

My letter in Local Transport Today, 4th August about Hampshire's fixed speed cameras

Hampshire Police deaf to criticism of its speed cameras

Idris Francis, Petersfield, Hampshire GU32

In 2011 the DfT instructed speed camera organisations to publish their data, explicitly so that members of the public could judge the effects of cameras for themselves. Hampshire Police finally published data in 2016, though for only 30 fixed cameras.

Earlier this year, having realised that the data was at last available, I obtained and analysed it and was so horrified by what I found that I emailed the chief constable to point out that her cameras clearly cause more accidents than they prevent. The first two copies of that email and a telephone call were ignored but the third email did secure a reply from her that she would not respond!

On advice, I then copied the information to the professional standards department of the police force who referred it to a senior analyst who replied at the fourth time of asking that he could not understand my analysis and would ignore my findings.

After I provided a one-sentence explanation and a step-by-step procedure involving only basic arithmetic he ignored it anyway, preferring to believe wholly implausible claims of camera benefit based on statistical probability theory rather than his forces own data.

The case against those fixed cameras is both compelling and damning, seen most clearly in the trend-adjusted numbers of fatal and serious collisions in each of the years following camera installation: 27, 15, 22, 31, 28, 33, 34 and 51.

The graph shows trend-adjusted fatal and serious collisions at camera sites relative to year of camera installation (Year 0). Site selection bias caused abnormally high numbers in up to eight years before installation, says Idris Francis

In non-adjusted terms this implies some 50 fatal or serious collisions more in eight years than would have occurred without cameras. While the adverse effects on slight injury collisions are less severe in percentage terms they are no better numerically because there are five times as many slight injury collisions.

No equivalent analysis of Hampshire's numerous mobile cameras is possible because, astonishingly, no records are kept of where or when they operate, the analyst claiming that there is no reason to do so. Yet nine other forces have copied me such records, allowing me to establish that the adverse effects of mobile cameras are even worse.

I would be happy to make all of this analysis available to readers so that they may satisfy themselves that my analyses are correct.

Any other organisation displaying such a cavalier disregard for the adverse consequences of spending millions of pounds of their own or public money would be in serious trouble, potentially including charges of corporate manslaughter when deaths and injuries are involved. This dangerous and expensive nonsense must be stopped and those responsible held to account.