



## FRONT SHEET

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<b>Title of Project</b>	Prosperity in Partnership - Bridgwater's Key to Success
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## Summary

### **Prosperity in Partnership — Bridgwater's Key to Success**

#### **The Problem:**

Historically Bridgwater has suffered from high levels of crime and disorder. In 1998 this had started to increase due in part to the lack of a dedicated town centre beat manager. This general rise in crime contributed to a fall in trading levels resulting in a major decline in the ambience of the town centre. In previous years crime and disorder had been tackled using single issue initiatives.

#### **The Evidence:**

To understand the reasons for Bridgwater's crime and disorder problems, the following sources were used:

- Home Office Crime figures; the local Business Crime Survey; the Crime and Disorder Audit; Chamber of Trade figures; Key Partnership Trading Statistics; the District Council's GIS Mapping facility and their CCTV incident logs.

Extensive use was also made of:

- the Crime Analyst's database, the local intelligence system, and importantly the observations of police officers, the general public and traders in the town.

All of the above were vital to identify the interaction between the victim, the **offender** and the **location** of the crime or disorder. In understanding this relationship the partnership were able to plan effective structured responses to the following issues: Burglary; Vehicle Crime; Theft; Criminal Damage; Antisocial Behaviour (including Drug Abuse); Night Time Disorder.

#### **The Response:**

In order to succeed a cohesive approach was planned to tackle the multiple problems identified in the town centre. The timely introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act and Geographical Policing provided the structure and tools to achieve this.

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A group of POP strategies were launched in 1998 using the SARA model. In brief, these included: a robust approach was shown towards offenders; designing out crime through structural change; the promotion of Radiolink and CCTV, to encourage greater liaison between stores and police; providing strategies for the high crime private sector car parks; reducing antisocial behaviour and disorder by changing the policing style; encouraging the judiciary to be positive with persistent offenders.

**The Impact :**

As a result of the planned responses the town centre is now thriving for business, local residents and visitors alike. A **23%** reduction in crime across all categories has been achieved in the first year alone. Through POP the town has attracted £1.6 million in funds to assist in the further regeneration and improvement of Bridgwater.

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# PROSPERITY in PARTNERSHIP .

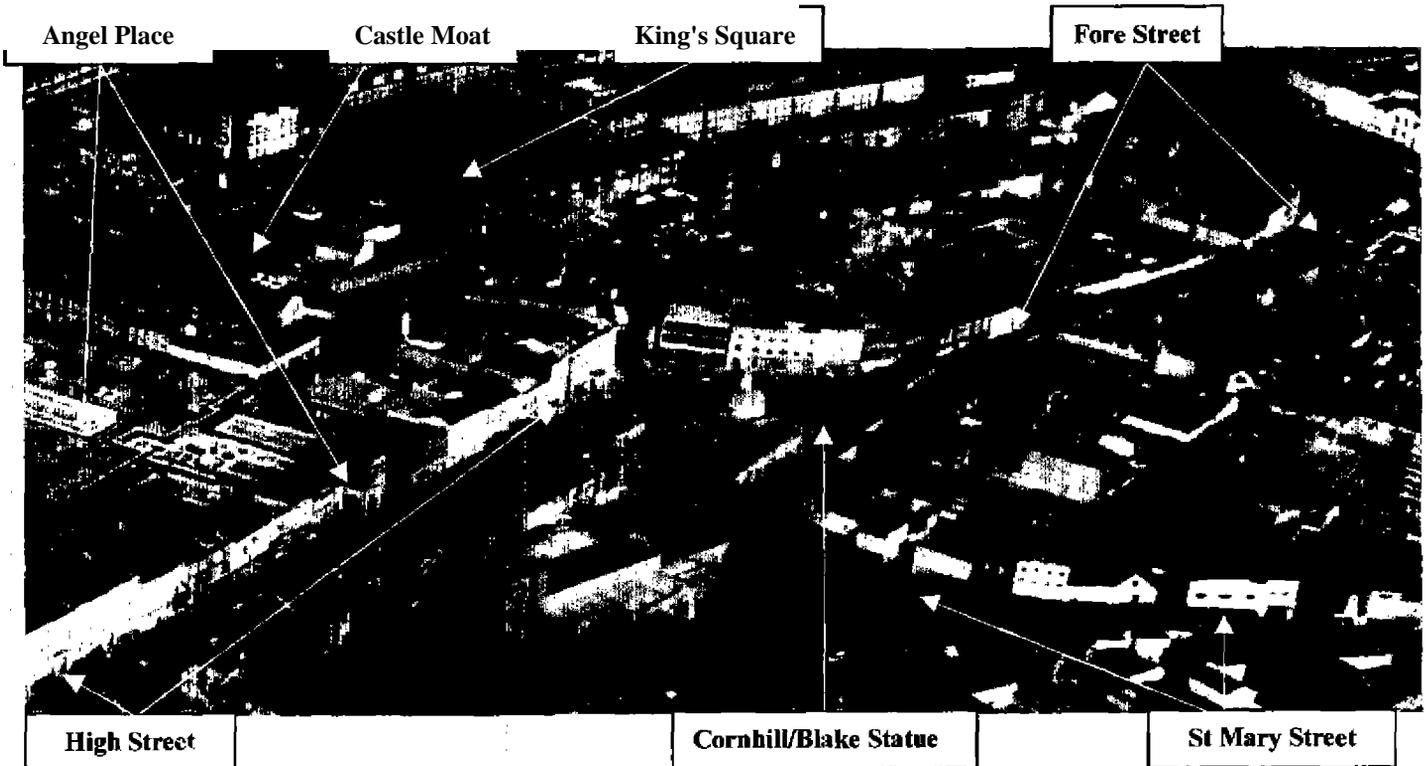
## BRIDGWATER'S KEY TO SUCCESS

### *Introduction*

This project relates to a multi-agency approach to tackling wide-ranging crime and disorder problems in the town centre of Bridgwater. A cohesive approach to regenerating the centre began in July 1998 with the express objective of :

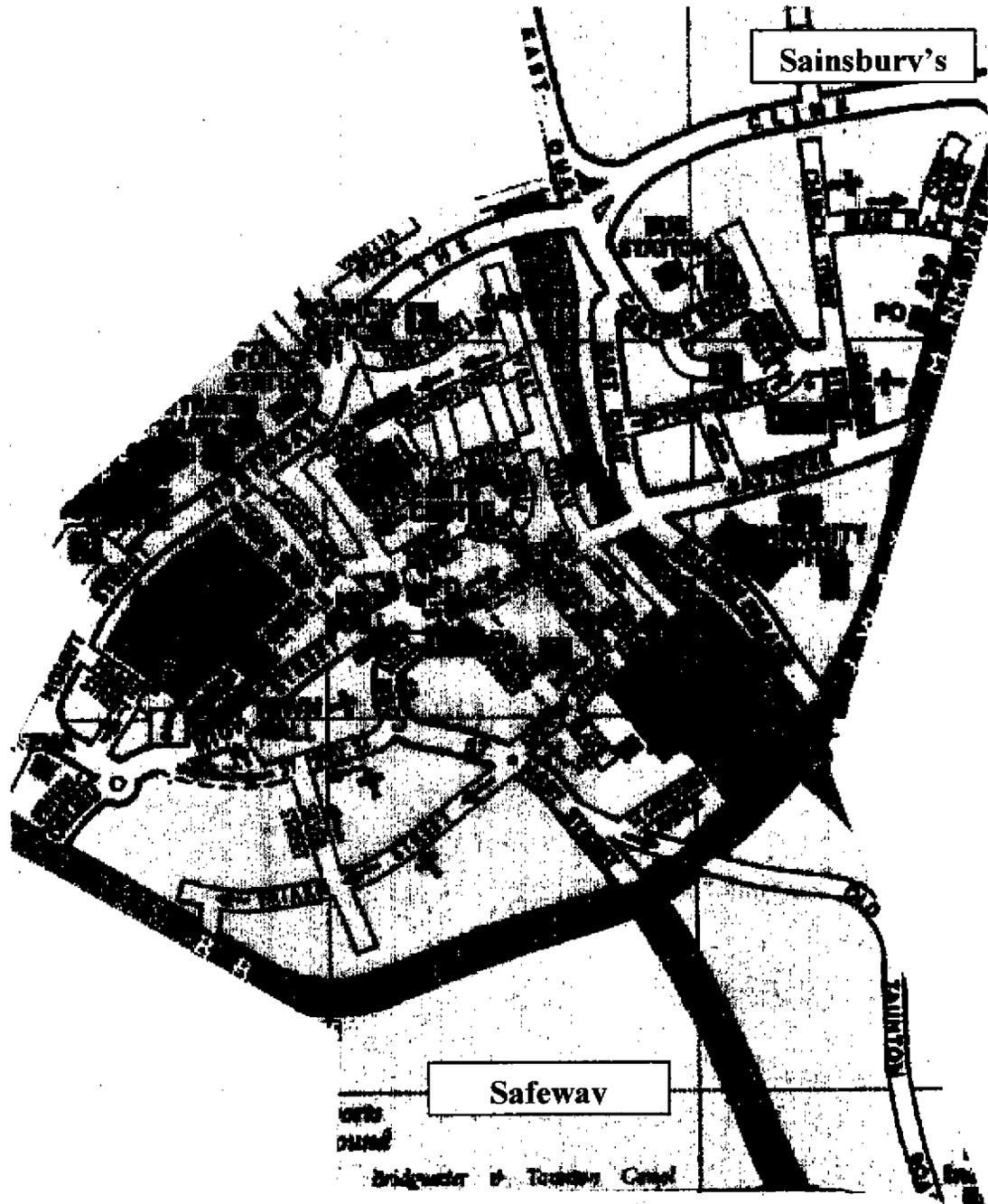
- enhancing the centre of Bridgwater for businesses, residents and visitors alike by reducing the levels of crime and disorder.

Bridgwater is a market town in the west of Somerset on the M5 corridor. It has a population of some 35,000 persons. It has grown significantly over the past decade, and will continue to grow at a significant rate for the next decade. The town centre beat area encompasses the main retail sectors. This is broadly 4 main shopping streets with 2 large retail food outlets Sainsbury's and Safeway at either end of the town centre.



Bridgwater Town Centre

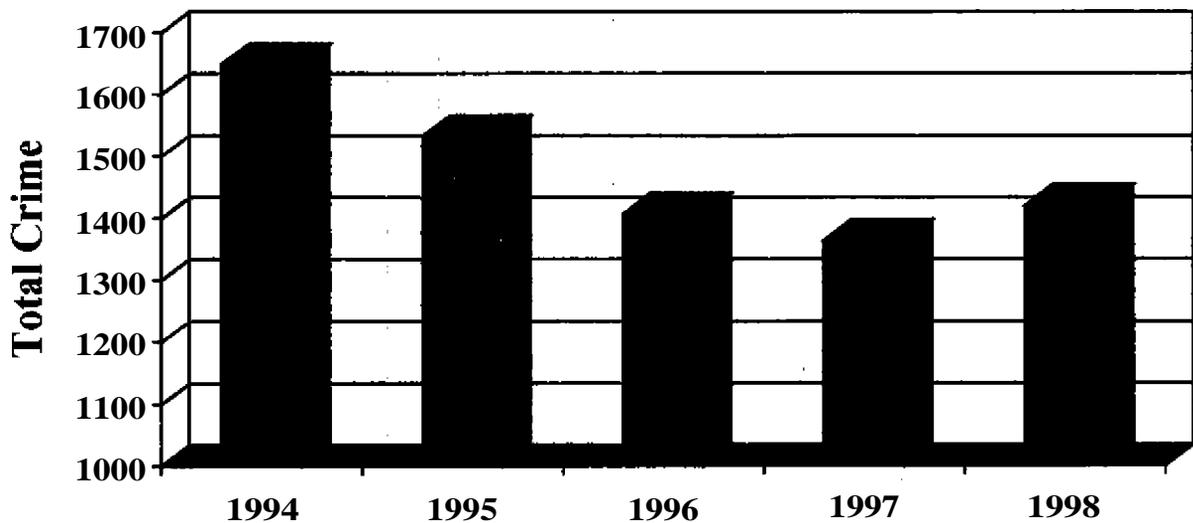
GB160 The Town Centre Beat



### S'cannink'

The overall levels of crime in the town centre have fallen since 1994 with a marked drop after the single initiative of installing CCTV cameras. The steady reduction of crime lost momentum after 1996. This is attributed to the fact only single-issue initiatives were being used. 1998 saw an increase in all categories of crime and disorder: Burglary; Theft; Damage; Antisocial Behaviour; Night-Time Disorder; Vehicle Crime.

Chart showing reduction in crime compared to previous years

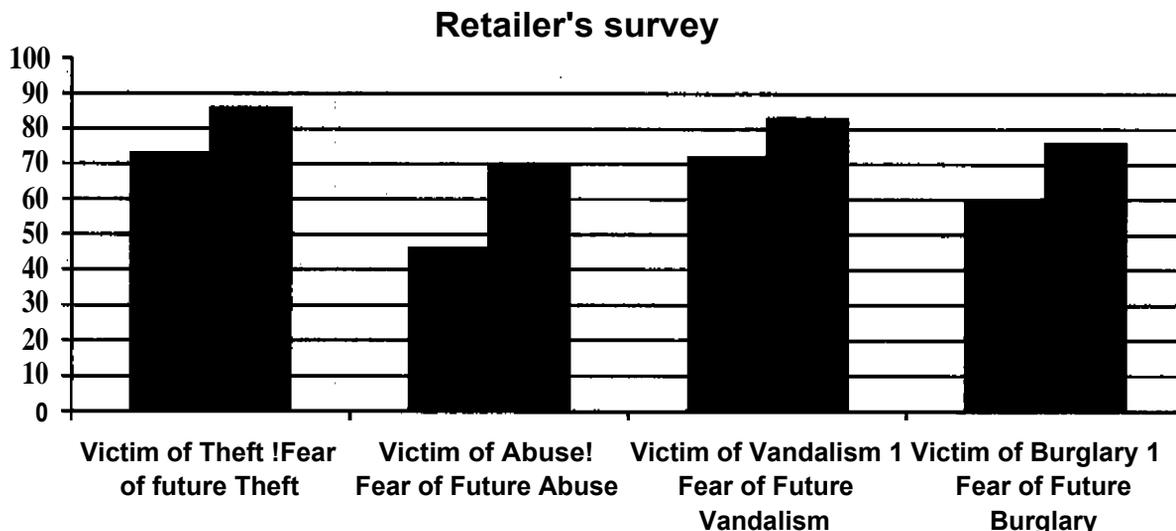


In July 1998 PC Hornby was appointed to the position of Town Centre Beat Manager. He quickly became aware that *in* order to tackle the range of crime and disorder problems still present on the beat he would need to use a variety of approaches to succeed. The timely introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act and Geographic Policing provided the framework to address the issues in hand. Central to this approach was the concept of Problem Orientated Policing and its model the SARA cycle.

The first priority was to locate the key decision-makers in the town centre to form a partnership to understand the underlying reasons for these problems in order to plan an effect response. Approaches were made to the following organisations and agencies:

- a) The Town Centre Manager
- b) The CCTV System Manager.
- c) Bridgwater Business Security Link (BBSL) Radio System Committee.
- d) The Bridgwater Forum.
- e) The Bridgwater Key Partners.
- fj) Sedgemoor District Council.

The first step taken by the Local Authority and Businesses, functioning as the Town Centre Key Partners, was to quantify the true levels and impact of crime on the retail businesses. To this end the newly appointed Town Centre Manager was commissioned to carry out a comprehensive and independent survey of a broad cross section of businesses throughout the town centre (see results below:)



The message was very clear that all stakeholders in the town were concerned at the quality of service provided by the Police. It was abundantly clear that they all wished to form a united front in dealing with the problems. Further consultation also revealed that the lack of a Beat Manager for the previous 10 months had contributed to the recent upturn in criminal activity. It was thought that a more visible policing presence was required. The Crime and Disorder Audits revealed the public shared similar areas of concern, namely: antisocial behaviour; fear of burglary; damage and violence. The town centre around the Cornhill and the Blake Statue had become a magnet for problem youths, drunks, beggars and drug addicts.

**Youths on the Blake Statue**



Over the past few years the town centre has suffered from high levels of crime compared to the rest of the Bridgwater Police Sector. Figures for 1998/99 show that ¼ of the total sector crime occurred on the town centre beat. It also had the second highest level of recorded crime for any beat in the Somerset West District. (Source Crime Analyst)

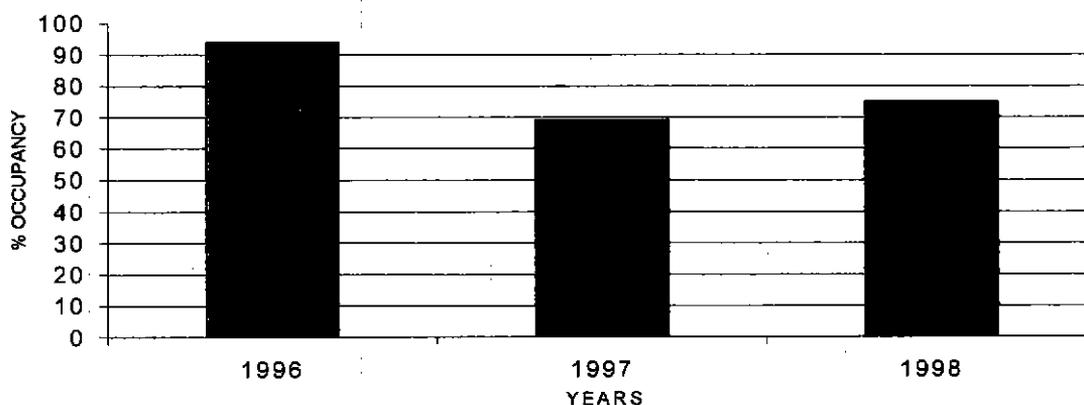
**Beat Crime in Bridgwater (Source: Crime Database)**

<b>Bridgwater Beats</b>	<b>Total Crime 1997/98</b>	<b>Total Crime 1998/99</b>
Bridgwater	1367	1420
Hamp	725	771
Bridgwater West	849	846
Sydenham North	703	740
Sydenham South	955	787

This high level of crime had a degenerative effect on both trade and the general ambience of the town centre, which was not helped by the unkempt appearance of the majority of premises.

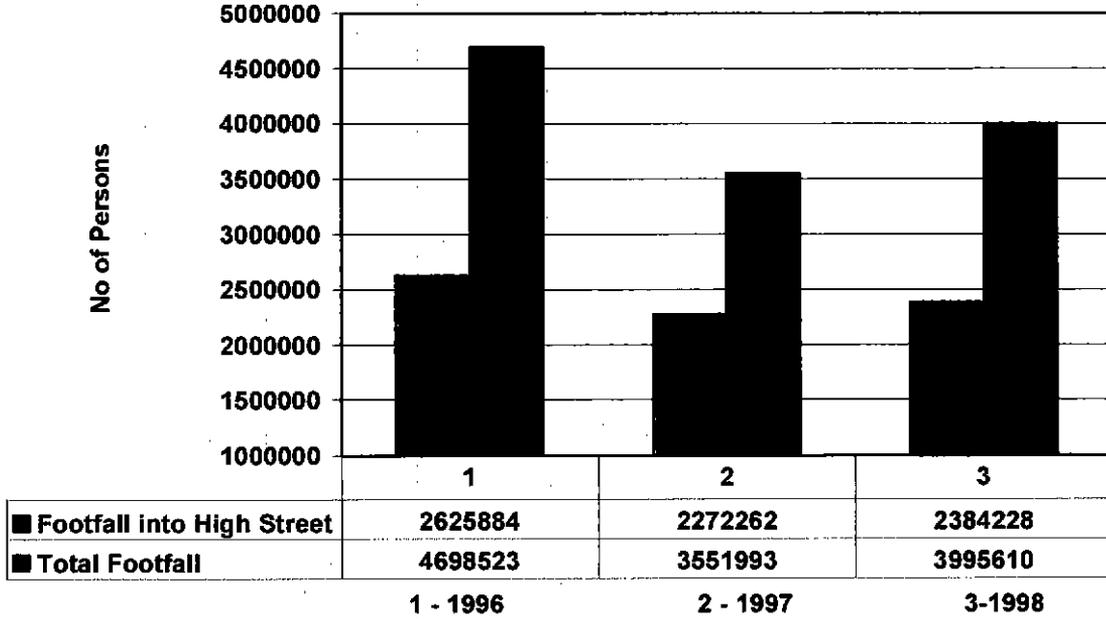
At the beginning of 1998 occupied retail floor space was below the national average for a town of similar nature and size. The low level of occupancy was in part due to the economic down turn of the previous decade.

**Percentage Retail Floor Space Occupied (Source: Retail Sector)**



The high levels of actual and perceived crime within the town centre contributed to the lack of inward investment. A vicious circle had taken a strangle hold on the trading environment of the town. It was in a situation of sharp retail decline, which showed low morale in all quarters. Footfall statistics (Number of people using the town centre) confirmed the downward trend of the town centre.

**Footfall Statistics in the Centre (Source: Private Sector)**



This reduced the profitability of the town and resulted in long established businesses failing. This was amply illustrated in Eastover where 50% of all business premises were empty. In addition a large number of the premises were trading as Charity Shops. The vacant areas became a target and catalyst for persistent and opportunist criminals.



**Vacant premises in town centre**



### An alysis

In the absence of a single forum to tackle crime, the police consulted with all key stakeholders (stated earlier), to understand the reasons for the problems in the town centre. This included regular attendance at town centre meetings and a personal visit to each retailer to understand their individual concerns.

Taking each issue in turn the causes of the problems were analysed to identify the interaction between the **victim**; the **offender** and the **location**:

#### BurLlarv:

Crime analysis showed that a large proportion of the town centre business premises' burglaries had the same *Modus Operandi*, namely - entry from the rear of the premises via the roof. Most of the premises entered had easy access from the back street service roads, an area devoid of CCTV. Police Intelligence indicated that one juvenile was believed to be responsible for 75% of the burglaries, all of which resulted in theft of petty cash. lie committed his offences at night and had a history of repeat victimisation in his M.O.



Rear of Fore Street — unobserved access to roofs

#### Vehicle Crime:

Vehicle Crime, particularly `theft from' cars was high in the private sector car parks, with 2269 reported crimes in Bridgwater in 1998199.1 in 6 occurred in the town centre, `theft

from' was twice as prevalent as theft of 243 121. Especially hard hit were the car parks of Sainsbury and Safeway.

### **GIS Spatial plots of Car Crime in 1998 (Source: Sedgemoor District Council)**



The lack of CCTV systems and security patrols in both of these car parks was the underlying reason for the sustained high levels of theft. That is in direct conflict with the low levels in the local authority and Angel Place (Private Sector) car parks. Offender profiling indicated youths were responsible for the majority of thefts, with property left on display inside the cars being the target.

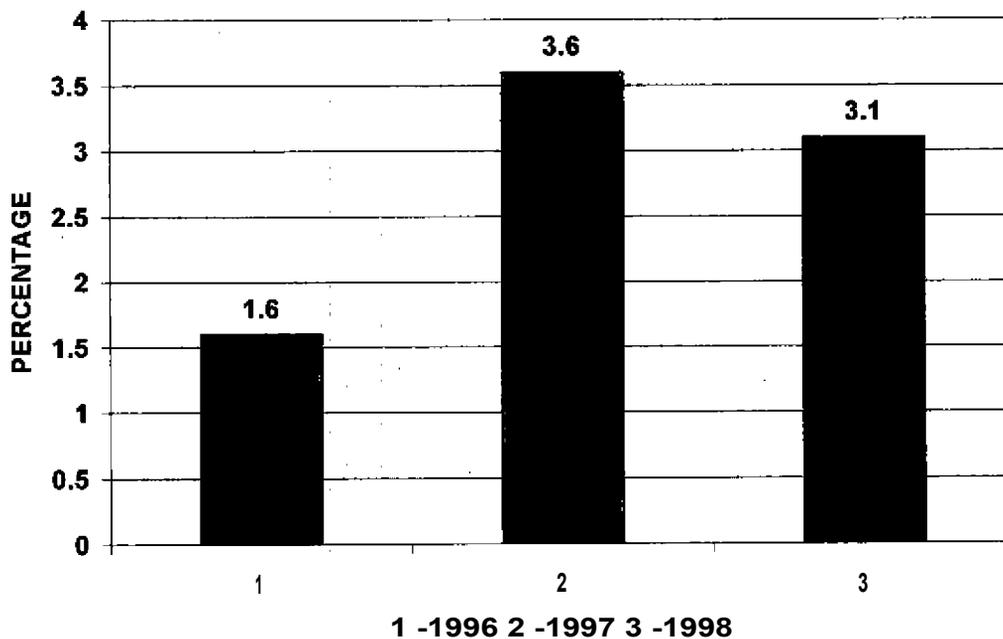
#### **Shop Theft:**

Shoplifting was high in the town centre with the Business survey indicating that 11% of those replying suffered theft on an almost daily basis. There were 231 reported crimes in 1998/99. It appeared that thieves acted with impunity. A large proportion of those who were arrested for theft also had serious drug addiction problems. A District wide survey of all arrests showed 48% of those arrested had drug habits. This high level of offending was not helped when persistent offenders were placed before the court. Traders who had been the repeat victim of shop theft by the same few shop thieves called for a review of the lax sentencing policy. The following case illustrates their frustration:

A well known shoplifter failed to attend court — a warrant was issued for his arrest. He was detained within 30 minutes and placed before the court. Within minutes he was released again on the same lax bail conditions, only to be arrested for further shoplifting offences within the hour. This male has had 57 convictions for theft and has breached court bail on numerous occasions.

Shops were also allowing the commission of offences expecting the Police to take action after the event. This was due to fear of the offenders and a lack of knowledge as to how to deal with such offenders and offences. Offenders were targeting the stores, which displayed these traits.

**AVERAGE TOWN CENTRE STOCK LOSS 1996 - 1998**



Crime analysis and offender profiling indicated in the pre-Christmas period thieves travelled from distance using the M5 corridor to attack the town centre stores.

**Damage:**

The Business Crime Survey highlighted that 72% of all business replying to the survey had in the previous 5 years been subject to various forms of damage. Police crime figures showed 58 repeat victims in 1998/99 with 247 crimes reported and 21% being detected.

Crime analysis revealed most incidents had taken place overnight at weekends. The most common form of damage being broken windows. Analysis showed no set pattern towards victim or premises, but offender profiling indicated a small group of offenders were believed responsible. CCTV was present in the area where the offences occurred but it was not recording the incidents of damage as they occurred. This lack of recording was partly due to poor pre-setting of the cameras.

**Antisocial Behaviour:**

The commercial heart of Bridgwater (Cornhill and Blake Statue) was a magnet to those disposed to antisocial behaviour. The Blake Statue had been moved some years

previously to provide a raised seating area in the then newly pedestrian designated Fore Street. As the town centre changed this utility developed in to a haven for drunks, drug users and vagrants. It also attracted young under aged drunks and their associated misdemeanours. All of this contributed to the declining levels of trading activity in the town, as this area was now effectively openly hostile in its appearance.

*Night Time Disorder:*

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Analysis of the night time on-street disorder associated with night clubs in St Mary Street revealed that those disposed to violence were in part playing up to the Police presence. Allied with this was the poor quality of the night clubs and public houses in the street, many of which were in a poor state of disrepair and this aggravated the hostile environment. Because of changes in the recording of incidents Police comparative data is not available for 1998. Officer observation indicated the same small number of licensed premises were the site of the disorder.

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## Response

Thorough analysis of the beat's problems by the key stakeholders provided the information needed to plan an effective response. Central to tackling all of the problems highlighted was the Crime and Disorder Act. This allowed all the agencies to exchange information and data to allow the full picture to develop thus allowing a properly structured and partnership led drive to reduce the town centre crime levels.

As a result the following problem-orientated police initiatives were then put into operation in 1998. Importantly it was felt that multiple POP's were required to tackle the problems now identified using the SARA cycle. Central to this regeneration was the acceptance that to tackle the problems, business and public sectors would need to provide the resources required to move forward. Bids for regeneration funds were made by the council and Key Partners to Heritage Groups and the National Lottery.

<i>Example of Refurbishment Plans</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
Refurbishment of <b>Cornhill</b> and five historic sites in town centre	To enhance the look of the centre to attract more visitors and businesses. To recover the Cornhill as a public amenity
<b>Potential relocation</b> of Blake Statue as part of <b>Pedestrianisation</b> process. Statue to be placed on original plinth.	<b>To discourage youths from loitering in the main shopping thoroughfare</b>
Removal of Gap Sites (empty I derelict <b>buildings</b> )	To enhance the look of the centre; to create an inviting environment for <b>businesses</b>
Introduction of one-way traffic system	To remove congestion <b>in the centre</b> and to create a safer <b>environment</b> for <b>shoppers</b>

### Burrlarp:

To tackle the roof top burglaries Support Groups were utilised to run observation points to cover the main area of attack, those being the properties on Fore Street. Allied to this was early warning by the CCTV staff to alert the officers of the impending arrival of known offenders. Extensive use was made of Bleeper Alarms in repeat victim's premises, and the known offender's home address was watched.

*Law*  
*ED*

### Vehicle Crime:

Approaches were made to the management of Sainsbury's and Safeway recommending that the in store security personnel actively patrolled the car parks in the absence of CCTV. The Police Crime Prevention Officer ran high profile car crime awareness days at both stores. Poster campaigns warning of theft were also run. Additionally the Traffic Wardens in partnership with the local Sedgemoor District Council Car Park Wardens implemented the Vulnerable Vehicle Scheme.

### **Shop Theft:**

To tackle the high levels of shoplifting a multiple-POP approach was required involving the partnership.

To improve use of the Sedgemoor District Council CCTV system and BBSL Radio Link. This allowed Police and Traffic Wardens to alert Radio Link members to sightings of known offenders. Preventative self-help action was encouraged amongst the retailers in the town, with retailer's looking after each other's interests rather than just themselves. The Special Constabulary encouraged membership of the Radio Link by visiting all the retailers in the town centre.

- b) The Special Constabulary officers delivered various Home *Office* leaflets that explained how to deal with offenders and alleged offenders. They also delivered information packs on how to combat Credit Card fraud, and leaflets encouraging Radio Link membership. (See appendix A)
- c) The use of the Special Constabulary also provided the extra uniformed presence that traders and public alike had expressed a need for in the Business survey.
- d) A known offender Photograph Scheme was also introduced. Attention was paid to the Data Protection Act, and the stated case of 'Helliwell Vs Chief Constable of Derbyshire'. Photographs were accessed from CCTV, the Police and various Stores within the town centre. (See appendix B)
- e) Extensive use was made of the local media to promote public awareness of Police activity and crime prevention schemes. The local radio station BCRfm assisted in this objective providing airtime for the Beat Manager to advertise the schemes.  
(See appendix C)
- fl) The Radio Link committee requested training evenings for store security staff to combat bad practice.
- g) A high profile anti-shoplifting campaign was implemented in the 2 week period running up to Christmas. 'Operation Grotto' utilised the Special Constabulary, Traffic Wardens, Support Groups and importantly Police Officers on paid rest days (thus not removing officers from other duties). All involved wearing fluorescent tabards enhanced the high profile presence.
- h) The Beat Manager operated a 6 months crackdown to reduce the persistent offending.

**Damage:**

Geographic Policing was used to place officers in the town centre, during the later hours of the evening to the early hours of the morning, the period when most acts of damage were known to have occurred. Use was also made of the BBSL Radio Link, officers were alerted to the presence of known offenders in the town centre area.

**Anti Social Behaviour:**

A robust approach was used to deal with the on street begging and drinking problems. Geographic Policing provided the manpower levels needed to execute numerous warrants issued under the Misuse of Drugs Act on dealer premises.

The partnership was acutely aware that there were gaps in the law with regard to the lowest levels of anti-social behaviour. To resolve this a meeting was arranged between the Council, Police and Town Centre Manager to draft new Bye Laws to plug the gaps. An agreement was reached for the police to provide the evidence and for the Council solicitor to prosecute. (See appendix D)

**Night Time Disorder:**

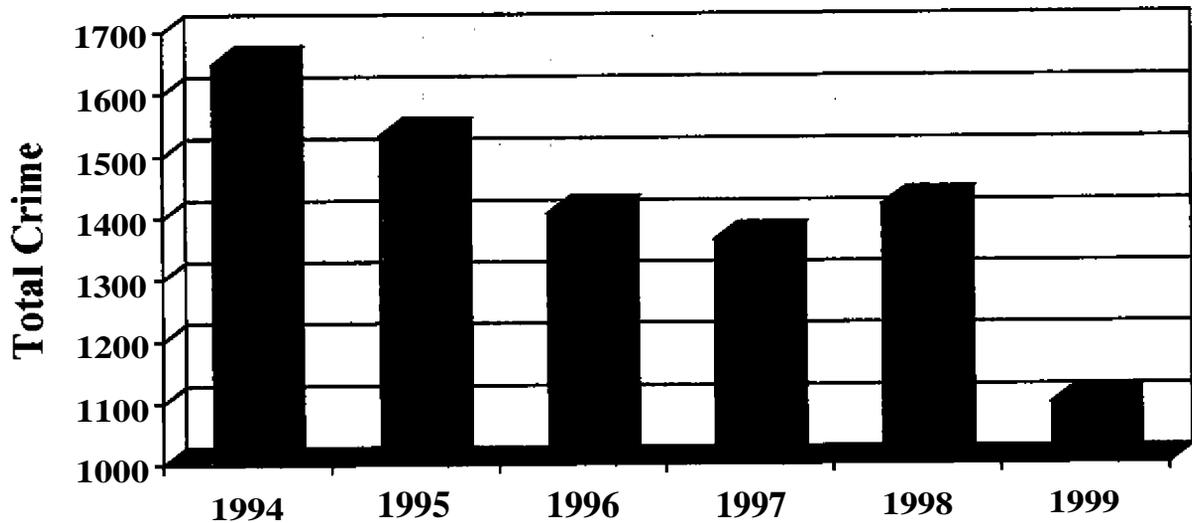
The Sedgemoor District Council CCTV system was used to monitor any on street disorder problems. This permitted the removal of uniformed officers, from the immediate area, whose presence had been an aggravating factor to violence. A number of the Public Houses also made a considerable investment to modernise their premises designing out antisocial behaviour. The Licensing Sergeant and Planning Authority have been actively involved with the beat manager, in providing advice to design out crime.

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## Assessment

Our measures for evaluating success include use of home office crime figures, footfall and retail occupancy statistics and will include results from the repeat Business Crime Survey and Crime and Disorder Audit. The Crime figures in 1998/99 showed a total level of recorded crime on the town centre beat as 1420 offences. In just one year the recorded crime figure has fallen by 23% with 322 fewer crimes. This is against a rising figure nationally.

**Chart showing reduction in crime compared to previous years**



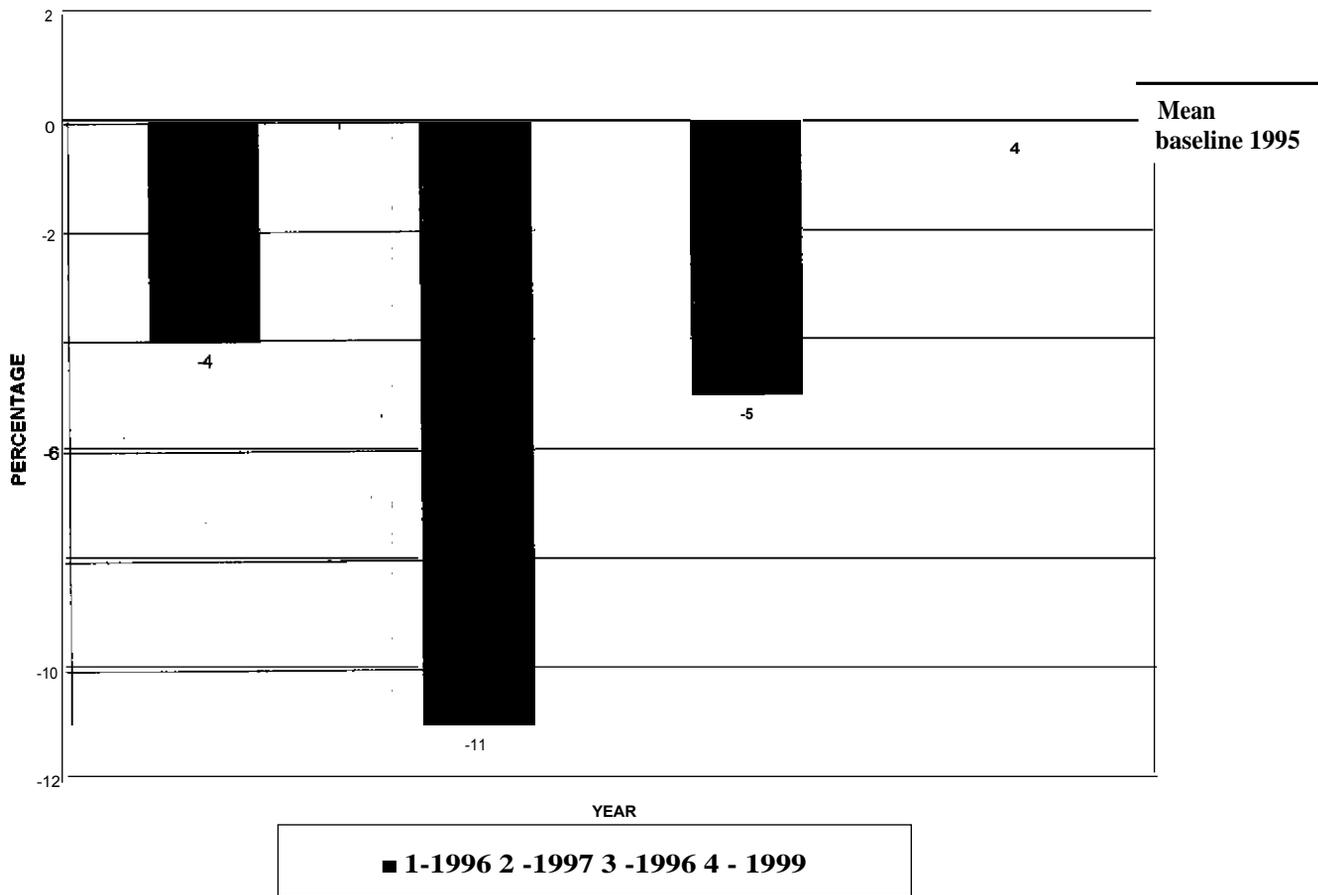
This reduction in crime is as a direct result of the various POP initiatives implemented on the town centre beat.

The figures show a fall in all key areas of recorded crime:

Key Areas of Crime	Absolute Reduction 1998/99 and 1999/00	Relative % Reduction
Assault	-31	-16
Dwelling Burglary	-13	-38
Burglary Other	-43	-42
Cycle Theft	-37	-29
Theft from Motor Vehicle	-52	-41
Theft of Motor Vehicle	-20	-32
Theft Other	-34	-9
Damage	-54	-22
Drugs	-15	-39
<b>Total Crime</b>	<b>-322</b>	<b>-23%</b>

In addition the number of vacant premises in Eastover now stands at 15% compared to the 50% the previous year, thus illustrating the growing confidence in this area of the town. 1999 was the first year in four years that had seen an increase in trading levels rather than a decline compared to the 1995 base figure.

TRADING LEVELS ON BPSE YEAR 1995



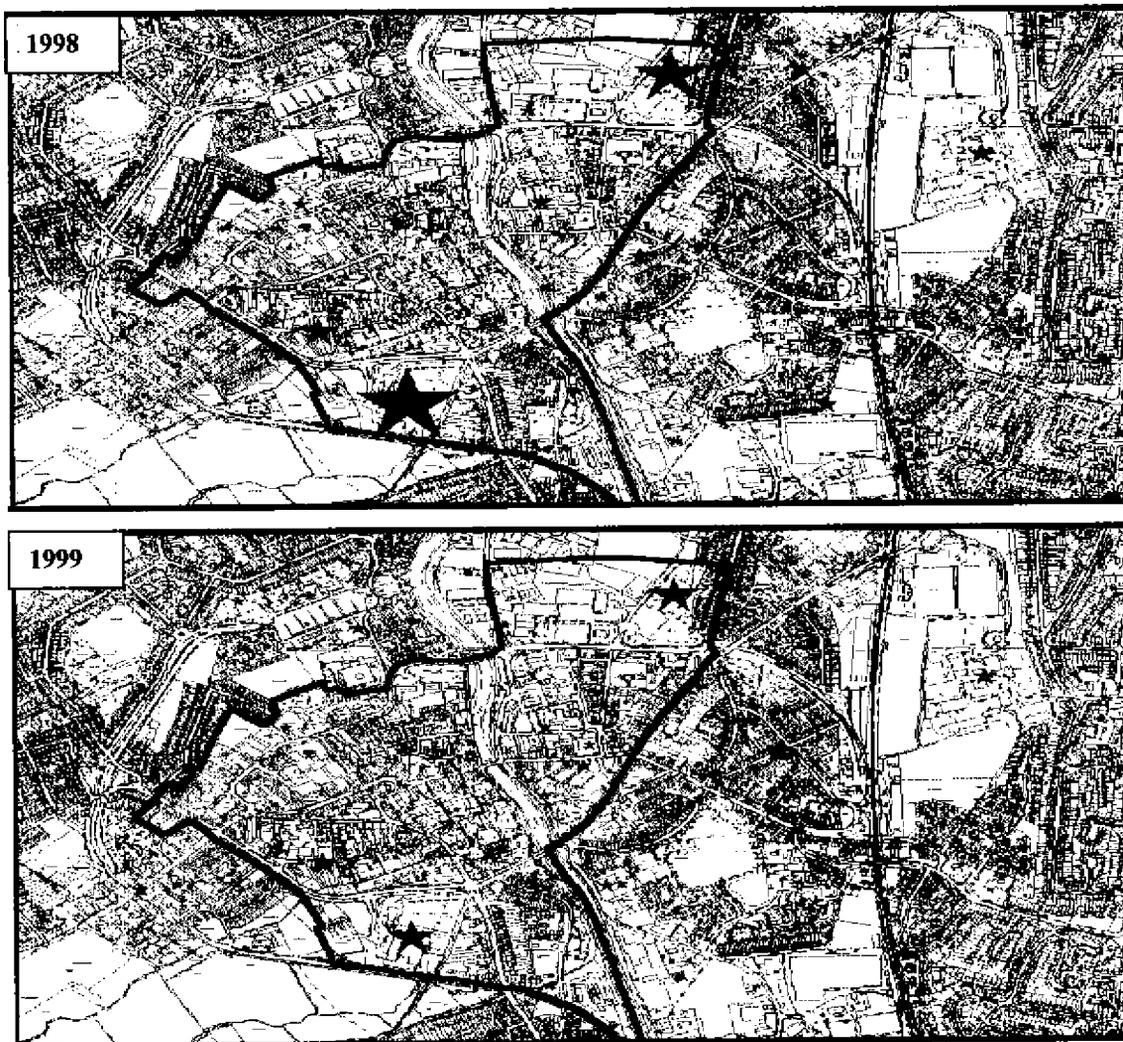
**Bur2larv:**

In both categories of burglary the total reduction was 56 offences. This was achieved by targeting a group of known offenders resulting in their arrest and subsequent imprisonment.

**Vehicle Crime:**

Success in the vehicle crime POP was limited mainly to the large reductions in offending within Sainsbury and Safeway, car parks. The results can be seen in the GIS mapping shown below:

**GIS Spatial plots of Car Crime (Source: Sedgemoor District Council)**



In the December 1999 Vulnerable Vehicle Scheme, 102 letters were sent out to the owners of vehicle left with property on display.

The Angel Place Shopping Centre have also, as the result of consultation with the Police Crime Prevention Officers, been awarded the coveted 'Secure Car Park Award'. They have the distinction of being the first car park in Somerset to achieve the award.

(See appendix E)

**Shop Theft:**

The level of shop theft was reduced as the chart below demonstrates, however the reduction was lower than expected. A major plus though was the feed back from stores regarding their 'Pro Active' approach towards alleged offenders. This can be illustrated by a quote from James Creswick the manager of Gilesports. He along with all other members of the Radio Link adopted a positive rather than passive role towards offenders in their stores.

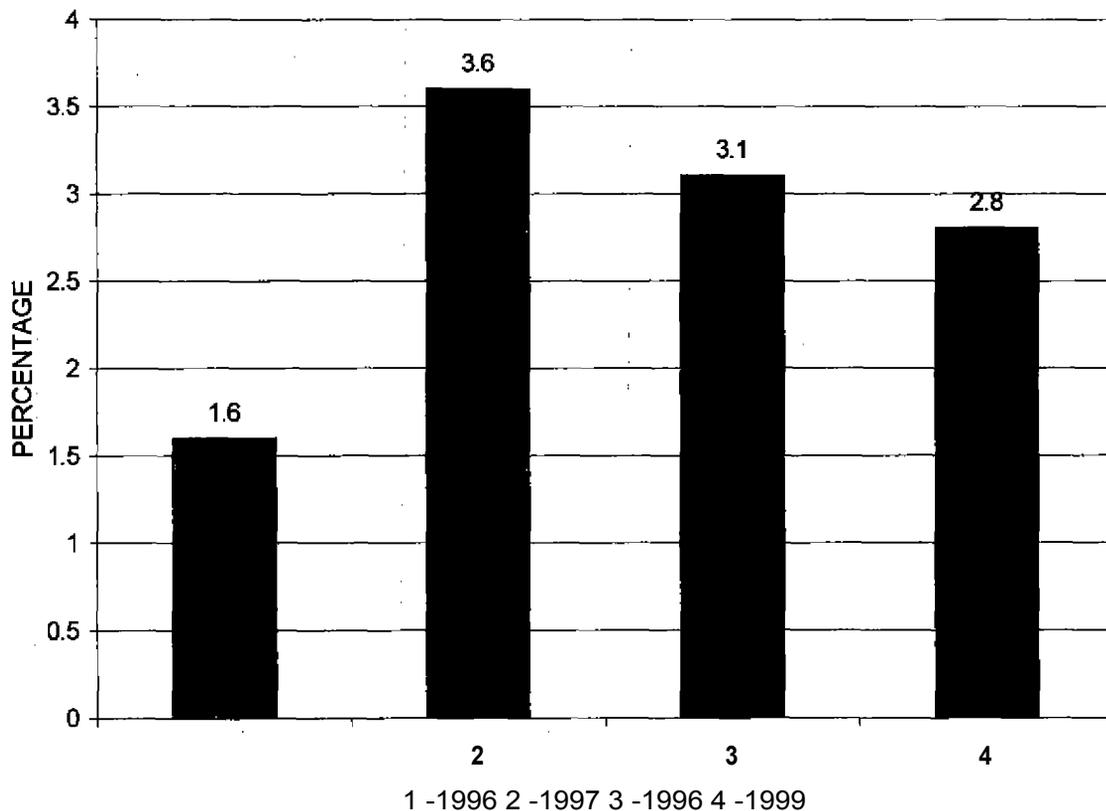
*"Since joining the radio link scheme the number of thefts have dropped to nearly zero".*

He continues:

*"..the beauty of radio link is traders can be alerted of potential problems and deal with them":*

One should remember in 1998 theft accounted for a stock loss of 13% within his store. In addition the chamber of trade *has* revealed a reduction in town centre stock loss as shown in the chart below:

**AVERAGE TOWN CENTRE STOCK LOSS 1996 -1999**



The Radio Link membership has doubled from 19 to 49 stores who willingly pay the rental fee, which endorses the value of the scheme.

The training of the local security officers has paid dividends with better quality evidence being presented, and a reduction in unnecessary calls. The ethos of the security officers also changed along with the store staff. They are now actively preventing crimes occurring, rather than allowing the commission of offences. This has had the beneficial effect of reducing the workload on the Police and, as importantly, the sales staff

The Photograph Identification Scheme has been of value, but some reluctance from the District Council has hampered the regular updating of the photographs. This matter has been addressed, as a result the photographs will now be regularly updated. BBSL have provided £250 to buy a Scanner and Colour printer to aid the production of the offender albums.

With the majority of shop thefts being committed by drug addicts, moves will be taken to address this addiction led offending utilising Drug Rehabilitation agencies.

### Damage:

The reduction in the levels of damage was encouraging with the use of CCTV coming into its own. The operators identified one well-known offender in the town centre. As a result he was arrested close to the scene of a damage incident. He was later charged with 3 other damages and a burglary occurring the same evening. He was jailed for 7 months. The amount of damage reduced as a result. In previous years the installation of floral displays and other cosmetic improvements to the town centre would have been an open invitation to vandals and thieves. Those items can now be installed with less fear of damage and removal, improving the general appearance and feeling of well-being in the town.



**Anti Social Behaviour:**

The on street problems around the Cornhill and Blake Statue have been reduced by the arrest of persistent beggars. The problem of under aged drinking has been reduced by officers confiscating the drink of those involved. The CCTV system has been used to act as an early warning system for the Police and Traffic Wardens to alert them of the presence of the beggars and drunks.

The proposal for new Bye-Laws progressed with a number of these being forwarded to the Home Office for approval. A second and third tranche of Bye-Laws is also being drafted.

The on street drug dealing has been tackled. CCTV operators identified alleged offenders to the Police who then conducted stop searches and arrests . Eight search warrants have been executed on the beat at the addresses of known and suspected drug dealers. As a result large quantities of stolen property valued in excess of £5,000 have been recovered. Offenders have been charged with offences under the Drugs Act, and Theft Act for handling stolen goods.

**Night Time Disorder:**

A change in the recording of incidents means comparative data is unavailable for 1998, but observations reveal that there has been a reduction in the number of incidents. At the present time the Door Safe scheme appears to be failing. This will be tackled using Geographic Police cover. The Partnership will encourage the District Council to address the lack of monitoring of the scheme.

The hostile environment has been reduced greatly with a new better-managed night-club opening, as well as the refurbishment of various Public Houses.

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## *The Way Forward*

In summary the various POP initiatives have made a large improvement to the general well being to the centre of Bridgwater, see picture below. The general atmosphere of the town has become far more positive from both within its boundaries and beyond. The crime reductions have contributed to the town attracting £1.6 million in regeneration funds. (See appendix F)

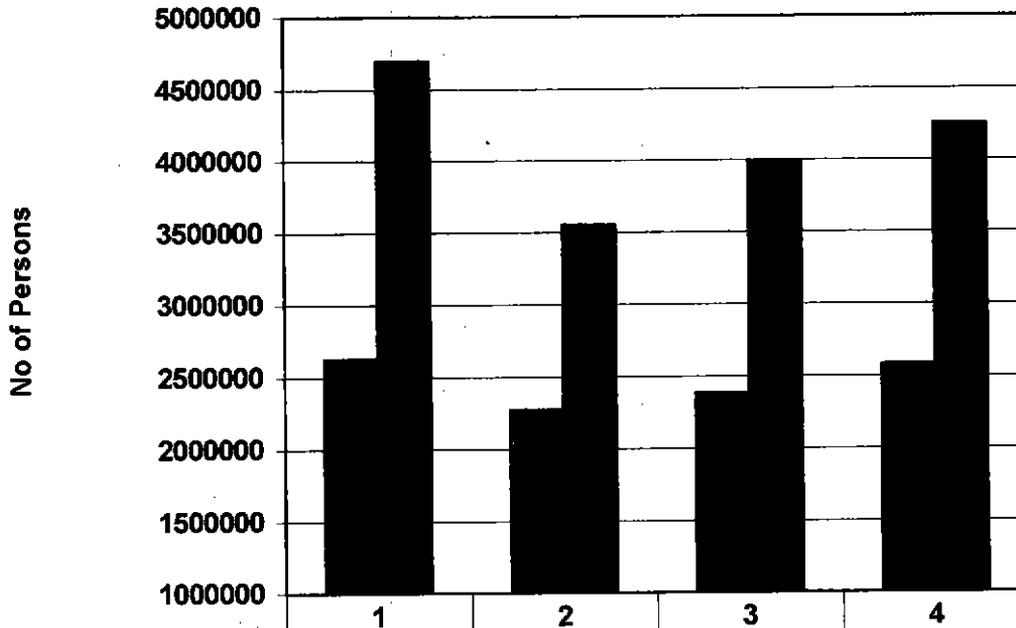


### **Pedestrianisation in Fore Street**

In summarising the feelings of the key partners Lucy Ball, town centre manager says:

"From our point of view if the town looks attractive and feels unthreatening shoppers feel more inclined to shop and stay rather than shop and run. The improvement in footfall figures proves my point with an increase of 25% returns from one car park alone" "In addition in 1999 we have seen a 20% increase in footfall through the Angel Place Shopping centre compared to 1997 figure."

**NUMBER OF VISITORS TO THE TOWN CENTRE (FOOTFALL) 1997  
TO 1999**



	1	2	3	4
■ Footfall into High Street	2625884	2272262	2384228	2582099
■ Total Footfall	4698523	3551993	3995610	4249540

1 - 1996      2 - 1997      3-1998      4-1999

There is no room for complacency. Bridgwater in 1998, was at a very low ebb. This partnership approach has been a significant step forward in reducing criminality and thus improving the environment of Bridgwater. Not wishing to stand still we are looking for new ideas and initiatives to improve our strategies and responses to the ever changing needs of the town centre. We will continue the fight against crime in Bridgwater. The following POP's will help in the process of implementation.

- a) The introduction of a banning order scheme.
- b) To introduce the Civil Retail Recovery Scheme throughout the town.
- c) Continue to make best use of the CCTV system and address the problem of poorly set 'pre sets' within the automatic monitoring facility.
- d) To encourage the judiciary and CPS to bring there specific tools to the partnership thus strengthening the fight against crime.
- e) Conduct a second Business Survey.

In moving forward we do not seek to reinvent the wheel. All the initiatives have been tried else where. The strength of the partnership is to tailor them to Bridgwater's needs. Many ideas have come from Business Crime Check, as approved by the Home Office and ACPO.

In Bridgwater we have proved there is

## **Prosperity in Partnership**