

Devon's Country mile message on the A377

Devon's Dft-funded Country Mile project is addressing road safety problems in rural areas in new and innovative ways. Technology is central to this process, with police officers and officials from a range of authorities working in partnership to advise and inform road users on safety issues in the project area. Much of the work is aimed at educating road users, but enforcement continues when needed.

The A377 road between Lapford and Morchard Road station was the scene of a recent combined operation by Devon and Cornwall Police and the region's Safety Camera Partnership. This involved various marked and unmarked Safety Camera vehicles and police motorcyclists - all linked by radio - on a stretch of road notorious for excessive or inappropriate speeds. Despite including 40mph speed limits, the A377 is regarded as challenging for motorcyclists riding sports machines, and coordinated use of advanced speed measuring technology allowed officers to speak to several such riders during the exercise.

A number of riders and motorists were interviewed as part of the operation to encourage changed behaviour on this route and others in the region. Helpful information and detailed advice on improving driving and riding skills was offered to other riders and drivers, with some of those who took part receiving further follow up later. One motorist will be going straight to court, having been detected at a dangerously high speed, 30 mph above the posted limit.

Local residents were highly supportive of the exercise. Families with children indicated great concern over traffic speeds, citing difficulties crossing the road to catch school buses - resulting in routes having to be re-arranged. Various other road safety-related topics were discussed, and the team received praise for providing high-profile enforcement.

Speaking afterwards, Superintendent Richard Baker of Devon and Cornwall Police said: "Finding new ways to deal with the sort of offences which can give rise to injury collisions on our roads is a key part of our work in the Country Mile project. This particular exercise focussed on high vehicle speeds, but we also spoke to individuals regarding mobile phone and obstruction violations. The use of unmarked police and camera vehicles on this occasion provided an educational input, but prosecutions will result from future operations if drivers persist in offending."