

6th February 2014

Dear Mr Francis,

I write to you with regard to your enquiry made to GoSafe (Wales Road Casualty Reduction Partnership), which has been passed to me as GoSafe Communications Officer to deal with on behalf of Dr Peppin.

While we acknowledge your concerns with regard to our data and the way that we present it, I would note that our Annual Reports are not a scientific, in depth statistical analysis of data, but present an overview of the Partnership activity for the year, together with headline data.

Our purpose in providing the information in the Annual Report is not to mislead, but to provide information that would be of use to the general public, whilst making the document both attractive and engaging to the potential reader.

Amongst your points, you showed concern and raised queries on the content of the following statements (numbered as you addressed them to GoSafe):

1. "Performance to date across camera sites is encouraging: by the end of 2011, KSI casualties had been reduced by 50.77% compared with the 1994-1998 annual average"
3. "In contribution to the above targets, the following reductions were achieved at Safety Camera Sites across Wales when comparing data for 2011 with the average for 1994-98"
4. "Camera sites in 2011 showed a 69.64% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured"
6. "For core fixed and mobile sites a comparison between the baseline figure and 2008-2010 casualty data across Wales shows a 71.49%* reduction in killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties. The baseline figure equates to KSI casualties in a 3 year period before the site was introduced"
7. "There were 18 fewer casualties from collisions involving young drivers at camera sites, with a reduction from 319 in 2010 to 301 in 2011"

Similar points were recently made in a complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) about content on our website. The ASA adjudicated and agreed with us that the website does not breach any rules. The original complaint and the response from the ASA can be found on their website (www.asa.org.uk).

The statements above were fact and not opinion. Our 2011/2012 Annual Report notes statistics on collisions “at camera sites” were obtained prior to the camera enforcement (the baseline period), and again in 2011 (after enforcement), and that data revealed a 72% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSIs). We do not claim that the reduction is entirely attributable to safety cameras and neither do we allude to that. Nevertheless, it remains a fact that research has shown that safety cameras contribute to saving lives. Accepting there may be interpretational nuances, we would suggest that this evidence alone supports our statement that cameras save lives, to what extent is perhaps debatable but the contention remains valid.

We would endorse the view that other factors, as raised in your correspondence, could also be said to save lives, and do not dispute that. We acknowledge that our statistical evaluation does not specifically take into account regression to the mean, but it is a factual analysis of the raw data. As you will be aware, in depth analysis is complex and very costly to undertake.

Your second point shows your graphs relating to KSI’s in Wales. We would note that our camera sites are not 1km square, the area is typically 1km in length and 50m wide. In various locations, we have camera sites that would overlap if we were to make such coarse analysis. Our data shows statistics from a bounded camera site, not the square kilometre in which it lies.

Point 5 relates to the statement “Motorists are continuing to break the law at camera sites and this demonstrates the continued need for educational messages to motorists”. We would entirely disagree with your interpretation of this statement. We see a large part of our role here at GoSafe as being that of educator, and consistent education messages need to be conveyed to the public continually in an effort to influence driver behaviour. In terms of how effective safety camera intervention is, you only have to consider the reduction in mean speeds at camera locations, which in turn has contributed to the savings in casualties.

Your final point (8), relates to the table showing “Savings due to Reductions in Casualties in Wales”, and states that “The savings are based on the reduction in 2011 in the number of casualties in Wales compared with the 1994/1998 average at current live camera sites”.

For this table, we used statistics on cost of accidents as supplied by the Department for Transport (DfT) and suggest they are the most relevant available.

We would like to take the opportunity to respond to your more general points as follows:

There is research from Transport Research Laboratory (Paper 323, available online at www.trl.co.uk) that showed that just a 1mph reduction in average speed results in an average 5% reduction in collisions. The DfT have carried out evaluations on the effectiveness of safety cameras, The National Safety Camera Programme - 4 year evaluation report [2005] (available online at www.ucl.ac.uk), and concluded there is a strong association between the fall in speed and the fall in collisions, casualties and deaths at camera sites. This report does, in fact, take account of regression to the mean.

Previous DfT reports, Killing Speed and Saving Lives [1992] and Tomorrow's Roads Safer for Everyone [2000] both concluded that speed is a major contributory factor in about one-third of all road accidents. This evidence is supported in casualty figures in Wales.

Wider than research in the UK, the World Health Organization published a report in 2005 aimed at giving a comprehensive overview of what is known about the magnitude, risk factors and impact of road traffic injuries, and about ways to prevent and lessen the impact of road crashes. This report can be found at www.who.int.

One of their many conclusions was that driving at excess or inappropriate speeds, while under the influence of alcohol, while sleepy or fatigued and without protective gear (such as seatbelts, child restraints and helmets) for all vehicle occupants, are major contributors to road crashes, deaths and serious injuries. Laws alone are not enough to discourage these errors. Enforced compliance is the key. In the European Union, improving enforcement of current laws could reduce the number of road traffic deaths and serious injuries by an estimated 50% (Police enforcement strategies to reduce traffic casualties in Europe: Brussels, European Transport Safety Council, Working Party on Traffic Regulation Enforcement, 1999).

The above reports, we submit, conclude that safety cameras reduce speed and this reduction in speed lessens either the number, or the severity, of collisions meaning they save lives. We would also note that safety cameras are increasingly being used to enforce other infringements such as seatbelt and mobile phone use.

Worldwide, as a road safety intervention, safety cameras have probably been scrutinized and subject to greater evaluation than any other initiative in recent years, and in every instance, the evaluation has shown the benefits.

We have been careful to avoid implying that the cameras themselves are the sole cause of the reduction of casualties at camera sites; there will of course be other factors. However, our core business is reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured on Welsh roads and we do that through enforcement, engineering and education, working to reduce speeds and therefore casualties. We feel it is appropriate to highlight directly the fact that safety cameras save lives and that at camera sites collisions have dropped considerably since the cameras were located there.

We fully accept your comment that cameras alone do not achieve the reductions that we highlight. However, we would note that cameras also have a significant halo effect, and their impact on the road network is much wider than the statistical data around specific sites portray.

To conclude, we have made a commitment to review our data analysis for the Annual Report 2013/2014, and will consider what additional statistical methods may be appropriate to use, but we would nonetheless maintain the position that these reports are for general use, and not intended for technical in-depth statistical analysis.

I hope the points I have made above have addressed the queries you have raised, and I would like to thank you for your obvious interest in road safety and specifically the benefits of safety cameras.

Yours Sincerely

Alex Owen
Communications Officer