

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.