

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY 25 JUNE 2002 AT 10.30AM**

**SPEED CAMERA 'NETTING-OFF' PROJECT**

Agenda Item Number:  <b>3</b>
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*Report of the Director of Environment*

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Executive Member: - I Tarry

**1. Purpose of the Report**

The report has been prepared in response to a request by Brian York for information to enable Scrutiny Committee to comment prior to the Cabinet considering the Speed Camera 'netting-off' project at its meeting on 22 July.

**2. Summary**

The County Council is committed to cutting the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads. This is reflected in a key promise in the Performance Plan and the target of reducing casualties by 40% by 2010. The achievement of reductions above this level may also be a 'stretched target' as part of the Public Service Agreement that the County Council will be negotiating with central government over the summer months.

Camera enforcement offers a proven method to help reduce road deaths and injuries. The next opportunity for Hertfordshire to join the national 'netting-off' project is October 2002. The process for entry has been foreshortened to enable the DTLR Project Board to scrutinise and agree Hertfordshire's Operational Case prior to the summer holiday period. The result is that the provisional Operational Case will have to be submitted to the DTLR's consultants prior to Cabinet agreeing the proposals. Any comments or changes required by Cabinet will be taken on board before deciding whether or not to sign the agreement.

The DTLR Project Board submit the Operational Case to scrutiny to ensure:

- that proposed camera sites conform to the accident and casualty reduction criteria set for the project, and
- that estimated setting-up and on-going operational costs will be covered by anticipated income levels.

DTLR may recommend amendments to the Operational Case for action prior to Hertfordshire being permitted to join the project. It should be emphasised that despite any agreement by DTLR, the final decision on whether or not to enter the project on the terms offered will depend on Cabinet approval.

3. **Conclusion**

The detailed Operational Case will be subject to scrutiny processes by DTLR prior to any agreement for Hertfordshire to join the national roll-out of the project. Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider whether or not they wish to offer comment to Cabinet.

#### 4. **Background**

- 4.1 Hertfordshire has a road casualty reduction target to reduce casualties by 40% by 2010, and it is possible that a stretched target for further reductions of road deaths and injuries may be included as part of the County Council's Local Public Service Agreement that will be negotiated with Central Government over the summer.
- 4.2 Camera enforcement offers a proven method to help in reducing road deaths and injuries, as experienced in Hertfordshire. A first year summary report by DTLR of the effectiveness of safety cameras in the 8 original national project areas highlights the reductions achieved at camera sites, and general reduction in the geographical area. Following the success of the pilots, DTLR announced the national roll-out proposals, which all police areas are expected to join by April 2003
- 4.3 The Safety Camera Partnership will be a three-way Partnership operated between Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Constabulary and Hertfordshire Magistrates Courts.
- 4.4 All Partners are committed to the project. The Hertfordshire Constabulary has given written support 'in principle' subject to a successful bid.
- 4.5 The Hertfordshire project will be a part of the national roll-out, which will eventually cover all areas of England and Wales. DTLR have taken charge of the process and require that all applications receive formal scrutiny and approval from their Project Board, which meets quarterly.
- 4.6 To assist in this process DTLR have appointed a firm of consultants (pa consulting) to act as advisors to potential partnerships, to scrutinise applications to ensure that all proposed camera sites meet the exacting criteria for the project, and that all anticipated expenditure, including setting-up costs, will be covered by fine income.
- 4.7 Entry dates to the national project are laid down by DTLR. The next opportunity for Hertfordshire is October 2002, and thereafter April 2003. Repayments of fixed penalty income to the Camera Partnerships are made one quarter in arrears, thus entrants after October will not receive income to cover setting-up and running expenditure until the next financial year.
- 4.8 To ensure that there is time for the DTLR audit process to be completed, the DTLR Project Board is meeting mid-July and 'pa consulting' require the final draft of the Operational Case four weeks prior to that meeting. This is prior to the July Cabinet Meeting. The Project Board may make a number of recommendations, which would have to be actioned if Hertfordshire wished to join.

#### 5. **Development of the Case**

- 5.1 There are currently 52 speed camera and 5 red-light housings in Hertfordshire, serviced by 13 cameras, all of which are 'Gatso' rear facing (this enables motorcycle rear number plates to be read). The ratio of cameras to housings is currently 1 – 6.

- 5.2 One criterion for the entry into the project is that all sites will meet stringent road collision and casualty reduction criteria. Currently there are 4 sites in Hertfordshire, implemented on a pilot basis, which do not conform to the criteria. They must be removed. A further 22 fixed sites have been identified in the operational case for implementation in year 1, and 30 in year 2, together with a recommendation for 17 new sites for mobile operations in the first year.
- 5.3 Additional cameras will be purchased to provide a 1-3 ratio of operational cameras to housings. In year 2, a further 45 possible mobile sites have been identified. These are currently being audited with the Constabulary to ensure that they can be safely managed. All of these proposed sites will be subject to scrutiny by pa consulting for the DTLR Project Board before they are agreed.
- 5.4 A strategy to reduce systematically the speed thresholds for the cameras must also be included in the Operational Case. It is envisaged that the thresholds will reduce to the ACPO recommendations within 5 years.
- 5.5 Premises need to be found for the new camera unit operations, a new IT system needs to be purchased to link in with the Police National Computer, and increased staff numbers will be required to deal with increased ticketing numbers. All costs associated with setting-up and running the project as appropriate to be claimed back from the income, with the remainder being returned to the Lord Chancellor's Department. The County Council will provide the Treasurer role for the Partnership.
- 5.6 A promotion strategy is currently being developed which will highlight the casualty reduction role of cameras in Hertfordshire. It is intended to show the location of all fixed camera sites on a website, and to give the daily programme of locations of mobile enforcement vans. The emphasis will be on reducing speed and reducing casualties, not increasing income. On entering the project the existing camera housings will be coloured yellow.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 Income from camera fines on the current sites in 2000/01 was £1.2m. Allowing for the increased coverage and a reduction in offences when the cameras are made more visible, based on experience elsewhere it is anticipated that income will more than double, thereby covering the expenditure with a contingency excess allowance of 10%. (A 10% annual flexibility in the Operational Case is permitted).
- 6.2 Failure to receive fine income at a level to match actual expenditure could result in Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary having to meet the shortfall. However, to minimise the possibility of this occurrence, the detailed operational case is currently being tested for robustness. These tests will seek to ensure that costs are taken on in line with the fine income and that the ability to reduce costs in the future, to compensate for any lower income, is retained.

6.3 The estimated costs and income will also be subject to scrutiny, agreement and audit by 'pa consulting' based on the experience of the pilot authorities and more detailed figures will be available to cabinet before a final decision is taken.

**7. Conclusion**

The Committee is invited to consider whether they wish to offer comments to the Cabinet.