

Harm in providing the information

The presence of speed cameras has had a positive impact upon road safety. To provide granular information of the speed recorded versus the speed limit would impact Police ability to enforce the law and keep roads safe. It would highlight that speed cameras allow a tolerance over the legal speed limit, encouraging illegal motoring thereby increasing the likelihood of accidents.

Investigations into fatal collisions show that some of these fatalities could have been prevented and there are five main contributory factors that cause serious road traffic collisions, known as the 'Fatal Five' one of these is speeding. Road users who commit one of the Fatal Five offences are far more likely to be involved in a fatal collision than those who do not. To disclose the figures would encourage drivers to speed, in the knowledge that their offending is likely to be undetected. This in turn would increase the number of accidents in our force area. Fatal collisions are heart-breaking – for the family, for the community, and for the responding emergency services staff who have to witness the tragedy and subsequent aftermath. Stopping any more deaths from occurring as a result of something unnecessary and totally avoidable is a top priority for us.

Section 31

Factors favouring disclosure

Disclosure would contribute to openness, transparency and accountability which are principal objectives of the FOIA. It would also inform the public how your force tackles the issue of road safety by prosecuting drivers for speeding.

Factors favouring non-disclosure

Disclosing the requested information would enable the public to establish exactly what speed tolerances are being enforced at multiple locations informing them where they are likely to get away with excessive speeding. Police rely on the perception by drivers that the law is enforced at the posted speed limit. If this information was disclosed then drivers would know when they can and cannot pass specific sites at a speed above the statutory limit. This would render the purpose of the camera site at these locations obsolete.

This will undermine police enforcement of the established speed limit. Disclosure would therefore hinder law enforcement. It would also require an increased Police presence throughout the force area which would put an unnecessary strain on its resources.

The effectiveness of speed enforcement relies on the perception that the chances of being recorded are high at all sites. The release of this type of information would encourage further similar requests which would allow drivers to deduce by a process of elimination those locations where the risk of being caught is more or less likely. This would reduce the effectiveness of safety camera technology and impact on road safety.

Balance Test

As much as there is a public interest in knowing the tolerance at which speed cameras trigger speeding infringements, what is of interest to the public is not always in the public interest.

Keeping the nation's roads safe is of paramount importance to the Police. To disclose this information will prejudice forces' ability nationally to prevent and detect crime and will increase the risk of accidents, some of which will be fatal.

The public entrust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions with regard to their safety and protection. In this case, being cautious with what is put into the public domain will maintain our ability to prevent crime and maintain public safety. Therefore it is our opinion that the balancing test weighs strongly in favour of non-disclosure.