

GLA Inquiry into Speed Humps



The second meeting of the Greater London Assembly Transport Committee's Inquiry into Speed Humps took place on the 5th February. This time evidence was heard from Bromley, Enfield, Camden and Hull City councils, the latter being included because of their supposed success with traffic calming schemes (see separate article later on that subject).

The London Borough of Enfield disclosed that their policy had recently changed so that speed humps were likely to be "the least favoured option". In other words, they would always consider other traffic calming and road safety measures in preference to humps. Cushions would also take preference over humps, if there was no other alternative. This is similar to Bromley's policy of a "preference for non vertical deflections".

Bromley's Comments

Gareth Davies from Bromley Council expounded on his approach, and primarily made the point that any measures selected must depend on the circumstances. He also criticised the London Ambulance Service for not responding to consultation requests.

Mr Davies pointed out that Bromley was one of the best London boroughs in terms of road injury reductions and had recently increased its targets to a 50% cut from the standard 40% which is the London Mayor's target. He also said that they continued to look at newer traffic calming methods, such as "speed advisor" units which had been successful in reducing speeds quite considerably in Bromley. They were now looking at "self-explaining roads" as a possible road safety technique (see below).

Green Party member Jenny Jones complimented Bromley on its "motorist friendly" policies.

Camden's Comments

Camden Council representative Sam Monck disparaged the objections that many people have to speed humps, saying there was no evidence to support them. For example, he claimed there was no evidence that humps caused additional pollution. *(Editor's Comment: He clearly was not aware of TRL report 482 and other similar scientific reports which clearly substantiates there is such an effect, but he is now).*

It was interesting to hear that Camden seem to have more money available for wide area traffic calming schemes as they have their own funds available for them, whereas Bromley and Enfield have to rely on TfL grants. *(Editor's Comment: Of course Camden has one of the highest rates of tax of all London boroughs so Camden residents get the worst of all worlds - high taxes and high humps. Which is probably why there was so much objection to the wide area scheme for Primrose Hill recently).*

In summary, Bromley came out very well from this review, with Camden appearing to be simply dogmatic. The Committee is likely to go ahead with a survey of residents views on humps before preparing a report.

Self Explaining Roads

What are "self-explaining roads"? These are roads where the visual appearance of the highway is adjusted so as to encourage better awareness of the road characteristics and more appropriate traffic speed. Research has shown that people rely on simplistic visual

clues and mental categorisation of roads, so they sometimes perceive a road as safer than it really is. This is particularly the case with younger drivers, who have not yet built up a more complex repertoire of behaviour from past experience.

By adjusting road features, you can potentially slow traffic, particularly at danger points, without disturbing flows or using speed humps. These techniques have been used in rural environments but their use in urban situations would be experimental.