

North Wales Police: "*We need to get tougher on speeding*"

Mar 9 2009 by Owen R Hughes, Daily Post

DRIVERS face a speeding crackdown after a “softer” approach by North Wales Police has seen serious injuries from road smashes soar.

Deputy chief constable Clive Wolfendale revealed that police had taken the “foot off the pedal” in its targeting of motorists.

The force increased the speed drivers could exceed the limit before they were hit with mandatory penalty points and a fine instead of being offered speed awareness courses.

These changes have seen driving courses dished out to more than 30,000 of the 100,000 speeding offenders caught since April 2007 in favour of penalty points and fines.

But police have revealed that since enforcement was relaxed the number of serious injuries reported on the roads has risen by 33% during 2008.

They insisted the large increase was down to a change in crime recording, but accepted that figures had “flat-lined” after years of improvement.

Now North Wales Police will “re-visit” its policy and warned the force could return to maximum enforcement to get its speeding message across.

Mr Wolfendale told the Daily Post: *“We have taken the foot off the pedal but the figures have flat-lined, which is a concern to us. We must revisit this and see if we need to apply pressure again. Camera enforcement has not been increased and we have raised the speeding threshold for those offered courses instead of prosecution. This has seen a vast increase in the number of drivers offered courses in North Wales. We hoped this softer approach would work in getting the message across but if we find it has led to this flat-lining of figures we can change our approach.”*

He added: “Speed is critical in most collisions in terms of the extent of the injuries caused.”

Police could not reveal how much the limit threshold before drivers faced penalty points had been raised.

Enid Rowlands, chair of the performance review committee, said *the increase in injuries risked causing damage to the force’s reputation because of its high profile stance on tackling speeding motorists.*

Members of the committee raised the figures with senior officers at a meeting last week. They were assured that a change in the counting procedure that saw more minor injuries added to the list of injuries counted as serious had resulted in the increase. The past 10 years has seen remarkable reductions in the number of road casualties on North Wales’ roads as the region has become renowned for its tough treatment of speeding drivers.

This has seen overall casualty figures fall from over 4,000 in 1998 to less than 3,000 in 2008.

North Wales Police said it had been achieved through a persistent programme of education and enforcement by police and their partner agencies.

A spokeswoman said: *"This has seen 1,170 fewer injured people a year. This is good news for the public, the emergency services and the hospitals required to treat those injured."*

But overall casualty figures have risen by 118 in the past year and serious injuries at a far higher rate.

Mr Wolfendale told the performance review committee the North Wales force had to revisit its speed camera policy.

The Association of Chief Police Officers announced in 2005 that all police forces in England and Wales will offer speed awareness courses to some drivers caught over the speed limit. Such schemes were thought to be more effective in reducing speeding than simply awarding penalty points and imposing a fine. **In 2007 Arrive Alive** said it was expanding its scheme in North Wales to include more drivers.

The PPP comments **Lies and obscuration**, no sign of any real concern for the victims from Wolfendale or Enid Rowlands, no mention of the REAL causes, gratuitous rubbish about speed ... can he even spell KINETIC energy. A performance review chair who probably knows nothing about road safety but understands political expediency. **WE NEED A REASONED DEBATE NOW.**

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The change in the 'accounting procedure' was probably to correct the 'anomaly' between the Police stats and the NHS higher stats for serious injuries. FIVE years ago we were told by traffic officers that they were being pressurised to 'raise the profile' of speed when reporting causes and to downgrade the severity of injuries in their reports. If a RTA casualty is hospitalised it is **serious** what ever the police report!