Influencing driver behaviour

Robert Wardrop, business development director for Unipart Dorman, discusses the effectiveness of using speed indicator devices to influence driver behaviour

"The installation of the DF11 units across the county is the result of a culmination of road safety initiatives that we have been working on for a number of years to increase road safety and reduce casualties through road traffic accidents in our county. The DF11 unit from Unipart Dorman was selected for its functionality and ease of use. Its flexibility to be readily moved around multiple locations fulfils our over-arching desire to allow each local community to have a greater influence on the issue of speed related safety. Unipart Dorman's philosophy of working with local councils also enabled us to fully understand the speed issues at the chosen trial site. The data that was provided enabled decisions to be made based on accurate information"

Andrew Trevithick
Lincolnshire Police Casualty Reduction

Inappropriate speed contributes to around 14 per cent of all injury collisions, 15 per cent of crashes resulting in a serious injury and 24 per cent of collisions which result in a death and are recorded by the police.*

Excess speed is not always the product of recklessness and the speed limit may only have been exceeded by a minimal amount, however, a recent analysis conducted by RoSPA, found that 85 per cent of pedestrians killed when struck by cars, died at impact speeds below 40mph.

Traffic calming measures such as speed humps and chicanes can physically prevent drivers from speeding, but these will often require a lengthy approval and installation process, in addition to strict qualification criteria based upon the historical incidence of collisions.

These physical measures do carry a number of drawbacks which can have a negative impact.

Speed humps, for example, are not suitable on the Blue Light Routes used by the emergency services as they can slow the response time. They will also generate more engine noise and reduce air quality.

Likelihood of detection and fear of subsequent enforcement is probably the most effective method of reducing speed in an area, however it is simply not possible to commit enough resource to have a continual police presence at speeding hotspots. Very few people speed in a malicious manner so identifying and then modifying driver behaviour is key to reducing collisions.

To influence behaviour there has to be a consistent flow of realistic and effective information delivered to drivers. In studies by (TRL) Transport Research Laboratory, such as PPR314 (Effectiveness of Speed Indicator Devices on Reducing Vehicle Speeds in London), speed indicator devices have been proven to offer the most effective way of presenting drivers with evidence on which to act. A bright dynamic LED display of real time speed information will catch the eye and most people are naturally compelled to reduce their speed and return to within the posted speed limit – if only to avoid the possibility of a fine and penalty points or disqualification.

Working in partnership

Tackling speeding, especially in rural locations and more specifically around schools, is no longer just the remit of the police and is now often community led. This has driven the development of Road Safety Partnerships across the country, which link individual authorities and agencies with a common aim.

As one of the UK's leading manufacturers of speed indicator devices, Unipart Dorman has been part of this multi-agency approach to road safety since their foundation and has assisted many Partnerships in planning and implementing traffic calming schemes based around the deployment of speed indicator devices.

We conduct initial site surveys to determine the most effective locations followed by the delivery of presentations to bodies such as Parish Councils and provide assistance to schools, supporting them with the development of road safety awareness lessons for their pupils and parents.

We offer a complete assistance package, designed to support road safety schemes and campaigns and our partnership approach will enable customers to fully understand and successfully manage their traffic problems.

Our DF11 speed indicator device delivers a clear and positive effect on traffic speed and provides downloadable accurate traffic and speed data, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the sign and is often vital in securing funding.

Most recently, Unipart Dorman has worked closely with the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership, to develop an effective speed reduction programme using the DF11 and delivered it across a number of parishes.

As part of a comprehensive traffic calming initiative developed by a common collective of local agencies, the DF11 has proved to be effective in altering driver behaviour, which in turn has a positive effect on traffic speed. This cost effective measure works to reduce speed related casualties and also promotes the local area as one where the elected representatives are working hard to address voter concerns and ultimately save lives.

**Source – Contributory Factors to Road Accidents", Road Casualties Great Britain 2009, DfT 2010*