



## **The Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership**

### **Annual Report from the Project Manager: August 2008**

### **Progress of the Partnership during 2007/08**

#### **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 (who endorse licences and process the payment of 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 2008 therefore represented the Partnership's sixth anniversary. In previous years I have reported on the past progress of the Partnership and herein I wish to provide information on the sixth 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 previously 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 have been located where speed in excess of the limit has led to an on-going pattern of injury. 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.
6. The funding mechanism dictates that the Grant can only be used to reduce casualties, and in particular the incidents of serious injury and death. The Partnership is not a law enforcement tool but is a casualty reduction measure targeted specifically where there is a pattern of casualties that can be influenced by speed reduction. The Partner Organisations have agreed to a set of criteria to ensure that the cameras are only used as a last resort at the most appropriate road safety problem sites. Members approved this criteria in July 2006.

#### **Operation in 2007/8**

7. There were no proposals to establish any new safety camera sites in the County since the degree of speed-related crashes at casualty hot-spots was either

insufficient to warrant the use of such a device and/or there was a more practical, appropriate or more economical alternative remedial measure.

8. However, Kent County Council (Kent Highway Services) identified the need for an extra camera housing to be installed on an existing Safety Camera site on A229 Loose Road Maidstone; and Medway Council completed the installation of their time-over-distance 'average speed check' system on the A228 which had commenced in early 2007.
9. The Partnership continued to operate the current fixed and mobile sites to ensure a continuing reduction in speed and casualties. 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.

### **Casualty Reduction**

10. Based on casualty data up to the end of 2007 the cameras across Kent and Medway have reduced the number of KSI by 59%. This is a further improvement on the result that I reported last year and shows the continuation of the excellent work of the cameras, and continues to exceed UK casualty reductions. The total number of people who are killed or seriously injured at our camera sites has reduced by 89 per year. The total reduction in all casualties is 299 per year where safety cameras are located. There have been no fatalities at the camera sites in Medway for a full three years.

### **Communications**

11. As part of the Partnership's operation it undertakes publicity and education activities to support the role of the safety cameras. The Partnership collectively produced a Marketing Plan 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 plan focuses 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.
12. Education initiatives included: 'Know the Limits' - a road safety gameshow which toured shopping centres and featured an online competition which was completed by over 1000 people; 'Driving Business Safely' - a seminar focusing on the new Corporate Manslaughter Law which was attended by over 100 Kent businesses; and a television, radio and newspaper advertising campaign inviting the public to log onto its website. Several campaigns for 2008 are already planned, including a PR and online promotion of the 'Streetlights mean 30mph' message.
13. The Partnership's website ([www.kmscp.org](http://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 138,000 hits since it originally launched in January 2003.

14. 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. The 'Fit for the Road?' stand at the Kent County Show is a joint initiative between all road safety partners and was awarded third prize in the public sector category in 2007, the aim for 2008 now being to scoop second place.
15. Numerous events will be attended during 2008 including the Kent County Show; Biggin Hill Air Fair; Margate's Big Day Out; World Super Bikes at Brands Hatch; various Kent Fire and Rescue Community Safety Days; and Police Station Open Days.
16. The Partnership has also enjoyed a vast amount of coverage in both the local and national media. In the past year 45% of the local media coverage of safety camera issues and campaigns has been positive, 33% neutral coverage and 21% 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.
17. The Partnership also undertakes a routine survey of public perception amongst residents and drivers in Kent. Of those interviewed in June/July 2007 18.6% had heard of the camera Partnership, 58.7% agreed that fewer crashes are likely to happen where cameras are installed, and 67% of Kent residents agreed that the primary aim of safety cameras is to save lives.
18. 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 Highways Agency to produce the hard-hitting theatre production "Licence to Kill?" which was shown to 5000 sixth form students in November. The production won the Gold Award in the not-for-profit category of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' 2007 PRide Awards. Kent Fire & Rescue have also supported the Partnership not only with staff resource but also by contributing £6,000 of funding towards educational campaigns.

### Future Activity

19. From April 2007 the mechanism for providing funding for safety cameras 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'. 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.
20. Between KCC and Medway Council the total Grant allocation for 2007/08 was £3,488,336 and this exceeds current Partnership 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 and so the difference is

being used to further the range of Road Safety activities in the county. The level of Grant in subsequent years reduces slightly year-on-year.

21. The introduction of the new funding arrangements 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 considered the incidence of mobile phone use while driving, and the non-wearing of seat belts by drivers.
22. These offences are regularly observed by the Partnership's Safety Camera Operators (when using mobile cameras) and are occasionally captured on film when a speeding driver is also clearly seen to be using a hand-held device and/or not wearing a seat belt. Until now the Department for Transport would not allow these offences to be processed under their regime. All but the most extreme offences have, until now, had to be overlooked.
23. Very recent surveys undertaken on urban roads in Kent and Medway show that around 10% of drivers and passengers are not wearing their seat belts, which is alarmingly high. Around 1% of drivers are also visibly using their hand-held mobile phones whilst driving in towns. In the last twelve months Kent Police attended 84 collisions resulting in fatal injuries; of these ten people were not wearing their seat belts. The incidents involving people who were at the time using a hand-held device or similar distraction is also an area of serious concern.

### **Proposal**

24. The Safety Camera Partnership's Board proposes to pilot and test a project whereby an offence of using a hand-held mobile phone, or similar device, should be processed through legal prosecution where the cameras have captured reliable evidence. The proposal also extends to processing seat belt offences where these also have been clearly observed by a Camera Operator and captured by camera. This is aimed at reducing the use of mobile phones while driving and is aimed at increasing seat belt use, both of which will impact positively on road casualty statistics in this county.
25. Members are asked to support a short-term trial, probably isolated to just one area in Kent and Medway, during which time any driver observed using a mobile phone will be contacted by letter to advise them that this is potentially dangerous as well as illegal. Where any occupant of a vehicle is seen not to be wearing a seat belt then again it is proposed that the Partnership's staff write a letter to the Registered Keeper of that vehicle to advise them of the risks associated with not wearing a seat belt. During this trial period there will be no punitive prosecution except in the most extreme cases.
26. The use of mobile phones and seat belts will be surveyed again to judge what effect this trial will have had on road user behaviour, and I will report back to Members in early 2009 on the results.
27. There are no additional cost implications for this trial as the Partnership can use its existing resources to carry out this work. The detection of seat belt offences and mobile phone offences by the Partnership will remain restricted to the existing Safety Camera locations where there have been a history of serious injuries.

28. Also, Kent Police have embarked on a programme of modernising their Central Ticket Office procedures, equipment and staffing structures, which is on-going into 2008. 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**

29. Members are asked to note the continuing success of the Partnership in reducing road deaths and serious injuries in its sixth year of operation, and the major contribution that this project makes towards KCC achieving the national targets for casualty reduction.
30. Members are also asked to approve the proposed trial of using the Partnership's existing resources to detect seat belt and mobile phone offences, and to write to offenders. This trial, if approved, would commence in the autumn.

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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  
July 2007