

New educational experience for drivers and riders

Police motorcycle traffic patrols are putting advanced technology to good use in the DfT-funded Devon Country Mile project. New, motorcycle-mounted recording equipment is being combined with miniature video cameras affixed to officers' helmets - to record driver and rider behaviour on roads throughout the project area.

Offences captured by the new video systems range from using mobile phones on the move to vehicle registration matters, and the equipment is also now in regular use where known road safety issues include close following and inappropriate or excessive speeds on roads such as the A361 north Devon link and the A377 Barnstaple to Crediton route. The systems are capable of producing high quality images, recorded to a computer-style hard drive offering rapid replay. This allows officers to show drivers and riders where their behaviour in moving traffic conditions has been incorrect or ill-considered, and provide suitable on-the-spot advice on improving driving skills. The systems are not currently being used to provide prosecution evidence, though pictures can be readily downloaded, and drivers are being regularly reported for offences as a result of the footage being obtained.

Use of "Helmet-cams" on marked Police motorcycles has already been so successful that plans are in place to extend their effectiveness through use on unmarked machines. Senior officers at the Barnstaple Roads Policing Unit, where the machines are based, expect the move to result in the recording of many more examples of poor, and potentially dangerous, driving and riding. In turn, officers will be able to stop and discuss offences and appropriate driving techniques with many more drivers - as part of a major ongoing drive within Devon's Country Mile Project to reduce road casualties through improved driver education.