

Reducing Speed and Improving Safety in Hammerwich

A Messagemaker VAS Solution

Melissa Barker Interviews Dave King

On the 8th of December, Melissa Barker made her way up to Hammerwich to meet a gentleman named Dave King. Dave has purchased a few speed signs from us over the years for his village and she was keen to get his feedback on the signs and how they have made a positive impact on the village.

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What issues did Hammerwich face on their roads to start looking at road safety/speed solutions?

People come into and out of the village from fast roads. They come off the M6 toll road, the A5 dual carriageway. When coming into the village there is only one sign saying 30 miles per hour, and then they are distracted by a roundabout. They come off these fast roads, and they feel they can still go fast as this road is quite straight.

Having regular speed watch sessions did give us some very accurate data on the mean average, top and bottom speeds.

With the speed watch, we do not record anyone doing less than 36. Before the smiley speed sign SID we would report at least 45 people in an hour. On average the lowest speed recorded would be 36 and the top speed 65, shocking. Speed watch is run by volunteers, at best once a month, which means each road gets one hour every two months. SIDs are there 24-7, they never rest.



Speedwatch is generally not very popular whilst the SIDs seem to be. Where the two villages merge into each other, at peak times we can have around 1000 vehicles an hour going through. When the traffic comes off the roundabout it goes along Highfields and Hospital Road, this is where they start to speed up. Speeding has always been an issue.

Were concerns voiced by the local community? If so, what were people worried about?

They were worried about boy racers going past them to see how fast they could make it go. But hasn't happened in 3 years. There were also concerns about vandalism, which has not happened.

Why were LED speed signs considered a solution?

We looked at where's the traffic fastest. Highfields is on a hill, and traffic comes up here at a reasonably good speed, most people were doing over 30 miles per hour, we did a speed watch from where the camera is now placed as it got more people speeding coming up than going down, but the speeds were higher going down.

The SID at the top of the hill reminds people as they are gathering speed to go downhill and it just checks them. At the bottom, the mean average speed must have dropped from 45 down to about 38 – a significant drop.



Were other solutions looked at? Whether LED or non-LED.

I was the only councillor who wanted speed bumps. We also looked at little insets chicanes but found they were so expensive, then we were quoted from £45000 for a zebra crossing. Cost-effective signs were a much better thought.

Why were SAM signs chosen?

We looked at a few solutions but felt the only one for us was the smiley face, also both the roads that we have covered are school runs which are very important.

I spotted these when I was out for a drive with my wife in the Shropshire villages. I thought to myself I would take more notice of this sign than a sign that instructed slow down. They ask you to respect the residents in the area in a subliminal way.

Why was Solar chosen?

A Neighbouring village, which I have some friendly banter with, went with a cheaper option, which was not waterproof, and you need to recharge yourself regularly. Within two years the guy got fed up charging them, and they probably only worked once every two months. One day when he opened them up everything had gone green inside so they scrapped the whole idea. Solar is maintenance-free.

What do you like about the product?

One great feature of Messagemaker's SIDs is the solar panel, which gives us the benefit of knowing it will work 24 hours a day every day with no attention.

We have a parish council meeting every month, prior to installing SIDs, we would have speeding complaints on the agenda at most meetings. Post SID: I can't remember a complaint. (That's probably down to the visibility of the SIDs)

What would you improve about the product?

Whilst I wish it was cheaper, there is a difference between cheap and value for money. That is exactly what we have here.

Never buy the cheapest – always go for the best value.

How have the signs been received by the local community?

We thought the SIDs would be received well. Positive feedback to a council is quite rare. We had numerous emails and texts complimenting us on our initiative, and I cannot recall negative comments, (even from our Victor Meldrews). The signs have been revived far better than we expected.

- I am impressed with the response shown by drivers.
- Public participation is the key, and we seem to be getting it.
- A young child in the village, comments to her parents we got a green smiley face.
- "I got a smiley green face yesterday, quite pleased!"
- "I live on Highfields Road, I can't believe what a difference the camera has made, not only to average speeds, but the noise level has gone down."



What effect have you seen these have on your initial problem on your roads?

From the initial installation, there has been an instant change in traffic habits. After two years, the effect is still very very strong.

Have the signs been as effective as you had hoped?

The signs have met more than 110% of our expectations.

Pre-SID installation, speed watch volunteers would record 45 to 50 speeders per hour. Now when they report there is only one page of 15 speeders per hour and very rarely get anyone doing over 40 miles mph. Mean average speeds have dropped from about 40 to 35 mph, this is a great achievement, and everybody likes them.

On the same road, the police used to pull 10/15 people in an hour. The last time they did, it was 2.

How does the local community feel now about the road safety issues compared to before the signs were put in place?

I have been a council member for 6 years and I came on board wanting to do something about speeding.

We have to be seen to spend money wisely. This is probably the best thing we have used the money for in 20 years. The bonus is we are probably saving lives.

“Everybody likes it. It’s the ideal solution, made the road safer, quieter.”