



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2008-03603

**Keyword:** Road Policing

**Subject:** CAMERAS ON A2 BANGOR TO BELFAST ROAD

### **Request:**

#### **Question 1**

When did the cameras "go live"?

#### **Questions 2 and 3**

Are all of the 9 sets of cameras live or even real?

Which cameras are not live/real?

#### **Question 4**

How many fixed penalty notices have been issued since the cameras went live?

#### **Question 5**

How many other convictions have there been as a result of the installation of the cameras?

#### **Question 6**

If no fixed penalty notices/convictions, why not?

### **Answer:**

I am writing to confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information.

I have today decided to:

- disclose information in response to questions 1, 4, 5 and 6 in full; and
- fully exempt information in response to questions 2 and 3 pursuant to the provisions of sections 31 and 38 of the Act.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states that fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

## **Answer 1**

The camera system went "live" on Friday 30th May 2008.

## **Answers 2&3**

The exemptions, as well as the factors the Department considered when deciding where the public interest lies, are listed below:

Section 31(1) Law Enforcement,  
Section 38(1) Health and Safety,

Sections 31 and 38 are Prejudiced based exemptions and this means it is the Public Authority's responsibility to evidence the harm.

The above exemptions are qualified exemptions and therefore a Public Interest Test must be carried out.

These tests are listed below.

### **HARM TEST**

Any information released to the public that may reduce the effectiveness of any speed enforcement equipment, therefore leading to higher speeds on the road, will in turn increase the likelihood of death or injury on the road.

To provide the public with information as to whether some of the cameras are live or not could potentially make enforcement of speed limits more difficult for police.

### **PUBLIC INTEREST TEST**

#### **Considerations Favouring Disclosure**

##### **Accountability**

The PSNI has invested in this system with the aim of reducing death and serious injury on this particular stretch of road. The public have a genuine interest in how the organisation is addressing this serious issue and in how public money is being spent.

##### **Public Awareness and Debate**

It may be argued that it is in the public interest to disclose this information to counter rumour and speculation as to whether all of the cameras are live or not and therefore empower the public to enter into more accurate and informed debate on the subject.

#### **Considerations Favouring Non-Disclosure**

##### **Efficient and Effective Conduct of the Service**

If information were to be released as to whether or not all of the cameras are live the deterrent and enforcement values of the system may be lost, thus resulting in a potentially more difficult task for police to enforce the speed limit. Further, on a national perspective, if a release in response to this request were to be compared with retention of similar information by the PSNI in relation to a different scheme, or by another Police Service, a comparison could result in a reasonable conclusion being reached by the public, which would amount to a disclosure, and would therefore make the work of the police in another area more difficult.

##### **Public Safety**

The release of any information that has the potential to reduce the effectiveness of any road safety equipment, could result in an increased risk of serious injury or death to the road using public.

### **BALANCING TEST**

The arguments of accountability and public awareness and debate are valid arguments and are in the spirit of the legislation but in this case the efficient and effective conduct of the police service and, in particular, public safety are the primary considerations.

What is in the public interest is the reduction of serious injuries and death on the roads, not only this road, but all roads in the province and throughout the UK.

In balance I conclude that for reasons of public safety and the efficient enforcement of speed limits by the police, it is not in the interests of the users of this road, nor the wider public to release information in answer to questions 2 and 3, as to whether or not all of the cameras on this road are live or real.

**Answer 4**

Detections on this system are not dealt with by way of fixed penalty, a notice of intention is sent to the registered keeper of the offending vehicle with the request to name the driver, it works on the same principle as the safety camera scheme. Further details of how the Notice of Intention system works in relation to the Safety Camera Scheme can be found on the PSNI Web Site at the following address, [http://www.psni.police.uk/index/safetycameras/pg\\_safety\\_cameras\\_caught.htm](http://www.psni.police.uk/index/safetycameras/pg_safety_cameras_caught.htm)

**Answer 5**

As this system is for the detection of excess speed offences no other offences are notified.

**Answer 6**

This question does not fulfil the criteria of Section 8 of the Act as it is not asking for recorded information, however for your information, to the date of your request there had been one detection on the A2, Bangor within the SPECS system. As of the date of writing however, August 14, 2008 there have been a total of four detections.

Speedcheck, the company who own this system state: - " The SPECS average speed enforcement system was the world's first digital average speed system to be enforceable and is still the UK's only fixed average speed camera. SPECS is used in permanent installations with a number of Safety Camera Partnerships around the country, resulting in impressive reductions in fatalities, serious injuries and average speeds wherever it has been used. It also has experience in providing integrated solutions that improve traffic safety on the road network".

This equipment therefore is not placed on the road network as a revenue generator but to encourage the driver to drive at the appropriate speed limit, thus promoting safer driving and reducing casualties. Whilst there is not a large number of detections at this time, this should be seen as a positive step. It also reflects a change in driver attitude towards speed. Early reports of the effectiveness of the system by Road Policing, local police and members of the public would indicate that speeds on the road have reduced and driver's speeds have moderated.

The Speedcheck website is available for viewing on [www.speedcheck.co.uk](http://www.speedcheck.co.uk)

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this letter.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing [foi@psni.pnn.police.uk](mailto:foi@psni.pnn.police.uk).

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that all PSNI replies under Freedom of Information will be released simultaneously into the public domain via our website @ [www.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk).

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.