

Northumbria Safer Roads Initiative

Minutes of Steering Group Meeting

29 January 2008

Whickham Room
Gateshead Civic Centre

Present:

Nick Clennett	Gateshead Council (Chair)
Ray King	Project Manager
Jeremy Forsberg	Communications Manager
Danny Barker	Data Support Officer
Peter Morris	Highways Agency
Andrew Farquhar	HMCS
Dick Fraser	Northumberland County Council
Gary Macdonald	Newcastle City Council
Andy Flynn	North Tyneside Council
Neil Mackay	Northumbria Police
Barbara Killen	Gateshead Council (Finance)
Alex Bennett	Northumberland Fire & Rescue
Dave Simpson	Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue
Caroline Shield	Gateshead Council
Natalie Goodman	Gateshead Council

Apologies:

Neil Thorpe	Newcastle University
Kevin Ridpath	North Tyneside Council
John Edwards	South Tyneside Council
Burney Johnson	Sunderland City Council
Bernard Garner	Nexus

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate account of proceedings.

3. Matters arising

All partners have now signed the service level agreement.

DB and RK have met with all local authorities with the exception of Sunderland to discuss those sites that are not meeting the partnerships targets for casualty and speed reduction.

NC put forward the partnership's policy on the installation of new fixed cameras to the Tyne & Wear LTP steering group, where it was upheld.

4. Presentation on the Regional Road Safety Project

CS and NG gave the group a presentation on the project.

The project is currently funded by DfT until March 2009 and involves the police force areas of Northumbria, Durham, and Cleveland. It is hoped that, through region wide data analysis, more targeted and coherent road safety information/campaigns can be sort. The project will work closely with LARSOA and the Regional Road Safety Forum with a Technical Group and a Steering Group responsible for making decisions. An evaluation programme will monitor the success of all campaigns.

Within the presentation the group were given motorcycle accident data as an example of how data trends differ from region to region throughout the calendar year. For more information please contact Caroline (carolineshield@gateshead.gov.uk tel: 0191 4333084) or Natalie (nataliegoodman@gateshead.gov.uk, tel: 0191 4333165).

5. Project issues

a) Membership of RSS.

With the change in funding arrangements and governance to partnerships in April 2007, DfT ceased to operate any central function to aid partnerships with various issues including signage and court cases. In response to this the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) approved Road Safety Support (RSS). This new central function involves partnerships signing up and paying an annual membership charge, for Northumbria the cost of joining for 07/08 was set at £20,730, which equates to 0.85% of the additional road safety grant made to the LTP authorities by DfT.

The working group felt that joining RSS providing no added benefits to local authorities, instead any benefits would be to Northumbria Police. Therefore the group recommended that membership only be sought if Northumbria Police were willing to pay the membership charge.

NM pointed out that any court cases or enforcement issues affect the whole partnership and not just Northumbria Police, therefore joining RSS should not be solely a police issue.

The group questioned if there was any scope to use RSS on an ad-hoc basis as the number of major court cases it deals with is small. NC asked if Northumbria Police would contribute to any membership charges if the partnership joined RSS. NM would discuss this matter with his colleagues and inform the group at the next meeting. The group directed that the Working Group investigate the options and potential issues further.

Action: NM/WG

b) Review of working practices.

The review of working practices is due in 2008 in line with the LTP reviews. The working practices that the partnership will review are:

- The potential outsourcing of the fixed penalty unit by Northumbria Police, once national ACPO guidance has been received.
- The civilianisation of some police posts within the camera enforcement unit. This review is already underway and is currently awaiting input from Northumbria Police HR.
- Internal reviews of working practices by HMCS.
- A review of all communications activities.

Action: JF

- The speed awareness program and moving to a national model, this will be led by Northumbria Police, See item 5.d below.
- The potential for route enforcement and route specific signage.

Action: WG

- The operations of vehicle activated signs across the region.

Action: WG

The group agreed with the areas for review and the findings will be presented at the steering group meeting in September 2008.

c) Discontinued support for wet film cameras.

A recent announcement by the manufacturers of the Gatsometer system has suggested that support for wet film camera systems will cease in five years. The partnership currently operates 44 fixed housings operating this system. If the partnership were to convert all of these to the digital alternative it would cost around £1.8 million in capital expenditure.

The group agreed that a full site evaluation would need to be carried out by the working group to determine exactly which sites would need to be converted and which would be better suited to alternative solutions, including possible decommissioning. Working group to provide project plan for managing this change program.

Action: WG

PM stated that the Highways Agency would bid for funding from DfT to convert any fixed housings on their roads that met the criteria for conversion determined by the Working Group.

d) Changes to the speed awareness programme.

A recent announcement by ACPO has outlined several key changes to the speed awareness programme. The changes would mean that an offender caught in one police force area could choose to go on a course in another area, with a payment of £15 being returned to the force area where the offence was detected. There would also be a national database for all force areas showing the details of every offender who had been on a speed awareness course in the last 3 years.

The group agreed that more information was required from Northumbria Police as to if/when they would be adopting the national model. It was also agreed that should Northumbria Police take up the national model then the preferred solution regarding the £15 per attendee, would be NSRI meet the full costs of Northumbria Police's administration costs in relation to all camera offences with the £15 being paid to the partnership. The alternative would be Northumbria Police retaining the £15 and NSRI only funding the administration of the offences that did not result in the uptake of a speed awareness course. This second option would be hard to administer and there would be difficulties disaggregating the administration costs of the two disposal streams resulting from a single process.

Action: NM

e) Site selection process.

The group agreed with the working group's proposal to carry on with annual cluster analysis to identify new core camera sites. This approach will lead to consistent site identification across the whole region.

f) Permanent signage at public concern sites.

The partnership has a policy that allows enforcement at non-core sites to take place 15% of the total camera enforcement time. These sites have a proven speeding problem but not the collision levels to warrant it being a core site. An annual review of these sites ensures that only the worst of these sites are enforced, as resources are limited. This review usually shows the same sites being the worst year on year. Members of the public have started to ask why these sites do not have permanent camera warning signs.

The working group recommended that permanent signs be erected at regular public concern sites. However, NC expressed concerns over increased signage on the road network and public perception of enforcement. The group agreed that more work was required by the working group.

Action: WG

6. Financial update

a) Expenditure to date and likely outturn.

A spreadsheet showing the expenditure for the first three quarters of 07/08 and the predicted expenditure for the final quarter had already been distributed to the group. This shows the total outturn of £1,834,091, giving a potential surplus of £95,258 compared to the original budget allowance of £1,929,349. BK pointed out that the confirmed figure would not be available until September 2008, when the accounts had been audited. The SLA allows for the surplus to be either refunded to the cost bearing partners or retained for use by the partnership to help fund such schemes as the digital camera change over. It was agreed that a further decision on this would be taken by the Steering Group at the September meeting.

b) 08/09 budget forecast.

The forecast expenditure for 2008/09 is £1,782,152, which is £29,996 less than the SLA forecast, this information had previously been distributed to the group. BK suggested that the £29,996 be left in the partnership budget as a contingency for any unforeseen circumstances. The group agreed to this and confirmed the proposed revenue and capital costs for 2008/09 as outlined, full details are at Appendix A to these minutes.

7. Communications

The Road Respect campaign is still on going and spreading into wider regional road safety focus.

The partnership recently commissioned independent market research to analyse the effects of recent communication campaigns. The research showed very positive results across the board; 85% of people support the use of cameras, 43% would like to see more cameras, one-fifth of people recognise the road respect campaign in some way, and approximately 110,000 people attended a road respect road show in the summer.

The major communications focus in the coming months will be on the Road Respect Schools competition and the Road Respect Charter. The schools competition will promote awareness of road safety issues within schools and 6th Form colleges and should generate fresh media ideas. The charter will be rolled out to businesses and fleets across the region in effort to engage employees in road safety, in particular mobile phone usage and seat wearing whilst driving.

The partnership will be commissioning qualitative research into the attitudes and views of motorcyclists using the regions roads.

The group would like more publicity given to the fact that motorists can be caught by our cameras using a mobile phone and the subsequent punishments this brings to the driver.

Action: JF

8. Any other business

None

9. Date of next meeting

The next NSRI Steering Group meeting will be held on Tuesday 29 April.

