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Budgets for safety cameras have changed, not the evidence

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With the announcement that Oxfordshire County Council was to stop funding safety cameras, the BBC has asked if it was the end of the road for speed cameras. They could have equally asked if this was the end to evidence based road safety policy, given the wealth of studies showing how cameras reduce speeding and casualties.

After the fourth national safety camera evaluation in 2005 confirmed the findings of the three previous studies, the government stopped documenting the effectiveness of cameras at the national level. Extensive research had proven cameras reduced speeding, crashes and casualties with 42% fewer people killed and seriously injured at camera sites. Even when regression to mean was factored, safety cameras were still highly cost effective with a benefit cost.

There is no new evidence to suggest that cameras are ineffective. The recent claim by the Tax Payer's Alliance, reported by some papers, has been refuted and rightfully ridiculed, including by RoadPeace.

What has ended is the choice of the local council to choose how they spend their transport grant. Since 2007, local governments have had discretion as to how they spent their money. **The coalition government has now decided for them and is not allowing them to use any of the grant for safety cameras.**

If the Conservatives are serious about listening to communities, then speed enforcement will continue to be important. Speeding vehicles was the leading cause of anti-social behaviour reported by the British Crime Survey. With cameras' proven effectiveness at reducing casualties and speeding, and the potential to be a self-financing intervention, this is the time to increase camera enforcement, not discourage it.

Amy Aeron-Thomas, Executive Director

References

Fourth national evaluation of safety cameras (2005)

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/nscp/nscp/thenationalsafetycameraprogr4597>

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