

COMMUNITY ROADWATCH(UK) C.I.C

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Dear Parish Clerk & Councillors,

USE OF MINI-SIDS FOR SPEEDWATCH

Further to my paper on the 'Use of SIDs' dated Feb 17..... Available to download [Here](#)

In 2015, after observing and personally experiencing the effect of Speed Indicating Devices (SIDs) - that have been used effectively in Rutland for at least the last 15 years - Community Roadwatch (CRW) started advocating their use as an element of an holistic community road safety effort. Each effort, in its own unique way: traffic calming measures, enforcement, Speedwatch and Roadwatch, can play a complementary part for the greater good.

Thanks to the personal generosity of Mick George, in Oct 16, CRW was able to procure a fixed SID for Colne Rd, Somersham/Colne (B1050). Subsequently, after witnessing the significant slowing effects that this SID had (and continues to have) on responsible drivers, CRW obtained a further Mick George-sponsored mobile mini-SID in Feb 17. This is battery-powered and is being moved around the area to not only 'educate' drivers and encourage them to slow, but also to obtain 24/7 empirical data about traffic volumes and speeding stats.

CRW has always supported Police Speedwatch 100%. However, as delivered in all other counties in England, it believes it should be provided by the County's agencies/partnerships free at point of delivery. Unfortunately, under-investment in capital equipment (kits) for Speedwatch as it is being rolled out has created a kit shortfall situation. Parish teams are trained but then are only loaned a kit for a mere 3 months before it is withdrawn to be loaned to the next trained team in the queue but these teams are still being counted as 'active'. At this point, parishes are encouraged (if not left with little option but) by Constabulary Policy supported by the PCC, to purchase their own Speedwatch SID at £2880 if they wish to continue to be operational. To be operational is what they joined for, were trained for and what they started up in good faith for, with high expectations of free and full Constabulary support. Apparently, there are 53 free kits in the Speedwatch pool but few are retained beyond 3 months in this district. However, we have to cope with the situation presented.

Unfortunately, the 'special to type' Westcotec Speedwatch SID that is recommended by the Constabulary for its lightness – has, by definition, limited application flexibility beyond use by Speedwatch because of its very short battery life. Thus, such a SID can become an expensive, useless parish asset (if it can't be sold on) should Speedwatch (a fragile scheme started with the best and noble of intentions) be discontinued. Reasons for ceasing Speedwatch operations might be because key figures move house, lose interest, dwindle to just 2 (3 is the mandated minimum), or become unavailable (work, death, birth).

Consequently, to save parish precept funds being used (albeit for a good purpose) on special-to-type, limited-use SIDs, CRW has been investigating ways of replacing the type of kit Speedwatch uses with multi-role Westcotec mini-SIDs. This model of SID has been used to great effect by CRW since Jan 17. As part of that investigation, CRW has discovered that the detection, display size and intensity along with range and electronics in the Westcotec mini-SID it is using is identical to that used by Westcotec in its Speedwatch SIDs.

Usefully, according to the manufacturer, the only differences between the 2 SIDs is that, for portability, the Speedwatch SID is lighter and uses a much smaller battery. Thus, the battery casing at the rear is much narrower. The small battery of this SID is contained in a 20mm casing bottom extension that also provides a surface for the 'SPEEDWATCH' flash that can be accommodated, if indeed it is vital, at the bottom of the mini-SID.

On the other hand, Westcotec mini-SIDs that would remain in situ between Speedwatch sessions (since the batteries last for up to 3 weeks) have clearance to be fitted to BBLP-maintained, CCC-location-approved lampposts at a minimum height of 2m. Consequently, being 100% identical in function, they are a solution that – if approved - could provide parishes (with or without Speedwatch teams) with an alternative better-value-for-money option to the limited-scope Speedwatch SID that would be used only during sessions and hardly ever over the winter months. Naturally, if your parish does not have lampposts and you still wished to use a mini-SID (for whatever purpose) you would need to have suitable posts fitted by the County Highways and that's been done elsewhere.

I have put this 'use of mini-SIDs on posts' concept to the Assistant Chief Constable Dan.Vajzovic@cambs.pnn.police.uk and the new County Speedwatch Lead Victor.Kerlin@cambs.pnn.police.uk - who is also Head of Cambs Special Constabulary. Neither of these Constabulary executives were previously aware that both SIDs were identical in function. Consequently, being pragmatists and naturally wishing to embrace best practice and 21st century solutions that will serve the best interests of the communities they serve at minimum cost, they are currently mulling it over. Additionally, the PCC is funding a new full time tri-Force 'Watch' Coordinator post at just under £25k pa to continue to roll out Speedwatch and manage its assets – including its 53 free SIDs. An ambitious undertaking as responsibilities also embraces aspects of Neighbourhood watch.

Consequently, it would be helpful and in your own best interests if you – as a Parish - could write to these Constabulary executives expressing support in principle for the use of Westcotec-specification, post-mounted mini-SIDS by Speedwatch as an alternative – if the Parish so wishes - over the purchase of special-to-type, limited-scope, tripod-mounted SIDs currently being recommended as the sole device by the Constabulary.

The knock-on advantage to the Constabulary of parishes buying their own 24/7 mini-SIDs that can be used by Speedwatch is of course that the Constabulary will be relieved of the responsibility / expectation for providing suitable SIDs free at point of delivery rather than just loaning them out for short initial periods as at present. A win-win situation for all.

David McCandless

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