

Twenty Years of Traffic Calming Guidelines

The Gallery, London 20 April 2011

In 1991, Devon County Council asked Tim Pharoah to suggest ways of making their streets safer; the result was *Traffic Calming Guidelines*. To celebrate the 20th anniversary of that very influential publication, the UDG invited Tim to be the lead speaker at an event at the Gallery which started with a message sent by Edward Chorlton, Deputy Chief Executive of Devon CC and the person who commissioned the work at the time.

Tim started by describing the situation before traffic calming as 'divide and rules', where traffic modes were separated – mainly pedestrians and cars – and engineers imposed regulations to make sure people behaved as they should. In spite of various texts of advice produced by the Ministry, the number of casualties remained at unacceptable levels. Tim's approach was aimed at changing the behaviour of drivers by adapting the streets; these were seen as spaces for traffic (where cars could have priority) or spaces for living (where pedestrians had priority); a third category were the mixed priority areas. One important element of the



system was that the hierarchy had to be discontinuous. The Devon Guidelines proposed 19 measures that would calm traffic, from humps to electronic enforcement of speed, that could be used individually or in combination with others. All of these were meant to work principally on the brain of the driver and let him/her know that anything but slow speed would be inappropriate.

The next part of the talk dealt with progress in the past 20 years, resulting in a great reduction in deaths and injuries. Tim suggested that although progress had been remarkable, there were a number of problems that still needed resolving, from the inclusion of environmental improvements to accompany traffic calming, to building without clutter. What the future would offer,



particularly in view of the Localism agenda, and whether the public realm would still be a priority, were important unanswered questions. Tim hoped that at least 20mph would be the default speed in urban areas.

Tim was then joined by Colin Davies and Graham Smith, to lead a substantial debate on all aspects of traffic calming. One contributor suggested that today, a new version of the *Guidelines*, should look at the whole space of the street, including the buildings' façades, rather than only the carriageway. It seemed the right comment to end a very informative and challenging evening.

● Sebastian Loew