



**RoadPeace** UK charity for road traffic victims

THE SLOWER SPEEDS INITIATIVE



North London safety camera site: The London Safety Camera Partnership has put the RoadPeace 'Remember me' plaques with photos of three of the victims killed in the latest crash. Although five people were killed, this still constituted only one fatal crash - the Government requires that four or more fatal or serious injury crashes must occur before a speed camera can even be considered.

*"We cannot think of any other case where society as a whole is expected to bear the costs of lawbreaking, and effective law enforcement is only deployed as a last resort. In addition, safety camera partnerships are prevented from taking action against speeding traffic by artificial constraints. These mean that most cameras can only be operated once several people have been killed or injured. **The guidelines must be amended.**"*

*House of Commons Transport Select Committee, October 2004*

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# HOW CAMERAS CAN HELP REDUCE SPEEDING -

**the leading contributory factor in fatal crashes and the most common type of anti-social behaviour**

September 2005

RoadPeace and the Slower Speeds Initiative

# Summary

## The Problem

- Speeding is endemic in our society, not just a problem at a few sites.
- On 30 mph roads, where the majority of people killed or seriously injured, over half of drivers speed (53%).
- Speeding is the leading factor in fatal crashes and reported in 28-30% of fatal crashes.

## Camera Operations

- Fixed speed cameras can only be located at sites where
  - 1) there have been four or more fatal or serious injury collisions in the past three years
  - 2) 20% of drivers exceed the speed limit
  - 3) there is no practical alternative measure
- Government requires drivers to be forewarned that safety cameras are being used and fixed speed cameras must be painted bright yellow.
- Two-thirds of safety cameras are located on 30 mph roads.
- Less than 1% of the road network has its speed limit enforced by active cameras
- For every safety camera, there are 400 CCTV cameras. These are not restricted to sites of repeated death and injury, nor even burglaries. **Why are the criteria for casualty prevention so much stricter than those for property protection?**

## Camera Revenue

- Of the £120 million collected in speeding fines last year, only £20 million (less than the equivalent of VAT) went into the Treasury, with £100 million invested in camera operations and safety measures.
- Benefits to society from the crashes avoided (£221 million) outweighed the 'excess' revenue earned from cameras by 11:1.
- Total camera revenue is equal to 10% of total Department for Transport spend on road safety (£1.2 billion or 11% of its total £11 billion budget) and less than 1% of the estimated total cost of crashes (over £18 billion).

## Penalties

- Set at £60, the fine for camera detected speeding is less than that proposed for littering or graffiti.
- Fines are not recommended to those exceeding the speed limit by less than 5 mph and speed awareness courses are available to many first time offenders found speeding 5-9 mph over the limit. They pay for the course and in return do not receive any penalty points.

## Camera Effectiveness

- The most recent camera evaluation reviewed 2300 sites in 24 Safety Camera Partnerships. It estimated that 770 people had escaped death and serious injury, including at least 100 road deaths avoided.
- Fixed speed cameras are more effective than mobile cameras and reduce speeding by 71%. Mobile cameras decrease speeding by 21%.
- Fixed speed cameras halve the number of killed and seriously injured (51%) at camera sites, while mobile cameras reduce fatalities and serious injuries by 28%.
- As with other road safety interventions which are chosen on the basis of high collision numbers, their impact may be affected by the regression to mean effect. However, casualty reduction has been documented with camera use after accounting for regression to mean.
- Speed cameras could be even more effective if they were allowed to be inconspicuous. In addition, there is concern, and emerging evidence, that the rules on publicising the locations of cameras and making the cameras conspicuous are encouraging drivers and motorcyclists to take greater risks on roads where there are no cameras.

## Public Support

- Public support for safety cameras has been consistently high, over 67%.
- Demand for cameras is also high and the current rules deny communities the protection they seek from speeding drivers.
- Speeding traffic was the leading anti-social behaviour identified by a recent British Crime Survey.
- Public support is useful but not necessary for governments to do the right thing.

## Countering Criticism

- Speed is the leading contributory factor in fatal road crashes, and accounts for twice as many deaths as does drink driving.
- Speed will aggravate the outcome, including the severity, of all crashes. By enforcing speed limit the Government saves much more from avoided death and injury than it receives in fines.
- Automated speed limit enforcement frees police for other road traffic duties. It is the low priority placed on traffic law enforcement which has led to a reduction in traffic police. Cameras have helped compensate, not cause, this problem.
- The real question is how many crashes and casualties would be avoided if we reduced speed, rather than how many are 'caused' by speed. The controversy around cameras is leading to deaths and injuries, which could be prevented if speed limits were more widely enforced.

## What is Needed

- The DfT's casualty quota for safety cameras should be dropped. Cameras should be used more widely to prevent casualties, especially at sites of community concern.
- Covert cameras should be used and evaluated. Even the Motorists' Forum has acknowledged the need for covert cameras on road stretches where speeding is persistent.
- Greater priority and investment should be given to tackling speeding – the most common contributing factor in violent death and top anti-social behaviour concern.

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## 1 Speeding– the problem

### Definition of speeding

Speeding refers to both excessive and inappropriate speed. Excessive speed is when drivers break the speed limit, while inappropriate speed is speed that is too high for the circumstances, but not above the speed limit.

Thus drivers should stay under the speed limit when there are vulnerable road users around and when it is dark or wet....**basically every urban road, many rural roads and all night-time and bad weather travel.**

#### The Highway Code states:

The speed limit is the absolute maximum and does not mean it is safe at that speed irrespective of conditions. Driving at speeds too fast for the road and traffic conditions can be dangerous. You should always reduce your speed when

- the road layout or condition presents hazards, such as bends
- sharing the road with pedestrians and cyclists, particularly children, and motorcyclists
- weather conditions make it safer to do so
- driving at night as it is harder to see other road users<sup>1</sup>.

### Extent of speeding

While speeding on 30 mph roads has decreased by 20% since 2000, the majority of drivers still exceed the 30 mph speed limit (53%), with a quarter exceeding it by 5 mph or more. Better speed compliance is found on 40 mph roads where 27% exceed the speed limit, while on motorways and dual carriageways, approximately half of all car drivers exceed the speed limit <sup>2</sup>.

### Crash risk

The relationship between crash risk and speed has a simple core premise: the faster one travels, the greater the chance of hitting someone or something. And when there is a collision, the impact will be harder. The reaction times of drivers and pedestrians do not improve with vehicle speed.

The exact crash risk will vary according to many factors related to the road, vehicle, driver and the environment. For instance, the crash risk on a 30 mph road cannot be applied or compared to a motorway where vulnerable road users are banned, traffic flows are separated, access is restricted and junctions are removed.

#### Key points about the link between speed and crash risk:

- A pedestrian hit at 20 mph has a 95% chance of surviving, but at 30 mph this decreases to 50% and at 40 mph, less than 5% will survive <sup>3</sup>.
- The difference between a pedestrian being hit at 30 mph and 35 mph is crucial with the survivability halving with the increased impact <sup>4</sup>.
- The Health Development Agency has concluded that a 20 mph speed limit on residential roads would reduce child road deaths and injuries by 67% <sup>5</sup>.
- Drivers flashed by a speed camera are twice as likely to be involved in a crash than drivers not flashed <sup>6</sup>.

### Why drivers speed

Key reasons include:

- They believe that they are better drivers than others and they can 'handle' speed.
- They are rarely faced with the consequences of their actions.
- They are encouraged by society's desire for speed (microwaves, internet, instant money transfer, etc.) and incredible tolerance to speeding.

## 2 Safety Camera Partnerships

In order to be allowed to invest camera fines into road safety measures, the local police force and local authority must establish a Safety Camera Partnerships (SCP) that conforms to guidelines set out by the Secretary of State for Transport. Almost all the police forces belong to a SCP. The government guidelines stipulate where safety cameras can be sited, how they must be signed and how fine revenue can be spent<sup>7</sup>.

Safety camera is the collective term used for all traffic enforcement cameras, i.e. fixed, mobile, and digital speed cameras, as well as red light traffic cameras. As the criticism has focused on speed cameras, particularly fixed speed cameras, this briefing reviews the evidence and arguments for speed cameras.

### Safety camera restrictions

**Camera core sites cannot qualify until they meet ALL of the requirements shown below.** Many of the SCP websites state that cameras are used at hazardous locations or where there is a history of collisions. Few specifically mention that there needs to be at least four crashes involving someone killed or seriously injured (K/SI) before a fixed speed camera can be considered.

DFT Safety Camera criteria <sup>8</sup>

Rule	Fixed camera sites	Mobile speed camera sites	Red light camera sites
1. Site length requirements	Between 0.4 and 1.5 km	Between 0.4 and 5 km	0.05 km
2. Number of fatal and serious collisions (K/SI) in past 3 years	At least 4 K/SI collisions per km	At least 2 K/SI collisions per km	At least 2 K/SI collisions within the junction
3. 85th percentile speed at proposed sites	Speed survey shows free-flow 85th percentile speed is at or above ACPO threshold.		N/A
4. Percentage over the speed limit	At least 20% of drivers are exceeding the speed limit, excluding congestion periods.		N/A
5. No other engineering solutions possible	There has been a site survey carried out by a road safety engineer confirming that no other cost effective engineering solution can be implemented to improve road safety along this stretch of road. It must also be safe to access camera.		

Note: The 85th percentile speed is the speed at which 85% of traffic on the road was travelling at, or below, when the survey took place. ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) recommends a tolerance of 10% plus 2 mph over the posted speed limit<sup>9</sup>.

#### Why so much stricter than EuroRAP?

The government's specified casualty collision criteria for a fixed speed camera are very high. The European Road Assessment Programme (EuroRAP) defines 'persistently high risk' roads as those sections with at least one fatal or serious injury collision per mile per three years<sup>10</sup>. This is less than one-fourth the casualty quota required for a fixed speed camera in the UK.

**See camera....Think memorial!**

### Number of cameras

The number of cameras has been misreported by many who have confused operating (i.e. active or 'live') cameras with camera housings. It has been reported that a mere 1000 cameras are rotated between 6000 safety camera sites<sup>11</sup>, thus an average of one in six cameras is active, but this ratio varies between the partnerships.

The most recent evaluation reviewed the location of safety cameras from 24 safety camera partnerships. The vast majority (79%) of cameras are located on built-up roads (30 or 40 mph speed limits), with two-thirds on 30 mph roads, where pedestrians and cyclists are most likely to be encountered and where the speed limit is most likely to be ignored<sup>12</sup>. In 2003, over half of all deaths and serious injuries on British roads occurred on roads with a 30 mph speed limit, a limit exceeded by over half of drivers<sup>13</sup>.

Safety camera location<sup>14</sup>

Road type	Safety cameras
30 mph	66%
40 mph	13%
Motorway	2%

With a total road network of over 392,000 kilometres and cameras estimated to cover a length of 1 km (500 metres either side of the camera). **less than 1% of the country's road network is covered by active speed cameras**

#### Safety cameras vs CCTV

For comparison, consider the use of CCTV. In the past three years, the number of CCTV cameras in the UK has quadrupled to four million, 400 times the number of total safety cameras (including inactive cameras)<sup>15</sup>.

There is one CCTV camera for every 14 people, but... only one active safety camera for every

- **56,000 people**
- **32,300 drivers**
- **28,000 motor vehicles**
- **392 km roads**

It is worth remembering that over four times as many people are killed in road crashes than are murdered. Children are also much more at risk from strangers behind the wheel than elsewhere: while on average, less than ten children are killed each year by strangers, 120 children are killed on the road<sup>16</sup>.

RoadPeace and SSI are not the only ones who think the SCP restrictions are extreme and counter-productive. In their recent report on Traffic Law Enforcement, the House of Commons Transport Select Committee concluded that:

*The attempt to make speed cameras more acceptable through tough guidelines on their use has back-fired. It would have been better to reiterate the simple message that speeding is dangerous, breaking the speed limit is illegal, and that those caught speeding would be punished.*

*The guidelines for use of safety cameras have had perverse effects. Cameras can only be used if "there has been a site survey by a road safety engineer and there are no other obvious, practical measures to improve road safety along this stretch of road". We cannot think of any other case where society as a whole is expected to bear the costs of lawbreaking, and effective law enforcement is only deployed as a last resort. In addition, safety camera partnerships are prevented from taking action against speeding traffic by artificial constraints. These mean that most cameras can only be operated once several people have been killed or injured. **The guidelines must be amended.***<sup>17</sup>

### 3 Effectiveness of speed cameras

#### Reduction in speeding

At the risk of stating the obvious, speed cameras were developed to deter speeding, not just speeding involving death or injury. Less than 10% of gun crime results in an injury but this does not mean non-injury related gun crime is acceptable<sup>18</sup>.

The most recent evaluation of the impact of cameras on speeding was based on 11,600 speed surveys<sup>19</sup>. There has been no criticism of the evaluation of the impact on speeding and there is no doubt that speed cameras have reduced the number of drivers breaking the speed limit at camera sites. This alone is enough to justify their use, especially as speeding is the top anti-social behaviour concern in the country.

#### Reduction in speed and speeding<sup>20</sup>

Average speed:	7% decrease (2.4 mph)
Speeding:	32% fewer drivers speeding 71% less at fixed camera sites and 21% at mobile camera sites
Extreme speeding:	43% fewer drivers exceeding speed limit by more than 15 mph 80% fewer at fixed camera sites and 28% at mobile camera sites

Reducing vehicle speed is essential for a sustainable transport system.

For more information, visit [www.slower-speeds.org.uk](http://www.slower-speeds.org.uk)

#### Reduction in crashes and casualties

After a nationwide study in the mid 1990s found that speed cameras led to a 28% reduction in K/SI casualties<sup>21</sup>, a two year pilot study was begun with eight safety camera partnerships. But after just the first year, safety cameras proved so successful (35% decrease in K/SI collisions with 47% fewer people killed and seriously injured), the government decided to roll out more safety camera partnerships immediately<sup>22</sup>. The second year evaluation reported a similar success, with a 35% reduction in K/SI casualties<sup>23</sup>.

The most recent evaluation focused on the 24 partnerships that had at least one year of data after camera installation. The impact on crashes and casualties is based on an analysis of 2,300 sites in those 24 partnerships. Almost all the sites showed casualty reductions with only 5% of the sites found not to be effective. The casualty decrease was reported to be particularly large for children and pedestrians<sup>24</sup>.

#### Reduction in injury crashes and K/SI casualties<sup>25</sup>

All injury crashes:	33% decrease (4,030 fewer collisions) 23% decrease in pedestrian collisions
K/SI casualties:	40% decrease (870 fewer K/SI and 100 fewer deaths) 51% decrease at fixed camera sites and 28% at mobile camera sites 35% decrease in pedestrian K/SI

#### 'Iron law of evaluation'

Because their impact on crashes and casualties can be quantified, speed cameras have suffered from the 'iron law of evaluation' and have been held to a higher standard of evaluation than other measures. Yet the criticisms of speed camera evaluations apply to all safety interventions that are selected on the basis of a high number of collisions.

There is concern that the safety benefits may be overestimated on occasion due to the effect known as the regression to the mean (RTM). As speed cameras are only allowed at sites that have experienced a high number of fatal and serious injury collisions in recent years, a reduction in collisions would be expected by the natural pattern, even without cameras. Yet a large scale study covering the longest time period found high crash savings from speed cameras. The study reviewed 49 camera sites in Cambridgeshire over a 14-year period and found a reduction of over 45% in injury collisions in the immediate vicinity of a camera site. Covering such a long time period, it was possible to estimate the impact of speed cameras, net of RTM, long term trend and seasonality<sup>26</sup>.

Another study did find RTM contributed to the casualty reduction. This study of cameras on 30 mph roads estimated that while K/SI crashes fell by 34% at camera sites, 18% of this decrease was due to RTM, 5% due to long term trend, and only 11% directly attributable to the cameras. But when this same study analysed the impact on total injury collisions, cameras accounted for 24% of the 26% decrease in total injury collisions. This study did not criticise safety cameras but concluded that

**To realise the full potential safety benefits of cameras what is needed is wider deployment and less emphasis on fatal and serious accidents in selecting locations for new cameras ...** *"The main obstacles to achieving the road safety benefits possible from further deployment of speed enforcement cameras seem to be public opposition and a consequent lack of political will. Speed enforcement cameras on 30 mph roads have been shown to offer safety improvements over a distance of up to 1 km upstream and downstream of the camera, with reductions in accidents over this distance averaging 20% or 1 PIA/km/yr attributable to reductions in speed"*<sup>27</sup>.

However the Government has recently announced a freeze on fixed speed cameras (thus blocking almost 500 new speed cameras), which is believed due, at least in part, to their concern over the effectiveness of speed cameras and the regression to mean effect. This ban was condemned by ACPO who claimed it could cost lives, with speeding being allowed to continue on known dangerous roads<sup>28</sup>.

#### Greater benefits possible with covert cameras

The benefits to society could be even greater if cameras did not have to be conspicuous. Research in New Zealand and Victoria, Australia, has shown that covert cameras are more effective in reducing casualties as they have a wider general deterrent effect than do conspicuous cameras<sup>29</sup>. A report commissioned by the Motorists' Forum also recommended inconspicuous cameras on roads where speeding occurred over a long section or in a local area<sup>30</sup>.

## 4 Fines and revenue

### Speeding fines

The maximum fine of £1000 for speeding is almost never imposed. The vast majority (80%) of speeding offences are dealt with by camera and restricted to a £60 fixed penalty fine<sup>31</sup>. So instead of being 'victimised' by cameras as some like to claim, in reality, speeding drivers are treated very leniently.

#### Speeding drivers are encouraged in five ways

##### 1 Enforcement is extremely rare

With speed cameras restricted to the worst locations - speed limits are enforced on a minute fraction (<1%) of the network.

##### 2 Drivers are forewarned

Warning signs are required to be posted in advance of camera sites and cameras must be highly conspicuous. Thus the message is 'only here is the speed limit enforced'.

##### 3 High speed threshold

The cameras are set at an enforcement threshold much higher than the legal limit. Moreover, in reality, many safety camera partnerships enforce speed at much higher thresholds than recommended by ACPO in order to control the administrative burden of processing fines.

##### 4 Minimum penalties

Camera detected speeding incurs a fixed penalty charge of £60 and three points, the minimum possible under the law. The fine is less than that for being drunk in public or littering. Bus lane and parking violations in London, incur a higher fine which is halved if paid within 14 days, yet this approach is not used with speeding fines. Penalties do not increase with repetition despite the evidence that behaviour is not changing and research showing that those who are caught speeding are 'crash magnets', with twice the risk of being involved in a crash.

##### 5 Repeat violations allowed

Drivers can be caught speeding up to 4 times before they are banned. Disqualification is not mandatory and magistrates can allow drivers to continue driving if they claim their livelihood depends on driving.

Furthermore, the Government has proposed to reduce the fine for speeding from £60 to £40 and from 3 to 2 penalty points for speeding up to 9-10 miles per hour above the limit<sup>32</sup>. This is met with much opposition, including from road safety professionals and campaigners, including the Safer Streets Coalition, and from within Parliament. The House of Commons Transport Select Committee stated:

*We reject outright the Government's suggestion that there should be lower penalties for speeding in built-up areas or villages. Exceeding a low speed limit is even more serious than exceeding a higher speed limit, because it increases so significantly the risk of death in an accident: 50% of pedestrians hit at 30 mph will live; 90% of pedestrians hit at 40 mph will die. We do not understand how a Government which professes to practice evidence-based policy-making could even contemplate such a change<sup>33</sup>.*

### Camera revenue

Of the £120 million collected in fines by safety cameras last year, £100 million was spent by SCPs on camera operations and related road traffic injury prevention<sup>34</sup>. Only £20 million went to the Treasury, the equivalent of less than 17% of the total, a lower percentage than VAT, and the DfT spends over £1.2 billion or 11% of its total £1.2 million budget<sup>35</sup>. Meanwhile, crashes cost the country over £17 billion every year<sup>36</sup>. The Safer Streets Coalition has recommended that all camera fines should be invested in road safety.

Much has been said about the revenue raising capability of speed cameras and four key points should be remembered:

1. Only law-breakers are fined, - to 'the polluters pay'.
2. The revenue earned is very low. The 2002/2003 total camera fine income was less than 0.3% of legal motoring activities, less than 1% of tobacco taxes<sup>37</sup> and less than one-quarter of the £500 million paid to victims of uninsured motorists in 2004<sup>38</sup> or the £560 million spent on medical care for road crash victims in 2003<sup>39</sup>.
3. Cost savings greatly outweigh the revenue generated. With enforcement costs of only £54 million and the value to society of crashes avoided at over £221 million in 2002/03, the benefit to cost ratio is 4:1<sup>40</sup>.
4. Government does not fund support services for road traffic victims. While Victim Support receives over £30 million per year from the government to support victims of crime, road traffic victims are not included under their mandate<sup>41</sup>. RoadPeace has argued that camera fines should be invested in the support and rehabilitation of road crash victims, as is the case in Australia, which would redress the unfairness and remind drivers that speeding is not a victimless crime.

### Under-investment

Many more cameras can be economically justified even by the motoring organisations. The Motorists Forum has recommended that the "implementation of road safety engineering schemes giving at least a benefit cost ratio of 2:1 over the whole life of the project should be encouraged"<sup>42</sup>. The last evaluation found that cameras had a 4:1 benefit cost ratio after just three years, while a 1996 Home Office study found that speed cameras had a 25 times investment return after five years<sup>43</sup>.

#### True cost of speeding

*Just before Christmas last year our 16 year-old daughter was knocked down by a speeding motorist estimated to have been driving at between 49 and 63 mph in a 30 mph zone. Her injuries were horrific. All over Christmas and the New Year period she lay unconscious in the local intensive care unit, her life in the balance. Against all odds she survived...The costs in both human and financial terms have been incalculable: it does not take much imagination to estimate the physical and psychological effects on our daughter. Plus the effects on our family and our friends, not knowing whether she'd make it through to the next day...Add to this the cost of her continued recovery, including a total of nine weeks in hospital, numerous outpatient appointments, seven operations so far, scans and drugs: one course of new antibiotics alone cost some £5000. Then there's the police investigation, the ongoing procedures in both the criminal and civil courts, the costs of providing invigilators when she had to sit her GCSEs from her hospital bed, the cost in terms of her father and I having to take extended leave from work. The list could go on...Speeding is a crime and if those who speed get caught, and have to pay the financial penalties, then so be it. The costs to us all of not using the available technology to prevent speeding will be far, far higher. The civil liberties arguments are spurious: if someone is speeding and seen by a police officer, why should it be any different if they are "seen" by a camera.*

P. Jordan, mother of teenager seriously injured by speeding driver

## 5 Public support for cameras

Speeding is a key concern for the public. The 2004 British Crime Survey reported speeding as the leading form of anti-social behaviour, cited by 43% of the 40,000 people interviewed<sup>44</sup>.

*“The public support the use of speed cameras because they understand two very simple things: the faster you go, the more likely you are to be involved in a crash and the more severe the impact of the crash”*  
Transport 2000

Transport 2000's poll of polls<sup>45</sup>

Year	Source	Finding
2003	BBC	75% in favour of speed cameras with only 19% against.
2003	Scottish Executive	75% drivers thought speed cameras to be a good thing.
2003	Used Car Market Report	62% satisfaction rating for speed cameras amongst motorists/sites
2002	You Gov	75% of London respondents thought cameras should be used more widely on dangerous roads.
2002	NOP/Evening Standard	84% motorists in London and the southern region viewed the use of speed cameras as a good thing, even though more than half had been 'flashed', or flashed and fined.
2002	RAC	78% drivers believed speed cameras were a good way of deterring people from speeding and were not an infringement of personal liberty.
2001	MORI	70% of respondents supported the use of speed cameras.

Speeding traffic was also identified as a key concern for children in the Transport 2000 and Barnado's project *Stop look and listen: Children talk about traffic*. Greater use of speed cameras was recommended, including in deprived residential areas where child pedestrians are excessively at risk<sup>46</sup>.

The third year evaluation public surveys on speed cameras found

- 76% agreed that Cameras are meant to encourage drivers to stick to the limits, not punish them.
- 68% believed that fewer collisions are likely to happen on roads where cameras are installed.
- 61% thought that cameras mean that dangerous drivers are more likely to get caught<sup>47</sup>.

Public support for safety cameras remains high, as seen by the findings from the most recent camera evaluation. It is worth remembering that there has never been a large scale publicity campaign promoting safety cameras and the National Safety Camera Partnership Coordination Unit was only allocated minimal resources for publicity. The support for speed cameras has come from local communities, unlike the media-fuelled opposition to speed cameras. Public support is always useful, but the government did not require or wait for public approval to introduce drink driving regulations in the 1960s.

*I got caught twice for speeding last year. Since then, I drive more carefully and am more conscious of my speed. I am sick of the attitude that cameras are only there as part of some insidious Government plot to raise revenue. I broke the law, got caught and faced the consequences instead of whingeing about the injustice of it all. The fine for both tickets was £120 with six points on my license. I am not rich, but I didn't think the fine was large enough nor a deterrent. They should increase the fines if anything, and, if the moaners want to avoid getting caught and fined, then obey the law, stupid.*

S. Rickard, Metro, 21/1/04

### “In defence of speed cameras”

What a strange attitude we have to lawbreakers in cars. Attempts to enforce speed limits are denounced as interference with ancient English liberties. Motorists who drive too fast are excused on the grounds that they are “otherwise law abiding”, a description that may as easily be applied to wife-beaters or child molesters. Upright citizens boast of victories over breathalysers, speed cameras and parking tickets. The Sun launches a “stop the highway robbery” campaign against the cameras while a lunatic fringe attacks them with hammers and airguns, and threatens explosives...Ministers tremble at the tabloid's wrath and agree to consider proposals to remove cameras where they do not “protect” the public. This is an incoherent thought even by today's standards. If a legal limit on speed exists, it is worth enforcing.

Our love affair with the motor car blinds us to logic and common sense. We strain every sinew to protect children from paedophile murderers. Yet, the number of child pedestrians killed on the roads annually is ten times greater than the number killed by perverted strangers. It is also higher than in France or Germany. The yearly toll of death on the roads exceeds that exacted by Osama Bin Laden's madmen in New York in 2001, and is vastly higher than the number of Britons killed in all recent terrorist attacks. On any sane risk assessment, speed cameras on roads – which have been shown to cut deaths and serious injuries by 35 per cent-are more necessary than armed marshals on aeroplanes.

There is no argument whatever for treating errant motorists more leniently than any other class of offender, or for making less determined efforts to catch them. Even an ignored “no right turn” sign can cause death or injury to innocent people. An illegally parked car – which may itself lead to an accident- is simply theft of road space, an expensive and scarce commodity. Retailers stuff their stores with cameras to deter shoplifters who cause no physical harm to anybody. It is hardly possible to walk a hundred yards along a high street or a few feet across an airport lounge without surveillance. Why should it be any different when we get into a motor vehicle? The police are said to hound lawbreaking motorists in preference to pursuing burglars. Why is this such a reprehensible order of priorities? Burglars cause loss and distress, but rarely kill or maim.

The argument that exceeding the speed limit is acceptable when the road is deserted or the schools are on holiday is preposterous. Children are more, not less, likely to be wandering around in the holidays, and pedestrians may unwittingly put themselves at risk in the belief that the limit is being observed. In any case a pedestrian hit by a vehicle travelling at 40 mph will almost certainly be killed, while one hit at 20 mph will almost certainly survive. Nor is it so scandalous that revenue from motor-ing fines swells police and Treasury coffers. Raising money from the taxation of socially undesirable behaviour-whether it be smoking, emitting greenhouse gases or parking at road junctions - is a perfectly sound principle...

Cars seem to create a state of arrested adolescence in many users. Behind the wheel, middle-class, middle-aged men (and the worst drivers are nearly always men) become as reckless and heedless as teenagers. They resemble naughty schoolboys not only in their determination to flout authority, but in their resentment when they are “picked on”. Yet a car is potentially a lethal weapon. The use of it is a privilege, not a right; the minority who forget that deserve to be hounded as mercilessly as any house-breaker or teenager vandal.

*New Statesman Editorial, January 12th 2004*

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## 6 Countering criticism

A small but vocal minority of motoring correspondents and lobbyists for the motor industry have campaigned against the use of speed cameras. Most of the critics do not accept that speed is a problem, while a few agree speeding is a key factor but do not believe that cameras are an effective way of reducing speed. In 2003, the Slower Speeds Initiative and PACTS (Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety) published a comprehensive rebuttal to speed camera critics ([www.pacts.org](http://www.pacts.org) or [www.slower-speeds.org.uk](http://www.slower-speeds.org.uk)). The four most common arguments are summarised below.

### 1. "Speed is not a problem"

Excessive speed is the most common contributory factor identified in fatal crashes. A recent Department for Transport study reported 28% of fatal crashes in 2003 and 30% in 2002 involved excessive speed<sup>48</sup>. This is a conservative estimate since contributory factors are based on the limited information known at the time the crash is reported. This will be within days of the crash occurring and before any proper speed estimates have been calculated or witnesses or drivers formally interviewed. Speeding will need to be very obvious for a police officer to record it at this stage. Yet even this conservative approach finds speeding responsible for over 900 deaths each year, almost twice the number caused by drink driving<sup>49</sup>.

"Simple physics: A lump of metal going fast will hurt you more than one going slowly"  
*The Economist*, "Speed kills. So why are speed cameras so controversial?", May 8th 2004

Some have claimed that speed cannot be a problem since motorways have the safest record. But motorways have restricted access and no junctions. Dividers separate and protect opposing vehicle flows and pedestrians and cyclists are not allowed on motorways. These are reasons why there are fewer collisions per kilometre travelled on motorways.

Even when another cause is involved, speed will always aggravate the consequences. Road crashes may be classified as fatal, serious and slight but there is a big range within the serious injury category. Impact speed will affect the extent of brain injury and fractures, as well as the likelihood of a full recovery, permanent disability, or death.

In terms of the sheer numbers involved, speeding qualifies as both a police and public health priority.

For every death from	there are...
Bullying <sup>50</sup>	60 deaths from speeding
CJD <sup>51</sup>	15 deaths from speeding
Gun crime <sup>52</sup>	12 deaths from speeding
Heroin <sup>53</sup>	10 deaths from speeding
Domestic violence <sup>54</sup>	6 deaths from speeding
Knife attacks <sup>55</sup>	4 deaths from speeding
All murders <sup>56</sup>	1 death from speeding
Passive smoking <sup>57</sup>	1 death from speeding
Superbug MRSA <sup>58</sup>	1 death from speeding

**If speeding is not a problem, then what is?**

### 2. "Cameras are used to generate revenue for the government"

The government receives no money from drivers who respect the speed limit. Speeding fines are not imposed on all drivers, but only on those who break the law. The real benefit to the government from cameras lies in the cost savings to the health sector and reduced pain and suffering. The estimated value of crashes avoided (£221 million) is over ten times that of the surplus revenue (£20 million)<sup>59</sup>. In Wiltshire, the number of hospital bed days decreased by 33% in one year (2002-2003), thereby freeing 501 hospital bed days for patients suffering from other diseases<sup>60</sup>.

As discussed in the previous chapter, speeding drivers are treated very leniently. If the government chose to enforce the legal speed limit (as it does the legal alcohol limit) on all the roads the AA's EuroRAP programme classifies as high risk, then the camera revenue earned would be many times higher.

As there remain some who still do not connect speed with danger, RoadPeace urges the government to highlight this connection by investing camera revenue in support and rehabilitation services for road traffic victims, as has been done in Australia and North America.

### 3. "Cameras are a cheap replacement for traffic officers"

Speed cameras are a tool, not a replacement, for traffic officers. Just like computers, motor vehicles, and mobile phones, they increase the efficiency of the police. Speed cameras cannot be blamed for the decrease in traffic officers. This started before the safety camera partnerships were established and is due to the lack of priority given to traffic policing. Speed cameras have not caused the decrease in traffic officers, but they have helped compensate for it.

Best use should be made with the limited traffic police resources available. Many of our members have been bereaved or injured in a crash and they are aware of the restricted police resources allocated to road crash investigation. The government has estimated the average cost of police investigation time to be £1500 for a fatal crash and only £190 for a serious injury crash<sup>61</sup>. Any additional investment in traffic police officers should go towards investigating crashes and tackling those road crimes which cannot be detected through camera enforcement.

### 4. "Cameras are ineffective as the decrease in road deaths has slowed"

Cameras will have contributed to that decrease but unfortunately, there are very few camera sites. With live cameras estimated to cover less than 1% of the road network, their impact on national road death rates will be limited. **Who expects to lose weight from dieting only one day a year?**

As noted earlier, there is reason to believe that we are not using the limited number of cameras in the most effective way. There is evidence that the policy of requiring cameras to be highly visible is encouraging drivers to speed elsewhere. Public health experts have warned that the government's policy **may be counterproductive to the aim of reducing road casualties**<sup>62</sup>.

It is also worth remembering that while speed cameras may seem to be the only road safety countermeasure ever discussed by the media, there are many other road safety interventions underway. The Government's Road Safety Strategy has over 150 activities organised into 12 main themes. Speed cameras are only one of many interventions to reduce road casualties.



## 7 The next step

### What we want

- The casualty requirements for safety cameras (both speed and red light cameras) to be ended. Safety cameras should be used to increase compliance with road traffic laws and to prevent death and injury.
- Inconspicuous, i.e. covert, cameras to be trialled.
- Existing cameras to be used more effectively and additional speed cameras to be installed according to local operational criteria established in consultation with communities.
- Consistent and proper evaluation of all road safety interventions, including those aimed at reducing excessive and inappropriate speed. **A lower standard should not be tolerated for more popular measures that may well be less effective at saving lives and preventing disability.**
- Fine revenue to be invested in national publicity campaigns explaining rationale for safety cameras and also in road traffic victim support and rehabilitation services. This would remind drivers that speeding is not a victimless crime.
- Involvement of speed to be estimated by speed calculations recorded at the end of the investigation, not at the initial reporting stage, as is currently done when only a 'best guess' is possible.

### How you can help

- Document your support for speed cameras and include any personal reasons.
- Document the support for speed cameras of any local or national organisation you are involved with - show it is not only the victims who want to see road danger reduced. Produce a press release and publish it on your organisation's website.
- Contact your local Safety Camera Partnership as well as the local police service and local authority. Find out when their next evaluation or consultation is due and be ready to support speed enforcement.
- Contact your local media (newspaper and radio, if not TV) and make sure the transport, crime and health correspondents are aware of your support for speed cameras. Send them a copy of your press release.
- Contact RoadPeace and the Slower Speeds Initiative if you want to campaign against the body count approach to safety cameras.
- For further copies of this briefing pack, contact RoadPeace.

### Cows, casualties and compensation

In 1998, an Injury Prevention editorial stressed the need for government to be proactive in preventing road traffic injury. The Government has had to establish special funds to compensate people who have suffered from government inaction. This includes those who contracted HIV or Hepatitis C from contaminated blood products, and BSE victims. As of 2003, the government had paid over £33 million to HIV victims<sup>63</sup>. The government also compensates farmers for whose cows fall ill from unsafe travelling conditions.

*With so much evidence showing the life saving potential of safety cameras and traffic calming measures, will the government one day have to compensate those road traffic victims that could have been avoided with a more proactive approach to speed management?*

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