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Speed Cameras – the evidence

Eight hundred more people could be killed or seriously injured each year on Britain's roads if all the fixed and mobile speed cameras operational before the road safety grant was cut this summer were to be decommissioned.

The true scale of the benefits of speed cameras are detailed in a new report by Professor Richard Allsop of University College London for the RAC Foundation. In light of the findings the RAC Foundation is sending a copy of the report to every highway authority in the country as they consider how best to spend their reduced road safety budgets.

Professor Allsop says speed cameras have offered continuing road safety benefits since their widespread introduction between 2001 and 2005.

These benefits, Professor Allsop concludes, are not just to be found at camera sites but across the wider road network.

He also points out that a large majority of the public have consistently backed the use of cameras. And he dispels the myth that penalties generated by cameras are a significant source of revenue, showing that in 2007 just £4 out of every £60 raised in penalties was net income to the Treasury and there was no surplus for local authorities or the police.

Commenting on the report, Professor Stephen Glaister, director of the RAC Foundation, said:

“The current crisis in funding for speed cameras – and road safety in general – leaves road users at real risk. The clear evidence is that if speed cameras were to be decommissioned then around 800 more people are likely to be killed or seriously injured on the roads each year.

“The government has said decisions on speed camera funding must be taken at local level which is why we are sending this evidence direct to all highway authorities. Councillors are perfectly within their rights to use scarce resources on things other than cameras but they need to know what the consequences could be.

“Professor Allsop's work suggests scrapping cameras would be a big mistake because the cash to install them has already been spent; they save life and demonstrate value for money; and despite the headlines, most people accept the need for them.

“Speed cameras should never be the only weapon in the road safety armoury, but nor should they be absent from the battle.

“Some politicians say there are more cost effective ways to save life on the highway. It is the responsibility of these people to demonstrate what these are.”

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Notes to editors:

The RAC Foundation is a charity which explores the economic, mobility, safety and environmental issues relating to roads and responsible road users. Independent and authoritative research, carried out for the public benefit, is central to the Foundation's activities.

Professor Richard Allsop has a first in Mathematics from Cambridge, and a PhD and DSc from UCL (University College London), where he is Emeritus Professor of Transport Studies, having been Professor since 1976 and Director between then and 1997 of what is now the Centre for Transport Studies. He has a longstanding involvement in road safety research and policy, including being a Director of PACTS (the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety). He was made an OBE in 1997 for services to traffic management and road safety.

Professor Allsop's report, *The Effectiveness of Speed Cameras – A Review of the Evidence*, is available upon request from the RAC Foundation and at www.racfoundation.org from the day of publication.