



IHIE Policy Statement

Safety Cameras

August 2004

IHIE believes that safety cameras (both 'Red Light' & 'Speed' Cameras) have a role to play in delivering the ambitious targets set out in the Government's road safety strategy as the recently published 3 year evaluation report clearly demonstrates. The vast majority of safety cameras are operated by safety camera partnership of police, highway authorities, magistrates courts and health professionals. The operation costs of cameras and the provision of new sites are met through fines with any surplus passed to the Treasury.

1. However, there is growing concern amongst the public and media about the siting and operation of safety cameras. We believe that, unless measures are taken to make the operation of partnerships 'transparent', such concerns may lead to public acceptance of camera technology being eroded.

IHIE recommends:

All Safety Camera Partnerships should be required to publish reports covering the operation of safety cameras within their area. The reports should include the background data justifying the siting of Safety Cameras (accidents recorded, etc), the operation cost, fines and monies returned to the Treasury. Proposals for installation of future cameras should be set out in the same way as local authorities publish Local Transport Plans (LTP) with proposals and programmes for expenditure. Currently 'business case' reports are submitted to the Home Office as part of the continued operation of a partnerships but are not made public.

In order to maintain public confidence cameras should continue to be sited ONLY where speed related accidents have occurred.

All safety camera partnerships should consider widening their remit to other areas of road safety education and publicity with particular emphasis on vulnerable road users, pedestrians, motorcyclists and cyclists.

2. The return of surplus monies from fines (£14.5 million in 2002/3) to the Treasury (hypothecation) has been characterised, as a 'stealth tax'. IHIE believes that the enforcement of road laws to the benefit of the community in reduced personal injuries is not a tax, but public acceptance of enforcement is in danger of being damaged by the current procedure. IHIE believes that 'surplus' fines should be reinvested directly into traffic safety measures. This point has been made by both the Commission for Integrated Transport chairman and the Chair of the County Surveyors Society Traffic and Safety Group.

IHIE recommends:

That a consultation exercise be undertaken with all safety camera partnerships, professional bodies, motorists representatives, et al to establish an appropriate framework for the returning ALL 'surplus' fines DIRECTLY to works, advertising, and research targeted on reducing speed-related injury accidents.

3. Current DfT guidelines for the installation of safety cameras require a site survey by a road safety engineer and that there be no other obvious, practical measures to improve road safety along the stretch of road. Road safety engineering measures can give significant rates of returns but with pressure on local government budgets and a significant skills shortage amongst traffic management professionals, the use of Safety Cameras is too often an option of first resort for speed-related injury accident sites than engineering works.

IHIE recommends:

Comparative costs of engineering works (and rates of returns) to a set national formula should be published for each new safety camera site proposed by safety camera partnerships.

4. Home Office guidelines and regulations currently require specific signing of roads where safety cameras operate. The IHIE believes that there is much to be gained by publicising the significant impact that safety cameras have on reducing speed-related injury accidents.

IHIE recommends:

Safety Camera partnerships should consider the signing of new or recent camera sites with details of number of speed-related injury accidents at the site.

5. A number of safety camera sites have been located throughout the UK where speed limits have been imposed which are lower than the original 'design limit' of the highway. IHIE believes that the greatest contribution to safety can be made by the use of 'self-explaining' highways where the highway layout has been designed for driving at the posted speed.

IHIE recommends:

Where safety cameras are currently in use or are proposed for highways which have been previously been designed for higher speeds than those posted, then engineering works to make such roads and speed limits 'self-explaining' should be strongly considered.

6. IHIE believes that, to present a robust argument for the use of safety cameras, drivers should be in no doubt over the maximum speed limit of any road on which they are travelling. In the absence of any other signs, a limit of 30MPH applies where there is street lighting, otherwise it is 60MPH. Signing of other limits should be clear. Guidance on the use of such signs is in need of revision, in particular with reference to safety cameras. Combinations of 30mph and camera sign already exist and can be erected within a 30mph limit area, where safety cameras operate. At the same time proliferation of signs should be avoided. A consistent approach to applying speed limits is vital. Frequent changes confuse drivers and the positioning (and public acceptance) of safety cameras is not helped by the absence of a consistent speed management strategy.

IHIE recommends:

Maximum siting distances for repeater signs should be reviewed by Government and the spacing of such signs reduced in areas covered by Safety Cameras. The use of 30MPH repeater signs in areas covered by Safety Cameras should be strongly considered.

7. IHIE believes that the current system of penalty points is seen by the public as disproportionate, punishing drivers irrespective of their level of transgression of the speed limit. IHIE accepts that significant breaches of the posted speed limits are punishable by magistrates by increased penalties (up to and including suspension of a licence) but believes that a graduated penalty system for exceeding the limit by a significant margin, would be more acceptable to the public and the police. The impending DfT consultation on revising the fixed penalty system is overdue.

IHIE welcomes:

Consideration should also be given to reducing current penalty points if the transgression is by a small margin or is a first offence. Rehabilitation courses focused on improving driving standards, not speeding, should be offered in lieu of a fine.

8. Active enforcement of the law requires police on the roads. Cameras enforcement of speed and regulations such as box junctions should not be seen as a quick fix for all road safety problems. Better driving standards can be encouraged by police. It is to be hoped that the inclusion of road policing in the national policing plan will raise its priority in force. Cautions and advice: we do not want to lose experienced officers who are able to detect offences not readily detectable by safety cameras: driving whilst under the influence of drink or drugs, anti social or aggressive driving etc. The use of such uniformed officers has the added benefit of visible police presence within communities.

IHIE recommends:

That police forces be encouraged to retain (or reinstate) and deploy their traffic teams.