

## **For those about to slow down - Devon's Country Mile salutes you!**

For those still convinced that safety cameras are no more than a means to an end for raising revenue and inflicting penalty points on hapless or unfortunate motorists and motorcyclists, there's a surprise in store. Statistics first: the Devon and Cornwall Safety Camera Partnership has some telling figures to convince you that keeping speed under control will help you stay alive. Recent national figures suggest at least 23% of fatal collisions are speed-related, and speed is a factor in around 30% of all fatalities on rural roads. The Department of Transport, in fact, reckons that speed is generally an under-reported element of injury collisions, suggesting the true speed-related fatality figure could be worse. There's more: you might bear in mind that human reactions are the weakest link in collision avoidance - no matter how good your vehicle's brakes - and if you're unfortunate enough to be involved in a head on collision at 50mph, there's a 65% likelihood you'll die... rising to a 90% likelihood at 60 miles and hour - Britain's national, single carriageway speed limit.

Statistics like these - and the tragic human stories behind them - are focusing the hearts and minds of expert teams at the various agencies involved in the DfT-funded Devon Country Mile project. Their aim is clear: to enhance safety for pedestrians and road users on north west Devon's rural roads - through the research, development and application of innovative ideas, which can later be rolled out far and wide. Project partners include Devon County Council and the county's Police, Ambulance, and Fire and Rescue services. Devon and Cornwall's Safety Camera Partnership is also heavily involved, with its range of advanced speed-checking technology assisting heavily in a slightly unusual area: driver and rider education.

Whilst its fixed and vehicle mounted safety cameras continue in day to day use throughout the two Counties, the Partnership is evolving new joint working methods with Devon and Cornwall Police. With road user education a Country Mile priority, traffic data obtained within the project is being combined with expert knowledge to allow teams of Police officers and camera partnership officials to closely target roads with known speed related issues. These include some of Devon's picturesque winding A and B roads, which the data has demonstrated are regarded by some drivers and riders as challenging enough to illegally - and dangerously - test themselves and their machines to the limit.

Enforcement remains the ultimate penalty for serious speeding offences detected during this work, with marked and unmarked camera-equipped vehicles increasingly being used in conjunction with police cars and motorcyclists to observe road user behaviour over some distance. Afterwards - in most cases - officers are taking the opportunity to speak to drivers and

riders, to discuss their use of speed in the circumstances, and possible improvements in driving or riding behaviour, or recommend further training.

Reactions to recent exercises have been favourable: residents are relieved that community safety is improved through high profile policing activity, while transgressors have also been relieved - to find that safety cameras really are about safety... and not about raising revenue!