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Mr Jim Wilkie
Chief Executive
Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
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Our ref. AW/ht
Your ref.
Date 25th November 2011

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

29 NOV 2011

Dear

Jim

Ref. 20mph speed limits/zones

Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Primary care NHS Trust are currently working together to introduce 20mph speed limits on most residential roads in Liverpool. This initiative does not include additional traffic calming (speed humps) but uses signage alone. Other Local Authorities, possibly your own, are already reviewing similar schemes in their areas and are likely to adopt a similar position.

I feel it would be remiss of me not to outline the police stance on these proposals and in particular whether the police are in a position to undertake enforcement activity on these roads.

The Association of Chief Police Officers' (ACPO) position has remained to date that if a 20mph speed restriction is placed and there is no engineering/clear signing to effectively achieve compliance then there will be no routine enforcement by police officers. Only when an issue is identified would an enforcement operation be put in place.

Part of the current police rationale is that if the speed restriction is necessary as there are vulnerable road users, compliance is the aim not prosecution, and therefore engineering should be put in place rather than police enforcement. This position was also established as it is believed that compliance being passed to the police will lead to the capture of genuine drivers who simply do not know they are in this very low speed limit, with the resulting loss of public support.

I have attached a more detailed background into the history of 20mph speed limits / zones, however, if you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew Ward
Assistant Chief Constable

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Background

In 1998 the Government introduced 20 mph speed limits and zones. The then ACPO Traffic Committee considered this and identified concern that the speed was likely to be difficult for drivers to maintain and unless it was clearly engineered, there could be many errant drivers and the enforcement a considerable commitment, which could lead to a reduction in public support.

Since this date the ACPO guidance has been that unless there is full engineering there would not be routine enforcement but those found committing offences would be summonsed and prosecuted outside the current fixed penalty process. Mainly due to the fact that to exceed an engineered 20 mph scheme is dangerous to vulnerable road users, so the driver would not be offered a fixed penalty ticket and would be required to attend court.

Local Authorities have received guidance from Government to ensure continuity with their introduction. These documents state 20mph limits/zones should be self-enforcing and that their success is dependent upon having in place speed reducing features (speed bumps). These need to be of a significant number and appropriate design to be able to reduce the speed of most traffic to 20 mph or less without the need for police enforcement.

The existence of a speeding problem in a 20mph limit/zone may illustrate the need to re-assess the level of engineering or, suitability of the road for such a reduced limit. This would then need to be explored by the local authority in consultation with the police.

Over recent years there has been a proliferation of 20 mile an hour zones and limits across the whole of the United Kingdom. Local authorities are increasingly demanding police enforcement. The police response has been to resist the demands, citing the reasons for not enforcing as outlined in the ACPO guidance.

In 2007 the ACPO Secretariat circulated a letter on the ACPO Intranet confirming the enforcement guidance on 20 mph limits and zones:

"Whilst the benefit of reduced speed limits in residential areas is recognised, the means by which such a speed limit is achieved clearly rests with the advice provided by the department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). This advice to local authorities should ensure that sufficient engineering works are in place to result in an average speed of 20 mph or less. It is not acceptable for the Police service to enforce such speed limits as a matter of routine. In the event that offenders are detected in the normal course of police work, it is recommended that prosecution should be by way of process and that the evidence should reflect the

Speed limits/zones should have engineering/clear signing and not require expensive routine police enforcement. Offenders are severely increasing the risk to vulnerable road users and should be prosecuted and not offered fixed penalties or diversionary education.

Merseyside Police welcome any reduction in speed, which may drive down the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads. However, it is important that we do not raise the expectations of the local community who may have the impression that the police will automatically be available to undertake enforcement activity. The strategic objective must be to modify driver behaviour through education and where necessary prosecution, in order to protect road users from death and serious injury.