

From: SWEENEY Deborah
Sent: 18 March 2015 18:33
To: SINGLETON Noel; LYNAM Stephen; DONOHOE Paschal; SWEENEY Deborah
Cc: MCCARTHY John; Campbell Paddy
Subject: Revised statement...please let me know if there are any obs

Minister Donohoe publishes new 'Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits'

New signage being introduced for minor local roads in rural areas and for new urban 'Slow Zones' for residential areas

The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Paschal Donohoe TD, has today (Thursday) published a new document entitled 'Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits', the aim of which is to provide advice and guidance to those charged with responsibility for speed limits across the country. It will also ensure that greater consistency is applied where speed limits are concerned.

Today's Guidelines address a number of areas and sees the introduction of new road signage to deal with speed limits in rural areas on minor local roads and for the implementation of new urban 'Slow Zones' in residential areas to reduce the speed limit to 30 km/h.

Speaking at the launch today, Minister Donohoe said; 'Speed limits should not be seen by drivers as setting a target speed, or as being appropriate in all conditions, nor are they intended to be. Drivers must, take responsibility to drive at a safe speed appropriate to the particular road and surrounding environment, while not exceeding the posted speed limit'.

"A speed limit is the maximum speed at which vehicles may legally travel on a section of road between speed limit signs. It is the responsibility of a driver to obey speed limits at all times. However, it is recognised that if they are to be effective, speed limits need to make sense in the circumstances in which they are employed. The new Guidelines will contribute in that regard."

"The purpose of the Guidelines is to provide advice and guidance to Local Authority Engineers, and other practitioners, in making bye-laws in relation to the setting and management of speed limits. The Guidelines also have relevance to An Garda Síochána, who must be consulted in relation to any proposed bye-law applying a special speed limit; the National Roads Authority, who must consent to a Special Speed Limit on a National Road or motorway and to other interested parties such as the Road Safety Authority, the general public and motoring organisations.

The key points addressed in the Guidelines include:-

- New criteria for setting speed limits for rural and urban roads
 - This will be based primarily on road width in rural areas
 - In urban areas it will be based on movement function (arterial road, link road, local road) and place context (commercial centres, suburban housing areas, out of town industrial areas).
- New rural speed limit sign

This generic sign is the 'white circle with black diagonal stripes' which is in use internationally. Its use is recommended on narrow country roads instead of the numerical 80km/h sign. This sign means that drivers must use their judgement when using the road in question but must not exceed 80km/h in any event. The new alternative 'rural speed limit' sign is being supported by an associated Road Safety Authority awareness campaign.

- Local Authorities and NRA (for national roads) should commence an update of all speed limits to be completed within two years and to be subsequently reviewed every five years.
- New Urban 'Slow Zones' (30km/h) for housing estates
Local Authorities and community groups are encouraged to consider the implementation of 'Slow Zones' in self-contained areas that consist of local roads with low traffic volumes and minimal through traffic. It is envisaged that each such zone should be a self-enforcing, reduced-speed area with speed bumps, markings or other traffic calming treatments as required. They should be developed and implemented as a local authority supported, community based approach to reduce the speed limit to 30 km/h and to add safety measures within a select area in order to change driver behaviour. The ultimate goal of a 'Slow Zone' is to lower the incidence and severity of crashes and to enhance quality of life. New signage is also being unveiled tomorrow to support Slow Zones.

"In addition, the web portal, www.speedlimits.ie is currently under construction. It will go live in the coming weeks with limited information and functionality to include provision for public queries on speed limits. The site will be improved over time and will provide, among other things, access to speed limit bye-laws and associated maps with sign locations.

"While a reduction in driving speed has a significant part to play with road safety, there is no guarantee of safety at any speed and the responsibility to exercise care must be taken by all road users at all times. Speed is an important but not the sole contributor to the cause and consequences of road accidents, making it essential that we all play our role in missing the number of incidents and ultimately reducing the number of deaths on our roads."

Note for Editors:

A Speed Limits Review Report was published in November 2013 that contained a range of recommendations regarding changes to the system of speed limits and its administration. Among other things, the Report recommended the updating of the Guidelines for the Application of Speed Limits. The review arose out of the Road Safety Strategy (2007-2012) and supports the Road Safety Strategy (2013-2020), under which the Department committed to publishing a Speed Limits Review Report and implementing its recommendations.