

Consultation on revision of DfT's speed limit circular

July 2012

In the Strategic Framework for Road Safety (DfT May 2011) we announced our intention to revise and reissue the guidance on speed limits Circular 01/06, Setting Local Speed Limits¹, with the aim of increasing flexibility for local authorities.

This revised guidance is attached in draft form and we are asking for your comments before finalising the new advice. It covers the local speed limits which may be set by traffic authorities in situations where local needs and conditions suggest a speed limit which differs from the respective national speed limit. We are not seeking views on the national limits of 30mph on street lit roads, 60mph on single carriageway roads and 70mph on dual carriageways and motorways.

- Informal feedback from local authorities and other groups on the existing guidance, and to a consultation in December 2009 on some revisions which in the event were not carried forward, have been generally positive, confirming that the advice remains largely fit for purpose, so we are not proposing substantial changes. But we are keen to update the guidance to take account of the recent changes to the signing regime, to expand the section on 20mph zones and limits, to introduce the Speed Limit Appraisal Tool and to make some other changes. We are therefore seeking comments on the drafting and content of this draft circular.

Traffic Signs

Section 6 of the draft Circular, Urban Speed Limits, takes account of the issues set out in the Department's traffic signs policy review "Signing the Way" in October 2011, which established a clear policy framework in which traffic signing should be considered and delivered, and the associated amendment regulations which came into force on 30 January 2012, resulting in fewer DfT administrative control about certain signs.

1

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090224115036/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/dftcircular106/dftcircular106.pdf>

20mph zones and limits

The section of the draft circular on 20mph zones/limits, also in section 6, has been expanded. Traffic authorities are reminded that they can, over time, introduce 20 mph zones or limits into:

- Major streets where business on foot is more important than slowing down road traffic and
- Lesser residential roads in cities, towns and villages, particularly where this would be reasonable for the road environment, there is community support and streets are being used by pedestrians and cyclists.

Where they do so, general compliance should be achievable without an excessive reliance on enforcement.

We want to make it clearer that highway authorities have flexibility in the use of 20 mph zones and limits, and should apply the option best suited to the local circumstances and that brings most benefits in terms of casualty reductions and wider community benefits.

Q1. Do you agree that this advice about introducing 20mph zones and limits provides useful guidance to traffic authorities considering speed management in urban areas? If not, please explain your reasons.

The circular amends the previous advice that 20 mph limits without traffic calming should generally be restricted to single or small groups of streets. This reflects practice in a number of cities (such as Portsmouth), where this approach has been taken. The circular will be linked to a new speed limit appraisal tool, which itself will illustrate the effects of 20 mph zones with traffic calming and 20 mph limits with little or no traffic calming.

Q2. Do you agree that traffic authorities should be able to consider the implementation of 20mph limits over a number of roads where mean speeds at or below 24mph are already achieved? If not, please explain your reasons.

Speed Limit Appraisal Tool and technical assessment tool for rural speed limit reviews

In the Strategic Framework for Road Safety we announced that we would provide a tool to help local authorities to assess the full costs and benefits of proposed schemes. The Speed Limit Appraisal Tool, which will be available on the DfT website, is under development. It will be launched later this year and references to it will be added to the draft Circular in a new section 5 when it has developed further.

The Speed Limit Appraisal Tool will replace the technical assessment tool for rural speed limit reviews, contained in Traffic Advisory Leaflet 2/06² and

² <http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/tal2-06/>

referred to in section 6.1 of the current Circular. The advice to use the technical assessment tool will be withdrawn.

Q3. Do you agree that the recommendation to use the technical assessment tool should be withdrawn? If not, please explain your reasons.

Speed limits for air quality purposes

We are considering making it clearer that compliance with air quality limits could be a factor in the choice of speed made by local traffic authorities (para 23 of the draft circular).

Q4. Do you agree that compliance with air quality limits could be a factor in the choice of speed made by local traffic authorities? If not, please explain your reasons.

Other changes

We have made some other small changes to the Circular to revise and update it.

Q.5 Do you have other comments about the drafting of the revised circular?

We are asking for your comments before finalising the new advice. We will be making additional changes aimed at clarifying or rationalising the advice, or where changes to other sections are required as a result of the changes proposed here.

You should continue to use the advice contained in Circular 01/06, Setting Local Speed Limits, or given in the context of the recent Traffic Signs Policy Review, until the final new guidance is in place.

How to respond

The consultation period began on 13th July 2012 and will run until 5 October 2012. Please ensure that your response reaches us before the closing date. If you need an alternative format (Braille, audio CD, etc), please contact the address below.

Please send consultation responses to

<https://consultation.dft.gov.uk/dft/speed-limit-circular>

Department for
Transport

Or to:

Speed Limit Circular Consultation Manager
Road User Licensing Insurance and Safety Division
Zone 3/19
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

speedlimitcircular@dft.gsi.gov.uk

When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If responding on behalf of a larger organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

If you have any questions, please use the contact details above.

What will happen next

A summary of responses, including the next steps, will be published within three months of the consultation closing on the website at www.dft.gov.uk. Paper copies will be available on request.

Freedom of Information

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you want information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.

In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Consultation criteria

The consultation is being conducted in line with the Government's Code of Practice on Consultation. A full version of the Code of Practice on Consultation is available on the Better Regulation Executive website at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf> If you consider that this consultation does not comply with the criteria or have comments about the consultation process please contact:

Consultation Co-ordinator, Department for Transport, Zone 1/14 Great Minster House, London SW1P 4DR

Email: consultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk