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Their say Drivers know speed cameras are the wrong road policy

by PAUL SMITH
Safe Speed campaign founder

DRIVERS KNOW a thing or two about 'how not to crash'. And they know as if by instinct that speed cameras are entirely the wrong road safety policy.

Despite tens of millions of pounds expended by government and camera partnerships in attempts to convince us 'speed kills' and 'speed cameras are good', confidence in the devices is at an all-time low.

My extensive research has uncovered the exact reasons why motorists' instincts are right and the government claims are wrong.

It turns out that speed cameras interfere with core values of safe driving. They make drivers uncomfortable because vital subconscious risk assessment processes tell us that we'd rather concentrate on the road ahead than the speedometer.

In fact, the speedometer simply doesn't measure the 'right sort of speed'. Speedometers measure absolute speed, but motorists must constantly manage relative speed.

Safe driving depends on drivers adjusting speed to suit the hazard environment - and for the vast majority of responsible drivers that means assessing the hazard environment and adjusting speed to suit.

When there are hazards we slow down. When there are no hazards we speed up. The subconscious risk assessment process effectively tells us what to do. And we do it.

That's why the majority of responsible drivers end up exceeding the speed limit in free flowing, low hazard conditions.

The speedometer is of no use whatsoever in this process.

It won't guarantee you can stop for a red light or that you are travelling slowly enough to negotiate the next bend.

Just ask yourself: "Could I drive perfectly safely without a working speedometer?" That will tell you exactly how important speed limits



are to normal, safe, driving.

Speed limits are useful because they help us to catch a relatively tiny minority of drivers who use speed carelessly or stupidly.

They give firm guidance to inexperienced drivers. But speed cameras have promoted speed limits way beyond their level of competence.

Speed cameras distract us from setting a safe and appropriate speed according to the conditions.

And that's exactly what motorists know they must do to drive safely and arrive in one piece.

Speed cameras are a road safety red herring with side effects.

And the side effects are terrible. The police-public relationship is being very badly damaged.

Drivers are being forced to concentrate on the wrong safety factor. Confidence in official road safety messages is at an all-time low.

We will not be able to put this right while a single speed camera remains on our roads. They belong in the scrap-yard and the history books.

Drivers know speed cameras are the wrong road safety policy and drivers are right.

For more details on Safe Speed visit www.safespeed.org.uk.

Agree or disagree? Have your say - see letters P18

New addition to Essex Police 'cold case' team appeals to ex-officers

ESSEX POLICE'S 'cold case' team is helping to find new opportunities in science and technology to solve undetected sex attacks.

The Major Crime Review Team was established in 2003 and focusses primarily on unsolved murder cases - which recently led to the conviction of a man for a murder in Southend from 27 years ago.

In October, it was announced that the team was going to be widening its scope and has now added Lorna

Watson to the team

She will be researching all undetected stranger rapes and attempted rapes to identify those with potential for further investigation.

Lorna, who has worked for Essex Police for the last five years, is particularly keen to hear from retired officers who worked on cases during the last 30 years that might be suitable for review.

Anyone who is able to help can contact Lorna on 01268 245822.

Speed fine in the right

by ALEX ELLIS
alex@theenquirer.co.uk

PLANS TO pump revenue raised from speeding fines into road safety initiatives rather than installing more speed cameras met a positive reaction in Essex this week.

The proposals, expected to be

announced today (Thursday) by Alistair Darling, the transport secretary, will call for the measure after intense public pressure.

Essex County Council leader Lord Hanningfield last month tabled an amendment to the road safety bill proposing funds raised by fines be used for

'Speeding police' slammed by road safety campaigner

AN ESSEX road safety group has slammed the county's police force after figures revealed officers were caught speeding more than 5,000 times - but none were fined.

Requested under the Freedom of Information Act, statistics show 5,070 marked and 199 unmarked police cars were clocked by speed cameras from January to June.

Essex Police say the tickets were cancelled, as most were officers on emergency calls.

Tom Mulcahy, Essex RoadPeace spokesman, said: "The police are not beyond reproach - they should be setting an example. What is the point of having all these speed cameras in the first place?"

According to the Road

Traffic Regulation Act 1984, speed limits do not apply to emergency vehicles if the 'observance of the limit would be likely to hinder' the driver's ability to carry out their duty.

John Baron, Tory MP for Billericay, said he would be writing to chief constable Roger Baker regarding the figures "as a matter of urgency".

He added: "Nobody should be above the law."

Labour MP for Thurrock, Andrew Mackinlay, said it was "incredible" that prosecution was not appropriate for some of the cases.

A spokesman for Essex Police said: "Any officer who activates a safety camera does so for entirely legitimate reasons."

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cash U-turn 'step direction' - MPs

safety initiatives and driver training by the council collecting it.

He told *The Enquirer* "it would be a victory for common sense" if money was ploughed back into road safety.

"I'm very pleased that the government seems to have listened. Some cameras seem to be installed to catch people out and make money for Gordon Brown. Revenue from cameras should be used to improve safety measures," he added.

Currently, cash raised from speeding fines is used to fund more speed cameras - with the remainder going to the Treasury.

James Duddridge, Tory MP for Rochford and Southend East, said

the announcement would be a "step in the right direction".

"We have far too many speed cameras on our roads at the moment. Drivers brake sharply in front of you, increasing the risk of accidents. The system where police had discretion was a more positive one. An absolute speed limit is inappropriate," he added.

Angela Smith, Labour MP for Basildon and East Thurrock, said speed cameras are there to improve road safety but added she would be "delighted" for cash raised from cameras be used to improve other safety measures.

"They should not be seen as fundraisers, but any income from them should be channelled into

protecting road users," she added.

"We have come a long way - we are over halfway towards our target of 40% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured by 2010."

Aimee Bowen, spokeswoman for road safety charity Brake, said they would be "delighted if all the money from speed camera revenue is pumped straight back into road safety".

She added: "It's only right and fair if this happens. We also hope the government will be announcing a relaxation of the rules on where speed cameras will be placed so we don't have to wait for people to be killed or seriously injured."



Crimedesk

Witness appeal after man attacked in subway

POLICE ARE appealing for witnesses to come forward after a 45-year-old Basildon man was robbed in the subway at Ashlands roundabout just after midnight last Tuesday.

Three white men in their early twenties - all wearing jeans and casual clothing - attacked the man and made off with his mobile phone and wallet.

The attack lasted 45 minutes, with two of the men holding the victim's arms whilst the other punched him in the face. The victim suffered cuts and bruises.

Witnesses or anyone with information should contact Basildon CID on 01268 532212 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Staff threatened by armed robber in shop raid

OFFICERS FROM Basildon CID are investigating a robbery, in which a woman was threatened with a knife at a tanning shop in Southernhay on Saturday.

The suspect entered the shop at around 8.50pm, produced a knife and ordered the woman to hand over cash.

He is described as 6', of medium build, wearing a grey or blue baseball cap, a grey jacket and thick woollen gloves. He is said to have a local accent.

Police are examining CCTV footage and urge witnesses to come forward.

Witnesses, or anyone with information, should call Basildon Police on 01268 532212.

Re-appeal after woman killed in arson attack

POLICE IN Southend have renewed an appeal for information after a woman was killed in an arson attack on 10 November.

Andrea Daly, 40, died of smoke inhalation after her Rochford Road home was deliberately set alight at around 3.30am.

Investigating officers would like to speak to a man seen near the scene of the crime. He was in his early twenties, wearing a red baseball cap and driving a white old style Ford Fiesta with black bumpers and silver trim.

A 15-year-old boy is on police bail until 6 January in connection with the murder. Anyone with information should call the incident room at Brentwood on 01277 262220.



Hamleys Santa helps make wish come true

CHRISTMAS CAME early for one Thurrock five-year-old, when she had a special visit to see Santa at Hamleys, on Regent Street.

The trip was organised by the Make-a-Wish Foundation for Elizabeth Marsh-Cornhill, of South Ockendon, who suffers from Wilms' Tumour.

The charity, which grants wishes to children living with life-threatening

illnesses, arranged for Elizabeth to ride in a pink stretch-limousine with mum, Keighley, dad, Peter and sister Victoria.

The family were treated to breakfast with Santa during last Wednesday's visit before being whisked away for a tour of the toy store. The family also visited the London Aquarium.

Mum Keighley said: "It was a perfect day and it

was a wonderful surprise to have a pink limousine, Elizabeth's favourite colour. Elizabeth hasn't stopped talking about her wish and she has rushed to school to tell all her friends."

Frances Heath, regional manager of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, added: "It is thanks to everyone who gets involved with wishes and people that attend our fundraising events."

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