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30 Mar 2012

Alex Wood Esq,
The Yorkshire Post

cc Carl Wheatley at the BBC and Ruth Gore, Marketing Officer (sic) at Humberside speed cameras

Dear Mr. Wood,

I have just responded in considerable detail to your article on accident numbers at camera sites, and in particular to the wholly unrealistic claims for camera benefit made by the authorities.

The comment I posted is shown below, and I would be happy to review any of these points with you at any time.

You might in any case find my website www.fightbackwithfacts.com useful when reporting about these and other matters, and I would be happy to provide more information if you cannot find what you need on the site.

Sincerely

Idris Francis

this is my comment on the YP web site at <http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/casualties-increase-on-speed-camera-roads-1-4400039>

"Having spent many thousands of hours over 12 years studying road casualty data, speed cameras and claims made for them, I am incensed by the wholly spurious claims made by the authorities. My detailed comments are that:

1/ The report's headline is misleading - yes casualties have risen at some sites - but only 6%. The laws of chance, especially when such small numbers are involved, make it absolutely inevitable that accidents will rise at some sites and fall at others, there is no surprise and no significance in these figures.

It is entirely possible that at any particular site, an effective camera (is such a thing exists at all) might have prevented an even worse rise than actually occurred, and similarly that at another site a dangerous camera might well have led to a smaller fall than would otherwise have occurred. In other words, relating camera effectiveness to results at individual sites is just NONSENSE.

2/ The laws of chance and regression to the mean also mean that it is inevitable that when cameras are placed where there has been a recent history of an unusual number of accidents, numbers will then fall at most of those sites - though as above, rise at a few purely by chance..

3/ A recent detailed analysis of all Thames Valley sites showed that the great majority of the recorded falls in accident numbers actually happened in the year or so between site analysis that led to the decision to

install the cameras, and actual installation - in other words, nothing whatever to do with the cameras, all due to trend and regression to the mean!

4/ My web site <http://www.fightbackwithfacts.com> contains a great deal of information and analysis on these subjects and in particular at <http://www.fightbackwithfacts.com/casualty-data/a> graph of Humberside casualties from 1989 to 2010 - the most recent data published. The main points that the graphs make clear are that:

(a) Fatalities (the ONLY reliable data due to low reporting levels in non-fatal) had been on a long-term falling trend since the late 1960s (when safer roads and vehicles overcame the rising volume of traffic)

(b) In the early 1990s when the obsession with speed began, the 3 year rolling average that had been falling for 20 years more or less levelled off

(c) There was a steep and unexplained fall in 2000 - before the wide-ranging increases in cameras,

(d) After that, more or less the time that the SCP would have started, there was a steady and serious INCREASE in fatalities - see the 3 year rolling average - until 2005, levelling off in 2006 and falling only from 2007

(e) The excellent falls from 2007 are reflected not only across the country but also across much of the developed world and are for the most part attributable to the developing economic crisis - of that there is no doubt whatever. Also to an extent to long term trend due to better roads, vehicles, safety systems, medical skills and response speeds etc.

(f) Anyone who claims that these falls are due to cameras - which affect only 1% of road length in rural areas either does not have the slightest understanding of statistics (an all-too-common failing amongst camera partnerships and police, even at the highest levels) or if he does, is bluffing in the hope that we, the paying and driving public, don't. Well, I do and so do many others - mostly engineers as it happens and the SCP claims quoted in the are nothing less than bunkum, hocus-pocus, fantasy and if believed by those who made them confirmation that they are unfit to hold the jobs they do.

(g) Slight injuries have hardly fallen at all for some years

(h) SI has fallen no faster or slower than before.

7/ "... the body stated there has been a 59 per cent reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured at core safety camera sites over an eight- year period"

As I said earlier - absolutely NONSENSE! That it IS nonsense is evident because:

(a) only about 10% of KSI accidents even involve speed above the limit in the first place, and many of those as only relatively minor factors, so even if cameras cut all speeding - which they do not - they could not achieve anything like even 10% (as the DfT itself has been known to admit) let alone the laughable (if it were not so serious) 59% claimed.

(b) The observed reduction in KSI came about because of (i) Long term trend - safer vehicles etc (ii) since 2007 the economic crisis (iii) In terms of SI, to the falling reporting levels - as the BMJ pointed out in 2006

and also to drivers - arguably faster and/or more dangerous drivers - who know where the cameras are and avoid them - taking their share of accidents with them, to other roads.

8/ "It claimed the 411 people whose lives have been saved or have avoided serious injury equates to a saving of more than 73m"

Sheer FANTASY! Job protection and self-satisfaction run riot! These figures are the Weapons of Mass Destruction lies in a road safety perspective!

a/ There is no causal relationship between cameras and the reductions quoted, as above

b/ The value of "savings" are in any case pure FANTASY, being based on long-standing DfT rubbish about "lost output" - which is not in fact lost - and purely theoretical valuations of pain and suffering, that occur in no know ledger this side of the Pearly Gates.

This drivel, this abuse of statistics for job protection and self-satisfaction has to stop! Hospitals in this country KILL 60,000+ people a year due to medical errors, neglect, infection, lack of hygiene and as we learned recently, lack of even basic food and water - meanwhile these people are wasing 150m pa on cameras that achieve nothing or less than nothing.

The AA (which amongst other activities sells car insurance and profits from higher charges it imposes on drivers with speeding convictions, and also from the speed awareness courses it runs) is quite wrong - camera numbers are falling and will before long fall to zero. Good riddance - in excess of 10,000 more people have died on our roads in the speed camera era than would have been predicted on the basis of long term trends - and the graph of excess deaths is an almost exact match for the number of camera penalties imposed -see <http://www.fightbackwithfacts.com/fatalities-track-fines/>

I am contactable through my web site.

One other point - a more detailed explanation of why the DfT's valuations of accidents are unadulterated bilge, recently published in Classic Car Weekly may be found at <http://www.fightbackwithfacts.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Idris-CCW-letter-accident-costs-14.3.121.pdf>

I am also in the process of filing a formal complaint to the DfT and the Transport Select Committee about how for many years policies in road transport and elsewhere have been based in part on wholly nonsensical valuations of life and limb."

end quote