

Avon and Somerset Police to introduce unmarked road safety enforcement vans to tackle persistent speeding

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Unmarked road safety enforcement vans are being launched this week to address persistent speeding issues in targeted locations across the Avon and Somerset force area.

This initiative follows extensive evidence gathered from community reports, Community Speedwatch schemes, and collision data, highlighting areas where excess speed is a recurring problem. The aim is to deter speeding and prevent serious collisions by encouraging consistent safe driving behaviours.

In addition to detecting speeding offences, the new vans are equipped with 360-degree cameras and long-range detection technology capable of identifying other road traffic offences, including failure to wear a seatbelt and using a handheld device while driving. The vans also feature infrared capabilities for night-

time enforcement and automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology. This means that offences can be detected day or night.

Changing Driver Behaviour to Save Lives

The deployment of unmarked vans is part of a broader strategy focused on changing driver behaviour and addressing the “Fatal Five” offences: speeding, drink/drug driving, not wearing a seatbelt, careless driving, and using a mobile phone at the wheel.

Unlike marked enforcement vehicles, unmarked vans are designed to encourage drivers to maintain safe speeds at all times, not just when enforcement is visible.

Chief Inspector Robert Cheeseman, Head of Roads Policing and Road Safety, said, “The use of unmarked speed detection vans is not about catching people out; it’s about protecting lives. Speeding is one of the leading causes of fatal and serious injury collisions, and we are committed to using every tool at our disposal to address this.

“The introduction of unmarked road safety enforcement vans represents a significant step forward in our commitment to reducing road fatalities and serious injuries. We urge all motorists to adhere to speed limits and recognise that road safety is a collective responsibility.”

Frequently asked questions

1. Why are unmarked vans necessary?

Despite regular enforcement efforts, speeding remains a persistent issue in certain areas. Drivers often slow down when they see marked enforcement vehicles, only to resume speeding once they are out of sight. Unmarked vans encourage safe driving consistently, as drivers will be less certain of when and where they are being monitored.

2. Is it legal to use unmarked detection vans?

Yes, it is completely legal. There is no requirement for speed enforcement vehicles to be marked or for advance warnings to be provided to drivers. The goal is to deter dangerous driving and improve road safety for everyone.

3. Shouldn't police resources be focused on other priorities?

Traffic-related offences pose a significant risk to public safety. In 2023, 63 people lost their lives in 55 collisions across Avon and Somerset. Effective traffic enforcement is vital in reducing these preventable deaths and ensuring the safety of our communities.

4. Are these vans just a way to generate revenue?

No. All cost recovery from speed enforcement is reinvested into road safety initiatives and educational programmes. The primary objective of unmarked vans is to reduce speeding and prevent collisions, not to generate revenue.

5. How are locations for these vans chosen?

The placement of unmarked vans is determined based on evidence from past incidents, community feedback, and data from speed enforcement and Community Speedwatch schemes. We focus on areas where there is a documented problem with persistent speeding and a heightened risk of collisions.