Intelligent crossing could mean safer future for pedestrians

AN innovative project at a busy retail park could provide the blueprint for a new approach to pedestrian safety.

Flashing road studs have been used to create a striking visual warning for motorists approaching an internal crossing at Giltbrook, near Nottingham.

Pole-mounted detectors activate the LED active road studs when the crossing, which spans the main vehicle access to the park, is in use.

Early indications show the bespoke system is already persuading drivers to approach at lower speeds.

It could soon be adopted by privately-owned or council-run sites across the country and experts think it even has the potential to be rolled out across the UK road network.

Gordon Stitt, of traffic technology specialists Swarco, said: “Managers at the retail park wanted to enhance drivers’ awareness of foot traffic and together with Rennicks we have created an intelligent solution.

“We’ve thought outside the box by using tried and trusted technology in a different way and we’re delighted with the results.

“The behaviour of drivers changed almost immediately and feedback has so far been really positive.

“The system is certainly doing its job and, while this was the first of its kind in this country, it could be the start of a new approach.

“Other sites might well want to follow suit when they see the success of this project and, if long-term results prove as positive as we expect, then I’d advocate a similar type of scheme for use on public roads one day.

“That would require the system to pass through various levels of legislation, but there is certainly massive potential for the concept.”

Mr Stitt thinks the Giltbrook system, which utilises hard-wired active LED studs from Rennicks UK in conjunction with LED warning signs from Swarco, has changed the perception of motorists.

He added: “The flashing studs work only when pedestrians are using the crossing, so drivers know from a fair distance away that they must slow down.

“People are sometimes not alert as they should be if lights are flashing all the time, so the fact that the studs blink only when pedestrians are using the crossing creates an instant alert.

“It’s a clever, practical, low-cost and sustainable way to increase safety and, though this is one of the first times studs have been used in this way, certainly in this country, it’s unlikely to be the last.”
The system uses dedicated pedestrian detectors C-Walk by FLIR to activate the high performance Rennicks DC-wired LED studs delineating the crossing.

John Swift, of Rennicks UK, said: “These studs provide unique perception levels as they use technology which is in itself unique - making them the brightest and most reliable products available.

“I experienced the staggering difference they have made at Giltbrook myself and I believe there’s been positive feedback all round.

“The system is designed to improve pedestrian safety but is not inhibitive to drivers - it simply reminds them they are off the public highway and provides a step change in the thought process.

“The studs can be used on any privately-owned retail parks, leisure sites, bus stations, even hospitals – any area where there’s a need to raise awareness of pedestrians or where hazard warning or enhanced navigation is important.”

The system in Nottingham was developed after talks with Savills, who are managing agents at the Giltbrook site on behalf of British Land.

Savills regional manager Denis Copeland said: “We wanted a system which really made the pedestrian crossing at a busy site entrance stand out and we definitely have that.

“The finished installation is fantastic. It looks particularly good when it’s dark and feedback has been positive from both customers and tenants.

“It has the potential to be utilised on other retail or leisure sites, indeed anywhere where there’s a need to highlight pedestrian crossings in a busy environment.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Videos of the studs in action can be found at
http://tinyurl.com/Giltbrook-Night
http://tinyurl.com/ntdg5as
http://tinyurl.com/Giltbrook-Day1

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