

FROM: NO CCTV

Press Release No. 3, 9th June 2008, for immediate release

Attn: News Desks
Political, Home Affairs Correspondents

IN WAKE OF SURVEILLANCE REPORT - NO CCTV CALLS FOR HALT TO CCTV EXPANSION

The Home Affairs committee today published its 'A Surveillance Society?' report. Campaign group No CCTV calls on decision makers to halt the proliferation of surveillance cameras in the UK in light of the overwhelming evidence that they do not work and are an unnecessary intrusion into the lives of law abiding citizens.

The report points out that: "Loss of privacy through excessive surveillance erodes trust between the individual and the Government and can change the nature of the relationship between citizen and state." **[Summary p5]**

The committee recommends that: "The Home Office should ensure that any extension of the use of camera surveillance is justified by evidence of its effectiveness for its intended purpose, and that its function and operation are understood by the public." **[Ground rules for Government p7]**. However the report repeatedly references the lack of evidence of the effectiveness of CCTV:

The Minister of State for Security, Counter-terrorism, Crime and Policing, Rt Hon Tony McNulty MP shared this view. He acknowledged a paucity of evidence on the effectiveness of camera surveillance in the prevention of crime but was convinced of its value:

Can I point to a definitive national study that quantifies in any way its success as a deterrent? No, I cannot [...]

[Report, paragraph 208]

In its 'Ground rules for camera surveillance' section the report points out that:

it has been difficult to quantify the benefits of CCTV in terms of its intended effect of preventing crime. We recommend that the Home Office undertake further research to evaluate the effectiveness of camera surveillance as a deterrent to crime before allocating funds or embarking on any major new initiative.

[Report, paragraph 222]

In fact much research has been carried out to determine the effectiveness of camera surveillance as a deterrent to crime and the poor results were acknowledged in the report:

The Surveillance Studies Network noted the findings of a Home Office research study that the 13 CCTV schemes it assessed had "little overall effect on crime levels" and queried levels of investment by the Home Office in CCTV installation.

[Report, paragraph 204]

Another inquiry witness who questioned CCTV's effectiveness was Professor Ross

Anderson of the Foundation for Information Policy Research (FIPR), he said:

“they are not so good at reducing crime in town centres and there is a very serious question about whether far too much money has been spent on these and not enough money on other crime reduction initiatives.”

[Oral and written evidence, Q 231]

The report even acknowledges the view of senior police that CCTV has been a waste of money:

Detective Chief Inspector Mick Neville of the Metropolitan Police’s Visual Images, Identifications and Detections Office (Viido) is reported to have said that although “billions of pounds has been spent on kit”, “only 3% of crimes were solved by CCTV”

[Report, paragraph 209]

The large sums of money spent on surveillance cameras was quantified in the report:

The Surveillance Studies Network’s report said that £500 million of public money had been invested in CCTV over the last decade and that during the 1990s the Home Office spent 78% of its crime prevention budget on installing CCTV.

[Report, paragraph 204]

We would echo the views expressed by Jonathon Bamford:

The Assistant Information Commissioner told us that the decision to install surveillance cameras should not be taken lightly:

“the actual assessment procedure, in deciding whether to establish a scheme, should be very, very rigorous. It should not just be on the basis of public popularity, or the technological capability to do it, or the financial capability to do it.”

[Report, paragraph 203]

The report recommends that:

Under camera surveillance in public spaces, individuals have very little control over whether or not their images and movements are captured and over how they are stored and used. This lack of choice intensifies the obligation on camera operators and regulators to behave responsibly and to deploy surveillance technology only where it is of proven benefit in the fight against crime and where this benefit outweighs any detrimental effect on individual liberty.

[Report, paragraph 221]

Since the inquiry showed that there is no proven benefit in the fight against crime we believe that local authorities and the police should cease the expansion of CCTV in the UK and begin to remove the existing cameras. This would return some much needed trust into our society, reduce public expenditure and claw back some civil liberties for citizens of the UK.

We contend that better community reduces crime, technology does not.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. No CCTV is a UK group campaigning against the excessive use of surveillance cameras in the UK. Their homepage is at www.no-cctv.org.uk
2. From March 2007 the House of Commons Home Affairs committee held an inquiry into surveillance in the UK.
3. The committee's homepage is at http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/home_affairs_committee.cfm
4. For further information contact Charles Farrier at press@no-cctv.org.uk