

FROM: NO CCTV
Press Release
24th July 2013
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Attn: News Desks

-- BEGINS --

ICO Rules Royston Vehicle Number Plate Tracking Cameras Unlawful

Today the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) issued an Enforcement Notice on Hertfordshire police [1], informing them that the vehicle number plate tracking camera "Ring of Steel" around the town of Royston is unlawful.

The ICO notice comes as a result of a complaint from No CCTV, Privacy International and Big Brother Watch submitted in June 2011 [2]. The three groups lodged their complaint upon learning that Hertfordshire Constabulary had installed a so-called "Ring of Steel" of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) [3] cameras around the small town of Royston, tracking every single car as it enters or leaves.

In the complaint the groups raised their serious concerns about the entire nationwide ANPR network that has been constructed by the police with insufficient public understanding and no public debate. The phrase "Ring of Steel" was once coined to describe extreme measures but in Royston it seems that it was merely part of standard police operations.

Charles Farrier of No CCTV said:

"This is a landmark decision. The ICO has validated our view that blanket vehicle tracking should have no place in a democratic society. The Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera network amounts to an automated checkpoint system that is the stuff of totalitarianism. The ICO has ruled strongly within the constraints of the Data Protection Act. But this can only be the beginning – our concerns go beyond regulatory frameworks, highlighting the detrimental consequences on our society of sacrificing freedoms without question and turning everyday life into a scene of crime."

In their press release [4] the ICO said:

"It is difficult to see why a small rural town such as Royston, requires cameras monitoring all traffic in and out of the town 24 hours a day. The use of ANPR cameras and other forms of surveillance must be proportionate to the problem it is trying to address. After detailed enquiries, including consideration of the information Hertfordshire Constabulary provided, we found that this simply wasn't the case in Royston. We hope that this enforcement notice sends a clear message to all police forces, that the use of ANPR cameras needs to be fully justified before they are installed."

For media requests contact either Charles Farrier at press@no-cctv.org.uk or Steve Jolly at steve_jolly@no-cctv.org.uk

-- ENDS --

References:

[1] http://www.ico.org.uk/enforcement/~media/documents/library/Data_Protection/Notices/hertfordshire-constabulary-enforcement-notice.pdf

[2] The full text of the No CCTV / Privacy International / Big Brother Watch complaint is available at:

http://www.no-cctv.org.uk/materials/docs/Royston_Ring_of_Steel_ANPR_Complaint.pdf

[3] ANPR cameras work alongside a variety of databases that can be used to identify cars and their occupants. The data collected from the cameras is stored in local force databases (Back Office Facility (BOF)) that may be used alongside querying or data mining tools, and in a centralised database (National ANPR Data Centre (NADC)). License plate photos are stored for two years and photographs of cars are stored for 90 days.

[4] http://www.ico.org.uk/news/latest_news

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. No CCTV campaigns against the excessive use of surveillance cameras. Their homepage is at www.no-cctv.org.uk. For further information contact Charles Farrier at press@no-cctv.org.uk or Steve Jolly at steve_jolly@no-cctv.org.uk. In 2010 Steve Jolly successfully fought a campaign against a ring of steel of cameras around Birmingham known as Project Champion.

2. Privacy International is the oldest surviving privacy advocacy group in the world, and was the first organisation to campaign at an international level on privacy issues. Their homepage is at www.privacyinternational.org

3. Big Brother Watch is a campaign from the founders of the TaxPayers' Alliance, fighting intrusions on privacy and protecting liberties. Their homepage is at www.bigbrotherwatch.org.uk.

4. This press release may be downloaded from <http://www.no-cctv.org.uk/press/>