

NORTHUMBRIA SAFETY CAMERA PARTNERSHIP
POLICY ON THE HANDLING OF ENQUIRIES, COMPLAINTS AND
DIRECTION AND CONTROL ISSUES

1. **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to formalise the policy concerning the handling of enquiries and complaints received concerning the use of safety cameras operated on behalf of Northumbria Safety Camera Partnership by Northumbria Police.

2. **BACKGROUND**

The Northumbria Safety Camera Partnership went live in April 2003 with the aim of reducing speed related fatalities and casualties on the roads of the region. This aim is to be achieved by targeting areas with a history of speed related accidents with red light and speed cameras, collectively known as safety cameras.

The Camera Enforcement Unit (CEU) record, on average, in excess of 7000 offences at roadside every month and these are subsequently processed by the Criminal Justice Fixed Penalty Unit (FPU). These offences generate a number of enquiries and complaints from members of the public.

These fall into 5 categories:

Enquiries Regarding the Offence. These tend to be requesting evidence surrounding the alleged offence, such as request for photographic evidence, calibration certificates of equipment used, training undertaken of personnel operating the equipment, etc.

Enquiries Regarding the Siting of Cameras. These tend to be concerned with the justification for the camera, due to number of casualties, or concerning conspicuity and camera signing issues or the justification and setting of speed limits. They may also include questions regarding the use of police resources on camera enforcement but do not amount to a specific complaint against an individual or police policy, so should not be considered direction and control complaints. It should be noted that these issues do not affect whether or not an offence has been committed.

Enquiries Regarding both Offence and Camera Siting. These enquiries are received into the FPU and may contain several points, which the individual feels may count as mitigation, or make their offence invalid. It is important that a clear distinction is made by the FPU as to what would affect the validity of the detection of an offence and what is a matter of Northumbria Safety Camera Partnership policy or a police direction and control issue.

Complaints against individuals. These concern the individual conduct of personnel and would normally be regarding the Police Officer operating

the equipment or FPU staff and the way they have handled correspondence and enquiries.

Complaints Regarding Direction and Control. These are specific complaints addressed to Northumbria Police regarding policy and/or the use of resources in respect of safety camera enforcement. In all cases these will be logged and recorded in accordance with current guidance by the Criminal Justice Department of Northumbria Police.

3. **POLICY**

It is proposed that the above categories of correspondence be handled in the following manner:

Enquiries Regarding the Offence. These will be answered by the FPU, as part of their routine processes. The correspondence will be filed along with all other materials relating to that offence. These are case specific and do not represent a direction and control issue.

Enquiries Regarding the Siting of Cameras. These will be answered by the Northumbria Safety Camera Partnership project office and will be recorded on the Project Manager's database. This will be searchable to provide reliable statistics as to which enquiries were concerning the use of police resources on camera enforcement duties but did not constitute a complaint. The nature of these enquiries will be given in the 6 monthly report to steering group members and a copy sent to Chief Superintendent, Northumbria Police Professional Standards Department, Force HQ for information.

Enquiries Regarding both Offence and Camera Siting. These enquiries are initially received into the FPU. The FPU will answer questions relating to the specific offence as normal and issue a statement to the effect that camera enforcement is carried out in accordance with current guidelines and regulations by Northumbria Safety Camera Partnership. The address of the Project Manager will be given to enable further enquiries about the operation of the partnership to be made at the discretion of the enquirer, whilst stressing that this is not an option for mitigation. The correspondence will not be passed on internally. The initial enquiry will be filed by the FPU as previously outlined. This procedure will also be used where the enquiry has been sent to the FPU but contains no request for offence specific information.

Complaints Against Individuals. Northumbria Police will deal with these complaints against employees in accordance with existing procedures for all complaints regarding personnel. Gateshead Council will deal with complaints against either the Project Manager or Communications Manager in accordance with their procedures.

Complaints Regarding Direction and Control. In all cases these will be logged and recorded in accordance with current guidance issued by Professional Standards, Northumbria Police.

4. **CONCLUSION**

This policy has received the backing of Northumbria Police Professional Standards, Operational Support and Criminal Justice departments and is accepted policy.