



**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
EXMOOR CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

11 JUNE 2003

TRAFFIC SPEED MANAGEMENT ON EXMOOR

Report of the Head of Recreation and Tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This brief report sets out some of the issues surrounding efforts to achieve a reduction in traffic speeds on Exmoor by both Devon and Somerset County Councils, as Highway Authorities, in recent years. The Forum is invited to comment on the issues and the practical attempts to resolve them. The comments will help to inform the process of developing the National Park Authority's approach to speed management policy and proposals put forward by the County Councils. The presentation of this report to the Forum will show examples of speed management schemes within the National Park.
- 1.2 Traffic speed, particularly within settlements, is a nationally important issue on which the Government has focussed attention for some years. This has been translated into action on the ground by County Councils through the medium of Local Transport Plans. Consultation with parish councils on the need for additional speed management initiatives has resulted in large numbers of requests for action and a consequent rash of new schemes, particularly in the Somerset part of the National Park. Devon County Council had already implemented speed management schemes within the fewer settlements in the Devon part of the National Park and recent work on speed management has been limited to relatively minor changes to existing schemes.
- 1.3 Calls for action to reduce traffic speeds from communities usually reflect genuine local concern. However, the ways in which these concerns are addressed on the ground inevitably lead to problems for the National Park Authority in trying to achieve its first purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.
- 1.4 The issues tend to revolve around:
 - The length of the section(s) of road(s) over which speed is restricted and over which signing is necessary, which may appear to be excessive.
 - The environmental impact of signing schemes which tend to use signs backed by yellow plates. In recent schemes Somerset County Council has included camera symbols on signs making them larger still.
 - The inflexibility of speed management techniques to address locally different needs. There appears to be a standard "one size fits all" approach to implementing speed management schemes. What may be appropriate on a principal road carrying 16,000 vehicles a day elsewhere in Somerset may not be appropriate in the Exmoor context.
 - Consultation on the proposed introduction of new schemes has been erratic.

- 1.5 When consulted on new signing schemes the Authority has sought to reduce the overall number and size of signs. However, the Authority has explored with both County Councils alternative methods of signing/markings speed restrictions such as the village gateways concept (e.g. at Wheddon Cross) which pay more regard to the special qualities of the environment of the National Park while retaining the necessary impact to alert drivers of the requirement to reduce speed.
- 1.6 The comments of the Forum would be welcomed.

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