

Future of Safety Camera Funding

Report by Director of Environment, Transport and Development

Summary

The County Council has an excellent record of reducing casualties on Norfolk's roads based on the partnership approach which has effectively brought together engineering, education and enforcement. However, there are still about 400 fatal or serious injuries and 2300 slight injuries every year.

The Government has reduced the Road Safety Specific Grant (RSSG) by 40% this financial year and have indicated that going forward this grant will not continue in its present form and it will be for local authorities to decide how best to manage continued delivery of local priorities, including road safety from the overall funding provided. An indication is required on the priority (level of funding) that should be given to safety camera enforcement, or alternatives, going forward.

Four options with varying costs and road safety implications are proposed:-

1. No safety camera enforcement or community safety work
2. No safety camera enforcement but provide community safety work
3. 'Core' minimum level of enforcement and some community safety work
4. Maintain existing level of enforcement and community safety work

The key risk with the removal or reduction in the amount of safety camera enforcement is that it may lead to more people being killed or injured on the county's roads. This risk could be mitigated by an alternative regime of police enforcement, but that is a matter outside of the control of the County Council. Independent evaluations have shown that where cameras have been installed at high risk sites, average speeds reduce and the number of people killed and serious injuries fall. Our studies of Norfolk sites falls in line with national studies. On the other hand, if the Government grant is withdrawn, camera enforcement activity could only continue at the loss of other priorities within the highways service.

Action Required

The Committee are asked to comment on the report and recommend an approach to the County Council's Cabinet.

1. Background

- 1.1. The County Council has an excellent record of reducing casualties on Norfolk's roads. Its performance has consistently been better than the regional and national averages, which was recognised by the award of Beacon status. One of the key elements in our success has been the partnership approach with the Police and Courts which has effectively brought together engineering, education and enforcement. However, there are still about 400 fatal or serious injuries and 2300 slight injuries every year. Speeding and road safety remains a key community concern issue.

- 1.2. The Government has reduced the Road Safety Specific Grant (RSSG) by 40% this financial year and have indicated that going forward this grant will not continue in its present form. It will be for local authorities to decide how best to manage continued delivery of local priorities, including road safety from the overall funding provided. A proposal has been prepared to deal with the in-year budget reductions. However, an indication is required on the priority (level of funding) that should be given to safety camera enforcement going forward. To date there has been a balanced approach to casualty reduction through the employment of a range of engineering, education and enforcement activities. A decision is required on this issue to allow the County Council and Police Authority to manage their responsibilities that exist in the Service Level Agreement for safety camera delivery.
- 1.3. The Norfolk Safety Camera Partnership has been in operation since 2001. During this time, cameras have only been placed at fixed sites and deployed on a mobile basis following Department for Transport criteria. Members made an amendment to these criteria in 2008 to allow a greater focus of mobile deployment to rural A' roads to meet casualty causation patterns.

In the County there are 23 fixed sites and six mobile cameras. In 2010, an average speed camera system was placed on the A149 following DfT rural demonstration project funding.

Data from Norfolk Police, which has been verified by the County Council suggests that

- At fixed camera sites, the number of collisions has reduced by an average of 68% over and above the casualty reduction rates being achieved across the county during the period of analysis. Fixed safety cameras in Norfolk are responsible for reducing our KSI figure by an additional 16 per annum. Applying the costs given in the DfT document, Transport Analysis Guidance unit 3.4.1 a 16 KSI saving per annum equates to a societal saving of £6.9m which represents the costs of loss of productivity, emergency service costs, NHS costs, insurance costs, damage to property etc.
- Nationally, since the introduction of safety cameras average speeds in urban areas have fallen by 3 mph.
- The initial results from the average speed camera system illustrate that the numbers of drivers breaking the speed limit has reduced from one in every ten before cameras to one in every one hundred after cameras. Furthermore the after studies indicate more consistent traffic speed.

2. **Current Arrangements**

- 2.1. The County Council funds its casualty reduction activity from RSSG (£2m p.a.), Local Transport Plan funding for safety schemes (£1.2m p.a.) and the Council's revenue funding pays for education, training and publicity programmes (£0.7m p.a.).
- 2.2. The total RSSG of £2m breaks down into £0.4m (capital) p.a. for additional local safety schemes, the operation of the Safety Camera Partnership (SCP) (£1.2m p.a.) and £0.4m p.a. for educational activities such as community safety measures like Speed Awareness Messaging (SAMs), additional road safety officers for older drivers and motorcyclists and behavioural change campaigns. In addition the SCP

provides the means to facilitate training as an alternative to prosecution which generates approximately £180K (net revenue) p.a. for additional education, training and publicity work.

- 2.3. Neither Norfolk Constabulary nor the Courts service currently contributes towards the cost of operating the SCP. The revenue generated by fines (present detention rates £600,000 per annum) goes to HM Treasury.
- 2.4. The feedback we have received indicates support for the community safety measures and other road safety work funded by RSSG.

3. **Options**

- 3.1. Enforcement is a key element of our road safety strategy. In the absence of SCP the police would be the only enforcement available.
- 3.2. At this time, while the County Council knows that the Government intends that the RSSG will not continue in its present form it is not clear whether the Spending Review in the Autumn will identify a new funding stream for casualty reduction. This is thought to be unlikely. Even if it does, it is likely to be significantly less than the current budget. Going forward without the ring fenced grant the Council will need to decide how much, if anything, it is able to pay for safety camera enforcement in the county within the context of its approach to casualty reduction. In addition, there may be some scope for an increased level of community involvement in speedwatch type activities.
- 3.3. It is not possible, unless legislation changes, to create an enforcement solution which is 'self funding'. It should be noted that earlier hypothecation or 'netting off' finance systems ended because the general public saw this as a 'tax on the motorist' and enforcement was seen as a revenue raising exercise. A successful regime of enforcement, in road safety terms, is one where no one exceeds speed limits and no penalty revenues are generated. Four broad options would appear to be available
- 3.4. Details of advantages and disadvantages of each option are set out in Appendix 1:
 - 1. No safety camera enforcement or community safety work – no cost.
 - 2. No safety camera enforcement but provide community safety work – cost £0.1m p.a.
 - 3. 'Core' minimum level of enforcement and some community safety work – cost £0.6m (but could reduce further in the order of £0.25m if the Council and the Police reinvested Speed Awareness course fees)
 - 4. Maintain existing level of enforcement and community safety work – cost £0.95m (but could reduce further in the order of £0.33m if the Council and the Police reinvested Speed Awareness course fees)

4. **Resource Implications**

- 4.1. **Finance** : As set out above.
- 4.2. **Staff** : Due to the uncertainty of continued funding through the RSSG, the service level agreement between the County Council and the Constabulary, established an approach of employing staff on short term contracts where possible. However, the options have staff implications and costs associated with termination of contracts.

- 4.3. **Property** : The SCP has a number of assets which could be affected by the decisions taken in relation to the scale of funding available. The County Council leases property, in Barton Way, Norwich to house the SCP. A break clause exists at February 2012 which would remove revenue costs of around £75,000 p.a. from the County Council at that time.
- 4.4. **IT** : None at this stage, but it may be possible to integrate 'back office' systems with other Police Authorities or indeed the systems that may emerge through the wider introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement in Norfolk.

5. **Other Implications**

- 5.1. **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)** : An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out to help assess the potential impact of each of these options. There is evidence nationally to support a link between speed and accident frequency and severity, and to a link between speed cameras and a reduction in speed and accident frequency and severity. However, the potential impact of each of the options in this report is very difficult to determine in detail. This is because there is a risk that reducing this type of activity could have an impact on road users, including vulnerable road users but the Council, and others, will continue to carry out other casualty reduction activities.
- 5.2. **Communications** : The County Council's Communications Section is aware of the in-year funding reductions required by Government and the high level of public and media interest there is. The Council, and its Partners, have a strong track record in reducing road casualties in Norfolk and has rightly won many awards during recent years for its achievements. A careful balance will need to be struck in communicating the impact the future funding regime is likely to have in Norfolk so as to not unnecessarily undermine the significant progress made to date.
- 5.3. **Any other implications** : The County Council has a SLA with the Police and Courts to ensure that the RSSG is spent on activities agreed by the partnership and that casualty sites are targeted. Any decision made by Members about funding of the SCP must consider the position of partners and the funding implications of that decision.

6. **Section 17 – Crime and Disorder Act**

- 6.1. Reductions upon funding will potentially have an impact upon our ability to address risk taking behaviour on Norfolk roads and therefore impact upon casualty reduction levels and our ability to achieve LAA targets

7. **Risk Implications**

- 7.1. This report highlights the key risk with regard to varying levels of safety camera enforcement, in that the removal or reduction in the amount of safety camera enforcement may lead to more people being killed or injured on the county's roads. This risk could be mitigated by an alternative regime of police enforcement, but that is a matter outside of the control of the County Council.

8. **Alternative Options**

- 8.1. Four options are set out in this report for differing levels of safety camera

enforcement.

9. **Conclusion**

- 9.1. The County Council has an excellent record in reducing casualties through a balanced approach to engineering, education and enforcement. In spite of a reduction of some 55% there are still about 400 fatal or serious injuries and about 2,300 slight injuries per year. The RSSG, which has funded the safety camera partnership, community safety work, some education and some engineering is unlikely to be available from 2011. Four options have been identified and the Committee's comments and recommendations to the County Council's Cabinet are sought.

Action Required

- (i) The Committee are asked to comment on the report and recommend an approach to the County Council's Cabinet.

Background Papers

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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Future Safety Camera Funding Options

Option 1: Close down SCP. There would be no fixed, mobile or average speed camera enforcement, and no community safety work (for instance Speed Awareness Messaging – SAMs, Community Speed Watch).

Advantages:

- Saves the cost of running the SCP and associated community safety work which is £1.6m p.a. Cost of closure is estimated at £500,000 as a one off cost. An early decision would allow an element of this cost to be met from this year's grant allocation with any residual cost shared between the County Council and the Police Authority. This sum includes costs for the decommissioning of fixed camera and average speed camera equipment. Some residual revenue costs will remain in future years to meet property leases and minor maintenance requirements of fixed sites.

Disadvantages:

- Actual traffic speeds, and communities' concerns, both real and perceived, about traffic speeds are likely to increase. The Association of Chief Police Officers have undertaken studies at sites recently switched off in Oxfordshire. They report that one camera recorded an increase in offending of 88%.
- More people may be killed or seriously injured in the county. Nationally speed limit compliance in built up areas has improved in the last 10 years with the widespread roll-out of safety cameras. It can be anticipated that drivers will increase their vehicle speeds as a result of the removal of the deterrent of enforcement and there is a correlation between vehicle speed and accident severity.
- Closure of the SCP would result in the loss of 28 Police Authority staff and two County Council posts associated with speed course administration. There would also be an impact upon the courts' staffing numbers. The expertise, skills and equipment would also be lost making any return to the service very difficult to achieve without significant set up costs.
- The SCP provides over 90% of the referrals to the speed awareness courses run by the County Council's casualty reduction section. Thus, 10,000 fewer drivers per annum would attend retraining courses and the County Council would lose a significant element of its scope to change driver behaviour and lose some £180,000 net income per annum presently used to support casualty reduction programmes.

- Support for safety cameras, according to independent national studies, is high. Over the last 8 years AA Member polls have consistently shown high levels of acceptance of speed cameras – support has ranged from 76% to 69%.

Option 2: County Council provides £0.1m p.a. Close SCP in its current form. There would be no fixed, mobile or average speed camera enforcement but retain a Partnership with the Police to provide some community safety work like Speed Awareness Messaging – SAMs and the work done with Parishes in terms of Community Speed Watch.

Advantages:

- Saves the cost of running the SCP and some of the associated costs which are currently about £1.5m.
- Cost of closure is estimated at £500,000 as a one off cost. An early decision would allow a significant element of this cost to be met from this year's grant allocation with any residual cost shared between the County Council and the Police Authority.
- Retains community focused service able to respond to local concerns caused by drivers speeding.

Disadvantages:

- Actual traffic speeds, and communities' concerns, both real and perceived, about traffic speeds are likely to increase, but perhaps slightly less than as in Option 1.
- Effectiveness of community safety work may well be less, in particular over time, if the threat of enforcement is reduced.
- More people may be killed or seriously injured in the county. While the impact may not be as great as option 1 it is clear that a reduced threat of enforcement will lead to an increase in traffic speeds with a corresponding rise in road casualties.
- Loss of staff, equipment and expertise required to run the SCP as in Option 1.
- Over 90% reduction in the numbers of drivers attending speed awareness courses as in Option 1.

Option 3: County Council provides £0.6m p.a. to support a 'do minimum' SCP 'core' enforcement only. Comprising some community speed focused work. Approximately £0.12 m p.a. of the cost could be raised from speed awareness delivery.

The cost of this option to the County Council could be further reduced by in the order of £0.13m p.a. if the Police also reinvested their share of the

revenue generated by speed awareness courses to directly fund the operation of the SCP. Indications suggest that the Police may consider supporting contributing their share, as retention of the SCP would support the roads policing function and support community policing strategies.

Advantages:

- Casualty benefits of all existing 22 fixed camera sites would continue. Mobile camera enforcement using 3 operators in three vehicles (reduction from 6). Average speed equipment on A149 maintained
- Retains community concern site camera enforcement, but at a lower level than present
- Deterrent effect retained, but in a diminished form given reduced number of fixed and mobile cameras in use.
- Retains community focused service, SAM or SAM II equipment, albeit at a reduced level of activity, to respond to concerns expressed by Parish / Public about speeding in local communities.
- Maintains the provision of Speed Awareness Courses (SAC) allowing around half of all detected drivers to attend retraining as an alternative to prosecution.
- Retains role of private sector for premises, approved driving instructors, goods and services for the running of SAC.
- Maintains a balance of enforcement supporting engineering and education.

Disadvantages:

- Reductions in other aspects of the Highways service would have to be made to meet the cost of support safety camera enforcement in the county.
- Actual traffic speeds, and communities' concerns, both real and perceived, about traffic speeds are likely to increase, but less than in options 1 and 2.
- More people may be killed or seriously injured in the county. While the impact may not be as great as option 1 or 2 it is clear that a reduced threat of enforcement may lead to an increase in traffic speeds with a corresponding rise in road casualties.
- Reduced level of enforcement activity with a corresponding reduction in the number of people attending in speed awareness courses leading to less scope to change driver behaviour and less revenue for the County/Police to reinvest in casualty reduction.

- Loss of around 14 Police Authority staff with associated loss of skills and expertise.

Option 4: The County Council provides £0.95m p.a. to maintain SCP in its present structure, but there would be no new sites commissioned. Approximately £0.18m p.a. of the above cost could be raised from speed awareness training delivery.

The cost of this option to the County Council could be further reduced by the order of £0.15m p.a. if the Police also reinvested their share of the revenue generated by speed awareness courses to directly fund the operation of the SCP.

Advantages:

- 'Locks-in' casualty reductions achieved to date.
- Retains the casualty benefits of all fixed, mobile and average speed camera sites in use
- Retains community focused service, SAM or SAM II equipment, able to respond to concerns expressed by Parish / Public about speeding in local communities.
- Retains current level of Community Concern site camera enforcement (Presently 15% of enforcement activity)
- Speed awareness courses continue (at present rate which generates revenue for the County Council / Police to reinvest)
- Has a strong element of public support.

Disadvantages:

- The cost of the SCP would be around £0.95m p.a. Reductions in other aspects of the Highways service would have to be made to meet this cost.