

The pros and cons of installing traffic humps – Cllr Alwyn Pidgen

Extensive UK research on traffic calming has shown that there are advantages and disadvantages of installing traffic humps along a busy residential road in a village such as Preston. A recent traffic count has shown that most speeding through the village occurs at peak times during the day and during the overnight period.

Put simply, road humps are raised sections of a road surface that vehicles must cross over to continue on their journey. They are designed to control the speed of traffic by ensuring that drivers slow down as they cross the hump. If they do not then vehicles with low undercarriages (mostly cars) are likely to be damaged.

There are several different types of speed limiters, such as speed cushions, speed humps and speed tables (see pictures below). The most popular of these is the speed table but it is also the most expensive. Each type has its own pros and cons and in theory all can make some difference. Research has shown that it is important to select the right type of humps for the area in question. For example, in a village such as Preston with a relatively narrow road, a virtual walkway and some bollards then not all of the speed humps would be practical.

In general, careful drivers who are mostly law abiding with regards to speed will also slow down at humps for fear of damaging their vehicle. However, on the other hand, a number of drivers especially company car drivers, 'boy racers' and delivery van drivers often see them as a challenge, and many large commercial vehicles and HGV's often ignore them.

Council's are well aware that if a driver of a damaged vehicle can provide evidence that an offending hump is outside legal requirements, he or she will have a case for damages against the responsible authority.

It must be remembered that emergency vehicles can be slowed down considerably by road humps, and as such may avoid an area altogether - increasing the time it takes to reach a critically ill patient or a fire. Also, it can be very difficult to carry out emergency treatment on a seriously ill patient while the ambulance driver has to navigate a line of speed humps. In our village we have a number of elderly and disabled residents with medical issues and we are also on the emergency ambulance route to the care homes in both Wingham and Littlebourne. Bus companies oppose the installation of large speed humps in villages.

There is also considerable evidence that speed humps lead to a noise nuisance, especially at night when many types of vehicles travel faster over the humps. Also large HGV's can actually shake the foundations of nearby properties when going over these humps. Don't forget that many residential properties in Preston are sited very close the main road and would be most affected by any noise.

There is no guarantee that installing road humps will make a significant difference in reducing the speed through a village.

For example, Acol village near Birchington has endured a significant long-term speed problem and after numerous complaints from residents, KCC recently

installed a number of speed humps. Subsequent feedback from Acol Parish Council stated that the humps have had little or no impact on vehicle speeds in their village. Also, many residents have reported unacceptable noise levels due to traffic ignoring the humps at all times of the day and night. Residents living closest to the main road reported the greatest disruption.

Some different types of speed humps are shown below

Speed cushions



Speed humps



Speed tables

