

Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee

EIN(2) 11-06(p.3)

Date: Thursday 7 December 2006

Venue: Committee Room 2, Senedd, Cardiff Bay

Title: Review of the Local Road Safety Grant 2000 – 2006

Purpose:

To inform the Committee of the impact of the Local Road Safety Grant in terms of schemes implemented and collisions / casualties prevented.

Background:

The Road Safety Strategy for Wales was published in 2003 and set the following targets for casualty reduction by 2010 compared to the average for 1994-1998:

- 40% reduction in the total number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI);
- 50% reduction in the total number of child KSI casualties;
- 10% reduction in the rate of slight collisions per 100 million vehicle kilometres travelled.

Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 placed a statutory requirement on each local authority to provide a road safety service. Section 40 of the Act assigned powers to the Secretary of State to allocate monies provided by Parliament towards the cost of road safety measures undertaken by local authorities, and Section 88B of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 allocated powers to pay special grants to local authorities. The Transfer of Functions Order on 1st July 1999 transferred these powers to the National Assembly for Wales.

The Local Road Safety Grant was introduced in 2000 in response to concerns over the lack of direct funding for road safety schemes and its effect on casualty numbers. The grant has been provided to local authorities each year by the Welsh Assembly Government to contribute towards solutions to road safety problems in their respective areas.

Since the Local Road Safety Grant was introduced in 2000, approximately £43 million has been allocated to local authorities. This included a £1.5 million "Slower Speeds" Grant in 2002/03 and £2.1m for child pedestrian training prior to a separate grant from 2005/06 onwards. The annual sum has risen from £3.66m in the initial year 2000/01 to £7.44 million in 2006/07. The grant is in addition to local authorities' own highway and traffic engineering budgets.

The local authorities are required to submit annual reports on the projects that they have undertaken using the grant for that year. Collision and casualty statistics before and after the implementation of engineering measures are provided, together with information relating to the evaluation of education, training and publicity (ETP) initiatives.

Halcrow Group Ltd was commissioned to collate and analyse the local authority submissions for 2006, and report the findings in a technical report. In addition, enhancements were made to the established data gathering procedures to ensure that from 2006 onwards robust evaluations would be possible.

The final Halcrow report details the type of schemes implemented in 2005/06, and the effectiveness of engineering measures introduced between 2000 and 2005. Examples of good practice are included for future reference by local authorities, together with recommendations on how to maximise the effectiveness of the grant and the associated monitoring procedures. The technical report is attached as Appendix A.

Evaluation Findings

Engineering

Expenditure on a wide range of engineering schemes accounted for 72% of the 2005/06 grant. These included measures such as traffic calming, 20 mph zones, pedestrian crossings, anti-skid surfacing and road improvements.

A total of 390 engineering schemes, each costing over £15,000 and implemented between 2000 and 2005, have been evaluated. It should be noted that for some of these schemes there is only one year of accident data available since completion, and ideally three years of "after" data is required to fully assess their effectiveness. Therefore it is important that further monitoring be carried out in future years. The schemes that resulted in the greatest reductions in KSI casualties were 20 mph limits / zones, mini-roundabouts, visibility improvements and traffic lights.

Aggregated together the engineering schemes demonstrated an annual average reduction in personal injury collisions of 58%, equating to an annual average saving of 372 collisions. The consequent annual average reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) was 90 (i.e. 65%).

The Highways Economics Note No.1, published each year by the Department for Transport, provides estimates of the average value of preventing road collisions. The actual collision reduction achieved by the evaluated schemes

equates to a financial return to society of over £32 million.

Education, Training and Publicity (ETP)

Local authorities allocated the remaining 28% of the 2005/06 grant to ETP initiatives. Since 2005 the guidelines issued with the grant have prescribed that at least 20% should be allocated in this way in

order to encourage an holistic approach to collision and casualty reduction. The 28% spend on ETP compares to 25% in 2004/05 and 17% in 2003/04.

It is clear that the local authorities in Wales have used the grant to fund a wide range of ETP activities. The most popular schemes were:

- The Children's Traffic Club (for pre school pupils)
- Pass Plus (for new drivers)
- Junior Road Safety Officer programmes (primary schools)
- Theatre in Education (schools and possibly youth groups)
- Road Safety Mascot (school pupils and general public)
- Pre-driver initiatives such as MegaDrive.

The Road Safety Strategy for Wales identifies a "New Approach to Road Safety Engineering" which involves changing road user behaviour by analysing tasks that child pedestrians and cyclists need in order to address problems encountered with traffic. It is evident from the evaluation that local authorities are investing heavily in targeting schoolchildren, particularly those of pre-school and primary school age.

Only 7% of the ETP expenditure was allocated to secondary schools. In the UK as a whole the number of child KSI pedestrian and cyclist casualties peak amongst children in early secondary school, which suggests that it would be appropriate to place more emphasis on this age group.

Due to the variation in scheme type and management, individual ETP initiatives need to be evaluated by the respective local authorities. For 2005/06 they reported varied evaluation methods, which included recording participation levels, website hits, media coverage and anecdotal evidence. To help them improve their monitoring methodologies further their attention has now been drawn to a Department for Transport publication "Guidelines for Evaluating Road Safety Education Interventions". In addition, the Halcrow report provides examples of good practice.

Contribution to Achieving National Casualty reduction Targets:

It is difficult to reach robust conclusions regarding the impact of the road safety grant on national casualty figures because:

- To make the grant evaluation process manageable, only collision and casualty data for engineering schemes costing over £15,000 have been monitored. Schemes below this threshold have not been taken into account;

- Although ETP interventions undoubtedly contribute to casualty reductions, it is not possible to statistically assess their effect.
- The grant is administered, and hence monitored, for financial years, whereas the casualty targets and comparative trends are based on calendar years.

For Wales as a whole KSI casualties reduced by 211 in 2005 when compared to the figure of 1537 in 2004. An average annual reduction of 31 KSI casualties was calculated for the engineering schemes in 2004/05. Therefore it is fair to conclude that 15% of the Principality's reduction in 2005 can be attributed to the larger engineering schemes funded from the Road Safety Grant. The actual effect of the grant is likely to be significantly higher due to the additional impact of engineering schemes costing less than £15,000, and the contribution of ETP interventions.

Recommendations:

Based on the key findings of the report it is recommended that:

- The Assembly Government's monitoring spreadsheets should be further enhanced to encourage greater links between engineering and ETP schemes;
- Local authorities should continue to allocate 20% to ETP initiatives;
- Local authorities should endeavour to target more road safety initiatives towards children of early secondary school age;
- Local authorities should develop more robust evaluation methods for ETP interventions;
- Collision and casualty data should continue to be monitored to highlight the effectiveness of different measures, and provide guidance for future programmes;
- The findings of the Halcrow evaluation be shared with local authorities in Wales to promote good practice.

Alison Jones
20/10/06