

# **FIFE CONSTABULARY**

## **Route 19**



**Compiled by PS John Hughes**



## **Introduction**

The City and Royal Burgh of Dunfermline is the main centre of commerce for the west of Fife. It is a very busy shopping centre that services several small villages and towns as well as the larger estates surrounding the town centre.

There are excellent road and rail links into Dunfermline. In particular the Bus Station is situated next to a large shopping mall next to the main shopping precinct. The Bus Station is very busy with both local and national bus routes accessing the facilities.

By far the busiest route is route 19. This route starts in Edinburgh travels to Fife and then from Dunfermline Bus Station makes it way west through several large housing estates in Dunfermline and then onwards through the various small towns and villages to the west of Dunfermline.

This route is one that is very important to local communities and also to the Bus Company, Stagecoach, who make a very large amount of money from the route and as a result are able to keep other less productive routes available to the public. It was because of this routes importance to the area and the Bus Company that it was selected as a title for this project.

The population for the greater Dunfermline area is 127,000 people. The bus routes are very important to a great number of these people as Dunfermline has suffered from high unemployment over recent years and buses are their only method of travel. This figure does not include the smaller populations that access buses.

There are numerous other routes leaving the Bus Depot travelling in all directions, again not only servicing areas of the City but also making their way to other smaller population centres. The buses used are normally either single or double deckers and are all operated by the same company i.e. Stagecoach. All the vehicles used are stored and serviced from the main Bus Garage, which is situated within the southern part of Dunfermline.

## **Background to the Problem**

This problem was identified through several sources and brought to the Police attention by various ways as follows: -

### Community Intelligence

Through regular contact with members of various community groups e.g. Community Councils, Neighbourhood Watch Committees, Residents Groups etc. police officers began to receive complaints regarding the conduct of individuals on public transport. These complaints varied from drunken behaviour to shouting, swearing and general disorder occurring on buses across Dunfermline. The complaints were very non-specific about times and routes but were very general.

## Bus Company

Stagecoach was very unhappy about the level of anti social behaviour being faced by their drivers. They informed the police through their local manager that they had received numerous complaints from their staff and from the public about the level of bad behaviour and threats they were facing on a regular basis. Again they had not recorded the complaints in any great detail and were unable to give specific information regarding times and locus of problems. They also complained about their vehicles being targeted by vandals with windows being smashed. There was no real pattern to this vandalism with incidents occurring across Dunfermline. The company were also facing problems with buses having the road blocked in front of them and groups of young adults running on the buses and switching off the engine. The drivers were actually at the stage that they felt unsafe and were threatening strike action. The Bus Company were considering removing some routes from service including very busy routes such as Route 19.

## Elected Officials

Complaints were received from various councillors and even an MSP regarding the situation, which they felt, was becoming desperate. They were all concerned about the level of incidents and were extremely unhappy about the threat to withdraw services.

## Police records

The number of calls recorded at the Police Station did not fully support the problem as described from other sources. The drivers were simply not reporting them to the Police and the Bus Company were also guilty of not advising the Police about problems. The only thing the Police had reasonable records on was the number of vandalisms reported. This again did not tally with the number recorded at the bus garage as the company again did not advise the police of every incident only the more serious damage such as large windows being broken.

## **Scanning**

Having identified that there was a quite serious problem, we carried out the scanning phase of POP and sought data from sources as follows: -

- **Community Officers** when visiting their local community groups attempted to ascertain as much information as possible about the problem. They were instructed to try and obtain some fine detail so that the problem could be targeted with resources being in the right place at the right time.
- **Local schools** were contacted and information sought from them regarding what input if any they gave to children and young adults about vandalism and anti social behaviour particularly on public transport.

- **The Bus Company** management was contacted and their recording procedures for incidents were examined. They were also interviewed about when they advised Police about incidents and what type of incident they would report. They were also asked about what advice or training they gave to drivers on how to deal with situations appropriately and what to do should an incident occur. They were also asked if they could possibly identify an age group or groups that gave them the most problems.
- **Bus drivers** were interviewed with regard to ascertaining if they could provide any detailed information on particular trouble spots again so that resources could be targeted effectively. They were also interviewed regarding how they might manage any situations or what training they had received.
- **Elected officials** were spoken with to ascertain exactly what information they had obtained.
- **Police records** were checked to ascertain if there was any pattern attached to these incidents. Also facts and figures were required for evaluation purposes.

## Analysis

The analysis for this problem was very difficult to quantify. This problem in analysis was caused as much of the information was very non-specific and consisted of members of the public and others making general complaints about a perceived problem. It was not helped by the Bus Company who were very poor at keeping records and had little or no good quality information on which to plan and act. The only quantifiable sources available were records kept by the company regarding vandalism and also Police records regarding calls and crimes. However the analysis is broken down as follows; -

- Community Officers visited Community Groups on their areas. From these visits it became apparent that only residents in specific areas perceived any problems on public transport i.e. buses. The areas complaining were, Halbeath Village (Route 19), Brucefield Housing Estate area (Route 19), Abbeyview Housing area (Route 19). Other areas covered by other routes were less vociferous in their complaints but the Officers did get some complaints from almost every group they visited. The complaints again were very non-specific and basically consisted of anti social behaviour both on buses and also against buses as they passed. The groups almost without exception blamed young adults and put the target group age as anything between 8 years to 15 years. It was interesting that very few complained about older adults later in the evening. They all were complaining about the younger element earlier in the evening.
- Officers as part of their duties regularly visit and give inputs to schools both primary and secondary. They tend to target their talks at good citizenship and often vary them to suit individual problems that are taking place at the time. Liaison was carried out at local schools and

teachers were asked if they had knowledge of the problem and if they could assist in combating this problem. All schools gave a very positive response to the problem and agreed that Community Officers and the Schools Liaison Officer as part of their regular inputs could speak to the children and young adults about causing damage to buses and about the dangers of anti social behaviour in and around buses. The schools were unable to supply any specific information about where and when the problems surrounding buses occurred but again they had all heard pupils' talking amongst themselves discussing what was happening on buses.

- The Bus Company management were interviewed and asked what training if any they gave their staff, particularly the drivers regarding conflict situations and what to do in an emergency. There was little in the way of advice or guidance given and no training at all in how to deal with drunken or anti social behaviour. The only guidance given with regard to say a window being smashed was to wait at the locus until the next bus arrived and then contact the Police. All in all it was a very poor training package and not designed to combat any problems at all.
- Bus Drivers were contacted and again interviewed regarding how they dealt with problems on their buses, what problems they faced and if possible where and when they faced problems. It became very obvious that the drivers had little or no idea on how they would or should react in a problem situation. They felt there was little support in place and many were actually frightened. There was a strong feeling that if something was not done they would be taking strike action and refusing to drive buses during evening hours. All of the drivers spoken to stated that they were aware of where they were likely to have problems and regularly did have problems with anti social behaviour both on the buses and also on the bus routes. It became obvious that they had a vast wealth of intelligence but had no way of passing it on and having it recorded. They were also at pains to explain that the trouble spots were very fluid and changed regularly. The drivers also identified young people aged between 8 years to 15 years as being the main culprits. Again the problem with all the information obtained was that it tended to be historical and very little was of use to target problems in specific areas or at specific times.
- Local elected officials were contacted but had little to add to the information already obtained from community sources.
- Police records were checked for the period 1<sup>st</sup> June 2001 to 30 November 2001. The records for number of vandalisms and number of calls involving buses were checked and figures were obtained as shown in graphs 1-3,
- Bus company records for the same time were checked and although unable to give specific details of how vandalisms occurred i.e. what

route and if it actually occurred in Dunfermline area, the overall cost is an indicator of how much vandalism of a minor nature takes place.

It was obvious from the scanning and analysis that there was indeed a severe problem. It might not be reflected in the number of vandalisms actually being reported to the Police but the anecdotal evidence and the obvious fear of crime experienced by bus drivers required that a response be implemented as soon as possible. The scanning and analysis was done very quickly and there were no questionnaires used or specific interviews carried out. The speed was required as the problem was ongoing and the threat of route closures was imminent.

## **Response**

The responses were decided upon after taking many factors into account. There was no specific information as to where and when incidents occurred and no clear pattern emerged to target resources. There was an obvious requirement to provide visible support to bus drivers and also there was a training requirement for both the drivers and the young adults who were being principally blamed for the problems. It was also obvious that the drivers had a wealth of knowledge regarding developing trouble spots but had not been advising their supervisors or the Police. Finally the responses had to be cost effective and make best use of very limited resources.

The following responses were implemented,

- The bus company agreed that Police Officers would use their buses free of charge to travel about their beat.
- Community Officers and other uniform Officers to use public transport whenever possible. This would not be planned, unless there was specific information to target routes, and Officers should wear high visibility clothing.
- Drivers would receive training from the Community Safety Officer regarding how to react to conflict situations and what to do in the event of an incident. This training would consist of network sessions at the bus garage. The bus company undertook to give similar training on a regular basis.
- Community Officers and School Liaison Officer to give an input at both secondary and primary schools regarding the problem outlining the dangers associated with damaging or targeting buses and also the possible consequences i.e. the removal of services.

- Incident logs were produced and supplied to bus drivers providing them with a recording and reporting facility. The logs would also be used to record any intelligence they might see when driving through their areas e.g. youths congregating, youths drinking or anything else thought relevant.
- Incident logs to be uplifted every Friday from bus garage and all information placed on the intelligence system and used to identify problems/problem areas as they developed. The information would then be used to target resources and hopefully prevent problems developing across the area.
- Community groups would be advised of the problem and asked to keep an eye on the buses in an effort to gain further information. Anything of any use to be fed back to their Community Officers using procedures already in place.
- Media launch in local press to highlight that Police personnel would be using buses.

The two main partners in the scheme would be the Police and Stagecoach. However Education and the communities would also play a very active role.

Objectives were set at the start of the project as follows: -

1. To increase the safety of drivers and passengers using buses in Dunfermline by reducing anti social behaviour
2. To obtain intelligence on persons who were responsible or who might be responsible for this problem. Use this intelligence to target resources effectively.
3. Reduce crime, particularly vandalism, associated with buses.
4. Increase visibility of Police Officers and thereby increase public confidence.

The project would run for a six-month period starting 1<sup>st</sup> December 2001 till 30<sup>th</sup> June 2002. The target area would be Dunfermline City boundaries but would also take in some outlying villages that are covered from Dunfermline Police Station.

There was no allocation of overtime or additional resources and all the talks and Officers who were either already committed to this type of duty or who gave talks as part of their community role would do training. Community Officers normally walk to the outlying areas of their beat on a daily basis so there would be an added benefit in that they could actually travel more efficiently using the bus service and thereby save themselves some time.

## Assessment & Evaluation

Several criteria were decided upon to evaluate this project.

- Discuss the situation with community groups to ascertain their opinions and perception.
- Contact elected officials and ascertain if they were still in receipt of complaints.
- Speak with bus drivers to ascertain if they were happier and feeling safe to carry out their duties.
- Number of vandalisms to buses during the project compared to the six months leading up to the project starting.
- Number of calls logged using the same comparison.
- Number of school inputs given.
- Number of safety talks given to bus drivers.
- No of incident logs completed and collected.
- Number of Criminal Intelligence entries created as a result of logs.

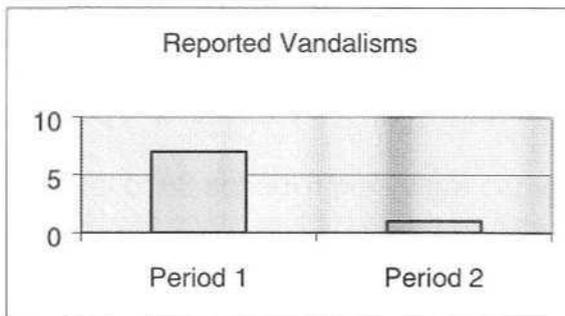
The first evaluation criterion is formed from opinions of community groups. Again as part of their routine duties Officers obtained the opinions of the various community groups they visit on a regular basis. All groups across the Dunfermline area stated without exception that they felt that the situation on the buses had improved. They informed the Officers that they felt the buses were safe to use and they had noticed a decrease in the amount of anti social behaviour.

Elected Officials across Dunfermline were contacted and they had not received any complaints regarding anti social behaviour on buses.

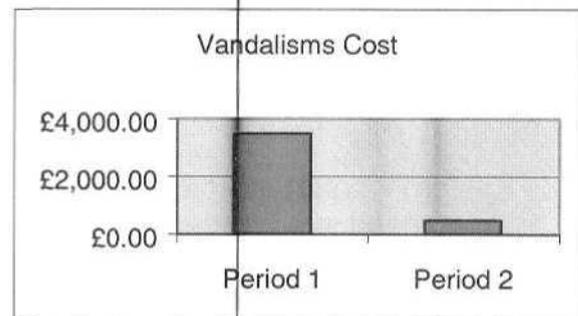
Bus drivers were interviewed and reported that they had observed a drop in the amount of anti social behaviour and felt much safer about driving their buses in the evenings in Dunfermline. It should be mentioned here that when this project began the drivers were threatening strike action and the routes across Dunfermline were under threat of closure. Neither in fact happened as the drivers all felt that a workable solution was in place.

The number of vandalisms reported to the Police for 6 months prior to the project is shown in period 1 Graph 1 below. Period 2 shows the number of vandalisms reported during the time the project ran. Graph 2 shows the cost of repair for these vandalisms during both periods. Graph 3 shows the cost of unreported vandalisms recorded by the bus company and not reported to the Police for the same period. This graph is perhaps not as valuable as a lot of

the damage shown actually occurs when the buses are being used for other purposes e.g. school runs. This is an entirely separate issue.

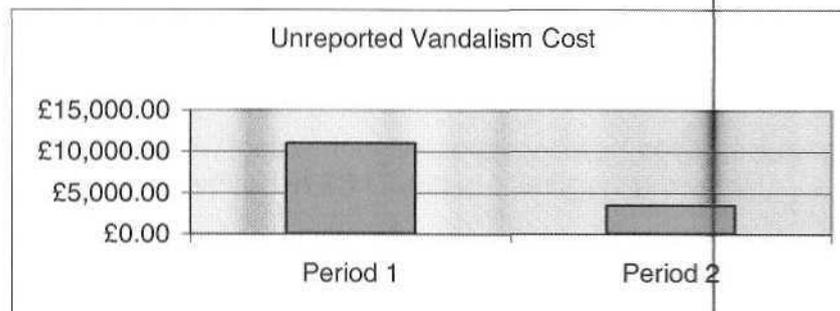


Graph 1



Graph 2

This shows a percentage drop in reported vandalism of 85.7% and equates to a saving of £3,000 to the bus company.



Graph 3

This shows a percentage drop of 68% in the cost of unreported vandalism to the bus company. This figure takes a number of factors into account and will be affected by other circumstances e.g. change in routine for school buses, school holidays, etc. So although this drop in unreported vandalism is impressive it cannot in all honesty be entirely claimed as a direct result of Route 19.

The number of calls received by the Police involving incidents on buses for the 6-month period prior to the project totalled 52. The number of calls received for the 6-month period the project ran fell to 36. Again these figures will be affected by the method used to log the calls. Some calls would not be logged in both periods if an operator recorded them simply as a disturbance or nuisance and not as occurring on a bus.

However as the circumstances for both periods is the same it would be relevant to claim a percentage drop of 30.77% in calls involving buses. A number of the calls involve school buses and not service buses but again due to recording difficulties it would be an onerous task to sort the figures out in this detail.

The savings made during this project are considerable particularly for the bus company. However there is also the saving in Police time and resources. If you take it that on average it would take one Police Officer 2 hours of time to attend to and record a crime, that is a saving of 12 hours. If you allow 1 hour per call, the time saved on calls is 16 hours. That is a total of 28 hours of Police time saved.

A total of 63 school inputs were carried out during the project period. The input was given as part of the routine school talks that would have been done in any case.

There were a total of ten visits to the bus garage to give safety talks to staff. This included how to deal effectively with drunk and abusive people, what procedure to follow should an incident such as a broken window occur and various scenarios brought up by the drivers such as mobile telephone usage etc. These talks were not given in any particular format but were kept informal and were designed basically to answer any queries raised by the bus drivers. The principal purpose behind the talks was simply to let the drivers know we were interested and that something was being done to alleviate their problems.

There were a total of 54 incident logs completed and uplifted during the period of the project. This resulted in 83 Criminal Intelligence entries.

As a result of this intelligence 3 hot spots were created and targeted. This was done as part of the normal station targeting policy, which uses intelligence to select problem areas as a hot spot. This intelligence was fed through the NIM procedure using the regular Tactical and Tasking Meetings held at Division. The other problems highlighted could be addressed at a very early stage before becoming major problems and were dealt with by way of either extra attention or by community officer attending and discussing matters with the young people involved.

It was difficult to show whether any displacement occurred as a result of this project but there was nothing in any figures that suggested problems away from bus routes had become any worse or better.

The procedures used during the project have been kept in place as it was seen as a very worthwhile method of having extra eyes and ears for intelligence gathering. The bus company and drivers are very happy to continue to assist and the Police Officers are happy that not only are they combating crime and disorder they also have a very convenient method of travelling around their areas.

This project used only resources that were already in place, no additional staff or overtime were used and made a considerable saving in time effort and money to the Police and also the bus company. It also targeted fear of crime and genuine public concern over what was developing into a major issue. Since the official project terminated after 6 months monitoring of reported vandalism has continued. Up to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2003, there has only been one

reported vandalism on a bus in Dunfermline. This happened in the early hours of the morning and was a drunken individual who smashed 2 bus windows. He was arrested as a result.

## **Conclusion**

At the start of this project four objectives were set. Basically increased safety of bus users/drivers, better gathering and use of intelligence, reduce crime particularly vandalism, and increased visibility of Police Officers.

The project has certainly managed to increase the safety of bus users and drivers as the number of calls and incidences of anti social behaviour has fallen dramatically. Intelligence was gathered at source and used effectively to target resources. Vandalism was reduced considerably with savings to the Police and Bus Company. Finally Police Officers have been highly visible and more mobile as a result of the project.

Taking all these factors into account the project was highly successful without being resource intensive and is one that could be adapted and used elsewhere without difficulty. It is also an easily sustainable project as it uses resources already in place.