



Guidance Notes

Public Space CCTV Camera Assessment Toolkit

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INTRODUCTION

During March 2011 the Scottish Government published a 'National Strategy for Public Space CCTV in Scotland'. One of the first recommendations within the Strategy is that CCTV services should be reviewed by providers, in collaboration with appropriate partners.

An equally important factor of the requirement for an evaluation process is contained within the Information Commissioners 'CCTV Code of Practice' which states there should be a periodic review of the systems effectiveness to ensure that it is fit for its intended purpose.

While the Government Strategy document makes no reference to the process which should be followed, it clearly provides autonomy for practitioners to develop an evaluation process which supports both the business benefits and best value of CCTV. The need to take stock of the current CCTV infrastructure is also clearly identified as a priority and the Strategy requests that regular assessment of CCTV systems, and in particular CCTV cameras, be undertaken.

This document describes the process which South Lanarkshire Council adopted to assess individual public space CCTV cameras. A great deal of credit must be given to South Lanarkshire both for their foresight in developing a CCTV camera assessment process prior to publication of the Strategy and also for their generosity in allowing it to be shared.

It is also essential that the correct partners participate in the assessment process as it is unlikely that any one CCTV provider will have all the resources and/or information required to complete the exercise themselves. Emphasis should also be given to the final outcome or conclusions of the evaluation as it may impact on other organisations and /or strategies, which will need to be considered.

This assessment toolkit does not address detailed control room operations and nor should it, given the wide variant of CCTV control room models in existence throughout Scotland. It remains a 'work in progress' document and those who embark upon its use are encouraged to provide feedback and comment on any aspects of the process to the Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN).

Finally, this process is not intended to be a "one size fits all" approach to CCTV assessment, but can be used and adapted to local needs or demand. If other examples of good practice in Public Space CCTV Assessments exist, SCSN would like to hear about them from CCTV Practitioners.

METHODOLOGY

While developing the evaluation tool, it was recognised that many academic studies have tried and failed to attribute a preventative benefit to the application of public space CCTV. This process concerns itself only with the application to which CCTV systems are actually put, and the uses they can be proved to serve.

The methodology used is based on actual outputs and strategic value as attributed by providers themselves. The process seeks to identify cameras which are underperforming in these terms only. By investigating the usage and positioning of individual cameras, within a public space CCTV system, a profile can be created which identifies a camera's comparative value in relation to supporting the delivery of community safety.

The term 'comparative value' means a numerical number or score which is attributed to the camera and, based upon statistics and inputs from all stakeholders, each camera will attract a score which considers outputs and performance over eleven different criteria. This enables cameras in the same system to be measured against one another and, if required, will allow further decisions to be made.

On conclusion of the evaluation, this process does not suggest to CCTV managers what action should be taken in respect of the cameras identified as underperforming. Any decision in this respect is entirely the responsibility of those who provide public space CCTV services. It is acknowledged that engagement with local communities and their elected members must take place to ensure any redeployment or rationalisation of public space CCTV cameras is managed appropriately.

For the purpose of clarity Public Space CCTV is defined in this document as CCTV cameras which observe areas where the general public have unrestricted access and are operated by local authorities, police forces or CCTV trusts.

A sizeable amount of research is required to provide the information needed for an evaluation and it is envisaged that the first assessment will require a great deal of effort, albeit future assessments should be relatively easier to accomplish. The assessment process is not a way of generating savings as in real terms the cost associated with CCTV cameras, and the transmission network, are complex and do not translate proportionately. However, this methodology aims at supporting a sustainable CCTV system which is effective, efficient and affordable within the available existing budgets.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Key People Involved

Despite changes in crime patterns and alterations to the urban environment there is a possibility that some people may, for a number of reasons, be reluctant to see changes in the CCTV network.

In order to assist with the process of carrying out an evaluation, and to ensure that all views are both gathered and considered, it will be advantageous to create a forum which includes stakeholders. Through nomination of a suitably experienced person to co-ordinate and carry out the tasks involved in this process, work can be progressed while gathering views from the group.

The evaluation process is not highly technical but it will be time consuming and therefore requires focused input. Although not exhaustive, the following list provides an example of the people who will be required to contribute to the process:

- CCTV Manager
- CCTV Operator
- ASB Manager
- Local Authority Partnership / Policy Manager
- Local Senior Police Officer
- Police or Local Authority Analyst

In addition to carrying out site surveys, a detailed analysis of historical and current statistical information forms a key part of the task. The evaluation process cannot be carried out in isolation as historical / current 'incident statistics', held by the police, is essential.

It should be noted that due to the presence of 'restricted information', supplied by the police, it will not be appropriate to delegate any work to a CCTV contractor or consultant.

Site surveys

It is suggested that each camera location should be physically visited in order to take photographs, make notes and consider the current urban environment within the camera(s) field of view. However, the need for this task will be dependent upon the level of prior knowledge that the CCTV Manager has of their system.

Key information to record is:

- Why is the camera there?
- What does it do?
- When is it used?

The primary purpose for visiting each location is to gain an insight into why the location was chosen initially and to gather information on its current relevance.

All information gathered during a site visit should be considered against the historical relevance of each location and the current surrounding urban environment, this is especially important in systems which were established in the mid 1990's.

Information on any proposed, planned or rumoured development in the vicinity of any camera location should also be checked as it could influence the assessment processes.

Gathering statistics and other information

Public space CCTV is by its very nature closely linked to operational policing and the relevance of police statistics is of major significance in the assessment process.

The level of information provided by the police can be very detailed, both in terms of historical and current data. Prior to commencing the assessment, agreement should be reached with the analyst about the length of the 'reporting period' although it is generally accepted that the previous five years of data will provide a meaningful evaluation.

Although not exhaustive, the following list provides an example of the police incident types which should be considered. However, the incident data should be filtered to best suit the stated purpose of the CCTV system.

- Complaints
- Disturbance
- Suspect Persons
- Drinking in Public Places
- Assault / Crimes of Violence
- Vandalism

In addition to police statistics, data gathered by the operators on the day to day operational use of the system should also be considered. Statistical information relating to the daily use of each camera is usually recorded by operators and relates to all aspects of assessing non-crime usage. The starting point of any historical data analysis is therefore entirely dependent on available records, related to ownership of the system and local record keeping procedures. Where it is felt that sufficient information is unavailable, local decisions will have to be taken on what procedures may be required and the necessary timescales needed to gather the relevant data.

Another significant point is the relationship between cameras, i.e. the role a CCTV camera can play in supporting an incident first observed on another camera. It has been identified that this data is not always readily available and therefore it may need to be anecdotally considered in the overall analysis through consultation with operators.

The Assessment Process

An excel spreadsheet which is used for scoring each camera on eleven different criteria is shown at **Appendix A**, while **Appendix B** contains a two axis diagram which is used to reflect the final score of a camera in comparison with its peers. Appendix B is basically the final outcome of the evaluation process and will identify cameras which may require further scrutiny, dependant on local needs

The following information provides a description of the eleven elements as per the criteria on **Appendix A**

1. **Condition** – Score is based on the technical condition of each camera. This could be based on the technical assessment from your Maintenance Contractor, or your local knowledge, or age of the camera head. The most important aspect, whichever criteria you use, is to ensure consistency of scoring; using the same principles for each camera.
2. **CCTV Incident Log** – Score is based on the average monthly use of the camera.
3. **CCTV Incident Support** – Score is based on the average monthly use of the supporting role the camera had in any incident.
4. **CCTV Operator Usage** – Score appropriate to use each camera receives on a daily basis.
5. **CCTV Operator Value** - Score based on the opinion of operators as to the value each camera has within the system.
6. **Strategic Value** – Score indicating the value the location has in the delivery of Community Safety. This should also take cognisance of a counter terrorism value such as proximity iconic buildings, as well as areas of high footfall, transport hubs and night time economy.
7. **Anti-Social Value** - Score indicating the level of anti-social activity within the immediate vicinity of the camera location.
8. **Historical Incident Profile** – Scoring process carried in relation to police incident information (last 5 years).
9. **Current Incident Profile** – Score based on current police incident information (last 12 months).
10. **Information Gathering Value** – Score based on the knowledge and opinion of the CCTV Police Liaison Officer in the value each camera plays in identifying and deterring criminal / anti-social activity.
11. **Evidential Gathering Value** – Score based on the number of evidence packages generated by each camera.

Scoring criteria

In order to ensure that a level degree of consistency is achieved, criteria relative to how to score from 0 - 5 is set for each of the eleven categories. This is reflected in **Appendix C**

The benchmark in relation to this scoring was set by South Lanarkshire Council and takes cognisance of their very busy and demanding urban environment. The whole purpose of an assessment process is to identify cameras within the system which are underperforming and therefore, bearing in mind this process will be used throughout the many different demographic areas of Scotland, **any group embarking on an evaluation must consider their own values that will attract a 0 – 5 scoring.** For example, while it is accurate within South Lanarkshire Council or indeed any similar environment, for many of the criteria listed below to place a value of 100 incidents which equates to a score of 5; this may not be pertinent to rural environments where for example the busiest camera may only detect 20 such incidents per month. Therefore, a local context should be used to establish the values required to attract the 0 – 5 scoring.

CCTV Camera Evaluation Matrix (Appendix B)

The next stage in the process is to plot each camera's value on the Evaluation Matrix (two axis diagram). This is carried out by calculating the average score (from Appendix A) in two key areas which are:

- a) Strategic Value
- b) Operational Value

The following list highlights which of the eleven criteria correspond to either Strategic or Operational Value in terms of calculating the average score

Strategic	Operational
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CCTV Operator Usage• CCTV Operator Value• Strategic Value• Anti-social Index• Police – Historical Incident Profile• Police – Current Incident Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Camera Condition• CCTV Incident Log• CCTV Incident Support• CCTV Operator Usage• Police – Information Gathering• Police – Evidence Packages

Context of Results

When the average score of each camera is added to the Evaluation Matrix Diagram it will enable a comparison of each asset within the system. Cameras attracting a score which places them towards the top right hand corner of the diagram are a valuable asset in terms of their stated purpose, while those at the bottom left hand corner may be under performing.

One of the key reasons for carrying out this entire process is to identify which cameras are not performing. Nevertheless, local context must be applied to the results before any decision are made.

CONCLUSION

In essence the work required to carry out an assessment process involves 4 stages:

- Form a working group
- Gather views from Practitioners and Stakeholders. Gather statistical Information
- Score each camera in terms of the 11 criteria. Calculate average scores (Strategic / operational Value) and complete the Evaluation Matrix
- Analyse results and decide if further action is required

Several CCTV providers throughout Scotland already carry out an assessment of their system using local processes. This document is intended to provide guidance to those areas who do not yet carry out such a process and those embarking on an evaluation for the first time are welcome to contact the Scottish Community Safety Network for further assistance.