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## Zonal waiting restriction signing - Executive summary

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Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) are mainly used in urban areas and relate only to waiting and loading restrictions. They have been designed to remove the need for time plates at yellow lines, where the restrictions apply at the times indicated on the boundary signs.

CPZs are frequently introduced by local authorities to address specific parking problems in a particular community. Research undertaken as part of this study, has shown that the most common reason for implementing a CPZ stems from the need to address residential parking difficulties, particularly where residents complain they can not park close to their house due to shopper or commuter parking. CPZs can also, however, be used to allow more free-flowing traffic through a town centre, particularly where parking causes problems for emergency services. CPZs reduce clutter on the streets, both in terms of signing and parked cars, and are therefore often supported by residents and environmentalists who campaign for less intrusive traffic signing.

The purpose of this research study has been to establish existing problems with regard to zonal waiting restriction signing and how these might be addressed. The study was therefore divided into three stages. These stages were as follows:

- **Stage 1:** Undertake a literature review, using the research team's current network of and a sample of twenty local authorities with different types of restricted zone identify the issues to be investigated in Stage 2.
- **Stage 2:** Using a sample of eight local authority areas, undertake in-depth interviews with a number of key stakeholders in/for each area including a sample of motorists parking on-street within the regulated area.
- **Stage 3:** Develop recommendations which can be carried forward for further investigation and possibly field trials.

The literature review (which can be found in Appendix A) investigates motorists' understanding of regulatory signing and lining, focusing specifically on Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) and Restricted Zones (RZs). The aims were to identify issues that should be considered when questioning motorists about their understanding of the signs and to designing new signs in order to maximise the level of understanding of the meaning of those signs. The review covered the following areas: current regulations, past and existing schemes, public reaction to various aspects of signing, the environmental impact of lining and signing in environmentally sensitive areas and the effectiveness of different types of signing.

The scheme review was designed to find out about the issues surrounding the implementation of Controlled Parking Zones and Restricted Zones. Twenty local authorities were contacted and the sample included a range of different sizes of local authority from the larger urban conurbation to those with tourist attractions, rural sites, villages and small towns. The review included an operational and policy development perspective to determine the extent to which public consultation was carried out by various parties prior to a scheme being introduced.

A survey of motorists was undertaken by TRL to investigate public understanding and perception of the signs and lines relating to Controlled Parking Zones and Restricted Zones. TRL undertook the design of the study and analysis, whilst commissioning a survey company to undertake the fieldwork and data processing. The research entailed conducting questionnaire surveys in Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) and Restricted Zones (RZs) in eight towns and cities in England. A number of issues have been explored within the survey, including motorists' interpretation of the signs and lines in their immediate vicinity, and their understanding of signs presented to them on show cards. The output from the research is used to identify the issues surrounding zone boundary signing, local signing and comprehensibility of existing signing.

Detailed stakeholder consultation exercises have been carried out within the eight selected UK towns/cities, and nationally with parking adjudicators, motoring organisations and trader representations to identify problems associated with Controlled Parking Zones and Restricted Zones. The focus was to:

- Identify environmental issues related to the display of regulatory signing;
- Identify the difficulties experienced by motorists to understand the signs and lines;
- Identify the difficulties in planning issues;
- Identify the effect of the economic viability on the town/city centre.

In Stage 3 of this study, TRL were contracted to design new signs that would attempt to solve some of the ongoing issues with CPZs and RZs. It was agreed with the customer that these signs should deal with only CPZs because the issues with Restricted Zones needed to be dealt with separately. 6 signs were therefore designed in an attempt to remedy some of the confusion experienced by motorists. The signs were designed on the basis that signing parking restrictions on a zonal basis remains.

Having proposed six new signs to replace some of the existing signing that is used within Controlled Parking Zones and Restricted Zones, the signs must be validated and approved for further development for them to proceed.

To date, the design process has been informed by a literature review, public consultation, in-house expertise and has incorporated discussion with the Client. It is considered that this collaborative approach has already provided some validation of the sign proposals, however further theoretical and practical testing should now be undertaken.

It is suggested that validation and assessment of the sign changes could consist of two processes:

- consultative validation; followed by
- field trials.

Each of these techniques is considered to offer a different perspective on the quality of the signs. Experience indicates that the undertaking of the 'consultative validation' is likely to require fewer resources than the 'field trials'. It is therefore proposed that the 'consultative validation' phase precedes the 'field trials'.

A number of potential areas of concern relating to the current operation of CPZs and RZs have been identified during this research study. They relate to **motorists' comprehension** of the concept of CPZs and RZs and how they should be used, and **local authority officers' comprehension** of the concept of CPZs and RZs and how they should be used to regulate parking. This report sets out some of the issues arising from the study with a discussion on how they may be resolved to ensure that the level of compliance with parking regulations increases, the number of signs that motorists experience difficulty in interpreting decreases and the ability of local authorities to comply with the regulations in the Traffic Signs Manual increases.

Based on the findings of this research study, TRL recommend that Controlled Parking Zones should not relate specifically to waiting and loading restrictions, and that motorists should not be expected to remember the restrictions while they drive around the zone. Controlled Parking Zones should relate to a regime encompassing all parking regulations in a particular area (therefore zones such as Pay & Display Zones should remain). A new entry sign should be designed and include 2 parts: the top section displaying information referring to permitted parking on a white background (possibly with the P symbol) and the bottom section describing the waiting and loading restrictions on a yellow background with the No Waiting roundel. The important point being that yellow line repeater plates should be used along all stretches of single yellow lines so that motorists are not expected to remember the times displayed on the entry sign.

In order to increase the effectiveness of Controlled Parking Zones and Restricted Zones, it is also recommended that an educational programme be devised, aimed in particular at the local authority officers who implement these zones.