

## **It's a difficult job, but someone's got to do it**

The man running Devon and Cornwall's Safety Camera Partnership is never likely to win prizes in a road user popularity contest, but Project Manager Jon Farr is actually a nice enough chap. He'll explain that issuing fines to speeding road users and adding points to licences are inevitable consequences of his unit's operation, but they're far from the real reason why the team turns up for work every morning. "I don't work with the Treasury," he says, firmly. "I work with highways teams and emergency services - who deal with the aftermath of road traffic collisions. That's both a privilege... and a constant reminder of why we come to work."

On safety cameras, everyone has a view - which Farr knows only too well - he's heard hundreds of them. He'll respond by quietly pointing out - again - that the prime focus of the two counties' safety camera partnership is genuinely not about penalising road users, but reducing collisions, deaths and injuries - by getting drivers to slow down.

These are the principal reasons why the Partnership is closely involved in Devon's Country Mile Project, funded by the Department for Transport. With its distinctly rural focus and mixture of roads, Country Mile data is revealing some dangerously high speeds on high profile A roads - while smaller communities are concerned about speeds in villages and country lanes, affecting pedestrians, horse-riders and cyclists.

Safer roads is thus the headline mission for the Safety Camera Partnership, and whatever the folklore, Farr instantly refutes suggestions their work is any kind of witch-hunt. "We always aim to be fair to road users, and we are certainly not out to trap anybody," he says. "The equipment is set to give marginal offenders the benefit of any doubt. Many are dealt with through warning letters or courses, but those significantly breaking speed limits will be prosecuted"

Country Mile partners the Police, the Safety Camera partnership and Devon County's Road safety experts agree drivers and motorcycle riders lie at the heart of two inter-related problems. One is inappropriate speed - overtaking in the wrong places, travelling unreasonably quickly in minor lanes, or through rural communities... the other is excessive speed, where they insist on travelling beyond posted limits, frequently above 60mph on single carriageway roads.

Country Mile data has highlighted these excesses, and revealed speed-related offences aren't limited to a few specific locations. "We're now targeting whole routes with speed issues, as well as specific places in the project area," says Jon Farr. "The A377 Exeter to Barnstaple road is an example, where it's more about highly inappropriate speeds in completely the wrong places - on a lengthy and winding stretch of road. But on the A361 North Devon Link road,

we're regularly detecting very high speeds in some areas at certain times of day,"

Ensuring road user safety in a wide range of situations has seen the project partners combine intelligence from council speed monitoring sensors with hi-tech vehicle mounted detection equipment and fixed safety cameras to maximise detection efficiency. New cameras provide all-round surveillance, and police motorcycle cameras add another new dimension. "We undertake regular joint operations with Devon and Cornwall Police, tackling speed and other motoring offences," says Farr, "...we're looking at technology to address mobile phone and seat belt offences - but traffic officers just down the road from the camera will certainly be watching for them." Then, his expression slips from enthusiasm to world-weary. "The top end speeds we prosecute involve drivers deliberately choosing excessive speed, and they're more likely now than ever to get a ticket... but we'd much rather deliver a simple, crystal clear message... use speed sensibly, stay safe and ticket free. Convincing drivers and riders of the error of their ways using warnings and education is central to our Country Mile project work. That's why local residents are so often pleased to see us outside their doors - something that speeding motorists often overlook."