

# Chapter 2 – National Surveillance Camera Strategy for England and Wales – Horizon Scanning

I am indebted to Neil Cohen (formerly Home Office Centre for Applied Science and Technology (CAST) and now Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) who has led on the horizon-scanning strand of the National Surveillance Camera Strategy<sup>18</sup>. Neil has been a continuous source of advice and support in the ever increasingly complex world of video surveillance technology and the challenging issues of ‘what does the future look like?’

It will be helpful first to outline a picture of how technology is developing in the world of video surveillance systems.

## Technological Developments

CCTV is in itself a misnomer. It is no longer a stand-alone closed-circuit system and has not been for some time. The understanding needs to widen considerably to reflect this change. In the near future, we will have mass streaming of video data from static, drone, body worn video cameras and mobile phone sources to online cloud storage; a long way from the more conventional static digital video recorder.

The technology available for surveillance purposes is developing at an ever increasing pace. Developments in artificial intelligence (AI) show strong signs of dramatic improvement in the near future. This may mean that we will no longer need the classic CCTV system where a human being views an image on a screen and acts accordingly. In the longer term it is not impossible to envisage a system with no human operators in the loop at all, analysis of the images being done automatically. What are the implications for public trust in the system? Currently the final decision is made by a human operator. What if this is no longer the case? It may soon be the case that an AI system can make more reliable decisions than a human operator, but will this be acceptable to the public?

This raises the question concerning safeguards. As opportunities to create new methods of deploying such technology become available – do our laws and regulations provide sufficient safeguards against misuse? The new Data Protection Act 2018 certainly provides a strengthening of privacy rights but I believe does not of itself provide the legal justification for conducting such surveillance in the first place.

An example of one of the big drivers for surveillance cameras could be the increasing use of driverless cars. These vehicles will have 360° vision with the provision to store those images. Also the data may be transmitted to:

- the owner (who may be an individual or the company providing a fleet of vehicles for hire);
- the insurance company; or
- a central monitoring service.

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<sup>18</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/704447/Strategy\\_plan\\_2\\_-\\_horizon\\_scanning.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/704447/Strategy_plan_2_-_horizon_scanning.pdf)