of the obligations of the agreement is the provision of a footway from Church Rise Southwards to the piggeries site.

24. The piggeries site is to be redeveloped for 4 houses and the layout has been agreed with the Parish Council and the Developer. CYC have spoken to the applicant who is keen to start work and we can reasonably expect the development and footway to proceed.
25. It is anticipated that this realignment of the junction (effectively putting in vertical traffic calming) and the footpath (giving the illusion of road narrowing) will reduce the 85th percentile speeds at Willow Court to a speed under the criteria (<35mph) for a CYC funded VAS.

Other locations awaiting funding via the Speed Review Process, and work already done at Holtby in 2010/11.

26. For a village that has little history of casualty accidents, quite an amount of work has been done on highway improvements in the village in the last 10 years or so.
27. There has also been more recent work by maintenance to improve the grass verge damage by adding edging stones.
28. Holtby are not alone in feeling that they are justified in wanting traffic calming measures. Currently (and since July 10) there are a total of 47 sites (including Holtby Lane) that have been investigated under the Speed Review Process, where speeds meet the criteria for engineering, but where there is no casualty accident history. All 47 sites are currently on the Project Team list for feasibility under the Speed Management Budget, which was set at £30k for the year 2012/13.

Consultation

29. The Speed Review Process is a partnership between CYC, North Yorkshire Police and NY Fire & Rescue. All partners are aware and in agreement on the results of this process.

Options

30. **Option A** - Take no further action.
31. **Option B** - Defer until after the 106 work, footpath and junction realignment is complete and then fund (CYC) speed surveys to determine if there is still a speed issue.
32. **Option C** - Agree that Holtby can have a CYC funded VAS.
33. **Option D – Officer Recommendation.** Take no further action at Holtby, but task the Speed Review Partnership with updating the VAS criteria and policy in relation to the DfT guidance and the evidence that VAS have a limited impact time and that there are now a number of ageing, ineffective VAS across the city.

Analysis

34. **Option A** – Take no further action. The VAS that was removed from Holtby was provided as part of a CYC trial in the first place. Holtby is already on the Project List (Willow Court location) awaiting feasibility for cost effective traffic calming, with work already due to take place via 106 funding which is expected to reduce traffic speeds in Holtby to under the advised criteria limits for no further action. A VAS would be not be a cost effective installation for CYC.
35. There is a Speed Indicator Device (SID) scheme already in place and Holtby has been identified as a suitable location for this scheme. This is a scheme Holtby have already taken advantage of on 2 occasions.
36. Holtby have the option to request an investigation via the Speed Review Process, if after this work is completed they still feel there are issues with speeding traffic, however this is unlikely to result in Holtby seeing any further speed reduction measures (including a VAS) being implemented by CYC, due to funding being very limited, to high priority casualty sites.
37. Under the current criteria, Holtby could purchase their own VAS sign, but would also need to fund speed surveys to justify this request, and ensure that there was budget for the future, as and

when the VAS required maintenance. Other PC's have elected to do this.

38. **Option B** – Defer until after the 106 work, footpath and junction realignment is complete and then fund (CYC) speed surveys to determine if there is still a speed issue. However, if these speed surveys, come back as over the threshold for a speed reduction measure, it is unlikely that a VAS would be recommended by officers. Although VAS have been popular with residents in the last 5 years or so, it is clear from the National Guidance and also experience in York, that the use is limited to being mainly successful in the first 12 weeks of installation and thus are not a cost effective use of funding. There are also issues with maintenance, many of these VAS are now 5 years old or more and there is no identified maintenance plan or budget for dealing with repairs as these machines begin to age. As sealed units any repair has to be done by sending the whole unit back to the manufacturer in Norfolk and this is beginning to cause issues with cost of maintenance and repair generally across the City.
39. **Option C** – Agree that Holtby can have a CYC funded VAS. But this decision would result in Holtby being made a priority over and above other sites in the same of similar situation. This could bring into question the reasons for having an evidence and data led decision making process and open the Elected Member up to having to make decision on the other 46 sites awaiting speed reduction measures.
40. **Option D** – Officer Recommendation. Take no further action at Holtby, as per Option A above; but also task the Speed Review Partnership to re-examine the data and criteria for the installation of VAS, following on from the DfT guidance and evidence that VAS have limited impact time and that there are now a number of ageing, ineffective VAS across the city.
41. It is of note that the 2 installation of VAS in the City of York, that have been very successful; in cost effectiveness and in terms of saving casualties, are located at Holtby Manor Bends on the A166 and at the bottom of Huntington Road, where a very specific speed/damage only accident history was identified and a VAS, used as per DfT guidance and set at an appropriate threshold appears to be making a difference. It may be that a new policy would ensure that VAS are used in future, at very specific locations

in line with DfT recommendations which would result in seeing less across the city, but used in a more effective way to reduce speeds at specific accident locations.

Council Plan Priorities

42. Get York Moving
43. Build Stronger Communities
44. The Speed Review process aims to give a data led method of assessing one aspect of safety on the roads (speed) and is therefore part of the work to make people feel safer, which encourages the use of environmentally friendly modes of transport. Fears of being a casualty are a real deterrent to more people walking and in particular cycling. By implementing a data led programme of speed management measures to reduce speeding, which targets the minority of drivers whose driving behaviour poses the greatest risk to others, overall safety can be improved and an increase in active transport use achieved. Thus supporting the council plan priorities, to get York moving.
45. Promoting the Speed Indicator Device (SID), via the Speed Review Process, gives communities, where it is evidenced as appropriate, the tools to help them selves, to make a difference, building stronger communities.

Implications

46. **Financial** - Revenue and capital funding for speed reduction schemes in 2012/13 and 2013/14 are limited, even with Local Sustainable Transport Funding helping in other areas. All potential measures should be prioritised.
47. **Human Resources (HR)** – There are HR implications. As anticipated the reduced officer resources to this service, has seen a general reduction in non priority feasibility and implementation. Resources will be focussed on areas, which deliver the best value for money in terms of casualty reduction.
48. **Equalities** – There are no equality implications.
49. **Legal** – There are no legal implications.

50. **Crime and Disorder** - Speeding is a criminal offence and the Council has a responsibility to deliver an effective Speed Management Strategy, however it is a Police responsibility to enforce the appropriate speed limit as per the DfT guidelines and Road Traffic Law.
51. **Information Technology (IT)** - There are no IT implications.
52. **Property** - There are no property implications
53. **Other** - There are no other implications

Risk Management

54. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the risks arising from the recommendations have been assessed, as below 16 and therefore require monitoring only.
55. **Strategic** - There are no strategic risks associated with the recommendations of this report.
56. **Physical** - Road accidents by their very nature are unpredictable and it is always possible that an injury accident will occur on a route that has been assessed where no action was taken. The data led method of assessing speeding issues ensures that routes with a casualty record are prioritised.
57. **Financial** - It is now evident that demand for speed management treatments outweighs the capacity to deliver. Thus decisions need to be taken using the criteria to ensure all locations are considered equally. All potential speed management administration and engineering treatments will be subject to budget allocation.
58. **Organisation/Reputation** - There is likely to be opposition to a recommendation to take no action following the assessment of a speeding issue. However, the data led method of assessing speeding issues enables justification to be provided in instances when no action is deemed appropriate. With reduced allocations and increased administration workload it is possible that the level of service provided will be lower than the public's expectations leading to a risk that the council's reputation will suffer.

Recommendations

59. The Officer recommendation is **Option D**, to take no further action in terms of implementation of a VAS at Holtby, but to task the Speed Review Partnership to re-assess the current Council criteria and policy for implementation of VAS signs.

Reason:-

60. Engineering work, due to take place at Holtby is anticipated to reduce speeds below the threshold for requirements of a VAS. The SID (speed indicator device) scheme would be appropriate for Holtby, and has been offered, and used in the past by Holtby.
61. To council fund a VAS at Holtby would elevate Holtby to priority over the other 47 sites currently waiting for speed reduction feasibility work and brings into question why there should be criteria led process of establishing priority for speed concerns. This could have knock on effects for the Partnership Speed Review Process, which is currently the only process we have for implementing a data led approach to using the NYP safety camera, at community concern sites which do not have a casualty history.
62. The current City of York VAS policy is 4 years old, and is not in line with DfT recommendations. Evidence from the trial of nine sites in York suggests that the speed reduction is only achieved for short times at VAS locations and as the equipment gets older there are emerging issues with maintenance and budgets. There is strong evidence that VAS, when used, as per DfT recommendations, (as is used in York at 2 sites) where there is a history of numerous non injury accidents can potentially be preventing risk of serious injury resulting from speed.
63. The other issue to take into consideration, is that a VAS is considered as one of the engineering tools available to reduce speeds (as per the Dft criteria) and implementation of speed reduction engineering (VAS) would see any site that had previously been eligible for Police enforcement being removed from the enforcement list because engineering has been implemented.

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**Report
Approved**



Date 03/04/13

Wards Affected: Holtby

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

- 1 – A & B Maps of Holtby
- 2 – Traffic & Vehicle Speed Issue Report
- 3 – Plans for the development of the Piggeries

Background Papers

DfT Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits
Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/03
Decision Session in March 2009 – Speed Review Report
Decision Session October 2009 – Vehicle Activated Sign Criteria York