

Traffic officers given body cameras to curb abuse from angry road users

The incidents took place between January 2020 and 2021 despite the impact of the Covid lockdowns on traffic numbers.

Body-worn cameras have now been issued to National Highways traffic officers patrolling motorways and some major A roads across the country 24/7, 365 days of the year. The national roll-out started in 2021 and was completed last month when the equipment was issued to colleagues in the Midlands.

Studies have shown that the presence of a camera can reduce the potential for confrontation and, should an incident occur, provide vital evidence needed for a police investigation and ultimately prosecution.

National Highways traffic officers are there to keep people safe and help the roads network run smoothly. Those that patrol the network are often first on the scene if there's an incident and help to reopen the road as soon as possible whether by clearing obstructions and spills, helping with broken-down vehicles or supporting the emergency services.

But despite their primary role being to help, abuse is becoming an increasing problem as they carry out this vital work. Incidents range from abuse being shouted from a vehicle, foul language, objects being thrown, targeted threats and even physical attacks.

Footage has today been released by National Highways of two difficult situations faced by traffic officers which have already been captured on the new cameras.

In [the first clip](#) a lorry driver, annoyed that traffic was at a standstill due to a vehicle running out of fuel, drives towards the traffic officer. The HGV can be seen stopping a short distance away from the traffic officer in this footage and the driver later apologising.

In [the second incident](#), a traffic officer is confronted by a man delayed by an incident on the motorway but who is convinced the traffic is being held unnecessarily.

Meanwhile traffic officer Chris Owen has already discovered how important the cameras can be after being called to the M61, between junctions 8 and 9, to a seemingly intoxicated pedestrian 'walking home to Preston from Manchester'.

She became increasingly aggressive with the traffic officer and, when the police arrived, made allegations against him of inappropriate behaviour.

Chris, who has been a traffic officer for six years, said:

Fortunately the camera could prove that was not the case. Although

it was filmed at night the footage was clear. It is reassuring to have that back-up.

Using the cameras can actually de-escalate some situations. Previously people would shout abuse or get angry knowing their actions would not come back on them. Now there is footage.

Although infrequent, complaints against traffic officers have previously relied on all parties giving statements which can often lead to conflicting reports and therefore lengthy and time-consuming investigations. The cameras will provide an accurate account of events.

National Highways Customer Service Director, Mel Clarke, said:

The cameras have been provided to help protect our traffic officers and will be part of their uniform. Like a seat-belt, we hope the camera isn't needed, but it will be there if necessary.

Our traffic officers should not have to face abuse or even threats while simply doing their job – which is to help people and keep our roads moving.

We want to reassure them, and warn anyone who thinks such abuse is acceptable, that we will do all we can to support our traffic officers and vigorously pursue justice for any criminal activities directed towards them.

Traffic officers are wearing Motorola Solutions' VB400 body-worn cameras which are used to support safety across many UK enterprises and organisations including multiple police forces and NHS England's ambulance trusts.

Costing some £500,000 to roll out across the team of traffic officers, the camera units are designed to withstand rigorous use and capture high-quality video and audio in all weather and light conditions. Recorded video is uploaded to the cloud, providing footage which is admissible in court.

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Making Bishops Stortford a home for](#)

'Ratty'

The Environment Agency is working in partnership with the *Waterside Stortford Group on an exciting project to improve habitat for water voles and encourage them to make new homes on the Stort Navigation in Bishops Stortford.

Water voles are the UK's largest vole species, made famous by 'Ratty' from *Wind in the Willows*, who despite his name, is actually a water vole. Sadly, they are also one of the UK's fastest declining native mammals. Due to habitat loss and the invasive American mink, they have disappeared from many of the places they used to call home.

Kate Nixon, Biodiversity Officer at the Environment Agency, said:

This fantastic partnership project will see a 60-metre stretch of pre-planted coir rolls installed along the toe of a steep bank close to the Goods Yard footbridge. We'll also be adding bankside vegetation to provide a source of food and cover, allowing water voles to safely move along riverbanks protected from predators.

Through this exciting venture we're very much looking forward to seeing the return of Ratty and friends once more in Bishops Stortford.

The project team will be installing 'coir rolls' along the bankside. These are cylinders made of sustainable waste product from coconut husk contained in a net.

The project will see the improvement of water vole habitat to encourage them to settle on the Stort Navigation

Coir rolls are dual purpose, protecting riverbanks from erosion and providing habitat. They can be planted with established wetland plants before they are installed to provide immediate habitat. These will be pre-planted with a 'water vole-friendly' plant mix, which will also enhance the existing habitat. This work can also benefit waterfowl, providing cover and nesting opportunities.

Where rivers or canals flow through towns, there's less vegetation, hampering the water vole's ability to safely migrate along the river corridor. The project will also help to protect the bank from erosion and in turn protect the towpath.

Hopefully this project will mirror the successful reintroduction project by Essex Wildlife Trust and Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, who in 2015 helped to re-establish a water vole population on the Stort, downstream of

Bishops Stortford at Thorley Wash nature reserve.

*The Waterside Stortford Group is run by Bishops Stortford Town Council and the Canal and River Trust.

The project is being funded by the Waterside Stortford Group and the installation will be carried out by volunteers from Canal and River Trust with support from staff from the Canal and River Trust and the Environment Agency.

The works are due to take place on 9 and 10 March 2022, weather and river conditions permitting.

[Reappointment of Jonathan Hall QC as Independent Reviewer](#)

News story

Jonathan Hall QC has been appointed to a further 3 year term as the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation.



Following a successful first term of appointment, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, Jonathan Hall QC, has been reappointed for a further term of 3 years from 23 May 2022 until 22 May 2025, in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Jonathan Hall was [first appointed to the role in 2019](#).

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Tree resilience efforts boosted as funds to improve forestry innovation reopen

Innovative approaches to tackling the greatest threats facing our trees and forests are set to be boosted by new Government funding, with applications for the Forestry Commission-delivered Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds and the Tree Production Innovation Fund reopening today (Tuesday 8 March).

This year, almost £4.5 million will be allocated to successful applicants across both funds, which together will boost nature regeneration efforts, promote biodiversity, and support innovative approaches to tree health, resilience and production amidst a changing climate. Investing in the long-term welfare of our forests will underpin wider efforts to treble tree planting rates by the end of this Parliament and plant 30,000 hectares of trees across the UK per year by 2025.

Chair of the Forestry Commission, Sir William Worsley said:

As we enter an unprecedented era of tree planting, fostering resilient tree growth and management will be essential to realise the health, economic and ecological benefits that trees offer – now and in the future.

Both funds will drive innovation across the forestry and associated sectors to ensure our much loved trees and forests continue to thrive for generations to come in the face of a changing climate.

Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds

Approximately 40% of England's woodlands are not actively managed, which can be detrimental to biodiversity and leave neglected woodlands vulnerable to pests and disease. Projects which successfully apply for funding through the second round of the Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds will receive a share of £3 million, as the Forestry Commission aims to bring an additional 20,000 hectares of existing woodland in England into active management by 2024/25.

Under the umbrella of the Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds, the new Timber in Construction Innovation Fund will support projects which increase and facilitate the use of English timber from sustainably managed woods and forests in construction. Other funds will support new business models and supply chains for ash timber to help restore woodlands damaged by ash dieback, as well as for initiatives using temporary infrastructure to access neglected or degraded woodlands. Moreover, a series of regional funds will support forward-thinking projects that enable the active management of

woodlands where previously not possible. Applicants in the forestry and associated sectors, as well as local authorities, will be invited to submit multi-year proposals spanning up to three financial years (ending March 2025), with individual projects valued at up to £100,000 per year.

Tree Production Innovation Fund

Also reopening today, the Tree Production Innovation Fund will make over £1.4 million available to projects striving to enhance the quantity, quality, and diversity of tree planting stock available for planting in England. The Fund will support the research and development of new technologies and ways of working which will supply young trees in the quantities required to realise ambitious tree planting plans across the country. Projects previously supported with this fund include collaborations from researchers, nurseries, seed suppliers and industry, including the Future Trees Trust, the University of Oxford and Maelor Forest Nurseries. Applicants will be invited to submit multi-year proposals spanning up to three financial years (ending March 2025), with projects valued at up to £300,000 per year.

The second rounds of the Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds and the Tree Production Innovation Fund are now open. For more information and to apply:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/woods-into-management-forestry-innovation-funds> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-production-innovation-fund>

Case study: Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds

- Routes to market for ash timber Innovation Fund

A collaborative effort between Grown in Britain and Axminster Tools, the 'Ash Bounceback: Homegrown hardwood into tool handles' project has secured a new supply chain for ash through the development of ash tool handles. This helps to reduce imports and utilise more UK timber. This project aims to see ash more widely viewed as high value, bringing more ash into active management.

- Regional woodland restoration Innovation Funds

Supported as part of the South East and London Innovation Fund, the myForest Woodland Assessor from the Sylva Foundation is an online UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) Evaluator Tool which supports woodland management activity. It will enable woodland owners and agents to critique their woodland management practices against the UKFS and be used to deliver advice to 50 owners of undermanaged woodlands, raising awareness to support the delivery of the UKFS.

Case study: Tree Production Innovation Fund

- Intelligent Growth Solutions Ltd and Maelor Forest Nurseries are investigating the feasibility and optimisation of Total Controlled Environment Agriculture (TCEA) systems to produce year-round forestry seedlings.
- David Farquhar, CEO of IGS, said: "Projects such as this offer

opportunities to undertake impactful climate-positive innovation. Our TCEA systems promise the highest quality seedling production, minimising wastage, reducing imports and accelerating reforestation. The forestry sector is evolving rapidly and is at the heart of the hugely exciting drive to tackle climate change, so we are excited about the positive role our systems could play in driving what we all know could be the right outcome.”

[Pro-Direct pays charity after 9 years of waste packaging errors](#)

The Environment Agency accepted an Enforcement Undertaking (EU) from the Newton Abbot-based firm for failure to register as a packaging producer and not taking steps to recover and recycle its packaging waste under the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007.

Pro-Direct Group Ltd has made a financial contribution of £19,906.21 to Devon Wildlife Trust and introduced new measures to make sure it is compliant by registering with a compliance scheme, training staff, and using a new weighing process.

Jake Richardson, Senior Technical Officer for the Environment Agency, said:

Enforcement Undertakings allow businesses to address historical non-compliance under the Packaging Regulations. A suitable environmental project benefits from a financial contribution and we are assured steps have been taken to ensure compliance with the regulations.

But if we encounter producers deliberately taking advantage of the system, we will pursue other enforcement options in line with our Enforcement and Sanctions policy, which includes prosecution.

Steve Hussey of Devon Wildlife Trust said:

We'll be using this funding to support the work of our Wembury Marine Centre, near Plymouth. Each year the centre welcomes thousands of visitors along with dozens of school groups through its Wildlife Champions project.

Each visitor gets to experience and learn about the rich marine environments that exist around our shores. Each person leaves with a better understanding of the marine creatures that live there and how they can help conserve them for the future.

Packaging Regulations reduce the amount of packaging waste entering landfill sites by requiring obligated businesses (producers) to contribute financially towards the recovery and recycling of packaging waste.

The regulation/s the company did not meet:

The aim of the Packaging Regulations is to achieve a more sustainable approach to dealing with packaging materials by ensuring that businesses take responsibility for the packaging used in their operations. This in turn reduces the amount of packaging produced and the material going to landfill.

Pro-Direct Group Ltd has acknowledged that by not following the regulations they avoided paying the Environment Agency's annual registration fees, and they did not fund the recovery and recycling of packaging waste:

- In the years 2009 – 2017: Regulation 40(1)(a) – a failure to register under the Producer of Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007.
- In the years 2009 – 2017: Regulation 40(1)(b) – a failure to recover/recycle under the Producer of Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007.

If a business or organisation produces or uses packaging, or sells packaged goods, they may be classed as an obligated packaging producer.

Companies are an 'obligated' packaging producer' if they (or the UK group of companies they are part of) meet both of the following criteria:

- handled 50 tonnes of packaging materials or packaging in the previous calendar year
- have a turnover of more than £2 million a year (based on the last financial year's accounts)

What is an Enforcement Undertaking?

An Enforcement Undertaking is a Civil Sanction available to the Environment Agency (EA) as an alternative sanction to prosecution or monetary penalty for dealing with certain environmental offences. It is a legally binding voluntary agreement proposed by a business (or an individual) when the EA has reasonable grounds to suspect that an environmental offence has occurred.

Enforcement Undertakings for environmental offences were introduced under the Environmental Civil Sanctions (England) Order 2010 and the Environmental Civil Sanctions (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2010.

Accepting an Enforcement Undertaking is always at the discretion of the EA but if accepted enables firms and individuals who have damaged the environment or operated outside of legislative requirements to offer to complete actions which will address the cause and effect of their offending, including making a payment to a suitable environmental project.

EUs can be offered for offences including polluting rivers, breaching permit conditions designed to protect communities, or not registering and follow

recycling/recovery obligations. The Environment Agency then carefully considers whether the actions offered by the offender are acceptable.

Why use Enforcement Undertakings?

- Businesses will voluntarily secure compliance now and in the future, without attracting a criminal record
- The environment, local community and those directly affected by the offending can benefit through actions being offered in an EU
- They allow the EA to deal with the less intentional and polluting offending in a more proportionate way than prosecution through the criminal courts

The Environment Agency reserves the right to prosecute, where offenders do not follow the terms of an Enforcement Undertaking offer.