

# Bucks Free Press

## Collisions increased at some speed camera sites, bosses reveal

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COLLISIONS have increased at some speed camera sites, a safety boss said.

Accidents have risen at 20 to 30 sites in Thames Valley said camera chief Richard Owen.

He said this will be shown in data of collision statistics to be released in the spring or early summer for 295 fixed and 206 mobile camera sites.

This means collisions have increased at about one in twenty sites.

Mr Owen was speaking at the first public meeting of its type of the nine-year-old Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership, which runs the speed camera programme.

His comments sparked fury from anti-camera campaigners at the meeting – a leading campaigner today said cameras distracted drivers and had no impact.

Mr Owen, the partnership's operations director, said: "It is no secret that collision trends on some camera sites have increase.

"We will be looking at why they have increased."

He said "20 to 30 have not decreased and have increased slightly, we will review those and we will be honest about them".

Yet he said collisions where someone is killed or seriously injured were down 43 per cent at speed camera sites.

Speeding tickets detected by cameras had fallen from 111,646 in 2003/04 to 42,422 in 2007/08 he said.

He said this was against the background of a marginal increase in enforcement.

An extra 27 mobile sites were introduced during 2007/08, a partnership report says.

And he said provisional figures for 2008/09 showed 93 were killed on the region's roads.

But Claire Armstrong, co-founder of anti-camera group Safe Speed, said she was "not the slightest bit surprised" by the increase at some sites.

She said: "Cameras have been a huge distraction and when you distract drivers they are not paying attention to the road ahead.

"They are worrying about their speedos and the location of the camera."

Speed is "not an issue" she said and was responsible for two per cent of accidents.

Drink and drugs were bigger factors in why accidents occur, she said, and there would be fewer deaths in a recession as "there are less cars on the roads".

And campaigner Idris Francis told last night's meeting in Maidenhead that he did not believe the killed or seriously injured figures.

Mr Francis – who gave out CDs and a leaflet outlining his research to attendees - said: "The truth is you have achieved nothing.

"It is worse than not achieving anything. Before your organisation was in existence we were achieving something."

Yet partnership communications manager Dan Campsall said Thames Valley now had the "lowest number of fatalities on record".

He also told the meeting, at the town hall, that the partnership would lead the way in examining the "kind of communities people come from" who have accidents.

He said: "What kind of lives do they lead? What newspapers do they read?"

This would be used to target certain groups with advertising.

He showed a recent partnership advertisement showing a coffin in the shape of a sports car emblazoned with racing stripes with the heading "pimp my coffin".

This is a twist on the popular MTV show Pimp My Ride, where everyday cars are souped-up.

And Mr Owen said the "link has been broken" between profit and enforcement as fine cash has gone to the Government and not the partnership since April 2007.

He added: "They are not hiding behind trees and wheelie bins".

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