

North Yorkshire County Council
Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee
28 August 2019

Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) - Protocol

1.0 Purpose of report

To provide details of the Protocol for local communities purchasing VAS, as agreed by the Executive on 26 March 2019, in response to a request by the Chairman that the matter be discussed by the Committee.

2.0 Background

A report was submitted to Executive on 26 March 2019 proposing a way forward for the deployment of third party owned VAS, and seeking approval for the detailed process involved.

The report, attached at **Appendix 1**, includes the Protocol. The recommendation was approved by the Executive, subject to an amendment, as reflected in the Minute, below:-

“283. Extension of Temporary Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) Protocol

A report of the Corporate Director for Business & Environmental Services, presenting a way forward for the deployment of third party owned temporary VAS.

County Councillor Don Mackenzie introduced the report which addressed the previous recommendations of the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as approved by the Executive in September 2018.

Barry Mason, Assistant Director outlined the approach taken had been to develop a proportionate and appropriate protocol, based on signage, location, rotation and delivery at a nil cost to the County Council. He confirmed the Protocol was ready for roll out as from April 2019 to run alongside the existing temporary VAS scheme, and that third parties would have the option of purchasing their own equipment once their current contract came to an end.

County Councillor Carl Les proposed an amendment to section 8 of the Protocol, suggesting the Protocol should allow for installation to be carried out by either a trained volunteer or an appointed contractor.

County Councillor David Jeffels welcomed the report and thanked the scrutiny committee and officers for their work. He drew attention to the perception of speeding traffic and was particularly pleased to see that the Protocol enabled Parish Councils to work together to rotate the temporary signage, thereby gaining the most benefit from it.

County Councillor Gareth Dadd also welcomed the Protocol and expressed his interest in seeing just how many Parish Councils and Community Groups would take it up.

County Councillor Dom Mackenzie reminded all members that road safety was of prime importance to the County Council and that the number of personal injuries due to speeding traffic was thankfully small.

Finally, County Councillor Carl Les questioned how the Protocol was to be communicated to all interested parties and asked that it be circulated to all County Councillors to raise their awareness so that they may share it with interested parties as and when appropriate. Officers confirmed the Protocol would also be sent directly to all Parish Councils and community groups.

Resolved -

That the detailed process for the installation of third party owned vehicles activated signs in North Yorkshire, as detailed in Appendix A of the report be approved, subject to the amendment to Section 8 as suggested by County Councillor Carl Les.”

3.0 Discussion on the VAS Protocol

The Chairman of the Committee, County Councillor Angus Thompson, requested that item be placed on the agenda for this meeting to allow discussion of the Protocol, which he will lead, allowing Members to outline any issues that have arisen in relation to the implementation of this. Officers will be present to assist with the discussion.

4.0 Recommendation

That Members outline any issues in relation to the implementation of the VAS Protocol, as outlined in Appendix 1 to this report.

Background papers

None

Barry Khan,
Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services),
County Hall,
Northallerton

August 2019

Author of Report – Steve Loach (Democratic Services).

North Yorkshire County Council

Executive

26 March 2019

Extension of Temporary Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) Protocol

Report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Given the level of anticipated interest from communities wishing to purchase their own vehicle activated signs (VAS) for installation in the highway this proposed extension of the existing protocol is presented to members.
- 1.2 This report provides members with a proposed way forward for the deployment of third party owned temporary VAS and seeks the approval for the detailed process involved.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 At a meeting of the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 31 October 2017, a number of Members felt that a change in the County Council's Temporary VAS Protocol would be advisable.
- 2.2 This was in order to relax the rules to allow communities to purchase and maintain VAS under certain prescribed conditions to allow more parishes and other appropriate community groups to have the benefit of these signs to address local actual or perceived speeding concerns.
- 2.3 Members of the Executive will be aware that this extension of the existing Temporary VAS Protocol follows the recommendations approved by the Executive Committee on 25 September 2018. Members approved the implementation of the recommendations of the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Vehicle Activated Signs Review in July 2018.
- 2.4 This extension also follows the verbal update on the proposed methodology presented to the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 January 2019.
- 2.5 It is anticipated this extension will be approved this financial year so the scheme can be rolled out from 1 April 2019 as previously advised.
- 2.6 The existing temporary VAS scheme that was approved by Executive Members on 30 January 2015 will continue to run alongside this new process until the four year contract period ends for each participant. After this time the community groups involved in the existing scheme will have the option of extending their current contract or purchasing their own equipment in accordance with the methodology detailed in this report.
- 2.7 The existing temporary VAS scheme will continue to be an option for communities until the County Councils stock of 30 signs reach the end of their operational life, at which time a decision will need to be taken on the way forward.

2.8 Given the high level of initial enquiries so far it is likely the vast majority of current participants will not extend their current contract period and seek to join this new scheme to manage their own deployments.

3.0 Principles of Scheme

3.1 The general principle is to provide a management and support mechanism for this community led scheme, providing a critical path through the application, purchase and commissioning stages.

3.2 The proposed way forward has been carefully deliberated. The aim is to make the process involved simple to follow and easy to understand. It is anticipated 'Appendix A' will be issued to communities upon application making the methodology completely transparent.

3.3 Appendix A sets out the various stages involved in deploying a third party owned VAS on the highway. The stages cover the following elements:

- Application and Site Assessment
- Legal Agreement
- Purchase
- Site Preparation
- Safety Management
- Installation and Maintenance
- Site Management

3.4 The process is split into 10 stages providing communities with everything they need to make a decision on the best way forward. The process sets out the tasks required of them, the typical costs involved and compares the pros and cons of each approved VAS.

3.5 The temporary signs to be used by communities must be consistent with the current stock temporary VAS which are the speed limit reminder type. The VAS must display the speed limit and a SLOW DOWN message. Speed Indicator Devices will not be approved for use. In accordance with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 Speed Indicator Devices are not authorised highway signs. Furthermore, members have previously raised concerns that these signs could encourage some motorists intentionally registering higher speeds.

3.6 The approved VAS in 'Appendix A' to this report have been sourced from manufacturers the County Council work with regularly and the details have been finalised through regular correspondence and meetings. The County Council have a good working relationship with both manufacturers. Both are very approachable and are aware of the expected interest from community groups upon approval of this report.

3.7 Products from these two manufacturers have been selected for their affordability. It is important the signs are financially viable and both manufacturers have supplied competitive prices for the various options available.

3.8 The VAS have also been selected for their size and transferability given they will not be a permanent fixture. The positive speed reduction impact of VAS is best achieved when rotated between sites on a regular basis. The signs should be light enough to erect/dismantle to ensure they remain a temporary fitting in the highway.

- 3.9 It is the responsibility of the community to choose a VAS based on the information provided in 'Appendix A'.
- 3.10 There are many other manufacturers with similar products on the market. Communities are free to use whichever company suits their needs as long as approval is sought from the County Council for the sign detail.
- 3.11 Officers will be available to provide guidance to community groups whenever required.

4.0 Equalities

- 4.1 An initial equality impact assessment screening form has been completed – see Appendix B. A full equality impact assessment is not appropriate for this proposal.

5.0 Finance

- 5.1 There will be no financial commitment from the County Council as all materials and works costs will be recovered from the participating community. There will some officer time required but this will be covered by the existing resource provided for the existing temporary VAS scheme.

6.0 Legal

- 6.1 Under the terms of the scheme, communities must sign a legal agreement with the County Council which will set out the various obligations. To ensure the signs remain temporary installations the legal agreement will incorporate a deployment schedule that must be followed. The document will be signed by the community and counter signed by the County Council.

- 6.1.1 In summary the legal agreement will cover the following elements:

- Funding
- Deployment and Rotation
- Safety Management and Risk Assessment
- Consultation and Complaints
- Public Liability Insurance
- Maintenance

- 6.2 The final legal agreement is to be drawn up by Legal Services and is to be issued to all participants.

<h4>7.0 Recommendation</h4>

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| <p>7.1 To meet the anticipated interest from communities to finance and manage their own deployments Executive Members are recommended to approve the detailed process as set out in 'Appendix A'.</p> |
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DAVID BOWE
Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services

Author of Report: David Kirkpatrick – Team Leader, Traffic Engineering

Background Documents:

- Roll Out of Temporary Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) Protocol' approved by Executive Members on 30 January 2015
- Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 31 October 2017
- Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task Group Vehicle Activated Signs Review in July 2018
- 'Covering Report to the Final Report of the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Vehicle Activated Signs Review approved by the Executive Committee on 25 September 2018

The Process for the Installation of Third Party Owned Vehicle Activated Signs in North Yorkshire

It is proposed the process for the installation of a third party owned battery powered temporary vehicle activated sign (VAS) in the highway will follow the 10 stages detailed below. Parish Councils, Town Councils or other neighbourhood groups interested in participating in the scheme are referred to as a 'community group' in the different stages.

1. REQUEST RECEIVED

A representative of the community group expresses an interest or requests permission from the County Council to install a privately owned VAS within the highway boundary.

2. INITIAL RESPONSE

A North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) officer assigned to the scheme undertakes a brief desktop assessment and responds with details about the stages involved. If for some reason the site is not appropriate the officer will provide an explanation.

The representative of the community group will be made aware the VAS must be battery powered and temporary and will not be permitted to be fixed in one location permanently

Although the signs are deployed on a temporary basis, the sites are permanent and the VAS remains the property of the community group. It is the responsibility of the community group to arrange suitable maintenance and insurance cover.

The community group must be willing to fund all of the potential costs involved and proof of funding needs to be demonstrated.

A site meeting will be arranged between the officer and representatives of the community group.

3. SITE ASSESSMENT

The officer meets representatives of the community group to provide advice on potential sites within a 20mph, 30mph or 40mph speed limit. Any further questions about the process will be answered at this stage.

Any existing street lighting columns or signposts that could be potentially used for mounting the VAS will be identified. Street lighting columns must be over 6m high, approved before potential use and protected from the attachment brackets/strapping. If a column is deemed unsuitable, signposts with retention sockets will have to be installed. Potential locations for these assemblies will be identified during the site assessment.

Mounting options for one temporary battery powered VAS:

- One centrally located lighting column or signpost with one adjustable mounting bracket attached. After a deployment the bracket could be loosened, spun round and re-tightened to enable the VAS to face a different direction for the next deployment. This process would continue for future deployments
- A minimum of two lighting columns or signposts (or combination) with a fixed mounting bracket attached to each one to enable the VAS to be rotated between two (or more) separate locations

Mounting options for two temporary battery powered VAS:

- Two centrally located lighting columns or signposts with an adjustable mounting bracket attached to each one. After a deployment the brackets could be loosened, spun round and re-tightened to enable the VAS to face a different direction for the next deployment. This process would continue for future deployments
- A minimum of four lighting columns or signposts (or combination) with a fixed mounting bracket attached to each one to enable the VAS to be rotated between four (or more) separate locations

The VAS cannot be installed on telephone or electricity poles or on street furniture within 100m of terminal speed limit signs. This distance is necessary because the vehicle detection range of the VAS is generally 100m. VAS positioned within 100m of the terminal signs may detect approaching vehicles still within a higher speed limit.

4. LEGAL AGREEMENT

If the community group agree to fund the VAS and any installation costs then a legal agreement will be issued for signature. The returned signed agreement will have to be accompanied by a proposed deployment schedule to prove the VAS is to be temporary and rotated.

Upon receipt the officer will arrange for the legal agreement to be counter signed by NYCC senior management and a copy of the agreement will be returned to the community group.

5. PURCHASE

NYCC will now place orders for the purchase of retention sockets and signposts with the costs to be borne by the community group.

NYCC will have no involvement in buying the VAS and any ongoing maintenance cover. This contract is between the manufacturer and the community group. If the cost of a VAS proves prohibitive interested community groups could join together with neighbouring communities to form a 'partnership'. This partnership would then share the cost and responsibilities.

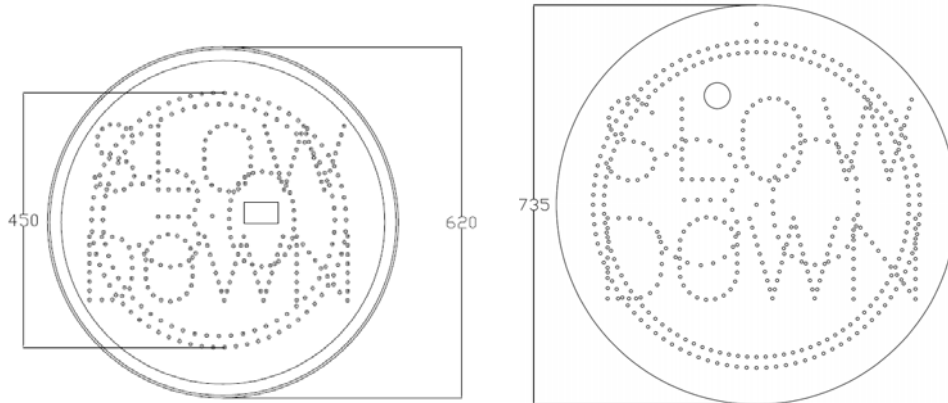
To participate in the scheme a minimum of £5,000,000 of public liability insurance must be in place.

NYCC have worked closely with two manufacturers ('TWM' and 'SWARCO') in recent years and both have vehicle activated signs currently deployed on the network in North Yorkshire.

The following page shows the permitted VAS types from these two manufacturers which are easy to carry, transport, erect and dismantle by volunteers. See VAS OPTION 1 & 2.

In addition to these products, similar battery powered VAS from other manufacturers will also be accepted on the network. However, these products must be approved by the officer for use on the highway before purchasing.

VAS OPTION 1

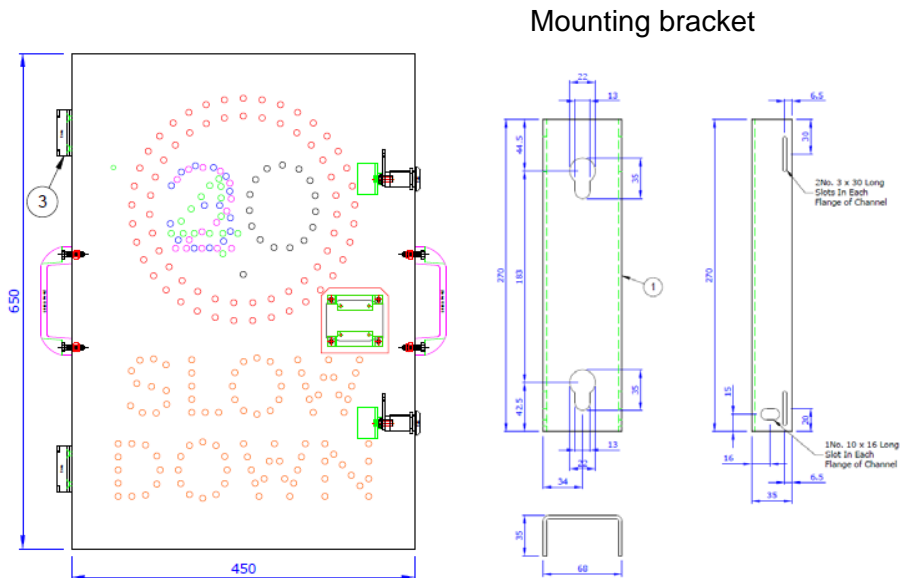


Examples of a Speed Control Sign available from TWM Traffic Control Systems

This VAS with an alternating display of the speed limit (configurable to 20, 30 or 40mph) and a 'SLOW DOWN' message can have a 450mm diameter roundel or 600mm roundel. The overall diameter of the VAS is 620mm or 735mm as shown above. The larger VAS must be erected on a separate post not a street lighting column.

For indicative purposes the smaller sign will cost in the region of £2500 + VAT and the larger one approximately £2750 + VAT.

VAS OPTION 2



MVAS (Moveable VAS) available from SWARCO TRAFFIC

This VAS is 450mm wide x 650mm high with a 300mm diameter roundel which is configurable to 20, 30 or 40mph. The speed limit and 'SLOW DOWN' message activate together.

For indicative purposes the VAS will cost in the region of £2650 + VAT.

6. SITE PREPARATION

The community group must consult neighbouring properties and prove local support to the officer. In the event of any resulting complaints they will be forwarded to the community group to address.

Retention sockets and signposts will be supplied and installed by the County Councils contractor only and paid for by the community group. The cost per assembly (retention socket and signpost) is currently £500 + VAT. (NYCC reserves the right to amend the cost of this work).

It will be appropriate to leave the VAS mounting brackets permanently attached to the lighting columns or signposts to make ongoing erection and dismantling quicker and easier.

When the VAS is not deployed on a signpost it will leave the signpost looking redundant. As a result it may be necessary to attach a temporary educational type poster or similar to the signpost. If necessary this will be provided by NYCC. The temporary sign will be placed in the care of the community group to attach to the signpost between deployments. The temporary sign will help promote road safety in the absence of the VAS.

7. SAFETY MANAGEMENT

Only trained volunteers or appointed contractors should handle the VAS. Training will need to be provided by the manufacturer as part of the purchase of the VAS.

The community group will be fully responsible for all operations to be carried out safely, taking into account the risks to both volunteers, appointed contractors and road users. Safe working systems must be adopted and followed by the volunteers or appointed contractors.

Risk assessments/method statements should be completed for working on the highway.

8. INSTALLATION

NYCC will not be offering a service that covers the installation, dismantling or rotation of the VAS.

After suitable training the VAS will be attached to an approved street lighting column or signpost by volunteers or an appointed contractor.

The VAS must be mounted at an appropriate height (2300mm above cycleways, 2100mm above footways and 1800mm above verge) with appropriate lateral clearance from the edge of the carriageway (500mm minimum).

9. MAINTENANCE

The community group will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the VAS beyond the initial warranty period. The VAS can be purchased with an extended warranty.

NYCC will be responsible for the maintenance of a street lighting column if correct mounting procedures have been followed. If correct mounting procedures have not

been followed the community group will be responsible for any resulting maintenance.

Signposts and retention sockets will remain the responsibility of NYCC. However, in the event of a collision resulting in damage to the signpost, retention socket and VAS the community group will be responsible for the replacement. The costs may be recoverable if insurance details are known.

The VAS must be kept clean, fault free and in good working condition at all times.

10. SITE MANAGEMENT

The community group should erect and dismantle the VAS in accordance with the deployment schedule and remain in contact with the officer who will provide assistance whenever necessary.

Routine checks will be undertaken by NYCC staff to ensure compliance. If through investigation it is apparent the VAS is not being rotated in accordance with the timetable in the legal agreement and the VAS is effectively permanent, NYCC reserve the right to remove the VAS from the highway.

If signposts remain unused or are no longer needed for deployments they will be removed by NYCC and the community group will be charged accordingly.

If requested, NYCC will arrange 7 day speed surveys for the community group and provide full details upon completion. The cost per 7 day speed survey is currently £110 + VAT. (NYCC reserves the right to increase the cost of this work).

NYCC will invoice the community group for the supply and installation of the retention sockets and signposts (or any other work) shortly after they have been installed.

<p>Initial equality impact assessment screening form (As of October 2015 this form replaces 'Record of decision not to carry out an EIA')</p> <p>This form records an equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to a proposal, and a decision whether or not a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.</p>			
Directorate	Business and Environmental Services		
Service area	Highways & Transportation		
Proposal being screened	Temporary Vehicle Activated Signs		
Officer(s) carrying out screening	David Kirkpatrick		
What are you proposing to do?	Allow communities to purchase and deploy their own vehicle activated signs on the network		
Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes?	Decision by the Executive Communities will be able to approach sign manufacturers directly to purchase their own signs without participating in the County Councils current scheme. The proposed scheme will provide communities with greater flexibility over VAS deployments.		
Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources? Please give details.	Officer time will be provided by the officer who currently manages the existing process. There will be an increase in workload but it should not be a significant change.		
<p>Impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or NYCC's additional agreed characteristic As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is this service used by particular groups of people with protected characteristics? • Does the proposal relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important? • Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the proposal relates to? <p>If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be a significant adverse impact or you have ticked 'Don't know/no info available', then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate. You are advised to speak to your Equality rep for advice if you are in any doubt.</p>			
Protected characteristic	Yes	No	Don't know/No info available
Age		✓	
Disability		✓	
Sex (Gender)		✓	
Race		✓	
Sexual orientation		✓	
Gender reassignment		✓	
Religion or belief		✓	
Pregnancy or maternity		✓	

Marriage or civil partnership		✓	
NYCC additional characteristic			
People in rural areas		✓	
People on a low income		✓	
Carer (unpaid family or friend)		✓	
Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities/probable impacts (e.g. disabled people's access to public transport)? Please give details.	No		
Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (e.g. partners, funding criteria, etc.). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics? Please explain why you have reached this conclusion.	The signs will activate by flashing the speed limit and a SLOW DOWN message through the use of LED's. The frequency of flashing is consistent with other vehicle activated signs so people suffering from epilepsy will not be affected.		
Decision (Please tick one option)	EIA not relevant or proportionate:	✓	Continue to full EIA:
Reason for decision	There is no impact on the people with the protected characteristics defined by the Equalities Act 2010.		
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)	<i>Barrie Mason</i>		
Date	<i>26/02/17</i>		