

Our ref 394/506

Your ref

8 September 2010

Mr T Behr

Dear Mr Behr

FOI Request re: Information Regarding Driver Improvement Schemes

Thank you for your correspondence dated 12 August 2010.

I can provide the following information in response to your requests:

The speed awareness course referred to throughout this request is offered as an alternative to the Fixed Penalty for speed and redlight safety camera offences. It is applicable to offences detected through the Safecam operation, that provides a safety camera enforcement and associated driver education service in the Avon and Somerset area.

As explained in my covering email for acknowledgement of this request, Avon and Somerset Constabulary also operate speed awareness and driver improvement courses resulting from Police-operated enforcement. This request does not apply to Police-operated enforcement.

PART 1

1. I can confirm that Safecam operate a speed awareness course, Speed Choice, as an alternative to the Fixed Penalty for speed and redlight safety camera offences.
2. The course fee is £60. Note that £60 is the minimum that can be charged for a course, as ACPO guidelines state the course fee cannot be less than the Fixed Penalty fine which is currently £60. Attendees will incur a further £30 fee if they require a second appointment as a result of non-attendance at their original appointment.
3. The first Speed Choice course was run on 1st April 2003.
- 4/5. A speed awareness course was initiated by the Avon and Somerset Safety Camera Partnership (Safecam) as a means of offering education to offenders rather than prosecution. The lead authority of the Partnership, Somerset County Council, took on the provision of the scheme - Speed Choice. Somerset County Council employ the Driver Education Manager, a team of 4 administrators and 26 course tutors, and also manage the budget and accounts for Speed Choice.
6. Speed Choice is a self-funding scheme. All payments for the course are made to Somerset County Council. Surplus monies (after expenditure has been covered ie employee, premises, transport, and supplies and services costs) have been managed differently over the years. Currently the surplus is split 4 ways; a proportion is used as a funding contribution for Safecam, the majority of the remaining amount is split between the Somerset and West of England Road Safety Partnerships, and a small amount is retained as a contingency fund.

PART 2

Please refer to the attached PDF file:

1. Page 1 of the attached PDF file provides the number of Speed Choice attendees during each financial year, up to and including 9th August 2010 (latest complete and available data at the time of enquiry).

2. Page 2 of the attached PDF file provides details of the Speed Choice income for each complete financial year 2003/2004 through to 2009/2010.

3/7/9. Details of Speed Choice expenditure and the distribution of income will not be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act as this information is considered exempt under Section 43 of the Act, Commercial interests. This letter acts as a Refusal Notice under Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act, Refusal of request. Please refer to the attached Decision Notice which fully explains this exemption and why it applies. You have the right to appeal against this decision, please also find attached details of the Appeals Procedure.

4/5. Speed Choice accounts are managed by the finance department of the Somerset County Council Environment Directorate, and as such appear in the Somerset County Council accounts.

6. There is no loss of income to Avon and Somerset Constabulary. The Constabulary do not provide any funding for Safecam or Speed Choice. The Safecam operation is funded by the Somerset and West of England Road Safety Partnerships (through the Government Road Safety grant), and Speed Choice is self-funding. Fixed Penalty fines are paid directly to Her Majesty's Court Service and are retained by Her Majesty's Treasury.

8. Somerset County Council manage the budget and financial accounts for Speed Choice.

Further information about Speed Choice can be found on its website at www.speedchoice.org.uk.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information, explanation or clarification.

Thank you for contacting Safecam.

Yours sincerely

Emma Greenhow

Emma Greenhow
Freedom of Information Disclosure Officer
Safecam