

Welcome to the Devon Country Mile

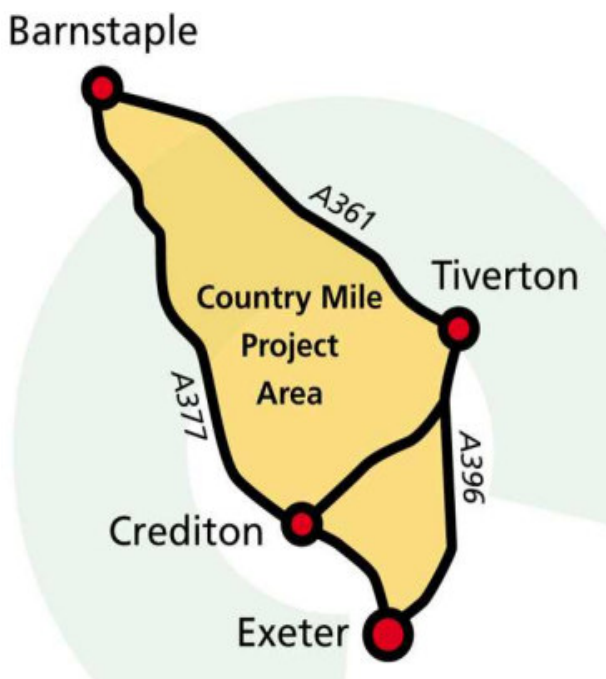
With the largest rural road network of any highway authority in England, Devon has an ambitious target to reduce road deaths and serious injuries by 55% by 2010. Despite the achievements in reducing casualties, there are still around 45 deaths, 300 serious and 3000 slight injuries reported each year in Devon.

Devon County Council is one of four Beacon authorities each to receive £1.5m from the Department for Transport to gather information about key problems facing drivers on their rural roads, and develop innovative strategies to improve safety by March 2010. The Rural Road Safety Demonstration Project aims to identify good practice for local highway authorities in developing, and implementing, a data-led strategy for addressing road casualty reduction in rural areas. Good practice guidance developed from the knowledge gained will be distributed amongst other highway authorities. Although this demonstration project will be of benefit elsewhere in the UK, Devon's objectives are to ensure that those who use the roads in our project area are the main beneficiaries. These objectives are:

1. To reduce the incidence and severity of road collisions that occur in the project area
2. To achieve improvements to public perceptions and awareness regarding road safety
3. To identify and document the methodologies used to deliver the programme for wider demonstration purposes.

Identifying and documenting best practice will enable us to decide how we can ensure other parts of Devon benefit from the experience of the project in future.

The area chosen for the Rural Demonstration Project is the A377 between Exeter and Barnstaple, the A361 between Tiverton and Barnstaple and the network of roads between them. This area was chosen because it offers us a good opportunity to reduce crashes and casualties and to learn more about effective casualty reduction on a variety of 'rural' road types.



Councillor Margaret Rogers, Devon County Council Executive Member for Environment recently welcomed the project and the partnership that will deliver it: "Devon has had a good record with regard to the reduction of casualties, but in recent years the number of deaths and serious injuries has started creeping up. Most of these severe crashes occur on our rural A-roads, and I applaud the Department for Transport for investing in Devon as a Beacon council for road safety to demonstrate what can be done to turn this around."

"We know that for road safety to be effective there has to be a mix of education, engineering and enforcement. I am pleased that all the 'blue light' services have agreed to support this project, and I am confident that over the next couple of years we can make a recognisable and measurable difference."

Project Identity

After much deliberation the name chosen for the rural road safety project is Country Mile - saying everything we need to say about the types of roads targeted and the fact that this will be a long programme of work. The brand for the project is a basic graphic enhanced by a number of strapline opportunities depending on how the logo is being used. Here are a couple of examples:



The logo will always be used with an appropriate strapline so that, in a broad and complex programme of work, it will always be possible to say something about a specific aspect of the project without ever losing sight of the project brand itself. This may include specific types of road user - drivers, motorcyclists, cyclists, tourists or horse riders - or perhaps engineering and enforcement projects. Where simply a general statement is needed, the "generic" version will be used:



Safety at fords and Irish bridges

Working in partnership with the Environment Agency a project is underway to inspect and review all the fords and Irish bridges (these are bridges that allow water to flow over, as well as under, it in exceptional circumstances) in Devon. The review involves a safety assessment of the area, with an emphasis on signing, depth gauges and general condition. By using a simple but consistent scoring system for each site a priority list is being developed that will help, in the next stage, to identify where and what action needs to be taken. As these sites are mainly in rural locations, priority will be given to making improvements at higher risk sites in the Country Mile project area.



We are grateful to the Environment Agency for providing the funding for the review (there are around 160 fords and Irish bridges in Devon) and we hope the partnership work will be able to continue into the next stage where improvements to the highest risk sites will be made.

Business and education update

The business education side of our project has been busy and we now have a series of courses for business drivers and managers operating within the project area. All will be promoted by our Community Driving Instructor and will be available through the Devon Drivers' Centre. These courses include:

- A theory presentation aimed at drivers and their managers
- A one hour assessment of driving performance
- A half, or full day of practical driver training.

Both the theory and the practical training courses focus very much on the 'how to' aspect of rural driving. For example, 'how to' approach a bend; brake on approach; select the correct flexible gear on approach, and use light acceleration to keep the engine just pulling through the bend.

Other subjects covered include safe following distances, hazards approaching from the side and hazard perception in a rural setting.

The practical driver courses will be supplemented by training and support for managers who find themselves responsible for the health and safety of staff who drive for work. This part of the service will cover areas such as corporate manslaughter, and having systems in place that will identify and address the risk of at-work driving.

Enforcing the Devon Country Mile

The Enforcement Strategy's specific aims are to reduce the average speeds on the A361 North Devon Link Road (NDL) and to increase the gaps between vehicles. By achieving these two aims, there is great potential to reduce the collisions on the NDL, the biggest number being shunts where drivers drive too close together at too high a speed.

As part of the Enforcement Strategy early requests from Devon & Cornwall Police asked for observation platforms on the A361 North Devon Link road. All such requests and proposals are required by the project to provide a business case. Such a case was developed so that not only did the Police have somewhere safe to observe driver behaviour, be seen by drivers and operate Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) equipment, but the Safety Camera Partnership's Camera Vehicles can use the platforms and Devon County Council can also use them for mobile Variable Message Signs. These platforms are now in the design stage.

To monitor the effects on driver behaviour, electronic traffic data counters that can measure speed, size of vehicle and gaps between vehicles have been commissioned so that we can monitor driver behaviour both before, and after, the observation platforms.

Reaching tourists and drivers unfamiliar with the A361 North Devon Link Road

Current data shows us that there are pronounced seasonal traffic flow variations in the demonstration area, especially on the A361 where collisions are more likely to occur in the summer months. Consequently, tourists are a key audience that we need to reach with this project.

This winter we will work with our partners, Devon and Cornwall Police and Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service, to develop ways of reaching tourists arriving in 2009 and influencing their driving behaviour.

In preparation, comprehensive analysis of collision data will be carried out. Results should determine where, why, when and how tourists are making errors along the route. This information will help us to create messages that will be included on variable message boards at the roadside or in marketing and information materials.

One of the ways in which we may choose to influence tourist behaviour is by issuing advice and information through garages, cafes, restaurants, shops, pubs, accommodation, holiday let companies, campsites, car parks, visitor attractions and coastal destinations accessed by the A361 North Devon Link Road.

Reaching visitors using a particular road is always difficult to achieve however, and anyone with suggestions on how we can influence these drivers can send their ideas to us at countrymile@devon.gov.uk

Market Research

We have commissioned a market research agency to undertake a piece of pre-project market research. The aim of this is to gain base level data on the attitudes and behaviours of people to road safety within the demonstration area.

This has been achieved through home and street surveys in the area. The survey includes questions on:

- o Speed
- o Collisions
- o Experiences of driving in rural Devon
- o Offences in the area

We have also been testing out some ideas proposed for the project (e.g. removal of road signs in the area) to gauge the public's reaction to these types of changes.

Recording and measuring how people think now will help us to understand the extent to which we have been able to influence their views and behaviours at the end of the project.

The research has just finished and findings should be with us by the launch of the project on the 22nd October.

Date for your diary – Wednesday 22nd October 2008, Project Launch

On Wednesday 22nd October the Country Mile project will be formally launched at the Fox & Hounds Hotel, Eggesford.

Although work on the project has already begun - mainly to gather the data and intelligence needed to guide our work - we will use the 22nd October as an opportunity to launch the project publicly. The day will be a two part briefing on the purpose, the range and the likely content of the project.

In the first part we will provide a briefing to those members of our partnership (including for example, police and fire and rescue officers) who will be working with us to deliver the initiatives within the project area.

The second part of the day will be a briefing for community representatives and other stakeholders (for example parish and district councillors, driver and rider groups or business representatives) who may be directly affected by the work of the project. It will also be an opportunity to enlist their help to take information back to their communities, members and staff. It will also bring to us the feelings, concerns and ideas of people who use the project area roads.

Contact us

If you would like any further information on any aspect of the Country Mile project then please do email us at countrymile@devon.gov.uk or you can write to us at

Devon Country Mile Project
Road Safety and Travel Awareness
Devon County Council

Lucombe House
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter, EX2 4QW

For a safer
Countrymile
Devon Road Safety Partnership

The Devon Country Mile is a partnership project between a number of organisations working in the interests of road safety and road casualty reduction in Devon.



Devon **NHS**
Primary Care Trust

Devon
County Council 

South Western Ambulance Service **NHS**
NHS Trust

Department for
Transport



www.devon.gov.uk/countrymile