

'THE GLYN'

REDUCING THEFTS FROM UNATTENDED VEHICLES

The Glyn' as it has come to be known by local Police Officers is a beat within the Brecon Division of Dyfed Powys Police.

As part of the Brecon Beacons National Park the area attracts visitors from around the world throughout the year who come to walk and view the many areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Those visitors who bring a much needed revenue to the area invariably travel by motor vehicle of one type or another and it is these vehicles which are targeted by gangs of thieves who are themselves visitors between county and force boundaries.

Auto crime in general terms accounts for a high percentage of reported crime within Brecon Division and has historically been a massive drain upon its resources. An analysis of the problem using anecdotal evidence and crime pattern analysis revealed that as much as 57% of all the divisions auto-crime is committed in the 'Glyn' beat.

The action plan which is run at section station level began in the Autumn of 1998 and is a long term multi-agency project using some old and many new and innovative ideas to reduce the instances of theft.

The ideas range from the inexpensive strategic placing of warning notices to long term and high cost re-designing and re-locating of car parks and surrounding landscape.

Technical equipment will be naturalised into car park furniture, such as litter bins. Bogus Foreign vehicles will be placed in 'hot-spots' with surveillance and arrest teams nearby, other agencies will assist by manning car parks at peak periods whilst promoting their services.

To date the measures taken have paid off in many areas that benefit not only the police service and a reduction in crimes but others involved in the action plan. There have been spin-off operations which have impacted upon other areas of concern for instance environmental damage caused by so called 'Off-roaders' in the same area.

In relation to auto-crime this is a long term action plan that will require enthusiasm from a number of agencies for it to succeed and early indications are that a marked reduction in auto-crime has resulted.

The progress of the project is continually being assessed and reviewed by its managers with any success being measured by a continued reduction in crime statistics which has to date accounted for a significant 85% reduction in thefts from unattended vehicles.



BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK

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Comisiwn Coedwigaeth Cymru
Forestry Commission Wales

1999

H.EDDLU DYFED WYWYS POLICE.

Reducing Thefts From Unattended Motor Vehicles

Brecon Division



Yn diogelu ein cymuned
Safeguarding our Community

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View of Brecon Beacons National Park

Contents

The Glyn	page 1
The Problem	page 2
Objectives	page 3
Analysis	page 3
Crime Pattern Analysis	page 4
Offender Profile	page 5
Response and proposed initiatives	page 5
Designing out crime	page 6
Developing Covert Surveillance Techniques	page 7
Covert Operations	page 7
Safe Haven	page 8
Crime Prevention Advice	page 8
Media Coverage	page 9
Other Initiatives	page 9
Assessment	page 10
Conclusion	page 10
Appendix 1	[Forest Enterprise plans for new car parking]
Appendix 2	[Letter to Schools]
Appendix 3	[Map of the Area showing car park numbering system]

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Auto crime in general terms accounts for a high percentage of reported crime within Brecon Division and has historically been a massive drain upon its resources. An analysis of the problem using anecdotal evidence and crime pattern analysis revealed that as many as 134 vehicles have been targeted in the Glyn beat during a peak year with more recent attacks accounting for up to 57% of all auto crime within the division.

A number of ideas and initiatives have been used and put into place over recent years and these together with the action plan have accounted for a significant 85% reduction in thefts from unattended vehicles to date.

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All these ideas will require ongoing reinforcing and some may fail only to be tried again after discussion and deliberation by all the parties involved.

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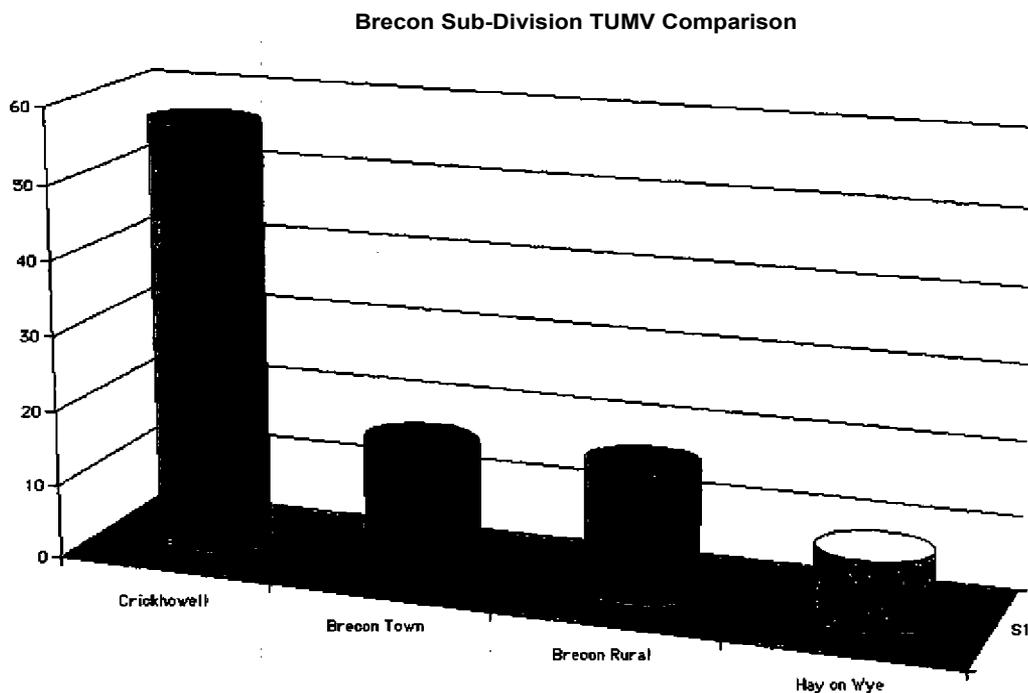
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THE PROBLEM

Dyfed-Powys has the lowest recorded crime rate in England and Wales and any figures quoted in relation to auto crime may appear to be a minor problem in comparison to other forces' issues. However, in relation to local overall crime statistics they are regarded as a potentially, serious and unacceptable drain upon resources by the officers who initiated the action plan.

Brecon Division is a rural area of some 750,000 acres much of which is within the Brecon Beacons National Park which attracts several million visitors every year from around the world. Visitors come to enjoy the stunning scenery and all manner of outdoor pursuits and invariably travel by means of 'motor vehicle, it is these that are targeted by thieves creating a number of 'hot spots' around the division.

The most prevalent 'hot spot' is 'The Glyn' which has recently accounted for as much as 57% of all



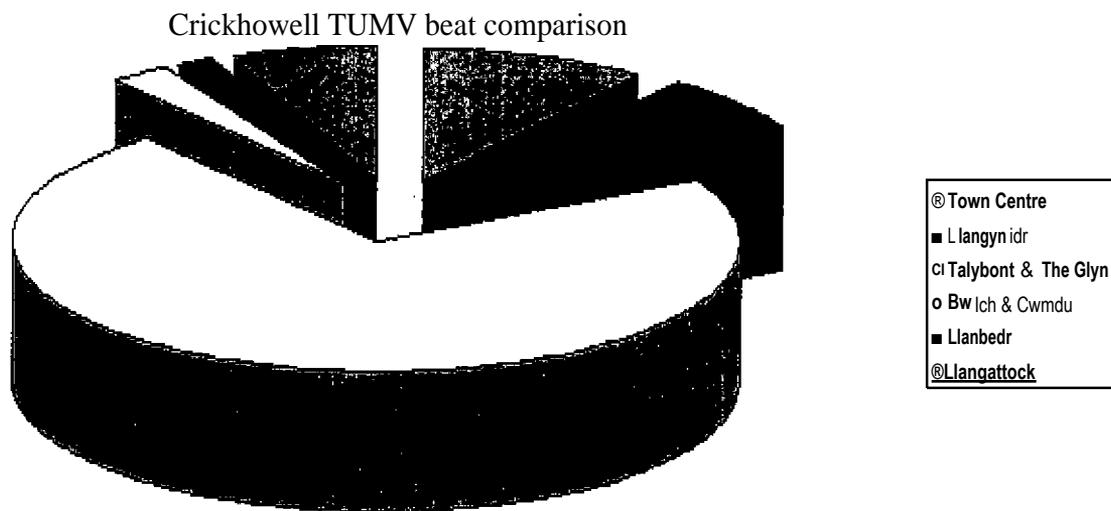
auto-crime in the division.

Action has been taken in the past resulting in some short term success in reducing instances of theft and increasing the number of arrests but no long term plans were made and offences would increase almost immediately after any proactive actions were curtailed.

In the Autumn of 1998 after changes within the divisional areas of responsibility the Glyn fell within the section policed by Officers from Crickhowell, a section station with an establishment of one sergeant and five constables. They have responsibility for policing the area for sixteen hours a day from 0900hrs to 0100hrs the following day. The officers were

aware that a formal plan had to be adopted to combat the potential drain upon resources. The investigation of just one theft from an unattended motor vehicle has the potential to require a round trip of forty miles, vehicle examination and extensive enquiries when cheque books and credit cards are stolen and used to commit crimes elsewhere. If nothing was done it was envisaged that a considerable proportion of an officers shift could be consumed dealing with such offences thus drastically reducing the ability to carry out proactive patrolling.

The project is designed to be uncomplicated, but run in a focused manner using information and technology available to all officers on local crime management systems with most police tasks being carried out as part of normal patrolling.



OBJECTIVES

Having adopted the Glyn, Crickhowell Officers undertook this project to try and solve the problem with three main objectives: -

- * reduce the number of offences.*
- target offenders and handlers of stolen property.*
- improve public safety.*

ANALYSIS

Before deciding the proposed initiatives to achieve the objectives the problem was analysed using crime pattern analysis and officers knowledge of the geography and history of the area.

Contributory factors influencing the problem and CPA results

- *The Glyn is a sparsely populated area with ten recognised car parks situated along the route of an unclassified road between the villages of Taybont on Usk and Ponsticill. The car parks are all unsupervised and to some degree isolated lending themselves to the opportunist and determined thief.*
- *Visitors are unaware of the problems relating to vehicle crime in the area.*
- *Intelligence has revealed that some determined and purposeful thieves operate on days of inclement weather when ardent walkers leave vehicles unattended for longer periods and fewer casual visitors are likely to be in the area.*
- *The village of **Ponsticill borders onto the town** of Merthyr Tydfil and Gurnos Estate which experiences high unemployment and crime.*
- *The distance from Crickhowell police Station to Ponsticill is twenty miles making routine patrolling difficult and immediate response almost impossible.*
- *From Ponsticill there is easy access to trunk roads in turn giving easy access to the Welsh valley towns and Cardiff where **unemployment and crime are high in proportion** to Pony.*
- *The area attracts tourists from abroad whose foreign registered vehicles are purposely targeted by offenders who have realised that these visitors often carry **numerous items of personal** luggage and property.*
- *Numerous schools and colleges use the area travelling by mini buses, again purposely attacked due to the **lucrative results** achievable.*
- *There is very little natural surveillance.*
- *Offenders have realised that the risk of **being detected or arrested** has been low.*

Crime Pattern Analysis Results

Offences are committed on all days but mainly on Thursday, Friday and Sunday between the hours of 10am and 6pm with an increase of activity between 11am and 3pm which is attributable to the arrival of the travelling criminals who may have driven many miles to reach this destination. Although all the car parks in the area are attacked a numbering system has been developed which allows CPA to identify those most at risk.

Offender profile

From an examination of custody records and using intelligence gathered from other sources

offenders can be categorised as aged between 14 and 30 years, unemployed, from Merthyr Tydfil and surrounding valley towns but may travel from as far away as Cardiff a distance of 30 miles. Groups of up to twenty individuals who have access to numerous vehicles will travel in different combinations to the area purposely to commit crime.

RESPONSE AND PROPOSED INITIATIVES

- *Encourage a scheme of supervised car parks*
- *Encourage and develop a 'design out crime' ethos.*
 - *Develop covert surveillance techniques*
- *Carry out proactive operations using decoy vehicles.*
- *Develop a 'safe haven' for use by schools and colleges.*
- *Provide repeat crime prevention advice to regular visitors.*
- *Develop contacts and liaison with neighbouring forces.*
- *Make full use of media coverage whenever possible.*

Having decided the initiatives locally a meeting was arranged with outside agencies who not only share the problems but also have responsibility for land management in the area concerned. In particular Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Forest Enterprise were encouraged to become involved.

The result of the meeting was extremely encouraging and a tour of the car parks and general area soon followed which allowed all parties to highlight their main concerns and from a policing perspective allowed on site discussions about some of the contributory factors influencing crime. Most of the initiative were taken up immediately with some after discussion with the other agencies being put on hold or dismissed.

Response development

Supervised car parks

Having gained the authority of the land managers, Forest Enterprise, it has been agreed that car parks highlighted as particular 'hot spots' will be manned at peak periods by charitable

organisations such as the Brecon Beacons Mountain rescue team. This not only gives a preventative presence but also allows such organisations to advertise their services whilst collecting voluntary contributions towards their funds.

A further development to this response has been the use of an information trailer owned by the National Park Authority being parked at 'hot spots'. Volunteers provide general information about the area, crime prevention advice, provide a preventative presence and are also a point of contact for patrolling officers. Dates have been highlighted throughout the year when the trailer will be used in this way.

Discussions are on going with the local community council who have expressed a similar interest in order to raise funds towards their millennium celebrations.



Designing out crime

This initiative is seen as a long term part of the project relying in some cases on **heavy** expenditure by the agency involved. Having toured the area with police Officers, Forest Enterprise who own and manage many of the car parks have recognised crime prevention advice and agreed to develop and improve those car parks that lend themselves to crime due to there location and landscape.

Some car parks will be dosed off by means of steel barriers and others will be enlarged and improved to attract visitors thus increasing the natural surveillance. The work has begun with improvements to some of the access roads and sign posting. Picnic tables have already been installed on the boundaries of the car parks again encouraging members of the public to unwittingly provide that preventative presence.

[see appendix 1]

There has been a recent increase in the number of stolen vehicles brought to the area to be stripped of parts or used for rallying before being set alight. The excellent working relationship with Forest Enterprise has allowed this problem to be addressed with the

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installation of more landscape friendly steal barriers, each costing £500.00 to install. This has denied access to the off road tracks where this practice was undertaken.

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Developing covert surveillance techniques

The technical support unit of Dyfed Powys Police are developing image recording equipment that can be covertly placed in car park furniture such as litter bins which have been provided by Forest Enterprise and 'Hyder' the local water authority. The bins are precast concrete which means they are not easily stolen or vandalised but also means they are difficult to move around between hot spots. Development continues and forest enterprise have more recently volunteered equipment they are themselves experimenting with to record instances of fly tipping and theft from forestry sites. It is hoped that such equipment will record images of offenders and their vehicles, thus improving detection's.

Covert Operations

What has without doubt been the most effective and rewarding initiative for police officers is the increased planning and use of covert operations at the recognised hot spots and on *days* when CPA dictates. Having established that foreign motor vehicles are deliberately attacked by thieves who have realised the potentially lucrative rewards, the division purchased an inexpensive left hand drive vehicle for which pseudo foreign registration plates were made.

Officers with military experience developed covert hides from where observations could be kept in some cases less then 100 feet from the offenders.

The first covert operation began on April 8th 1999 and within three hours the vehicle was attacked by three youths from the Merthyr Tydfil area who were duly arrested, much to their surprise. Two of the youths were in possession of Class B drugs and all were unemployed. The operation was executed so well by the officers concerned that the offenders believed they had been captured by some specialist agency working for the government.

The four youths were identified as being from among a group of about twenty individuals who regularly travel to the area to commit this type of crime. Significantly there were no crimes committed after this date for over six weeks which is proof of the effectiveness of this type of operation.

Covert operations have been supported by increased high profile policing carried out by section officers with assistance from rural and armed crime vehicle personal which has seen an increase in the number of arrests for drug related crimes.

Safe haven

The idea of the 'safe haven' was to establish sites where secure lockers or cages could be



provided to allow schools and colleges to leave property whilst they were in the area. There are educational complexes at either end of the Glyn and these were identified as potential sites. After discussions at the initial all agency meeting it was decided that this would be difficult to manage and more emphasis should be placed upon giving suitable repeat crime prevention advice to the schools and colleges that regularly visit the area. This initiative has not been developed.

Crime prevention advice

There are numerous schools, colleges and outdoor pursuit centres that visit the area and a list of regular visitors was obtained from the National Parks Authority. In February a letter entitled The Glyn Car Park Watch was sent to all these bodies offering advice and asking for help and ideas.
[see appendix 21]

There has been some response with several schools acknowledging the letter and its advice. Further information and advice sheets will be sent every six months to the relevant organisations and any new bodies identified as using the area on a regular basis.

Notices, some in several languages, warning of the dangers of theft **have** regularly been placed around the car parks but these have been vandalised or failed to withstand the elements. A simple but effective solution has seen police officers using step ladders to place the notices out of reach. The notices are generally being left untouched but when any do disappear they are quickly replaced.

Warning notices do not however stop unsuspecting members of the public leaving all manner of valuables on show and officers always ask victims the question, "Did you see the warning notices". The answer is regularly and disappointingly "Yes, but we **thought** it would be okay, its such a nice area", or something of a similar nature. The notices used are **high** visibility and brightly coloured but obviously fail to put the message across in some cases.

The community Safety Department have assisted the action plan by targeting garages and other business premises that cater to the public, with posters warning motorists of the dangers of car crime and potential thieves that there is a greater risk of being caught in Dyfed Powys.

A new initiative has been launched and involves the local High school where the art and design department have been asked to design a new hard hitting poster which can be used within the division and possibly extended to the force area.

Develop contact liaison with neighbouring forces

Crickhowell section borders onto both the Gwent and South Wales police areas and a very good working relationship exists with fellow colleagues. Cross border initiatives such as road checks are planned for the busy summer months and regular liaison is made with intelligence officers in neighbouring forces to identify active criminals who we know or suspect to be coming into our area to commit crime.

Make full use of media coverage.

Contacts have been developed with all local newspapers and those that serve the areas from where offenders travel. A weekly crime digest is created for the whole section thus highlighting problem areas and offering crime prevention advice. When arrests are made particular effort is made to inform the papers relevant to the offenders address, giving names and ages of those who are charged and reinforcing the message that offenders are more likely to be caught if they enter the Dyfed Powys policing area.

The Dyfed Powys Police Helicopter has demonstrated its state of the art technology on a BBC Wales news programme, highlighting its use in detecting this type of crime whilst giving the impression to potential thieves that they are not safe from watchful eyes.

Other initiatives

All parties have adopted a numbering system for the car parks in the Glyn area allowing easier incident reporting and requests for assistance. This system also allows CPA to be carried out much easier as some car parks have no official or recognised address. The numbering system has been used by the police for some years who have provided the other agencies with the necessary maps and key. [see appendix 3]

It is the policy of Dyfed Powys police to train all officers in carrying out forensic examinations of vehicles subject of crime. This enables all available vehicles to be examined and accounts for 20% of suspect identifications from fingerprints in all types of crime.

Adding to the distress of some victims has been the lack of access to public telephones in the Glyn with some crimes reported after victims have arrived home. This greatly reduces the service police can provide with no vehicle examination and no face to face contact. A vandal proof telephone has been installed in the heart of the area allowing incidents to be reported and acted upon more speedily.

Forest enterprise have a contract agreement with a firm who provide a number of vehicles vending at three locations in the Glyn providing another point of contact for police. The current contracts expire shortly and further companies will be invited to participate allowing more vendors to oversee more car parks.

Associated Operations

Although this is a police initiated project a lot of the more expensive initiatives fall outside the police domain and the agencies involved have been persuaded and encouraged to make the necessary plans and expenditure.

The project has allowed an excellent working relationship to develop and in order to allow the process to continue officers always attempt to respond positively in answer to requests for advice or assistance from the other agencies.

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority receive complaints on a regular basis regarding the illegal use of 'off road' vehicles on the mountains which causes both environmental damage and damage to livestock and farming equipment. In response, to this particular problem officers have initiated pro-active patrols in conjunction with park wardens to seek out, film and prosecute such offenders. The results have been extremely pleasing for the other agencies who have made full use of publicity to highlight the problem and the action being taken. The results have without doubt increased the response that police can expect when approaching the other agencies for help.



Assessment

In statistical terms the action plan has shown itself to be a success and has contributed towards the impressive 85% reduction in thefts since the early nineties.

It will be impossible to deter every determined thief and we cannot hope to defeat those groups of individuals who indiscriminately attack any and all vehicles. A group of youths from Merthyr Tydfil undertook such a crime spree earlier this year breaking into ten vehicles, half this years crimes, over a two day period. Although the crimes are detected there are still ten victims who remain substantially out of pocket.

Detections have also increased' by 50% with covert operations and identifications of offenders from crime scenes being responsible.

In terms of financial loss to victims figures have been reduced from a staggering high of L63,767 compared with L7,5'77 this year to date.

The reduction in reported crime has allowed officers to spend more time carrying out proactive patrolling which in turn achieves results_ This is reflected in a 300% increase in the number of persons arrested in possession of drugs in the Glyn beat this year.

Conclusion

It is difficult to measure in terms of hours and money exactly what the action plan has cost the division. There have been meetings for exchanges of ideas and planning together with a substantial increase in patrols in the Glyn area. All of this has been achieved during normal hours



of duty but with more focus on this particular hot spot. There are no notable increased pockets of crime elsewhere on the division.

The action plan will continue with the support of all managers and will ultimately be measured by a continued reduction **in** crimes statistics. The latter six months of 1998 saw a total of 51 thefts from unattended motor vehicles in the Glyn highlighting this as a busy period at a time when the division has other commitments such as the Royal Welsh show and Brecon jazz festival.

For it to be successful the action plan must not be left unsupervised, if it is, as has been seen in the past, the thieves will quickly move back into the area preying on the unsuspecting visitors.



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