

Are there speed cameras on Britain's most high risk roads?

A survey by Transport 2000 and the Slower Speeds Initiative

This report looks at the current use of speed cameras on Britain's most 'high risk roads'.¹ It finds that, contrary to often made claims, speed cameras are being used on the majority of these roads — wherever the strict casualty criteria set by government are met. It argues for a relaxation of these criteria to allow more effective camera enforcement on roads identified as high risk.

Survey findings

One frequently recycled speed camera myth is the claim that there are few speed cameras sited on Britain's most dangerous roads.² The supposed absence of cameras from these high risk roads has been treated as evidence that cameras are badly sited. Worse, it is taken to show that their real purpose must be other than casualty reduction — and 'revenue raising' is clearly implied — since they are being used on roads which are supposedly less dangerous but more heavily trafficked.

Transport 2000 and the Slower Speeds Initiative wanted to establish the current situation. In February 2004 we carried out telephone surveys with the Safety Camera Partnerships (SCPs) responsible for enforcement along each of the 21 most 'high risk' roads as identified by EuroRAP. We found:

- **Contrary to the claims, speed limit enforcement (through the use of fixed speed cameras, mobile speed cameras or laser guns) is taking place on 19 of the 21 most 'high risk' roads.**

On the remaining two roads:

- 3 fixed cameras and one mobile will soon be operational (the A631 in Lincolnshire).
- The speed limit has been reduced and engineering solutions used in preference to enforcement (the A436 in Gloucestershire).
- There are at least 50 camera sites (16 fixed, 34 mobile) on the most 'high risk' roads.
- A further 14 cameras (2 mobile and 12 fixed) are planned for these roads in the near future.

The reasons why there are not even more cameras on these roads are varied:

- The casualty history along some stretches fails to meet government criteria which stipulate that crashes must be clustered for sites to qualify for fixed or mobile camera enforcement.

- Some of the crashes are due to inappropriate speed (driving too fast for the conditions but within the speed limit) or are not speed-related at all.



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- Other solutions such as engineering, road markings and signing or reduction in the speed limit are considered to be more appropriate to reduce the danger along these routes, in accordance with government guidelines.
- Three roads fall, at least partly, within the jurisdiction of a SCP (North Yorkshire) which is not yet operational.
- Some of the roads cross the boundaries of partnership areas. This prevents them from meeting the casualty criteria within any one camera partnership.

Analysis

Critics of speed cameras and of safety camera partnerships have taken the supposed absence of cameras from Britain's high risk roads as evidence that casualty reduction is not always the primary reason for their deployment. The argument that cameras are either poorly sited or could be used for revenue raising in some places simply because they are absent from others is clearly problematic. Moreover, like all arguments against speed cameras, it starts from the premise that speed limit enforcement can only be legitimate under very special conditions.

In any case, the claim that speed cameras are not being used on high risk roads is unfounded.

Cameras are being used where government casualty criteria are met and where there are no other alternatives to enforcement, such as engineering or signing — in accordance with the guidelines.

These stringent casualty criteria are a major obstacle in using more cameras along these roads. Government guidelines to SCPs currently specify that for a fixed camera to be used there must have been at least four crashes involving death or serious injury per km in the preceding three years. Mobile camera enforcement requires at least two such crashes. Where crashes tend to be scattered rather than clustered a route may not qualify for camera enforcement. The casualty criteria put rural authorities in particular at a very serious disadvantage.

Transport 2000 and the Slower Speeds Initiative want these criteria relaxed so that

The European Road Assessment Programme (EuroRAP) compares relative statistical risk of death and serious injury on roads across Europe. EuroRAP calculates risk 'by comparing the frequency of death or serious injury on every stretch of road with how much traffic each road is carrying' measured as crash rates per billion vehicle km. Roads in the high risk category are those for which the risk of a fatal or serious crash occurring is ten times higher than the safest roads. 'Persistently high risk roads' have at least one fatal or serious crash per mile per three years. AA Motoring Trust (2003)

EuroRAP 2003 British Results: Britain's Most Improved and High Risk Roads

speed cameras can be placed at sites with a crash history or in response to community concerns about speeding traffic. It is unacceptable that where people have already died or been seriously injured in speed-related crashes further tragedies must occur before effective speed limit enforcement is undertaken. Drivers who speed are more likely to crash.³ To prevent death, injury and the associated trauma for victims, their families and communities, SCPs should have the discretion to enforce wherever drivers routinely flout the law on speed limits.

The government's imposition of very high casualty criteria to restrict the deployment of speed cameras is a direct result of anti-speed camera lobbying. One crash involving a death or serious injury *per mile* in a three year period qualifies a road as 'persistently high risk' according to EuroRAP. This is equivalent to 0.6 fatal or serious injury crashes *per km* over the same period — **less than a third of the casualty rate currently required for mobile camera enforcement and only 15% of the casualty rate for static cameras.** **If the government were to use this EuroRAP measure of risk, SCPs would be able to make far greater use of speed cameras to reduce and prevent speed-related crashes.**

Geographical boundaries should not prevent action being taken to tackle a dangerous stretch of road. **There should be a procedure to ensure that safety camera partnerships can co-operate on a regional basis whenever necessary.**

The use of speed cameras on high risk roads in Britain*

Results of February 2004 Survey by Transport 2000 and the Slower Speeds Initiative

Road	From - To	Safety Camera Partnership (SCP)	No of current cameras & type	No of imminent cameras	Comments (PIC – Personal Injury Collision; KSI – Killed and/or Seriously Injured)
A537	Macclesfield - Buxton	Cheshire (& Derbyshire)	1 mobile	-	Isolated 11 km Peak District road. Collision cluster over 2.5km near Wildboarclough within Cheshire SCP area. Mobile enforcement takes place at this site on the basis of 20 PICs, including 7 KSIs, between 1998 and 2000. None on the Derbyshire stretch.
A534	Welsh Boundary - Nantwich	Cheshire	1 fixed	-	24.6 km. Enforcement takes place over a 600m stretch, the only place where the collision history (16 PICs, 3 KSIs) meets government criteria.
A682	M65 J13 - A65 Long Preston	Lancashire & N Yorkshire (SCP scheme not yet operational)	3 mobile + additional non SCP enforcement (in N Yorks)	-	Road is divided between two police force areas – Lancs and N Yorks. 3 camera sites on the Lancs stretch. N Yorks safety camera partnership is not yet operational but they do carry out mobile enforcement.
A54	Congleton - Buxton	Cheshire (& Derbyshire)	1 fixed camera not part of the SCP	-	Isolated 18.6km Peak District road. 35 PICs including 16 KSIs between 1998 and 2000 do not meet government criteria because no obvious cluster.
A631	Gainsborough - A1103	Lincolnshire	-	3 fixed, 1 mobile	Road improvements are being carried out, including road markings, in accordance with government guidelines that cameras should be used as a last resort. Speed limits under review.
A683	A6 - Kirkby Lonsdale	Lancashire	1 fixed, 1 mobile	-	Cameras in use.
A61	Barnsley - Wakefield	S Yorkshire & W Yorkshire	1 mobile	-	Engineering works undertaken in accordance with guidelines, occasional enforcement carried out, more expected when resources available.
A1101	Outwell (A1122) - Long Sutton (A17)	Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Lincolnshire & Norfolk	1 mobile in Suffolk, 0 in Norfolk	-	Road fails to meet selection criteria because of number and type of casualties, either not clustered or not primarily linked to illegal speed. Crosses several partnership boundaries. Engineering solutions implemented.
A44	Leominster - Worcester	West Mercia	2 fixed, 1 mobile	3 fixed	Further sites investigated for future enforcement, but none justified on government casualty criteria.
A53	Leek - Buxton	Staffordshire & Derbyshire	2 fixed, 1 mobile in Buxton	1 mobile in Staffs	Moorland road: some accidents are due to illegal speeds, some to weather, fog etc.
A5	Daventry – Rugby (A428)	Northants (& Warwickshire)	4 mobile N'hants; 1 mobile Warks	2 fixed in N'hants	Some delay introducing cameras since the Highways Agency are responsible for the stretch but are not part of the SCP.
A70	Cumnock – Ayr	Strathclyde	1 fixed	-	Fixed camera in use.
A59	Skipton – Harrogate	N Yorkshire (not formally part of SCP)	Laser guns	-	N Yorks scheme not yet operational but mobile enforcement is carried out.
A28	Ashford – Margate	Kent	4 fixed	-	Fixed cameras in use.

*The 21 roads in the table are those identified in the 2003 EuroRAP report as 'Britain's persistently high risk roads'.

Road	From - To	Safety Camera Partnership (SCP)	No of current cameras & type	No of imminent cameras	Comments (PIC – Personal Injury Collision; KSI – Killed and/or Seriously Injured)
A436	A417 Little Witcombe – A40 Shipton	Gloucestershire	-	-	Engineering measures and speed limit reduction introduced in accordance with guidance. KSIs reduced by 33%.
A170	Thirsk – Scarborough	N Yorkshire (scheme not yet operational)	Laser guns	-	N Yorks scheme not yet operational but mobile enforcement is carried out along route. Many crashes involve motorcyclists losing control on steep gradient.
A60	Mansfield – Worksop	Nottinghamshire	1 fixed; 2 mobiles	-	Engineering in accordance with guidance with limited camera enforcement.
A71	Kilmarnock – M74 J8	Strathclyde	1 mobile	-	Mobile enforcement used
A6	Derby – Buxton	Derbyshire	3 fixed, 10 mobile sites	-	Mobile enforcement in accordance with criteria, but many sites which meet criteria for mobile enforcement are unsuitable for other reasons – such as no place to park.
A660	Leeds – Otley	W Yorkshire	mobile cameras	4 fixed	There are mobile cameras on this road. SCP has applied for 4 fixed cameras.
A43	Corby – Stamford	Northants	2 mobile	-	6 approved mobile sites, but only 2 enforced regularly, the other 4 are enforced irregularly. No crashes or cameras along the very short Lincolnshire stretch.

References

1. See AA Motoring Trust (2003) *EuroRAP 2003 British Results: Britain's Most Improved and High Risk Roads*, http://195.167.162.57/pdf/EuroRAP_UK_Results.pdf
2. Barker, P., and Cropley, S. (2003) 'Speed cameras: costing us millions and costing us lives', *Autocar*, 11 November 2003, pp19-23.
3. Taylor, M., Lynam, D., and Baruya, A. (2000) *The Effects of Drivers' Speed on the Frequency of Road Accidents*, TRL Report 421, TRL: Crowthorne, Berkshire

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