NATIONAL CCTV STRATEGY

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Acknowledgements

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FOREWORD

The United Kingdom is generally recognised as a leading user of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) for community safety and crime investigation purposes. We regularly see examples of where it has been used to make our streets safer, reduce the fear of crime and detect serious offences. The use of CCTV in the support of terrorist investigations in the UK has led to considerable worldwide interest, with many countries now following us in developing CCTV infrastructures.

CCTV enjoys considerable public support and it is important that this is maintained. This report has identified the significant benefits associated with CCTV, but also highlights the potential improvements that can be made to existing systems. Although the current CCTV infrastructure is very good, it could be much better if it was effectively coordinated and there is a direction that all users could follow in terms of future developments.

The Home Office continues to be in favour of technical developments that will improve the effectiveness of CCTV, but we need to ensure that any system adopted will be effective. The review upon which this report is based highlights among a number of things the problems faced using images for evidential purposes in the Criminal Justice System (CJS). It should be our collective aim and responsibility to ensure that, as well as the need to keep up with technical developments in the industry as a whole, improvements in provision remain consistent with the requirements of the CJS and with the needs of the Court Service in particular.

The report looks at the attention being paid to improvements in the technical aspects of CCTV development, the potential benefits and impact of digital recording systems, rapidly evolving technology, and the legal background to the operation of CCTV. It also highlights the constant need to observe data protection, privacy and human rights legislation. Recognising data protection and privacy rights in the operation of all systems is not only important because the law requires us to do so, but also that it is right that we should do so, with concerns about surveillance so apparent in our everyday lives.

I see CCTV as an important tool in the Government's crime-fighting strategy.

The review upon which this report is based highlights some of the problems faced by many of those who operate and manage CCTV systems. The need for standards, better training, improved partnership working and more coordinated use of new technology will ensure that we get the best out of new and existing CCTV systems.

I very much welcome this report. I am grateful to the joint Home Office and ACPO team involved in this important piece of work and for setting out the way forward clearly and concisely. The recommendations are wide-ranging and will require immense efforts on behalf of everyone involved in continuing to making CCTV effective. At the end of the day, if the public were to lose confidence in CCTV as a beneficial influence, we risk losing a very valuable tool in the battle against crime and disorder.

I look forward to seeing the continued development of CCTV following this review and in particular the work of the National CCTV Strategy Programme Board.

TONY MCNULTY
Minister of State for Security,
Counter Terrorism and Police and Ministerial Adviser on Parliamentary Affairs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Closed circuit television (CCTV) plays a significant role in protecting the public and assisting the police in the investigation of crime. In many ways, we have led the world from its early introduction in the 1970s to the massive growth in CCTV installation and use in the 1990s.

The Government has invested heavily in local authority-operated CCTV schemes and most town centres benefit from CCTV cameras. Although we have more CCTV than many other countries, most is privately owned and operated by the commercial sector and covers areas such as retail establishments and shopping malls.

CCTV has been instrumental in helping the police to identify and bring to justice those involved in all aspects of criminality, perhaps the most notable being serious crime and terrorist incidents. CCTV in the UK enjoys significant public support and year on year fear of crime surveys states that the public feels safer due to the presence of CCTV.

The contribution CCTV has made in protecting the public and assisting the police to investigate crime has occurred despite CCTV systems being developed in a piecemeal fashion with little strategic direction, control or regulation. This approach has failed to maximise the potential of our CCTV infrastructure and many involved in its operation and management felt there remained a pressing need to examine existing standards, procedures, training and methods of operation. In addition, as local authorities, the police and criminal justice agencies face the challenges associated with the move from VHS technology to digitally recorded images, the lack of a co-ordinated approach to CCTV development poses significant risks in terms of compatibility of systems, cost of accessing the images and the potential loss of operational effectiveness. Recognising the current concerns and both the risks and potential opportunities that CCTV can bring, a report was submitted by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lead on CCTV to the Home Office recommending that there was now an urgent need for the development of a national strategy that would ensure the effective development of the public space CCTV infrastructure. The report was endorsed by the thenCrime Reduction Delivery Board in September 2005.

This strategy is the culmination of work undertaken by a small joint ACPO/Home Office project team, supported by a wide range of stakeholders involved in the use and management of CCTV.

This report is broadly based on the following 10 themes and examines each issue in detail.

- The need for standards in all aspects of CCTV;
- The need for clear guidelines on registration, inspection and enforcement;
- Training of all personnel;
- The police use of CCTV footage and evidence
- Storage / Volume / Archiving / Retention issues
- The need for CCTV Networks – Live & Stored
- Equipping, resourcing and standardisation within the CJS
- Emerging Technologies / Changing Threats / New & Changing Priorities
- Partnership Working
- Financial and Resource management.

It is felt the advice did not go far enough in exploring the reasons for installing CCTV in the first instance, establishing the exact purpose of the CCTV system and individual cameras, and how the critical success of the system could be measured. (HOSDB has recently updated the Operational Manual 17/94 with a publicly released draft available from the HOSDB website)

2.2.4. FIT FOR SEVERAL PURPOSES

Increasingly, CCTV systems are now being used for a variety of purposes.

In town centre CCTV schemes, in addition to crime and disorder uses, cameras are increasingly being used for parking and bus lane enforcement. Whilst in many circumstances additional cameras are being installed, in some cases the cameras' initial purpose has been changed or they are required to perform a number of additional and conflicting tasks. Some existing cameras originally installed for detecting crime are now being positioned to monitor a bus lane and record vehicle number plates. Whilst the cameras are being used in this way, it seems unlikely that they will then be used proactively to patrol the area and detect crime. Current installed cameras cannot perform these two functions at the same time.

The London Councils' (ALG) Camera Sharing Group has done a lot of work in establishing protocols and enabling camera sharing between local authority, Transport for London (TfL) and other agencies. Whilst it makes good financial sense to share cameras, and a good example of a partnership approach, particular care and attention should be given to ensure that cameras installed for crime and disorder are not diverted to other uses. Although it is more acceptable, for instance, to use TfL enforcement cameras for crime and disorder when they are not being used for their intended purpose, the cameras cannot be used for two different purposes at the same time, without some conflict and a reduction in their effectiveness.

There is also a conflict between the pro-active and post incident investigation use of CCTV. Town centre operators use the cameras pro-actively to search for suspicious behaviour, certain types of activity, or in response to intelligence or ongoing incidents communicated to them by police or other parties. This real time pro-active use of the cameras is at the heart of the CCTV operator's role. Unfortunately, this often frustrates investigators reviewing CCTV. If an incident was not captured initially, the roaming cameras, and distant shots are unable to provide secondary evidence/intelligence, by providing a good quality continuous recording at set locations or choke points in the vicinity of the crime. This results in investigating officers having to trawl nearby addresses and subsequently relying on external CCTV cameras from commercial premises. CCTV in this instance was never expected to provide the quality of images required for police investigations.

In other situations, such as transport hubs, shopping centres, shops, public houses and clubs, the role of CCTV cameras is widened even further. Often the primary role is not the detection and prevention of crime. The purpose of the CCTV scheme may be to monitor crowds, slips, trips and falls and staff crime. Often there is a public expectation that these systems are being installed for their safety, but the CCTV may not be of sufficient quality for police to use in criminal investigations.

2.2.5. COVERAGE/DEPLOYMENT

A commonly-used estimate for the number of cameras operational in the UK is that generated in a study by Michael McCahill and Clive Norris in 2002. This provided what has been regarded by many as the best estimate figure of around 4.2 million cameras. In London, it is estimated that on average, an individual may be recorded by over 300 different cameras in any given day. However, the evidence from police

low cost variations on large infrastructure projects, such as the digging up of roads, laying conduit for CCTV or large scale IT projects which could tie in with digital CCTV, transmission, and storage etc.

2.3. CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were arrived at following consultation with key stakeholders:

- Incompatible systems have led to the police employing specialist technical staff to recover and process digital CCTV footage. The CJS has difficulty playing back these proprietary formats.

- The picture quality of images obtained from CCTV systems varies considerably and is often far from ideal, especially if it is being used for primary identification of a suspect and identification is being sought.

- HOSDB operational guidance documentation was fairly dated and difficult to read but it is currently being reviewed and brought up to date.

- CCTV cameras are increasingly being used for potentially conflicting roles, which results in them becoming less effective for crime and disorder purposes. Until a viable technical solution is found, consideration should be given to supplementing existing pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) cameras with fixed cameras capable of continually providing good quality images for post investigation use, and if and when they are justified, dedicated cameras installed for non crime detection use, thus allowing the original PTZ cameras to be used for their original pro-active surveillance use.

- There is a vast difference and variance in the quality and usefulness of the business processes employed across the CCTV landscape.

- We cannot say with any certainty how accurate previous estimates of camera numbers are. Efforts are ongoing to ascertain numbers through consultation with local authorities, but there is a good deal of uncertainty about the extent of provision nationally. This uncertainty extends to where the cameras are, if they are deployed and covering the correct areas, if the images they produce are fit for purpose and whether they are being used effectively by the police. This in itself is a major problem and one which requires a clear, transparent strategy that will be central to delivering a strategy for the short-to-medium term. Without a better understanding of the degree of coverage, or a clearer and supported end to end process, future guidance around common standards in all the areas of concern above, will fall far short of what is required to ensure a meaningful strategic direction.

- Increased CCTV effectiveness can be achieved if actively monitored town centre CCTV schemes are also encouraged to monitor existing CCTV systems in other largely public areas such as railway/tube stations and where possible onboard CCTV in buses, tube and train carriages, extending to shopping centres, football stadiums, arenas, thus becoming the de-facto hub for public space CCTV. It should be the aim that such monitoring be carried out in a fully co-ordinated way.

2.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

R 2.1.   Establish digital CCTV standards. Agreement would have to be reached between police, CJS and public space CCTV operators. One way would be for the stakeholders to agree on a standard digital video format that they will accept. To achieve this, it would be appropriate to establish a technical standards group within the stakeholders / governance group.

R 2.2.   Setting of standards more generally by the stakeholders. There would be merit in seeking to influence national and international CCTV standards. It is proposed that one of the ways of achieving this would be through the involvement of national and international standards setting bodies, and seeking collaborative working with industry and national and international police agencies and organisations

R 2.3   Continue the review of the Home Office HOSDB Operational Requirements (OR) Manual. Work on this is currently underway . (HOSDB have recently updated the Operational Manual 17/94 with a publicly released draft available from the HOSDB website) it is expected that the completed manual will: give guidance on recommended minimum image quality, be more user friendly, and give guidance on how to test the systems once they have been installed.

R 2.4.   Review the location and purpose of all CCTV cameras. Owners of systems should undertake a review of all the CCTV cameras in public space use, detailing their purpose and establishing if they are fit for that purpose.

R 2.5.   Establish a mechanism such as a Governance Body to ensure that there is the correct balance between cameras being used for police / crime use and other uses. This refers to the structure we have to set up with the key stakeholders and detailed in the chapter on Partnership Working.

R 2.6.   The current installed camera base of Pan-Tilt-Zoom (PTZ) camera technology cannot be used by a variety of users for different purposes simultaneously. Therefore, there is a need to establish the technical requirements and possible technical advancements that would allow multiple purpose use whilst maintaining fitness for purpose but also reducing the cost.

R 2.7.   Clear recommendations on what is required from CCTV systems if they are to be used by the police for investigation, detection and prosecution of criminal cases is needed. There is a role here for forces, in conjunction with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

R 2.8.   In order to scope the issue of coverage across the country, consideration should be given to mapping out where the cameras are in order to produce a holistic analysis, identifying any weaknesses in the coverage, [profile the coverage against the National Intelligence Model (NIM) and National threat assessment models such as known crime spots, anti-terrorism / serious crime, intelligence, and specific targets of a financial or strategic importance]. To have strategic value, this would need to be a national exercise. Future deployment should be in accordance with NIM principles.

R 2.9.   Local CCTV owners should consider the value in gathering best practice and job profiles, prepare standard local operating procedure/guidance documents, complete with generic role profiles, preferred Key Performance Indicators, model business cases, and process and stakeholder mapping/interfaces. Any documents associated with this work would in practice serve to supplement and complement the advice currently being prepared by the NPIA on

11.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

R 11.1. Establish a body responsible for the governance and use of CCTV in the UK.

R 11.2. Create an effective funding stream, which may include but not be limited to:

- Contributions by stakeholders and interested parties; in the majority of cases this will include a contribution from the police as one of the key players in the use of CCTV

- Further government funding; a dedicated funding stream for CCTV, including funding for maintenance, repair and expansion. This should also include restrictions and conditions on the use of funds to enable standards to be conformed to

- Income generation by the system itself; use of CCTV in a variety of ways from traffic, bus lane, and bylaw enforcement to alarm monitoring, lone worker monitoring and electronic patrolling of retail and business parks, where the system is 'funding itself'. The concern here is that cameras and/or the CCTV operators will be increasingly used for these purposes, detracting from the use of cameras for crime prevention and law enforcement. This last point is an increasing worry from a police perspective

- Partial funding from a CCTV Registration Scheme

R 11.3. Standardised national key performance indicators should be introduced for use by CCTV operators, the police and the courts.

R 11.4. Promote CCTV and its expansion, by forming business cases that evidence the effectiveness of systems, focusing on the best elements of a CCTV system, how useful CCTV can be for pre-emptive/reactive purposes, value for money, and number of arrests per year. This will be the key to gaining funding and resource support.