Black Cat device

Update for Parish Council 16ᵗʰ September 2021

This is following up on the report of initial findings and costs presented to Parish Council at the August meeting, that report can be viewed on the Parish Council website, in the 'Documents' section, along with other documents relating to the device. https://etchinghamparishcouncil.org.uk/document-category/blackcat/

The Black Cat is a Radar unit that can be placed at the roadside to record the number of passing vehicles and speeds across two lanes of traffic over a period of time, battery operated, data is stored on an SD Card up to a maximum of 4GB, the data can then be transferred to computer software to be analysed.

Some villages in Rother have purchased the device, Catsfield have been using one for quite a while and Sedlescombe have recently purchased one.

It is possible for two or more villages to share a device, in that case it would probably be best for the villages to share the costs, but one village hold the device and manage the usage between the villages, to ensure fair distribution of use. It is also suggested that if two or more villages share a device a dedicated tablet could be provided to go with the device, that way it would not be necessary for each village to install the two pieces of software.

If we purchased a device just for Etchingham I would recommend getting a tablet just for Black Cat, that way if the person operating the device changes the software does not have to be installed on another device, also all of the historical records will be in one place for easy access.

Keith Robertson at Catsfield gave me quite a bit of information, I have downloaded some from www.tagmaster.com and some information is available on the Rother Association of Local Councils (RALC) website www.ralc.org.uk

I am now in direct contact with the Sales Manager at the suppliers (Tagmaster) so can get answers to the technical questions quite quickly.

Choice of locations;

1) Have checked with the suppliers, there is not a problem with using near to a VAS sign proving the device is located behind the VAS and pointing away from the VAS.
2) The device is set at a 45 degree angle to the road, so some of the existing posts will not be suitable, the brackets can fit posts up to telegraph pole size, so will check how easy it is to get permission to use telegraph poles

Updated summary of potential costs.

Item	Cost	Notes
Device purchase	£2500	
Device hire	£450 pw	More than 5 hirings, better to buy.
Solar Panel Kit	Approx £800	Also quite bulky.
Fixing brackets	£20 each	One needed for each location. (x3?)
Highways licence	£57 pa	Covers multiple sites in the village.
"Collect" Software (collects the data from the device)	FREE	Needs to be installed on a laptop or tablet, recommend purchasing a tablet just for Black Cat (see below)
"VDA-Lite" Software (analyses the data collected from device)	FREE	Needs to be installed on a laptop or tablet, recommend purchasing a tablet just for Black Cat (see below)
Tablet computer to store and analyse the data collected. I would recommend this, see note.	£120 - £180	If a dedicated tablet was supplied and the person operating the device changes there would not be a need to install the two software packages on another tablet or laptop each time, also all historical records would be stored in one place.
Ongoing costs		Will be checking with supplier, but not aware of any costs at this stage.
Annual Calibration		Will be checking with supplier, but not aware of any costs at this stage.
Additional fixing posts, if required		Cost not yet known, if no suitable are already on the roadside, Highways will install at the current cost.
Post installed on private property		Cost to be established and agreed with property owner. Location would need to be agreed with Highways to ensure the collected data is suitable for their purposes

My recommendations if a device is purchased;

1) Sharing with another village would halve the cost, **but** it would also halve the usage time. The ideal deployment time at a location is ten days, you then need to allow 4-5 days between uses to allow sufficient time for offloading the data from the device and recharging the battery, over the year that gives about **24** uses, so shared that would be **12** for each village. There would obviously be some difficulties with arranging the share times, as both villages might want to deploy the device at the same time, and sharing with a larger village could be a problem if they have more locations and want to use it more often. So, my recommendation, if affordable, would be to purchase a device just for Etchingham.

2) A tablet specifically for Black Cat. I would recommend this as it keeps all the historical data in one location, also if the person operating the device changes they would not need to load the two software packages to their own computer.

3) Solar Panel Kit – would probably only be useful if the device was to be deployed in one location for a period longer than 10 days. So not a recommendation at this stage.
4) Recommend up to three locations spaced throughout the village to start with, one near the west end of the village, one east and one in the middle, more locations could be added later if required.

Things still to be checked;

Can the device be attached to a suitable post on private property, for instance the front garden of a house on the High Street, if all the sites in the village were on private property is permission and licence still required from Highways.

Who to contact, and what the procedures are for using a telegraph pole.

Who to contact at Highways regarding locations, permissions and licence.

Are there any ongoing costs with the device, such as an annual re-calibration. _[none known at this stage, but still checking]_

If there is any aspect of the device use that Councillors would like more information on, let me know, so I can investigate.

Cllr. Colin Boylett