

15 April 2013

Your Ref: AS/GM/1/59/1/1

Our Ref: RP8332

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Dear Mr McKenzie

PROPOSED SPEED LIMIT REDUCTION: C128C KINGSWELLS - CULTS ROAD

I refer to your recent correspondence in connection with the above matter and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide formal comment on behalf of the Police Service of Scotland.

In your correspondence you have asked for formal comment on a proposed speed reduction on the above route, which at present is governed by the national speed limit of 60 miles per hour. In considering such proposals on behalf of the Police, my initial action is always to identify the rationale behind the reduction being sought. In my experience, the reasons can include:

- concerns due to regular high speeds, recorded through traffic monitoring equipment, which compromise road safety at the location; or
- road traffic collisions which have a direct correlation to excessive or inappropriate speed; or
- a change in local circumstances, i.e. a local development which sees the nature of the route and/or vehicle usage changing.

A comment which was passed to me many years ago by a fellow senior officer in Road Policing was that '*speed limits have to be realistic.*' In essence, what I was being told was that an average motorist, when driving on a road and observing a posted speed limit, should immediately be able to understand why a limitation has been placed upon their manner of use of the road.

In the case of an urban area, with residential and industrial premises being present and a road layout which may have numerous junctions with the potential for multiple pedestrian and vehicle movements, a reduced speed limit can be relatively straightforward to understand. Where the need for a reduction becomes less clear is often in a rural setting, where traffic interaction and risks, while still present, are less evident.

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Since receiving your correspondence, I have visited and driven along the route in question, to allow me to assess and understand the proposal being considered. In addition, I have examined the written information and statistical data provided to me and now offer the following observations:

Road Collision History

I looked at the recorded injury collisions on the route between 2008 - 2012, considering frequency, causal factors and level of severity.

While the route had previously sustained a number of injury collisions, road engineering related improvements performed in 2011 at key 'collision cluster' locations have apparently resulted in a positive impact on collision numbers, with no injury collisions reported at these sites in the 12 month period after installation. My experience is that reductions in speed limits are often considered at locations where there is a constant or escalating road safety concern, however, with this route seeing a marked improvement in terms of injury collisions, it does not add weight to the argument for a reduction in the speed limit.

Speed Survey Results

The speed survey results were particularly interesting, as they showed an 85th percentile speed which never exceeded 50 miles per hour. Indeed, the mean speed was recorded between 38 and 44 miles per hour which is most certainly not indicative of excessive or high speeds at the recording locations. After viewing these results, I can only conclude that most drivers already appear to be driving at a speed which they consider appropriate for the prevailing circumstances.

When I drove along the route, I found some locations where the maximum safe speed was in the region of 20 to 30 miles per hour, while at others, a higher speed was quite safe. The need for these lower speeds occurred on bends nearer Kingswells where, quite frankly, it would be impossible to negotiate them safely at a speed in excess of 30 miles per hour. This is a prime example of the variances in route layout frequently experienced on a rural road, which often sees a series of bends and twists followed by a straight section of road. As a consequence, the application of a meaningful speed limit in such circumstances is made all the more challenging.

There are numerous unclassified rural roads throughout the north east of Scotland which are governed by the national speed limit. Irrespective of the limit in force, a speed limit should never be viewed as a target speed for a driver to achieve. Importantly, the onus remains on the driver to drive according to the prevailing circumstances, irrespective of any speed limit which exists.

Enforcement

The final consideration when providing comment from a Police perspective is from the stance of potential enforcement. With various competing demands, the Police have to prioritise their actions and in terms of speed enforcement, this normally results in action being taken on routes with a speed related injury collision history or where there is statistical evidence of excessive speed. Without these qualifying conditions being met, the likelihood of enforcement being conducted at a location is quite limited.

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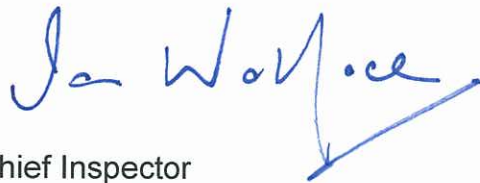
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In conclusion, the Police will always seek to promote and encourage the safe use of the road network, as 'keeping people safe' is the key outcome which Police Scotland seeks to deliver. I do, however, have to return to the comments previously made to me about the need for speed limits to be realistic.

On this particular occasion, I can find no specific evidence which convinces me that a reduction in the existing speed limit is either warranted or particularly enhances road safety. On that basis, I am not supportive of any change to the speed limit being applied.

I trust that this will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ian Wallace". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Chief Inspector

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