
TRUVELO (UK) LTD

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Automatic Community Speed Watch — the next step

Truvelo (UK)'s photo-speed solution for improving compliance reduces risk and increases safety.

Increasing drivers' speed compliance is all about improving road safety. It therefore makes little sense to put at risk those who carry out roadside surveys.

For many years, the principal method of carrying out such surveys has been Community Speed Watch. This scheme exists to enable residents to become directly involved in raising awareness of the dangers of speeding and so help to control the problems within their local areas. The emphasis is on education and deterrence, rather than punitive action — those who are found to have been speeding are not prosecuted but receive a letter highlighting their behaviour from local police authorities.

Community Speed Watch uses volunteer observers. These volunteers stand at the roadside, measuring and recording vehicle speeds using handheld devices. However, with the increasing emphasis on minimising risk to the individual, traditional methods of operation are becoming increasingly non-viable. Locations have to be risk-assessed and volunteers trained to work safely in a live traffic environment. There is also a potential risk to volunteers of adverse reaction from motorists not taking kindly to being observed.

Automating the process

Truvelo (UK) has Automated the Community Speed Watch process. It has done this by combining the VIA-Cam radar-activated camera with a mains-powered or a unique off-grid power supply which combines wind and solar power generation with an on-site battery supply.

The VIA-Cam can measure speeds above 5mph and, because it can capture both front and rear plate images, is bi-directional. This enables both lanes of a road to be monitored simultaneously and increases siting possibilities.

The camera operates across a wide temperature range (-15 to +50C) and its infrared illumination enables images captures at night as well as in daylight. Images and associated data are automatically transferred into a back office for adjudication and onward processing via bespoke encrypted cellular telephony.

In creating this first-generation technology, Truvelo has deployed the system on estates across its portfolio of blue-chip clients. These are from a wide variety of business sectors, including pharmaceutical, steel production, car manufacturing, and aviation. The system has proven to be such a success with the private sector that it is only natural for Truvelo to now look to the public sector.

The first generation of Automatic Community Speed Watch is a pole-mounted, non-passive safe solution. It can be used barrier-free at locations with speed limits of up to 30mph. Truvelo (UK) has developed a second-generation passive-safe solution with a frangible pole which, potentially, can be used at locations where the speed limit is up to 60mph, and without a barrier or some other form of intermediate protection in place.

Combined with an off-grid power supply and 4G transfer of encrypted data, this is truly revolutionary functionality. When used in conjunction with the Violation Management System, Truvelo's DPIA-compliant offence transfer and processing electronic back office, the result is a brand-new concept for speed compliance, both across the UK as well as internationally.

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Increasing the options

As well as increasing operatives' safety, Automatic Community Speed Watch also removes the subjectivity and fallibility of having humans involved in the monitoring process.

In the UK, considerable effort goes into ensuring that enforcement of safe driving is not a blunt instrument.

Rather than adopt a binary offence/no offence stance, roads authorities and the police have implemented a system which can be escalated in line with the incidence and severity of offences. Speed enforcement with fines and points added to drivers' licenses is very much regarded as the ultimate sanction, not a first step.

At the lower end of the scale are Speed Information Displays (SIDs), many thousands of which are now in operation around the country. SIDs measure approaching vehicles' speeds and can display these to the drivers on a screen, together with a positive or negative reinforcement message or pictogram of a smiling or sad face.

Automatic Community Speed Watch adds another intermediate step between SIDs and full enforcement, plus it informs the operators of driver behaviour by doubling as an automatic traffic counter.

This increases the acceptability of interventions in terms of safer driving. Road safety is now the number one concern of parish and local councils but gaining the trust and support of communities is important if schemes are to be successful and not just stand accused of revenue-raising. An increasingly variable scale of responses is regarded as 'fair policing' and so is popular with local authorities and more palatable to road users.

Automatic Community Speed Watch is now in operation in the UK. In Hertfordshire, on-grid and off-grid first-generation solutions are being used to monitor driver behaviour and generate warning letters to drivers, the entire scheme being funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

David Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire said: "In Hertfordshire we are piloting both on-grid and off-grid automated speed watch solutions to monitor and change driver behaviours. This is being done by generating warning letters to be sent to speeding drivers rather than fines. The schemes are being funded by my office using money generated from court costs.

"The first half-year results of the pilot have been very positive, with the number of speeding vehicles dropping month on month, and we are keen to explore implementation of the solution at several other diverse sites where poor observance of speed limits has been evidenced as a problem."

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