

To full Council, 22/09/2014

"That in existing residential estates in which speed ramps have not been provided during the course of construction, should a majority of residents desire speed ramps and fund-raise a percentage of the cost of their installation, this County Council would provide support:

- (i) financially, by contributing matching funding towards the cost of installing the speed ramps and
- (ii) organisationally, by assisting residents in overcoming the planning requirements to permit installation of the speed ramps."

In June of this year, a 6 year old boy was killed. He had been playing on the green a little way down from the front of his house. A car hit him. He died almost instantly. When I heard the news report, I shuddered. When I read the newspaper report, I cried.

I have a 4-year old boy and a 6-year old girl. I live in a 400+ house estate. My children play on the green a little way down from the front of our house. They play in the turning circle at the top of our road. This could have been my child. This could have been any of our children.

On any summer's evening, there could be up to 100 children playing on the various greens and roads in our housing estate. Speeding is commonplace. A long straight downward stretch of road runs past the largest green. It is an invitation to accelerate. To date, there have been several animals killed but, through sheer good fortune, only one child hit. Thank God, the child was shaken but not hurt.

Cork County Council has a Traffic Calming Policy for Residential Estates. It was published in 2008. It emphasises the benefits of good estate design as being the best way of calming traffic. It is of course correct in this but, unfortunately, having been published in 2008, it came too late for many thousands of residents living in estates rushed up during the Celtic Tiger years.

The Traffic Calming Policy lays down criteria which must be met before traffic calming in an estate is considered:

- two thirds of residents must want it
- a through road must be 300 metres or longer
- a cul de sac must be 150 metres or longer.

Its next step is to then create a list of estates meeting these criteria and to prioritise them. Prioritisation is on the basis of:

- the history of accidents in the estate
- the speed of the traffic
- the volume of traffic on the roads
- the vulnerability of the road users.

So after all this is done, a list of estates requesting traffic calming is drawn up and the roads department prioritises the list in conjunction with the area committee.

There are many reasons a road is dangerous. Sometimes it is because of a blind bend. Sometimes it is because adequate driveway car parking hasn't been provided, so residents with a second car park along the kerb. Sometimes it is because of gradient. But what is certain is that nobody knows better when and where traffic calming is needed than the residents who live with the roads and their users every day.

There are many estates in this county who cannot wait to build up an adequate accident history data to impress upon Council their need for traffic calming. That little boy who died in Kilkenny - he would have been simply one statistic in his estate's accident history. Many residents are simply desperate for traffic calming and fear that their child will be the next essential statistic.

For those estates who are genuinely and urgently seeking traffic calming, I am asking the Members and Management to please support a scheme to expediting the retrofitting of traffic calming measures and in particular the provision of ramps. I suggest the following procedures:

1. Cork County Council will draft a briefing document on acceptable ramp design and installation.
2. A representative of the estate requiring ramps will provide the County Council with a petition indicating that a majority of residents in the estate want ramps.
3. The County Council will provide the estate's representative with a list of approved contractors for the laying of ramps, together with the briefing document on acceptable ramp design and installation.
4. Residents of the estate will liaise with contractors to obtain the most reasonable price for the installation of ramps to Council specifications.
5. Residents will provide an agreed portion (up to a maximum of 50%) of the cost of providing the ramps.
6. The Council will organise planning permission as necessary and will provide the balance of funds.
7. A combination of a residential representative and the Council will supervise the installation.

Essentially, a scheme like this would work like a Community Contract. Its advantages from the County Council's point of view are that it indicates a clear desire for traffic calming, assists with funding and alleviates staff resources. Its advantages from the estate's point of view are that buy-in is required from a majority of residents, awareness will be raised throughout the estate and traffic calming will be provided with minimum delay.

I ask the Members and Management to please support the introduction of a scheme such as this which may help to save the lives of children and other vulnerable road users.