



Tony Porter  
Surveillance Camera Commissioner  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

Date: 19 May 2020

*By email*

To: Mark Shephard – Bridgend County Borough Council  
Paul Orders – City and County Cardiff Council  
Ellis Cooper – Merthyr County Borough Council  
Chris Bradshaw – Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council  
Phillip Roberts – Swansea City Council  
Rob Thomas – Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council

CC: Leaders of Councils  
Strategic Governance Board CCTV

Dear Chief Executive

**Re: CCTV collaboration project in South Wales between local authorities and the police**

I hope you are well and managing as best you can in these challenging and uncertain times. I understand from the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner that you have kindly agreed to participate in a collaborative project across all seven local authorities in the South Wales Police area to seek an optimum and long-term solution for investment in CCTV coverage. I really welcome this innovative and forward-thinking approach which I am sure will prove successful and help keep your communities safe.

If deployed correctly surveillance cameras can play an important role in protecting our communities rather than spying on them. As you will know, state surveillance cameras systems such as CCTV are typically operated by local authorities with the police as partner. The vast majority of footage from local authority CCTV is ultimately used by the police in investigations – from minor offences to the most serious of crimes. As well as this, many local authorities work closely with forces when they are responding to live incidents, for example directing officers on the ground.

You will also know that the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice, which I oversee, sets the standard that the Government expects state owned overt surveillance cameras systems to be operated at. As a relevant authority under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, local authorities must pay due regard to that code.

As an operator of surveillance cameras, you need to be able to demonstrate to the communities you monitor that you are using surveillance cameras proportionately, effectively and efficiently. In order for a local authority to do this, they need to rely on feedback and partnerships with their police forces. Without that it is difficult to evidence and justify why funds are being spent on such a service – in other words, there needs to be collaboration, which is what you are planning on doing with South Wales Police.

Over the six years I have been Surveillance Camera Commissioner, I have seen some local authorities turn off or reduce service in terms of town centre CCTV systems. In some cases this has been due to the cost of running a non-statutory service in austere circumstances. In fact in Dyfed Powys we have seen the complete closedown of local authority CCTV services and then the

full re-instatement of CCTV services, but with significant cost as all the infrastructure had been removed only a few years earlier. Sadly, in others it has been because the relationships between local authorities and the police have deteriorated to a level where the local authority is unable to justifiably demonstrate the value CCTV has to offer. Where surveillance cameras are being used effectively from my experience, this has been due to good working relationship and partnerships being developed and put in place. So, I fully endorse the work that is underway in South Wales to nurture partnership working between local authorities and the police.

The benefits of such an approach are clear – better siting of cameras, updating out of date systems by investing in the latest technology leading to more cost effective systems in the long-term, working to agreed and consistent standards, putting in place feedback mechanisms around the effectiveness of surveillance and transparently demonstrate to communities how CCTV has protected them by publishing regular statistics. These all benefit local authorities, policing and the communities you serve.

Modern technology creates a new imperative. Powerful cameras linked to algorithms (facial recognition, voice recognition, gait recognition technology and so on) provide new and diverse opportunities for civil leaders to protect and support their public. Proper and strong governance, policy and protocols for use of this new capability are necessary to ensure a balance between privacy and security. What is inevitable is that all these new systems are linked to video surveillance technology. Old analogue CCTV networks have had their day. New cities, smart cities and smart towns will provide effective use of resources, effective resource deployment and cost benefit to the tax payer. This is surely best supported in collaboration between organisations and local authority partners. There is not just work going on here in the UK for smart cities but all over the world and these all have CCTV capability at their core.

Through the leadership of South Wales Police Assistant Chief Constable Jenny Gilmer and Tony Gleason (Chair of the Public CCTV Managers Association, and representative of the Local Government Authority) and as part of my National Surveillance Camera Strategy for England and Wales, we have been developing a framework Service Level Agreement (SLA) to be used by the police and local authorities – a key deliverable of the strategy. Ensuring there are proper, robust and efficient agreements in place are extremely important and this is precisely what the framework document will do by helping to develop better partnership working that help local authorities and police forces work more effectively in your roles.

The SLA framework will set the standard for this type of collaboration across England and Wales and something I will be asking all Chief Executives and Chief Officers to sign up to. I ask that through the work in South Wales that you use the framework to develop your own service level agreements – you will be pioneering in this approach and shape how agreements are developed across all local authorities and policing.

Properly funded and managed local authority CCTV systems are an essential tool for the prevention and detection of crime and public safety. Robust partnerships can help put in place measures that mean local authorities and the police can effectively evidence the value of that CCTV to the communities that they are serving.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Park', written in a cursive style.

Surveillance Camera Commissioner England & Wales  
Email: [scc@sccommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:scc@sccommissioner.gov.uk)