



Quiet Lanes

INTRODUCTION

Quiet Lanes are a Countryside Agency initiative, which has the support of the Department for Transport. Quiet Lanes are minor rural roads which are appropriate for shared use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorised users. They should have low traffic flows travelling at low speeds.

There have been two Quiet Lanes National Demonstration Projects, in north Norfolk and west Kent; supported by the Countryside Agency working in association with Norfolk and Kent County Councils. This leaflet describes the schemes and their impacts, and offers some advice for future schemes.



Typical Quiet Lanes in Norfolk (top) and Kent

THE AIM OF QUIET LANES IS TO MAINTAIN THE CHARACTER OF MINOR RURAL ROADS BY SEEKING TO CONTAIN RISING TRAFFIC GROWTH THAT IS WIDESPREAD IN RURAL AREAS.

- ◆ THE QUIET LANES CONCEPT INVOLVES THREE KEY ELEMENTS:
 - A) LOCAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT TO ENCOURAGE A CHANGE IN USER BEHAVIOUR;
 - B) AREA WIDE DIRECTION SIGNING STRATEGY TO RE-ROUTE TRAFFIC; AND,
 - C) QUIET LANE NETWORK SIGNING.
- ◆ THE CONCEPT IS AIMED AT IDENTIFYING NETWORKS OF MINOR RURAL ROADS AND IS NOT SOLELY ABOUT ADDRESSING ISSUES ON INDIVIDUAL ROADS. WHERE POSSIBLE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY SHOULD BE INCLUDED WITHIN THESE NETWORKS.
- ◆ THE CONCEPT IS NOT INTENDED AS A DEVICE TO TRAFFIC CALM BUSY ROADS OR TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF RAT RUNNING AND HEAVY GOODS VEHICLES.

DETAILS OF THE SCHEMES

The Norfolk Quiet Lanes scheme comprises 30% of the local road network, 59 kilometres in total. The network lies within the North Norfolk Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is an element of the Norfolk Coast Transport Strategy.

The Kent project was designed to link towns, villages, public rights of way and the existing cycle routes in Tonbridge and West Malling. The network is made up of 40 kilometres of Quiet Lanes and off-road links.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The aim of the Quiet Lanes initiative was to achieve positive changes in user behaviour on minor rural roads, without reliance on speed limits or traffic calming. Community involvement was decided on as the mechanism to encourage this change by developing community ownership of the network.

For this reason, it is important that community involvement continues beyond implementation. The Countryside Agency "share with care and be aware" message was used to alert people to the likelihood of encountering non-motorised users on the lanes and the need to drive carefully because of this.

In Norfolk the scheme was widely publicised by using exhibitions, the local media, the circulation of leaflets, and meetings. An implementation group was set up with local stakeholders including: Norfolk County Council, North Norfolk District Council, local Parish and Town councils, farmers, businesses, politicians, emergency services, the police, disabled representatives, and interest groups. Pubs, hotels, transport associations, schools and local firms were asked to encourage their employees to adopt the aims of the project.

In Kent the residents were consulted through meetings and public workshops; they were asked to offer their views on the proposed scheme and suggest which roads should be included in the network. A user group of parish council representatives, local business representatives and residents was set up to discuss progress, and a newsletter circulated to 40,000 households.



Community involvement in Kent

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SIGNS

The entry/exit signs were developed by Norfolk County Council, in consultation with the local community. Their aim was to inform drivers they were entering a different type of road where they might expect a range of road users. The signs were relatively small and mounted on wooden posts; they currently require special authorisation. In the attitudinal surveys, three quarters of respondents in Norfolk and two thirds in Kent approved of the Quiet Lanes signs, although there have been some concerns about their conspicuity. Signs 100% larger than those used in Norfolk and Kent are now being authorised.



Norfolk Quiet Lane sign, used in conjunction with non-motorised user signs showing distance to next village and cycle route number (see right)

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due to likely enforcement problems. As a result, no traffic calming measures were introduced along the Norfolk Quiet Lanes; however some measures were implemented within the villages.

Kent implemented low key calming measures at selected points on the Quiet Lanes network where vehicle speeds were thought to be a problem. On Comp Lane, a false cattle grid, made up of 5 rumble strips, was implemented. On Thong Lane, a pinkish surfacing material was laid with an uneven edge pattern along the centre of the road to give the impression that the road was narrower. Early monitoring of the site on Comp Lane showed a 4mph drop in eastbound speed (for traffic that has just crossed

the false cattle grid) but this was not sustained with the 2002 monitoring showing a drop of only 2mph compared to speeds before implementation. The westbound speeds at the same monitoring site (i.e. for traffic approaching the false cattle grid) did not alter significantly. Equipment failure meant that before/after measurements were not taken along Thong Lane.

In Kent, a signing hierarchy was devised with the routes to small villages being signed approximately every two miles. Following a signs audit, superfluous signs were removed; old-style wooden and metal fingerpost signs were retained where possible. New fingerpost signs made of aluminium were introduced; these were blank on one side to direct traffic away from the network. New village signs incorporating the Quiet Lane sign were erected where a Quiet Lane passed through a village.

In Norfolk, a route hierarchy was set up prior to the start of the scheme; this aimed to ensure traffic used the most appropriate routes. Fingerpost signs, showing the name of the next village only, were introduced to discourage through traffic. This led to complaints from residents that some villages were no longer signed directly. Way markers were also used on the exit signposts to direct walkers and cyclists to the next Quiet Lane.



False Cattle Grid, Comp Lane in Kent

TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES

In both Norfolk and Kent, discussions with the community led to the view that traffic calming was considered "urban" in character and was not desirable along Quiet Lanes. The cost of implementing measures across the whole network would also have been prohibitive. Changes to the speed limit were rejected

Where sections of Quiet Lanes network need to be linked by busier roads, consideration should be given to providing off-road routes or segregation for non-motorised users, or traffic calming measures which significantly reduce vehicle speeds.



Thong Lane in Kent before (left) and after surface treatment

TABLE 1: MEAN SPEEDS (MPH) BEFORE (1998/9) AND AFTER (2002/3) SCHEME IMPLEMENTATION (BOTH DIRECTIONS COMBINED)

LOCATION	MEAN SPEEDS				85TH PERCENTILE SPEEDS			
	BEFORE	AFTER	DIFFERENCE	CHANGE RELATIVE TO CONTROL	BEFORE	AFTER	DIFFERENCE	CHANGE RELATIVE TO CONTROL
NORFOLK – JULY								
Control roads	34.6	34.7	+0.1		41.2	40.2	-1.1	
Quiet Lanes	30.2	30.1	-0.1	-0.2	36.8	36.0	-0.8	+0.3
NORFOLK - NOV								
Control roads	34.1	33.3	-0.8		40.1	38.6	-1.5	
Quiet Lanes	30.5	30.2	-0.3	+0.5	36.4	36.2	-0.2	+1.3
KENT								
Control roads	39.9	37.2	-2.8		46.3	43.1	-3.2	
Quiet Lanes	29.2	26.9	-2.3	+0.5	35.2	32.6	-2.6	+0.6

NB Some sites have been excluded from the totals owing to equipment failure. Mean speeds in Norfolk in July and November are therefore not directly comparable.

TABLE 2 TOTAL TWO-WAY TRAFFIC FLOWS BEFORE (1998/99) AND AFTER (2002/03) SCHEME IMPLEMENTATION

	WEEKDAY				WEEKEND			
	BEFORE	AFTER	% CHANGE	% CHANGE RELATIVE TO CONTROL	BEFORE	AFTER	% CHANGE	% CHANGE RELATIVE TO CONTROL
NORFOLK – JULY								
Control roads	4407	4323	-1.9		4232	3898	-7.9	
Quiet Lanes	1984	1785	-10.0	-8.1	1732	1582	-8.7	-0.8
NORFOLK - NOV								
Control roads	4125	4542	+10.1		3427	3772	+10.1	
Quiet Lanes	1943	1879	-3.3	-13.4	1245	1091	-12.4	-22.5
KENT								
Control roads	5503	6395	+16.2		3842	4004	+4.2	
Quiet Lanes	2137	2122	-0.7	-16.9	1577	1453	-7.9	-12.1

NB Some sites have been excluded from the totals owing to equipment failure. Weekend and weekday totals and Norfolk July and November totals are therefore not directly comparable.

MONITORING

Cost effective monitoring was difficult due to the large areas involved and the extremely low flows of both motorised and non-motorised users. Before and after surveys were carried out by TRL Limited and the County Councils which comprised automatic speed/flow surveys and manual classified counts (11 sites in Norfolk, 17 in Kent), attitudinal surveys, and video surveys.

SPEED

Speeds were low in both National Demonstration Projects prior to scheme implementation, largely due to narrow widths and limited forward visibility. The monitoring showed negligible changes in speed on the Quiet Lanes compared to the control roads (see Table 1).

TRAFFIC FLOWS

In both Norfolk and Kent vehicle flows were reduced slightly when compared to the control roads, as can be seen in Table 2.

NON-MOTORISED FLOWS

The non-motorised flows were very low both before and after scheme implementation. The numbers fluctuated throughout the monitoring period but the changes are mostly not statistically significant.

The majority of people asked in both Kent and Norfolk said that the scheme had made no difference to their level of non-motorised use of the lanes. However 17% in Norfolk and about 14% in Kent said they were now more likely to walk, cycle or ride a horse on the Lanes.

The lanes, especially in Kent, are subject to flooding because of poor drainage; this is likely to discourage non-motorised use during the winter months.



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Walkers using a Kent Quiet Lane

ATTITUDES

Attitudes were monitored using focus groups, postal and telephone questionnaires, and opinion surveys at local amenities and attractions. Surveys among horse riders and carriage drivers, cyclists and walkers were also carried out.

Support for the schemes in both counties remained strong in both "before" and "after" surveys with at least three-quarters of respondents in favour of the schemes. However a considerable number (c 1/3 and decreasing in Norfolk and 1/2 and increasing in Kent) did not believe the scheme was working in practice. Concerns such as rat running and the speed of vehicles were cited as reasons for the schemes not working.

Almost 40% of respondents in Kent and almost half of those in Norfolk reported that they now drive more carefully along the lanes. This effect was self-reported and was not supported by measured changes in speed. However it could be that the points where more care is needed (for example at bends or where other users are seen) are not the same as the monitoring locations (for example these tended to be sited away from bends).

ACCIDENTS

Accident levels were very low in both areas before implementation and there has been little change in the accident rate following scheme implementation.

MAINTENANCE

Norfolk County Council has implemented a verge management strategy along the Quiet Lanes. In order to benefit wildlife cutting has been limited to a 1m strip of verge, cut twice a year. They are investigating varying the cut times and removal of the cut material to prevent over-enrichment of the soil and growth of rank vegetation. It is hoped that the less manicured appearance of the verge will also act as natural traffic calming. This type of scheme must be done with care as non-motorised users may need to use the verge when they encounter motor vehicles.

Bad weather and flooding caused deterioration of the road surface on some Quiet Lanes in Kent, leading to the perception that they were not being maintained. There have also been concerns about the signs becoming overgrown or faded.

CONCLUSIONS

Designation as a Quiet Lane can be a suitable method of maintaining the tranquillity and character of minor rural roads, but with community involvement alone it is unlikely to significantly reduce speeds or the number of vehicles. If rat-running or high traffic speeds are a problem then a more interventionist approach will be needed, such as the implementation of traffic calming measures.

ADVICE TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Countryside Agency suggest using the **PACE** system

Plan - set objectives, define area, identify partners, assess demand.

Activate - develop a strategy, engage community, signs audit, assess potential network, financial estimates.

Check - objectives, community participation process, set targets.

Enable - implementation, monitoring.

- Quiet Lanes should generally be pleasant to walk, cycle, or ride a horse along. This would usually involve low traffic speeds (85th percentile <35mph), low traffic flows (<1000 vehicles per day), and narrow road widths (<5 m). If not, traffic calming may be required before designation.
- If linking roads are too busy to be designated as Quiet Lanes then they should have suitable non-motorised user provision, and should be short. Consideration should be given to the needs of visually impaired people if the footway is to be converted to shared use.
- Consultation with the local community should lead to consensus on the lanes to be designated and the objectives for the scheme as a whole. Objectives should be realistic and not raise expectations beyond a level that can be achieved with the planned measures and the available funds.



Picture of Kent link road (Teston Road)

- Quiet Lanes maintain low speeds and flows through community involvement; this must therefore start early and be maintained throughout the life of the project.
- The Quiet Lane network should fit into the local route hierarchy with suitable diversion routes available. Public rights of way should be included in the networks wherever possible.
- Monitoring of the schemes should be undertaken to ensure the scheme is meeting its objectives; methods will vary depending on the objectives set. For example, if implemented to improve quality of life, before and after attitude surveys of local residents would be appropriate.
- Consideration should be given to the needs of disabled people using the road. For example wheelchair users may consider rumble strips undesirable, whilst the size and colour contrast of signs is important for visually impaired people.

REFERENCES

Transport Act 2000 Chapter 38, Section 268. The Stationary Office, 2000.

Norfolk Quiet Lanes Pilot Project: Technical Report 1 Public Engagement and Scheme Implementation by Norfolk County Council, 2000.

Kent Quiet Lanes Technical Report: A National Demonstration Project in Kent by Kent County Council, 2002.

TRL Report No. 602 *Kent Quiet Lanes Scheme* by J V Kennedy, A H Wheeler and C M Inwood, TRL Limited, Crowthorne, 2004.

TRL Report No. 603 *Norfolk Quiet Lanes Scheme* by J V Kennedy, A H Wheeler and C M Inwood, TRL Limited, Crowthorne, 2004.

The Countryside Agency's technical guidance: <http://www.quiet-roads.gov.uk/site/pace/default.htm>

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From the DfT homepage, click on Roads and Vehicles, then Traffic and Parking Management and then Traffic Advisory Leaflets.

The Department for Transport sponsors a wide range of research into traffic management issues. The results published in this Traffic Advisory Leaflet are applicable to England and Wales. Attention is drawn to variations in statutory provisions or administrative practices between the countries.

The Traffic Advisory Unit (TAU) is a multi-disciplinary group working within the Department for Transport. The TAU seeks to promote the most effective traffic management and parking techniques for the benefit, safety and convenience of all road users.

Department for Transport

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