

INVESTIGATION

More rule-bending speed camera sites

MCN finds more evidence of 'cash machine' cameras

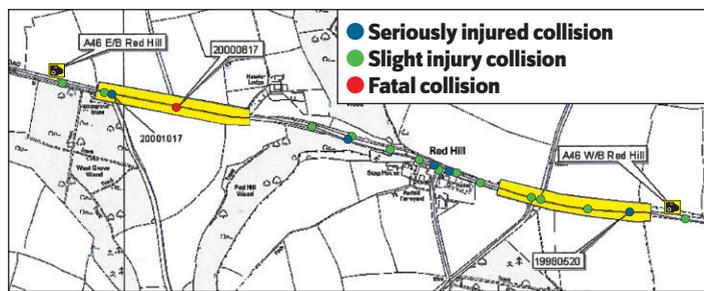
BY STEVE FARRELL

MCN has obtained more evidence of speed camera authorities bending the rules on camera sites to put them where they want rather than where they ought to be.

Last month we brought you evidence of abuses of a strict Government code on where cameras should be placed in Avon and Somerset, Greater Manchester and Hertfordshire, obtained by submitting an enquiry under the Freedom of Information Act.

Now more camera authorities have answered our enquiry, exposing more examples of rule bending. They include a camera on an A-road which appears to have been justified with the help of a slight accident on a tiny adjacent road, and cameras located outside approved site areas altogether.

The Department for Transport's Handbook of Rules and Guidance for the National Safety Camera Programme clearly states a camera



site should be "a stretch of road" in which a minimum number of accidents must have occurred.

To see how closely camera partnerships were following the rules, we asked them to send us maps of every site showing every accident used to justify the camera.

The map above shows two yellow areas which represent fixed speed camera sites on the A46 in Red Hill, Warwickshire. Those are the areas that have been approved by Government as camera sites based on accidents within them.

But the map also shows that the cameras themselves aren't even in

the approved sites. Stephen Rumble from Warwickshire Safety Camera Partnership said: "We were unable to find suitable practical locations to install the fixed cameras within the original 500-metre site."

"But the locations selected are well within the overall permitted maximum fixed camera site length of 1000 metres."

The other dodgy site we've recently uncovered – on Mill Way in Sittingbourne, Kent – is a mobile camera site which isn't a stretch of road as DfT rules say it should be, but in fact sprawls across several

different stretches of road, allowing an accident on one street to be used to justify a camera van half a mile away on another street altogether.

When we questioned site engineer Lee Burchill, he claimed we'd been sent an out of date map in error. "The site was revised," he said. He wasn't able to explain why the former site had apparently failed to comply with guidelines.

A DfT spokesman confirmed that the rules have always said a site should be a stretch of road.

The RAC Foundation has called for an organisation to be set up to which all camera partnerships must be accountable for failures to follow rules. Director Edmund King said: "The evidence you've unearthed reinforces our view that this whole thing needs to be reviewed."

● If you know of a camera that's there to rake in the cash rather than improve road safety, let us know. E-mail steve.farrell@emap.com, including a photo, the camera's location, the reason you've chosen it and a daytime phone number.

NEW RIDER

BY SIMON JOHNSTON



TOUCH-SCREEN test looms for our man

Easy, in theory

This week, Simon prepares for his theory test. And he's nervous; he's running an underwear strategy of two pairs a day...

I WAS never good at tests when I was at school, so when I booked my theory test a week ago I was filled with dread – the pressure of getting it right made more acute by the fact that, at MCN, I sit next to the road test desk and some of the most experienced riders you'll ever find.

So by the time this week's MCN hits the news stands, I'll be sat in front of a computer screen taking my theory test. So let me just repeat that opening remark again... I hate tests. At school I always belted through them as fast as I could so I could leg it as soon as possible – I even threw up after one of my A-levels (although that is far more likely to have been a result of the seven pints of snakebite the evening before). Also, it's over ten years since I passed my driving test and theory tests didn't even exist then: 'Can you see that numberplate?' 'Yep'. That was about all the questions I was ever asked.

The theory test these days is split into two sections: the multiple choice questions and the hazard perception part. The multiple choice is

35 questions in 40 minutes, and the pass mark is 30 out of 35 correct.

For hazard perception, you're shown video clips with everyday road hazards and you need to respond to the hazards as early as possible. Now, unlike the multiple choice part, you aren't able to review your answers; as on the road, you only get one chance to respond to any developing hazard. The pass mark here is 44 out of 75.

Fortunately, there are a number of handy books you can buy to help you through the whole horror of the theory test, and hopefully minimise the sphincter-clenching experience. I've bought the BSM's Theory Test Questions for Motorcyclists, at £4.99, and two CD-Roms – GSP Driving 3-in-1 test (theory, hazard perception and practical) that includes all the official DSA theory test questions, and the GSP Hazard Perception CD-Rom. I found both for around £8 by shopping around online and they should give me the practice I need. But I'm still taking a spare pair of pants for when I leave the test centre...

Next week, I'll hopefully be clutching a piece of paper that a) proves I'm not a test numpty, and b) that enables me to go on to my CBT...

New transport chief ignored red light

NEW transport minister Douglas Alexander has had a conviction for running a red light, MCN can reveal.

Alexander, who has already given his backing to camera enforcement after taking over from Alastair Darling in a recent cabinet reshuffle, was snapped by a traffic light camera.

A Department for Transport spokesman said: "His licence is now clean but in the late nineties he ran a red light and had three points as a result."

Alexander joins roads minister Stephen Ladyman and top traffic cop Meredydd Hughes as the latest high-profile backer of

camera enforcement to have fallen foul of the technology.

Ladyman has had nine points for three speeding offences, making him a "dangerous criminal", according to controversial North Wales chief constable Richard Brunstrom.

Brunstrom last month told a North Wales newspaper: "Anyone who gets caught speeding three times is a dangerous criminal. I have no sympathy for anyone in that situation."

Alexander has also backed road pricing by making £10 million available to pay



DOUGLAS ALEXANDER

for development of the technology needed to implement a national road pricing scheme.

ROAD RACING REVOLUTION

SEE MORE AT ALPINESTARS.COM/S-MXR

Lightweight racing-developed protection with a road riding comfortable fit.

Over-injected areas for maximum flexibility

PU. running shoe foot bed for durable comfort

Easy to use internal calf size adjustment

Complete ventilation and fully perforated version available

+39 0423 5286