

Transport-watch

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Letters, Chronicle and Echo Northampton

SPEED CAMERAS

Despite there being no rise in the killed and seriously injured casualties, the police are concerned that speeding has increased, report 6th Sept. Instead the concern should be that the speed limits are inappropriate and that, despite the rhetoric, breaking the speed limit is, and always has been, a trivial cause of road traffic accidents (2.5% of all recorded causes where there is an injury).

Worse still, at the national level the downward trend in deaths per vehicle-km, which stood at 7% per year in 1995, collapsed to 2.5% under the impact of this punitive, finger wagging and nasty regime. That has happened despite over 13 million fines, supported by countless thousands of speed humps and traffic management measures, which cause delay and air pollution where none need exist. Had the previous trend continued there would have been at least 10,000 fewer deaths than have actually occurred.

Meanwhile the police in Northants are wasting resources on mobile patrols in the expectation of prosecuting 24,000 motorists in 12 months. Those police should be ashamed of themselves. After all, (a) depending on the time of day, speed limits are either far too high or far too low for the prevailing conditions and (b) nearly all the prosecuted drivers will have been driving sensibly for the conditions because, surprise, surprise they, like the rest of us, want to stay alive and to preserve their cars from damage. (How strange).

Instead of pretending that the present policies have been a success the police and those who are paid to govern over us should admit that this 15-year old attack on speed and the motorist has been an unmitigated disaster both for road safety and for public relations.

Paul F Withrington Director Transport-watch

Copy to:

Brian Binley MP, Chief Constable, Councillors, Heather Smith.

Editor – see graphs attached

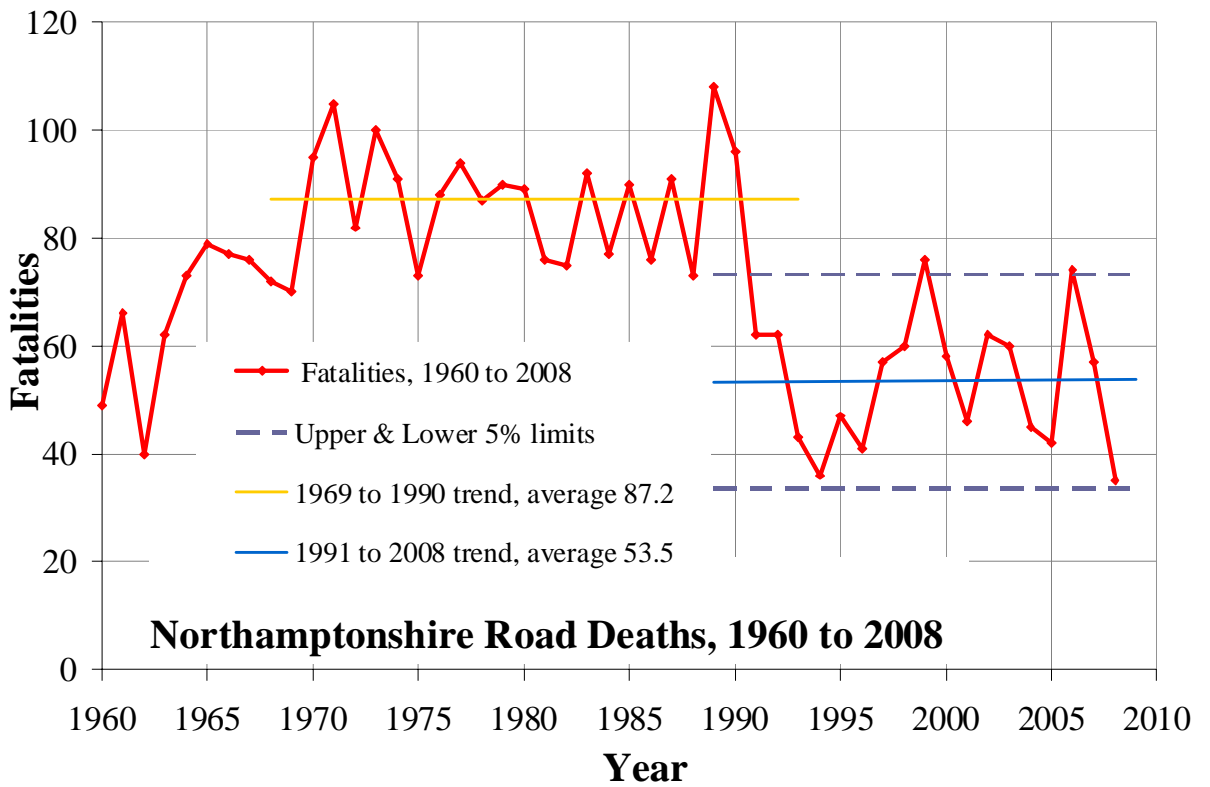


FIGURE 1 Prior to 1990 there was no trend - just random variation. Between 1990 and 1994 there was an astonishing decline followed by more random variation.

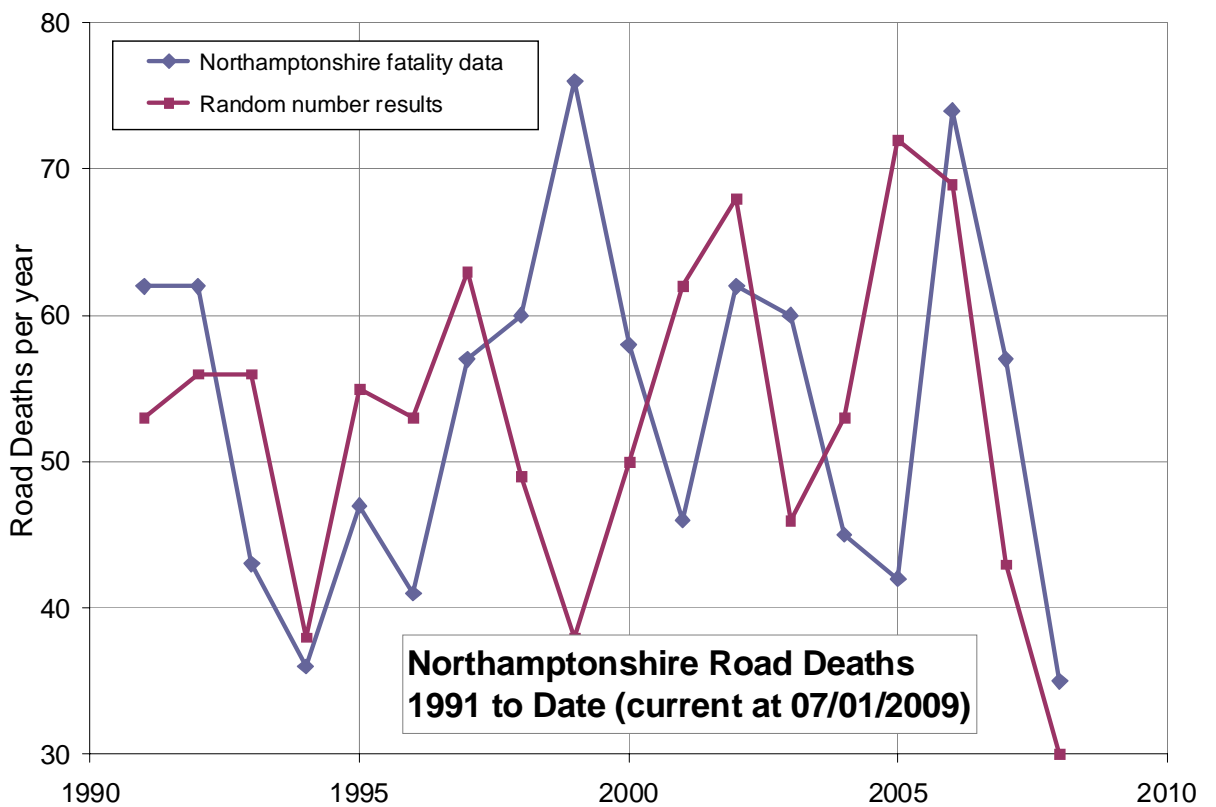


FIGURE 2 The difference between the random number line and actual deaths illustrates that the actual deaths are a product of random variation rather accident prevention measures.

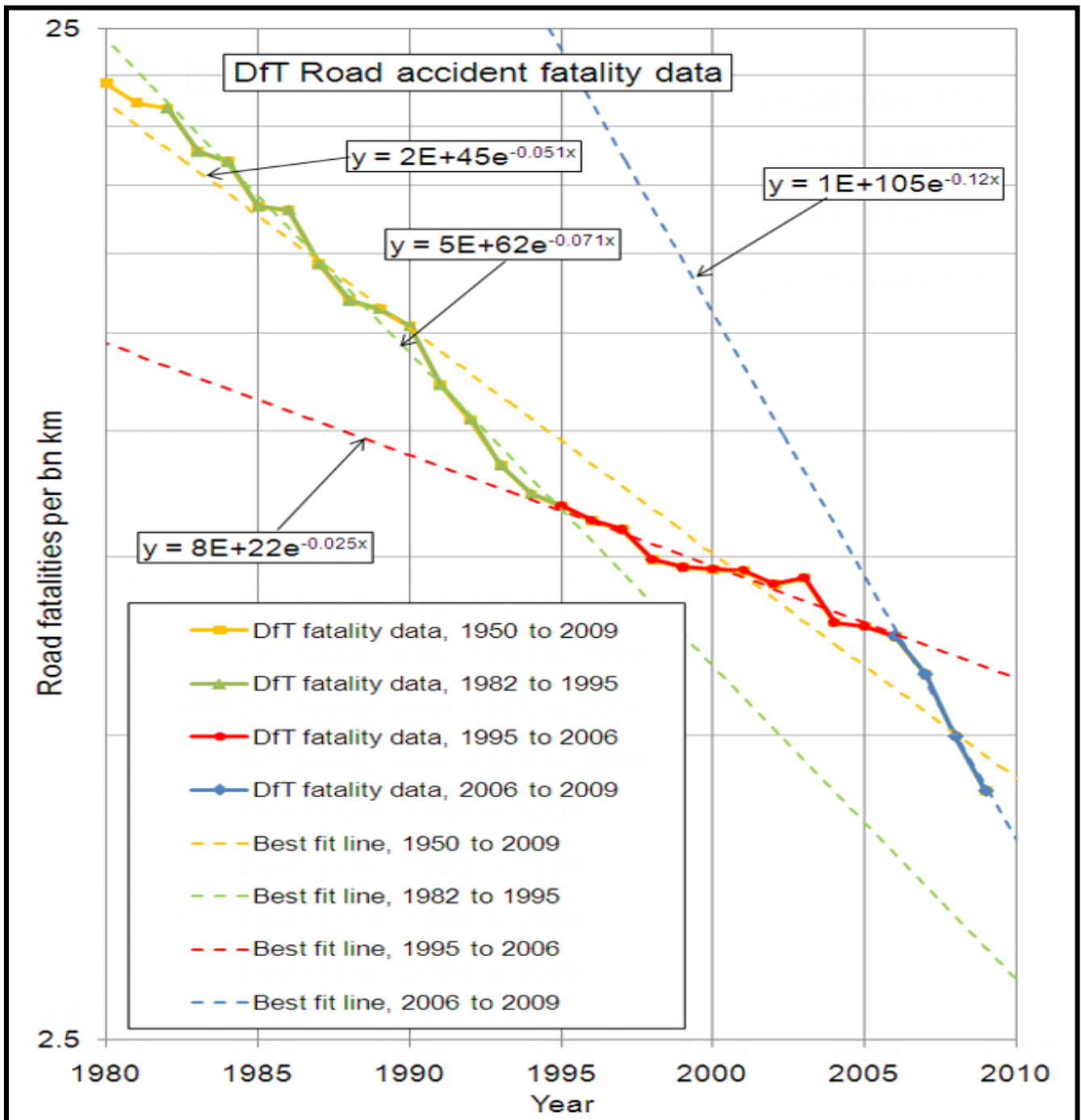


FIGURE 3 Nation-wide deaths per billion vehicle-km.

Between 1982 and 1995 deaths per billion vehicle kilometres were declining at 7.1%. Thereafter that decline collapsed to 2.5% despite the millions of speeding prosecutions, endless traffic management schemes that cause congestion where none need exist and many thousands of speed humps.

Since 2006/7 there has been an astonishing acceleration in the downward trend. However, that cannot be due to the previous policy which has not changed. The reasons may include the effect of the recession perhaps taking the poorest and most dangerous drivers off the road or causing all of us to behave more cautiously or possibly there has been a change in policy with measures targeted on the most dangerous roads. Certainly there has been a reduction in the numbers fined falling from a high of 1.8 million in 2006 to circa 1.2 million. In that context we note that Figure 4 suggests shows that for every doubling of fines 370 extra deaths arise compared with the pre 1995 trend line.

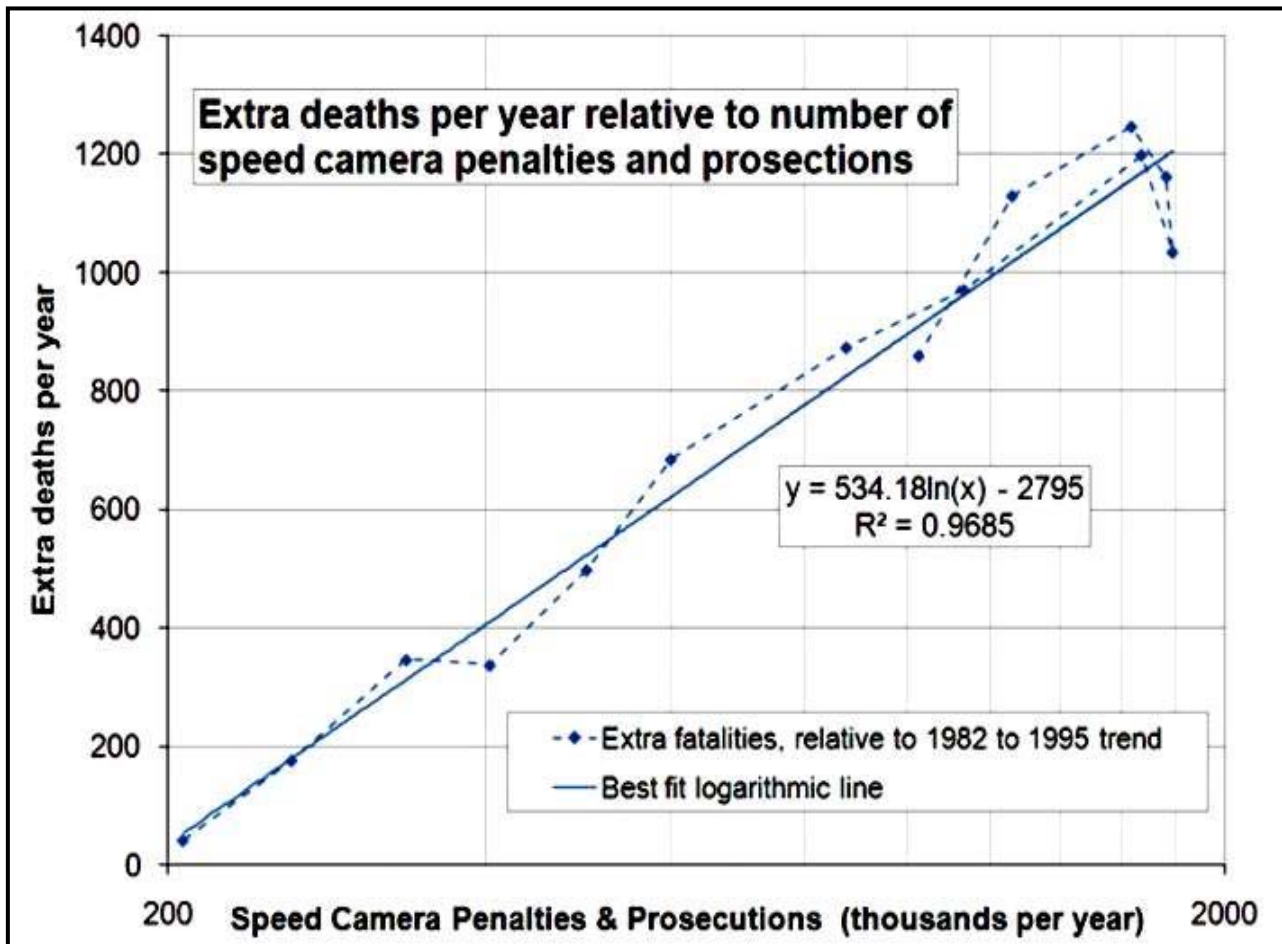


Figure 4 Extra deaths and speeding penalties

The graph shows an astonishing correlation between the extra deaths compared with those which would have occurred had the trend prior to 1995 continued, see figure 3. In numerical terms every doubling of speeding fines corresponds to 370 extra deaths. Similarly, a halving of speed camera fines reduces the extra deaths by 370. Most remarkable of all is the way the dotted line bends back as fines are reduced.

Perhaps the more they fine us the more we die.