

PRESS RELEASE

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CAMPAIGN GROUP RESPONDS TO LATEST DEVELOPEMNTS WITH REGARD TO CCTV ON THE COWLEY ROAD

The campaign group No CCTV would like once again to state their opposition to plans to install CCTV on the Cowley Road. Yesterday (23rd April) a “CCTV in Cowley Road – Progress Report” and “Cowley Road Report and Budgetary Costings for 4 Cameras” were presented to the East Area Parliament. No CCTV spoke at the meeting and laid out new evidence relevant to the proposals.

Charles Farrier, Press Contact at No CCTV said: “There is overwhelming evidence that CCTV is not an effective crime prevention tool, particularly with relation to alcohol related crime which is what we are told is the problem on the Cowley Road. Furthermore CCTV's investigative powers have been called into question by data released by the London Assembly last year which concluded that there was no correlation between CCTV coverage and crime clear-up rates across the London boroughs. On top of this there are serious civil liberties concerns – filming everyone flies in the face of the concept of innocent until proven guilty. The council should scrap any plans to install cameras. It is an illiberal waste of money.”

Below is a more detailed account of the information put forward by No CCTV at the East Area Parliament meeting on 23rd April, together with some additional points that were subsequently forwarded to councillors:-

There are two ongoing parliamentary inquiries looking at surveillance in the UK which have thrown up fresh evidence supporting the position that installation of cameras is not an effective use of public money and reinforcing the disproportionality of their deployment with respect to civil liberties. No CCTV's Interim Report of November 2007 lays out some of the civil liberties concerns which still remain our chief objection to surveillance cameras/CCTV.

The following are quotes from evidence presented to the Home Affairs Committee's inquiry into “A Surveillance Society?” and the House of Lords Constitution Committee's “Impact of Surveillance and Data Collection” inquiry -

- *Dr Murakami Wood of Newcastle University (Home Affairs Committee, 28/11/07):* "I think it is quite clear from the evidence that we have seen that there is not enough evidence to suggest that there is any statistically significant effect on the rates of crime or any kind of crime prevention and that is the important distinction. It is up to you to make the judgement on whether that is important or not."
- *Deputy Chief Constable Graeme Gerrard, (Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lead on CCTV, House of Lords Constitution Committee, 16/1/08):* "The evidence and academic research that I have seen says it is very effective in places like car parks where offenders are going out specifically to break into cars and are thinking rationally and about the way they are going to do it, but in terms of our town centres, where a lot

of the behaviour is violent or disorderly behaviour, often fuelled by alcohol, people are not thinking rationally, they get angry and the CCTV camera is the last thing they think about and even the presence of police officers does not deter them from fighting and being disorderly in the streets, so cameras are not likely to."

- *Deputy Chief Constable Gerrard (House of Lords, 16/1/08):* "The principal measure of effectiveness as far as the Police Service is concerned is in relation to the support of the investigative process. [...] Interestingly, there is very little academic research on the effectiveness and usefulness of CCTV in the investigation of crime, most of it is focused on does it reduce crime, not what is the impact of it in terms of investigating crime."

In fact, in September 2007 members of the Greater London Assembly produced evidence specifically concerning the investigative value of CCTV footage in "*a breakdown by London Borough of the number of CCTV cameras in the capital, together with details of the latest crime figures and clear up rates*". The statistics show that there is no correlation between CCTV and crime clear-up rate. In fact, four out of five of the boroughs with the most cameras have a record of solving crime that is below average.

- It is particularly interesting to note the statement of the Assistant Chief Constable Nick Gargan of Thames Valley Police and member of ACPO (*Home Affairs Committee, 18/3/07*) in which he hinted at moves toward networked camera systems to link Police to local authority cameras: "the electronic transfer of data will be an aspiration further down the line". Furthermore, local papers reported a few days later the desire of police in Witney to create a network of cameras to cover villages around the town. This endorses the concern No CCTV has consistently aired about plans specifically laid out in the National CCTV Strategy and reinforces the responsibility of local councils as the front (and perhaps only) line in defence of civil liberties.

Installation of CCTV is not a simple local issue. Do we really want Cowley Road patched into a centralised state run database? Once patched into such a system it is likely to be very difficult to get unplugged.

Attention should also be given to recently published research by Farrington, Bennett and Walsh ("The Cambridge evaluation of the effects of CCTV on Crime", (2007) Crime Prevention Studies Vol 21) which notes that: "CCTV had no effect on crime according to survey data, and an undesirable effect on crime according to police records".

Should the council still choose to go ahead with the installation of CCTV cameras (despite the weight of evidence against and lack of evidence for) then we once again urge them to seek an independent assessment of the scheme. We would also urge them to check the "criteria for inclusion of evaluation studies" laid out by Welsh and Farrington in the 2003 study "Effects of Closed-Circuit Television on Crime".

Any evaluation requires before and after measures of crime in experimental and comparable control areas as a minimum. The crime data needs to be broken down into specific locations or at the very least into beat codes in order to be better understood.

Clearly detailed and reliable crime figures are fundamental to any honest review or assessment of crimefighting policy.

As an aside, we note from the release of recent crime figures that crime is falling once

again – a fact that supports our contention that CCTV is not necessary but which also indicates that should CCTV be installed the police will point to falling crime and claim that CCTV is the reason.

In our November 2007 Interim report we mentioned that we had spoken to researchers who specialise in CCTV evaluation and that we would be happy to share with members of the East Area Parliament the information they supplied to us. To date councillors have not requested this information. Have councillors spoken to researchers and begun a preliminary study? Surely it is their social duty as elected councillors to ensure proper and independent monitoring of any scheme pre- and post-installation to ensure ensure tax payers' money is used appropriately.

We note that the council's Progress Report makes no mention of any such assessment despite a one year trial being previously agreed by all parties as a condition of installation.

We stress at this point that we in no way endorse the installation of cameras. Research has shown consistently that CCTV does not fulfil the roll for which it is acclaimed. The very point of conducting such research is so that others can take on board the findings and thus avoid wasting valuable public funds on the basis of real evidence. We do not see the need to repeat their experiments.

The recent Progress Report also mentions the funding of the proposed scheme which raises concerns with regard ownership of the cameras and recordings. If Thames Valley Police and Oxford's Community Safety Partnership are to pay for the cameras, who will own them and will the East Area Parliament have the power to remove the cameras after a one year trial?

In relation to camera citing, we note that the report states: "All cameras will ideally be in line of sight of each other for two reasons: Continuity of evidence ,Transmission of signals". The suggestion that all cameras be in line of sight of one another takes the proposals back to the original plan put forward in November 2006 where the whole of Cowley Road would be under surveillance – in fact people could be tracked all the way from beginning to end of the Cowley Road. We are also concerned that one of the proposed camera locations is opposite Princes Street where the East Oxford Community Centre is – a venue used by many campaigners. This further suggests that the rights of peaceful protesters in Oxford is to be undermined.

On the issue of 'Health Aspects', the Progress Report quotes from the World Health Organisation's fact sheet on 'Electromagnetic fields and public health'. We would draw your attention to a report a year ago (22nd April 2007) in 'The Independent' that echoed the calls of the chairman of the Health Protection Agency for an inquiry into WiFi safety. The article states: "Professor Olle Johansson, of Sweden's prestigious Karolinska Institute, who is deeply concerned about the spread of Wi-Fi, says there are 'thousands' of articles in scientific literature demonstrating 'adverse health effects'. He adds: 'Do we not know enough already to say, 'Stop!'?" In May 2007 the BBC television programme Panorama raised further questions about the safety of WiFi technology. What is clear is that there is still an awful lot of research that needs to be done. The World Health Organisation's fact sheet was published in May 2006, substantially before the latest findings were released.

Finally we would like to remind people of the Home Office's guidance, issued when CCTV Challenge was launched in 1994, notably before the weight of evidence against CCTV had been published: "It is essential at the outset to assess the crime and other problems to be

addressed and to examine a range of responses, which might include CCTV. Avoid falling into the trap of thinking you should use CCTV just because it is available and because neighbouring towns seem to be planning to do so. You need to think through the way in which CCTV will help address **your** problems in **your** circumstances.” [Emphasis in original.]

Better community reduces crime, technology does not.

No CCTV

info@no-cctv.org.uk

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The East Area Parliament's Progress Report can be downloaded at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/files/meetingdocs/73611/item%2013.pdf> ; the budgetary costings report should be on the council's website shortly.