

Rother Association of Local Councils

Reducing speeding in towns and villages in the Rother area

1. Background

A meeting of Rother Parish Clerks in June 2019 discussed the issue of speeding and inappropriate driving across the district and concluded that it is a common and important issue across the Rother area. Although there are Community Speedwatch groups in many parishes' general awareness by the public about speeding is lacking together with very little enforcement.

Ideas ranging from parishes coming together to create joint messages, what they thought the issues were, how they could address these themselves and what could reasonably be expected that other authorities should be doing were all considered.

It was decided that clerks should speak to their individual councils regarding taking this forward and, if enough interest was shown, hold a workshop in September 2019 to identify issues connected with speeding and how these might be addressed.

A variety of issues and possible solutions were identified at the workshop and presented to the October 2019 RALC meeting which agreed that RALC fully supported this initiative to reduce the impact of speeding in Rother.

2. Defining the problem

To gain a better understand about what constitutes / causes speeding or inappropriate driving the workshop defined six categories which it felt covered most aspects of the problem and the possible causes

Categories	Causes
Driving too fast / exceeding the speed limit	A total disregard for the speed limit, inattention to the prevailing speed limit, going with the traffic flow, late for an appointment / work / school, distraction, use of mobile phone / sat nav, drink / drugs
Driving within the limit but too fast for conditions	Over confidence about driving ability, lack of experience, familiarity with the road, ignoring weather conditions, volume of traffic, inattention / distraction, use of mobile phone / sat nav
Driver attitude and behaviour	Viewed as a victimless crime, risky overtaking, disregard for others safety, over confidence, driver age, familiarity with road, impatience, aggressive driving
Road traffic safety issues	Road layouts, inconsistent speed limits, signage difficult to read / confusing, lack of pavements, condition of roads (e.g. Potholes)
Impact on communities	Rat runs, school runs, short cuts, parking, through routes used by heavy vehicles on roads not designed for this, environmental issues
Barriers to change	Insufficient data, lack of enforcement, driver attitudes, cultural change, funding, legal, traffic and safety policy

The possible causes are by no means an exhaustive list and to an extent the causes in the first three categories are interchangeable but nonetheless they offer a starting point for considering possible solutions

3. Outcomes from the Workshops.

The key objectives from the workshops were to identify how we can work with other authorities to review policy and practice so that enforcement and driver education can be improved, how we can open discussions with ESCC in areas where casualty statistics do not support ESCC engagement and to review with all regulators if and where we can make a case for a change in the law and in regulations.

4. Current Position

Speedwatch Groups

These are organised and run by local volunteers who record vehicle speeds and details which are processed by the Police who send warning letters to drivers. Groups come under the Community Speed strand of the Sussex Safer Road Partnership through Operation Crackdown.

A concern often voiced by groups is that despite letters being sent out they are ineffective because of a lack of enforcement by the police and in terms of a police presence at Speedwatch sessions

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Sussex Safer Roads Partnership

Is the organisation set up to “Create a safer environment for all road users, significantly reduce life-changing injuries and eliminate fatalities” it brings together teams from Sussex Police, East and West Sussex County Councils, East and West Sussex Fire and Rescue Services, Brighton and Hove City Council and Highways England. Data from Speedwatch groups is collected and used by the police to direct police resources (e.g. camera Vans) to some sites, but very rarely in our Villages and Towns.

Resources to set up new Speedwatch teams, liaise with SSRP and Police enforcement have been very limited which has led to delays in responding to requests and enforcement actions resulting from Speedwatch team’s recordings. New staff are now being allocated to the Police Speedwatch team which is expected to improve responses and the partnership welcomes bids from Rother Parish Councils for SID equipment purchase

Highways Authority

Undertakes engineering changes on the roads by continually reviewing casualty data to identify locations on the road network which would benefit from safety improvements and has a statutory duty to prevent road death and serious risk. The only statistics that are or can be used to define risk are pertinent to the above duty and statistics sourced from Speedwatch records or other sources will not be considered. This can create frustration in communities where there is a perceived real risk which is not supported by casualty statistics.

Police

Enforcement activity is and has been low in our Towns and Villages. There is now a Prevention PC in Rother who is the contact point for Parish Councils and Community Speedwatch groups and is tasked with coordinating Rother Police response to speeding. Prevention teams will help and support Parishes where possible and welcomes advice from councils on how Rother Police can best help. Rother Police have no policy in terms of enforcement, due to limited resourcing (not all Police Officers are trained to do enforcement). While the problem of speeding is perceived by the public to be wide spread there is little data for the Police to use in allocating resource to combat speeding.

5. The Way Forward

There are 278 Speedwatch groups and 1500 active operators in the whole of Sussex and these groups are a vital part of this or any other initiative. However, recruitment and retention are proving to be very difficult for various reasons and the most common one is the belief that there is a lack of enforcement which is leading to disillusionment

The Speedwatch groups are a free and valuable resource which needs to be nurtured and encouraged and RALC has urged the police and SSRP to try and have a police presence more often at Speedwatch sessions. Although data from Speedwatch sessions is useful and valid it cannot be used for prosecution of a motoring offence or as part of highways analysis nor can Speedwatch groups be expected to operate 24 x 7 and as such it only provides a limited picture of the problem

Data or rather the lack of it is an obstacle to understanding, analysing and devising strategies that can have a lasting impact on changing driver behaviour. The gathering of meaningful data offers great potential for better informed strategies, analysing effectiveness of safety campaigns, reviewing legislation and policies as well as providing historical data over the longer term

The Police have agreed that if defined, reliable data was available, they will respond to “Hot Spots” where the data indicates high levels of speeds are regularly recorded. This is a step forward toward our goal of better enforcement. The decision to respond or not would of course always be made by the Police and depend on resource available.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a large proportion of speeding is by local people and an analysis of available Community Speedwatch data using the first 5 digits of the post code of drivers who have been sent letters would determine what this percentage could be (possibly banded in 1 mile zones up to a 5 mile radius of the locality) and if there is clear evidence that this is the case it would present an early opportunity for an education campaign targeted at parish level and also Rother wide

Highways have agreed that data collected from a traffic monitoring device which is acceptable to them for analysis purposes and which can be deployed easily, safely and quickly by Parish Councils will be recognised as

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valid data. This is a step forward and offers the potential for gathering traffic flow information 24 x 7 whilst also providing highways and police with additional information to help target their resources in the most effective way by providing before and after data to help establish a campaigns effectiveness. These devices can be moved between sites as there is often more than one site in a Village that needs to be monitored.

Black Cat Radar

This device collects traffic data (Time, Location and Speed) without the need for in-road traffic sensors, can detect the direction and lane position of vehicles in 2 lanes, measure vehicle length (Car, Van, HGV), the distance between vehicles (shows higher risk if too close at speed) and vehicles overtaking. The device is powered by a rechargeable battery which will last up to 15 days. This will provide the data needed for a traffic survey prior to any infrastructure considerations and data to help target Police resources. Data is downloaded from the device to a Microsoft PC or tablet, there no licence fee for the analytics data base.

See Appendix A for full details and specification

The cost of the device is £2,500 which includes 1 battery, mounting brackets and security fittings with the option of purchasing an addition battery at £70 or less. The device is mounted on poles or other assets at approximately 2m height and can be installed by one person. Highways have indicated that this type of device is acceptable to them but that it **would not be funded by ESCC**. We do therefor need to consider how this may be funded, and how governance should be applied in terms of insurance and training and ESCC licencing of the positioning of such devices. Free technical support is available from the supplier but there may be a role here for SSRP in advising and mentoring Councils.

Some of the larger parishes may be persuaded to fully fund this for their Parish or alternatively on a 50/50 basis with other Councils, a second option is a pool of devices that can be loaned (for a modest fee) to parishes and lastly highways installing a device for a 7 day period (current cost £410 per site per week).

Training for operatives is dependent on the distance from the side of the road that the device is being deployed where this is 1.2m or more then no special training would be required however, for distances less than 1.2m Parish Councils would need to ensure at least one of their operatives are in possession of a (Appendix B Signing, Lighting & Guarding) certificate which is valid for 5 years. Training for this qualification costs approximately £130 for 1 person or £474 + £53pp for a group booking of up to 8 people, insurance (theft/damage) for the device is approximately £15pa. Public liability insurance is probably within your current cover provided that installation instructions are followed. There is also a £50 per site one-off licencing fee which is payable to Highway's, but multi-site licences may be considered by Highways if the Governance of such a project is adequate

The device has been demonstrated to us and the system looks very capable and not too complicated to set up and download data from. In order to evaluate the viability and effectiveness of this initiative it is proposed that two or three pilot sites be identified in order to trial a device provided funding can be found for the trials, and if successful, a further roll out of devices as and when resources and funding become available.

6. Proposal

1. Parish Councils who consider traffic related issues in their area to be significant, **invest in Traffic Volume and Speed recording equipment** which can then inform decision making relevant to community safety and quality of life, or Hire such equipment from ESCC to enable new initiatives to begin.
2. Parish Councils, ESCC, SSRP and the Police adopt a partnership approach using the new data plus some procedural change to enable more **enforcement** of speeding laws, support **educational** messaging through both Speedwatch and through awareness **Campaigning**, and inform reviews for potential changes to traffic management infrastructure.
3. RALC will lobby regulators to change where needed laws, regulations and funding streams to support our objectives using the data and evidence gathered.

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The use of data and the benefits of a change in approach are summarised in the table below.

Objective	Policy & Procedure change and benefits.
Better driver education & messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater police presence at Speedwatch sessions supports volunteer retention in Speedwatch Teams and more Speedwatch teams. • More enforcement supports Speedwatch and Volunteer retention • <u>Data led</u> evidence can be used to inform business cases and funding relevant to the need for better signage, infrastructure changes and other physical measures to improve safety, change driver behaviour and antisocial driving. • Opportunity for more Educational messages through Campaigns to drivers supported by <u>new data</u> gathered.
More Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Data led</u> targeting enables more enforcement from informed targeting of Police resource. • More mobile enforcement vans
A review of Law and regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for change to Enforcement supported by data for higher penalties for speeding offences. • Graduated responses in Speedwatch issuing Educational letters depending on the bands of speeds recorded. (As is the case if recorded by the Police or a Camera). • Access to non-personal post code data analysis to enable “local” speeding to be evaluated and used in Educational messages
Increased Campaigns	Data supported campaigns. Roadside signs (e.g. “This is a 30mph area”), District Council campaigns (e.g. Rother Alerts messaging), County Council leafleting campaigns, police co-ordinated campaigns, local campaigns run by parish councils.
New Sources of Funding	<p>Better data will not change the problem of lack of Highways funding and we recognise that the criteria applied to funding of infrastructure projects by Highways will not change and will still be based on serious crash data.</p> <p>However, <u>if any new data</u> supports the need for change there are opportunities for Part funding, Precept Funding, Grant Funding and CiL Funding.</p> <p>There are also funding streams applied to Community Health & Wellbeing and more recently the Environment. At present much of this funding is targeted at Urban areas but a greater proportion could be directed to Rural areas.</p>

Conclusion

A key message to emerge is that education is the path to changing driver attitude if speeding and inappropriate driving through towns and villages is to be reduced and this proposed initiative can only be successful if difficulties and problems are overcome in a spirit of co-operation and commitment at all levels and an understanding that there is no quick fix but that the potential rewards are great.

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