

Safety Cameras

A report by the County Transportation Manager to the Highways Advisory Board on 10th July 2007

Summary

1. The Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership (K&MSCP) was launched in 2002. The partnership operates across the Kent Police area covering both Kent and Medway and its sole purpose is to reduce road crash casualties.
2. The K&MSCP produces an annual report which is produced for each Partner organisation setting out progress to date and challenges for the future. Each year this report is presented to the Highways Advisory Board (Appendix 1).
3. The K&MSCP report considers six issues associated with safety cameras in the county and the Kent Police area as a whole:
 - An overview of the partnership and its structure
 - Funding
 - Operations during 2006/07
 - Casualty reduction
 - Communications
 - Future activity and funding arrangements

The value of Safety Cameras

4. In recent years road crash casualties in Kent have reduced overall. This success is due to a variety of factors involving many areas of work undertaken and supported by our various partners and stakeholders. However, the contribution of the work of the Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership should not be underestimated. The partnership has been in existence for five years, during this time its work has reduced casualties at camera sites, consistently performing at above the national average. To fulfil KCC's commitment to reducing all seriously injured (KSI) casualties by 40%, by December 2007, we need 478 fewer KSIs, 69 have already been achieved by safety cameras alone.

Recommendation

5. Members are asked to acknowledge the annual report of the Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership.

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**The Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership
Annual Report from the Project Manager:
Progress of the Partnership during 2006/07**

Introduction

1. Roadside cameras which detect speeding vehicles, or those who contravene red lights at traffic signalled junctions, are generically called 'Safety cameras'. These play a vital, but limited, role in the wider road safety strategies of the three traffic authorities in Kent (Kent County Council, Medway Council and the Highways Agency). Speed cameras in particular contribute to raising awareness of the dangers of inappropriate or excessive speed on the roads, and are installed only where significant numbers of injuries have been caused by traffic travelling in excess of the posted limit.
2. Whilst the cameras are installed and maintained by the three traffic authorities, their operation also requires the co-operation of the Police (as law enforcers) and Her Majesty's Courts Service (involved in endorsing licences and processing fixed penalties). These five organisations formed the Safety Camera Partnership in Kent in 2001 and gained approval to join the national 'cost recovery' programme from July 2002.
3. July 2007 therefore represents the Partnership's fifth anniversary. In previous years I have reported on the past progress of the Partnership and herein I wish to provide information on the fifth year of operation.

Funding

4. Funding for safety cameras including all administration, staff salaries and all running costs associated with the cameras and processing of offences, has been provided entirely from Central Government under the DfT's 'Cost Recovery' programme. This money was then reimbursed by the Partnership from Fixed Penalties received from offences detected by the cameras. Thus the operation and installation of the cameras has not been a burden on the respective budgets of the Partner organisations, nor on the public purse.
5. All camera sites installed in the county of Kent since 2002 comply with strict casualty and speed criteria set out by the Department for Transport (DfT). In order to receive the reimbursement of costs from DfT the Partnership needed to strictly adhere to these criteria.
6. The identification of camera sites and the installation of the associated street furniture remains the responsibility of the traffic authorities; whilst the processing of offences and collection of fines remain the roles of Kent Police and Her Majesty's Courts' Service.

Operation in 2006/07

7. The agreed programme of works in 2006/07 included the installation of two more fixed speed cameras (one in KCC area and one in Medway), and the operation of mobile speed cameras at six new locations where the level and nature of recorded crashes suggested that high speeds were contributing to serious injuries.
8. The Partnership continued to operate the current fixed and mobile sites to ensure a continuing reduction in speed and casualties. One fixed camera in the KCC area was relocated and upgraded to more modern technology, whilst another was removed completely from Canterbury where the need for it had been superseded by changes in the road layout and the introduction of new roundabouts and pedestrian crossings. This latter site will continue to be monitored to ensure that traffic speeds remain low in the absence of the device.

9. The use and position of traffic signs indicating the presence of cameras, and reminding drivers of the speed limit at that point, have been reviewed and enhanced across the county. Whilst there is no legal requirement for any of these signs the Partnership is keen to ensure that all drivers are aware of the speed limit and the need, at camera sites in particular, to observe it.
10. The Partnership's Operational Case for 2006/07, accepted by DfT following an in-year adjustment, estimated expenditure of £3,333,577 during that financial year. In the event, the Partnership collectively incurred costs in the region of £3,310,390 which falls marginally below the original agreed budget. The monetary difference between the agreed budget and actual expenditure is retained by the Government.
11. The cost of maintaining the Partnership's operations, including new camera sites, was funded entirely by the Department for Transport provided that we comply with their guidance (a full copy of the Handbook of Rules and Guidance was made available in the Members' Suite last July; and can be seen on the Partnership's website and via the DfT website).
12. The value of Fixed Penalty Notices paid to Her Majesty's Courts Service during the same financial year (2006/07) was £3,672,360 (figures subject to audit).
13. Thus, after the DfT have paid our costs, the Treasury retains the total balance of £361,970. Such funds are not available for use by the Partnership nor its individual members. (These amounts are yet to be audited.)

Casualty Reduction

14. Previously I have reported that the savings in death and injury on Kent and Medway's roads, brought about by Safety Cameras, has exceeded the national average (my report of March 2006 refers). In 2005 the DfT published a report showing that across the UK cameras had reduced the number of people Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) by 42% at camera sites; but in Kent and Medway our KSI reductions were 53%.
15. On assessing crash data up to the end of 2006 the cameras across Kent and Medway I can now report that cameras have reduced the number of KSI by 58.3% which is a significant improvement on the already impressive figures of 2005. The total number of people who are killed or seriously injured at our camera sites has reduced by 116 per year. The total reduction in all casualties is 394 (which represents 35.5% reduction). Every day at least one person in Kent and Medway escapes injury due to the presence of safety cameras.
16. Casualty reduction targets were set by the Government with a view to reducing the number of people Killed or Seriously injured by 40% by the year 2010. That target represents a reduction of 478 of which 69 have already been reduced by the use of cameras alone; in Medway the target represents a reduction of 88 and cameras have provided a saving of 47KSI.

Communications

17. As part of the Partnership's operation it must undertake its own publicity and education activities to support the role of the safety cameras. The Partnership produced a Communications Strategy, accepted by the DfT, aimed at increasing awareness, understanding and acceptance of safety cameras; and intended to promote the benefits of reducing both speeding and red-light running, and the role safety cameras play in preventing crashes and casualties. The strategy focused particular attention on vulnerable road user groups, which are frequently involved in speed-related crashes and also people who drive for a living who are predominant in road crashes.
18. Education initiatives for this year include: a young driver campaign aimed at 17 to 24 year olds and a generic speed limits awareness campaign. "Driving Business – Safely!"

– aimed at those who drive for a living - will also run again this year. It has proved hugely popular with over 7,000 literature packs requested from Kent businesses.

19. The Partnership's website (www.kmscp.org) is updated weekly and details all Partnership information including an interactive map of all fixed, mobile and red light safety cameras. It also provides a contact point for the public and has had over 115,124 hits since it originally launched in January 2003.
20. Literature and display material is regularly produced which highlight the dangers of excessive speed. Partnership staff also attended numerous shows and events for the public with material explaining the operation of cameras which provided further opportunities for the public to see how the cameras work, meet the staff and ask questions. Numerous events will also be attended during 2007 including the Kent County Show; the Kent County Fair at Paddock Wood; Lydd Airshow; various Kent Fire and Rescue Community Safety Days; and Police Station Open Days.
21. The Partnership has also enjoyed a vast amount of coverage in both the local and national media. In the past year 48% of the local media coverage of safety camera issues and campaigns has been positive, 37% neutral coverage and 15% negative coverage. The Partnership's Project Manager, Communications Manager and Communications Officer have appeared on local television, given radio interviews and given presentations to various clubs, societies and organisations.
22. The Partnership also undertakes a routine survey of public perception amongst residents and drivers in Kent. Of those interviewed in June/July 2006 18.7% had heard of the camera Partnership, and 83.6% of Kent residents agree that cameras should be supported as a method of reducing casualties.
23. This Partnership is working closely with its road safety colleagues to deliver consistent campaigns across the county. For example, it has teamed up with KHS, Medway Council, the Ambulance Service, Kent Fire & Rescue, Kent Police and the Probation Service to form a road safety village at the county show called "Fit for the Road?". Kent Fire & Rescue have also supported the Partnership not only with staff resource but also by contributing £10,000 of funding towards educational campaigns.

Future Activity

24. From April 2007 the mechanism for providing funding for safety cameras has changed. Monies are now provided via the existing LTP2 allocations and is an additional supplementary grant on top of the usual LTP allocations. These monies are entirely grant (in effect a cash allocation) and are not therefore part of any 'borrowing'. Between KCC and Medway Council the total grant allocation for 2007/08 is £3,488,336 and exceeds current costs. From April 2007 all grant monies not used on the Safety Camera Partnership can be retained by the local authorities for use on other road safety initiatives.
25. The new additional road safety funding has also brought a relaxation in the rules and governance of the project, allowing more flexibility (if it is needed) in the deployment of law enforcement techniques to target road safety issues. To this end the three Transport Authorities in the county have agreed a procedure for assessing the justification of safety cameras at new sites based on casualty reduction and based on professional judgement that any road safety problem at a site cannot be better addressed by other methods in preference to a camera.
26. The services provided by the Police and Her Majesty's Courts Service must be funded from this new LTP supplementary funding in order that they can continue to support the administration of any offences detected. However there is no longer a requirement to refund the Government through the value of fines collected from April 2007.

27. The Partnership will continue to investigate improvements to efficiencies in the processing of offences in order to minimise operating costs; and to ensure that our openness and clarity with the public exceeds the expectations of the Freedom of Information Act.

Conclusion

28. Members are asked to note the continuing success of the Partnership in reducing road deaths and serious injuries in its fifth year of operation, and the major contribution that this project makes towards achieving the national targets for casualty reduction.

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Background papers:

- Project Manager's Reports of:
November 2002; July 2003; May 2004, July 2004, July 2005, March 2006, July 2006