

FIGHT BACK WITH FACTS

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To all Assembly Members and MP's for Wales,
cc Welsh Police Forces, the media and others

Dear Members,

Although born and raised in Wales, I write not as a constituent but to provide important road safety information. I trust that you will find time to read what follows and to act on it to put an end to a disgraceful situation involving systematic misrepresentation of accident and casualty data and the waste of public money to achieve little, nothing or less than nothing.

Having spent many thousands of hours since 2001 studying speed camera data and the greatly exaggerated claims for the benefits they claimed to provide, I was pleased to read last September that Welsh Transport Minister Edwina Hart had called for reports on:

- *the impact of speed cameras on road safety in Wales, including the value for money in their deployment*
- *the governance of the partnership and the nature of the Welsh Governments relationship with it*
- *opportunities to secure savings and/or enable more focused speed enforcement"*

I welcomed this because, as I am sure all will agree, spending decisions and cost-effective policies depend heavily on access to the best available data and analysis. Equally important is recognising for what it is the nonsense that has circulated for too long about the accident and casualty reductions attributed to speed cameras that, as I set out below and elsewhere, would largely have happened anyway without cameras.

On reading the press report I wrote to Ms. Hart asking for a meeting at which I and another independent researcher could present the information and analysis we had assembled over some years' study. That letter and the PowerPoint presentation I gave at the subsequent meeting are available, alongside a very great deal more information, on my web site at <http://www.fightbackwithfacts.com/presentation-to-welsh-government/>

My presentation sets out in detail how claims for speed camera benefit have always been greatly exaggerated by ignoring the two other main factors which lead to reductions in accidents and casualties at camera sites, namely long term trend and "regression to mean" (in layman's terms, "return to normal") following the unusual spate of accidents which, for the most part, leads to those sites being selected in the first place. In other words, they claim credit for reductions that would, for the most part, have happened anyway.

My main reason for writing to you today is to make you aware that the claims of Go-Safe, the Welsh camera partnership, for the accident and casualty reductions their cameras provide are wildly exaggerated for the above reasons, and also because the cash values they attribute to those savings are themselves nonsense.

My detailed complaint, GoSafe's seven week delay in responding, their response refusing to acknowledge the clear evidence that their claims are invalid (beyond saying that they will take my complaint into account in future), my responses to that refusal and the UK Statistics Office report rejecting the Scottish Partnership's equally bizarre claims for the same reasons and this email are all at <http://www.fightbackwithfacts.com/false-claims-wales/>

I need not repeat here the detail already available in my complaints, but essentially they include

a/ ignoring that accident and casualty numbers fell substantially over the same periods at sites which did not have speed cameras, and would logically have fallen to much the same extent at their sites had no cameras been installed.

b/ claiming reductions far greater than the proportion that ever involve speeding in the first place - a manifest impossibility, especially as speeding is far from eliminated.

c/ claiming credit for cameras for reductions which occurred before the cameras were installed.

d/ claiming credit for further percentage reductions many years after camera installation (in reality camera effect, if any, reaches its maximum within weeks or months as the proportion of passing drivers aware of the presence of cameras reaches its maximum)

e/ claims financial savings, in cash terms, on the basis of these fanciful reductions multiplied by purely notional DfT estimates for "values" of pain and suffering avoided, figures which are also widely exaggerated - for instance the true cash cost to the economy of a fatal collision is of the order of a few tens of thousands of pounds, not 1.9m.

And all this at a time when large numbers are dying in our hospitals due to lack of adequate care, including poor hygiene and worse. Taxpayers and road users deserve better.

Not forgetting that whatever residual benefits 50,000 p.a. speed cameras might provide could be better provided by 1,000 p.a. vehicle activated signs - see <http://www.fightbackwithfacts.com/cameras-versus-activated-signs/> and <http://www.fightbackwithfacts.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/F.42-Accountants-Report.pdf>

In summary, speed cameras and the organisations and jobs they support are and always have been singularly ineffective and cost-ineffective way of reducing accidents even on the basis of the false claims - and then only on 2% of road length. Correct to the likely true figures, add in the accidents they directly cause, the consequential costs for drivers (penalties, lost licenses, jobs and businesses) and the false estimates of cash values and it becomes clear that on any rational accounting basis they cost far more than any possible benefit and should be withdrawn from our roads without further delay.

I would be happy to provide more information on request or indeed present or debate the evidence in London, Cardiff or both.

Yours faithfully,

Idris Francis B.Sc.