

CCTV in Jersey

The views of the Jersey Human Rights Group (“JHRG”)

The JHRG has discussed both the desirability of the current proposed expansion of the number of CCTV cameras run by the States Police and the broader questions of whether state surveillance is generally:

1. Socially beneficial, i.e. reduces crime and/or improves the solving of crimes and conviction of criminals;
2. Risky, because of the additional power and knowledge that it gives the state;
3. Is adequately and openly accountable and regulated;
4. Cost-effective (or, to put it another way – could the resources consumed by CCTV be used more effectively in other ways); or
5. Undesirable because of the inevitable loss of privacy.

The Group’s discussions indicate clearly that all these questions worry members to some degree. Further, those members who attended the Scrutiny hearings on the subject did not feel that adequate answers were obtained to any of the questions above. At the risk of over-simplification, the position of Home Affairs and the SoJP appeared to be along the lines:

“CCTV has been in extensive use, both in the UK and Jersey for several years without generating any problems. The public do not complain about it; on the contrary it provides the public with a sense of security. We do not have to worry about it anymore.”

There is a real concern that public support for police CCTV is based on a false impression of effectiveness. The Surveillance Studies Network, in a 2010 report for the UK’s Information Commissioner, referred to this support for CCTV ***“despite its ineffectiveness”***. In 2008 the UK government and National Policing Improvement Agency commissioned a comprehensive review of the effects of CCTV on crime from the Campbell Collaboration. The review found that CCTV schemes in city and town centres, public housing and public transport ***“did not have a significant effect on crime”***.

Conclusion

The JHRG believes that Home Affairs should commission a report, from independent social studies experts, that provides answers to the 5 questions above.

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