

NARROWING THE OPTIONS FOR CAR THIEVES

‘E’ DISTRICT

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NARROWING THE OPTIONS FOR CAR THIEVES

PROJECT SUMMARY

Following complaints in January 2002 from Englishcombe Parish residents, which were emphasised by local media interest, it was identified that Haycombe Lane, near Bath had become a 'hot spot' location for abandoned and burnt out vehicles.

This lane is a single track no-through road, leading to a small cluster of properties. The upper part of the lane falls within the Bath Sector and the lower part, which includes the dwellings, falls within the Radstock Sector. A section of this lane contained two lay-bys, one which adjoined Haycombe Cemetery and the other which had been created from reducing the verge and these were the primary locations for the problem. This, in turn, led to the overall degeneration of the area.

Thorough analysis of the records of the Police, Fire Brigade, Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Council recovery and Hintons Recovery Service it was established that there was a problem, although the extent could not easily be identified due to the manner in which the records were maintained by all parties. Certainly, information provided by the residents tended to imply the problem was at serious levels.

Various options were considered through liaison with residents, partners and other agencies which resulted in a decision that the best approach would be achieved by making structural changes to the roadway and improving the localised environment. This took the form of erection and installation of bollards, high metal railings and landscaping of the area.

This was carried out through agreement with local residents and BANES and in fact, B&NES found funding for the whole project.

Since implementation of the improvements the number of abandoned and burnt out vehicles at the location has dramatically reduced.

Following the changes local residents were surveyed and all agreed the situation had improved considerably and had thereby enhanced their quality of life.



Narrowing the Options for Car Thieves



Scanning

In January 2002 following complaints from local residents and Englishcombe Parish Council, Haycombe Lane on the border of Bath and Radstock Sectors, was identified as a location of persistent abandoning of stolen vehicles, many of which were burnt out.

Historically this location had been well known for such actions for well over 20 years. It was clear that no long term preventative measures had been considered to stop this occurring.

Matters came to a head in that January, when a local resident and Councillor highlighted this matter with a high profile front page newspaper article in the Bath Chronicle (Appendix 'A') where he was photographed with a home made sign behind a burnt out car, intimating this was a dumping ground to abandon and burn out vehicles. This was quickly followed by representations made to the Radstock Parish Council Forum via the Englishcombe Representative, who asked for Police to take some strong preventative action on behalf of his community.

Haycombe Lane, as already stated is on the border of the Bath and Radstock Sectors (See map at Appendix 'B'). It is a single track no through road leading from Whiteway Road, Bath which is a busy commuter link. It also adjoins the lower end of the Haycombe Cemetery. The upper part of Haycombe Lane where there are no residential buildings, falls within the Bath Sector. However, the lower part of the lane where there are approximately six dwellings, falls within Englishcombe Parish and is therefore part of the Radstock Sector. Normally vehicular access to these dwellings can only be made via the Whiteway Road.

On entering Haycombe Lane from Whiteway Road the road dips and rounds a bend which effectively obscures the view of the lane from the main road and any nearby dwellings. The lane then passes through an area bordered on the right by the grounds of Haycombe Cemetery and on the left by a hedge and agricultural land and it is in this area that the problem existed. On the right hand side was a large turning space, which adjoined the Haycombe Cemetery and was adjacent to an unofficial tip

which was used by the Cemetery staff for the disposal of rubble and vegetation. This added to the general unkempt nature of that location. Almost opposite this was



another area which had become an unofficial passing space. The road had eaten into the verge and it was at these points where vehicles were frequently abandoned burnt out. Having passed this point there are no dwellings for approximately 300 metres, where there is a small cluster of houses.

Both areas have always been attractive to local youths, because they were isolated from view due to the fact that they were still some distance away from the houses but owing to an adjoining footpath had easy access to a nearby housing estate, where it was believed some of the offenders may have lived.

This area had not previously been highlighted as a 'hot spot' location and therefore as a result of the complaints and requests for assistance from the residents and local parish councillors, PC Steve Carrow was tasked to investigate the extent and full facts of the problem. Steve initially approached local residents who provided a handwritten list of dates when vehicles had been abandoned and often burnt out. Fifteen dates between September 2001 and January 2002 were supplied when locals had seen abandoned or burnt out vehicles there.

He then went on to search the different information held by various agencies. Police sources were checked with Storm logs, CMU records and stolen vehicle reports. Fire Brigade records were checked and then the recovery services were also checked. The Storm logs since April 2001 revealed 28 storm logs generated from Haycombe Lane. Of those 18 referred to abandoned vehicles, 16 of which were burnt out and of those, 9 do not appear to be recognised as stolen vehicles. There were 3 recorded CMU records, two of which matched Storm. Fire Brigade records recorded attending

10 incidents at Haycombe Lane during the same period and it was clear from the Storm logs that the Fire Brigade did not attend all incidents. B&NES recorded recovering 7 vehicles from the location and Hinton's Recovery Service stated that they had attended 10 times. All agencies stated they would try to research their records to obtain more detailed information on vehicles involved. As a result this information was supplied from which Steve was able to compile a chart. (Appendix 'C')

Differing agencies had dealt with these incidents in isolation but as a result it was clear that the numbers far exceeded that recorded on Storm. Whilst the numbers undoubtedly exceeded those recorded by any individual agency there was likely to be some overlapping of reports.

Following consultation with the District Corporate Development Officer, it was decided to commence a SARA on this problem as there was sufficient information at this stage of the scanning to demonstrate the requirement. At this point Steve also considered, as part of the problem analysis triangle, matters concerning the victims and possible offenders.

Analysis

The origins of many stolen vehicles were not known because they had been recovered and disposed of prior to being identified. Although it was likely that the majority of these vehicles were stolen from in and around the Bath area it would not be practical to address this specific problem purely from the point of view of preventing the initial thefts.

Apart from the victims of the initial crime, the residents of Haycombe Lane should also be considered as victims due to the deterioration in their quality of life brought about by this problem. Some examples are that the road was occasionally blocked by burnt out vehicles, and on one particular occasion telephone lines were melted as a result of the burning of a vehicle. The initial repair by BT misconnected the lines to the relevant houses which caused additional problems and further emphasised their frustration. This area had also shown clear signs of degeneration with scorch marks and debris being left from the vehicles. It was clearly attracting the criminal fraternity to the area and thereby making the residents feel vulnerable and exposed.



The residents of Haycombe Lane, were already proactive in reporting and recording any information they could obtain in relation to the abandoned vehicles, but were not in a position to effect a reduction in the numbers being abandoned.

There was a lack of specific intelligence on possible offenders and despite liaison with local beat officers and putting directed patrols into the area, no useful information was forthcoming. Meetings were held with the Bath Sector Inspector who also agreed to supplement our efforts by additional patrols but again there was no evidence that this had any direct effect on the problem. This view was also seen as addressing the problem in the short term.

Consideration was also given to the possibility of doing observations and setting up CCTV cameras. However, due to the location both options were considered impractical. It was decided that the most practical solution to solving this problem was to concentrate on the location itself.

The only way this problem had been dealt with in the past would appear to be by random patrols and officers using their local knowledge, but this had not proved effective. In fact we have anecdotal evidence of officers patrolling that area as far back as 1983 looking at the same problem.

It was felt a solution would be best achieved through a partnership approach.

Careful analysis of the times and days of the week on which vehicles were discovered revealed no particular pattern.

Following the Parish Forum meeting PC Carrow met with local residents to discuss their concerns and inform them that positive action would be taken to resolve the problem. The residents appointed a representative who would be the main point of contact and would assist in liaising with other agencies. Subsequently there were several site meetings with the residents and other agencies to discuss the problems.

Response

As it had been decided that the only appropriate response was to deal with the actual location, several options were considered.

As a result of our analysis of the problem, four possible solutions were evaluated in the first instance. This involved site meetings and discussions with Parish and local councillors, residents, Police, Fire Service, and representatives from various departments within Bath & North East Somerset Council. These included Highways, Parks Department in relation to the Cemetery and B&NES Direct.

The possibility of erecting a barrier or gated entrance across Haycombe Lane, close to its junction with Whiteway Road, was considered. The Crime Reduction Officer was tasked to look into this and he felt the best possible solution was a lockable gate. However, this was discounted because some residents were concerned about the inconvenience it would cause both themselves and visitors or tradesmen. The local authority were also against the suggestion for reasons of easy access.

The Crime Reduction Officer also suggested the possibility of improving lighting. However, the isolated nature of the location meant that such upgrading was unlikely to deter offenders and would also be too costly. There was also reservations on two other points, one being that street lighting would encourage further criminality as the location is isolated or conversely, the lighting would be damaged by offenders.

CCTV was considered with discussions as to the best point to position cameras to cover the lay-by area or the entrance to Haycombe Lane from Whiteway Road. This was discounted because of the lighting and it was felt it would not identify culprits but would only establish the timing. Also the costs were thought to be prohibitive. It was also unlikely that any cameras installed would be adopted by B&NES CCTV system and it would be unlikely to find an appropriate body to take on responsibility.

The fourth option and the chosen response was to have the area around the parking bays tidied up and implement structural changes to the roadway and verges which would prevent the persistent abandoning of vehicles at this location. Specifically, it was identified that concrete bollards should be placed to effectively restrict the width of the lane to prevent parking in the laybys. It was agreed to tidy up and reinstate the verges. The management of the cemetery agreed to landscape the area behind the parking bay. High iron railings were erected by the cemetery management which linked with existing railings,



to form a continuous barrier. The vegetation on the adjoining footpath which led to the Whiteway estate was cut back to give a more open aspect and therefore make it more attractive to all users.



In doing so the objective was to reduce instances of burnt out vehicles at the location and prevent degeneration of the area, thereby improving the quality of life of the residents.

Initially the Police identified funds available to be used on the project through the District SARA budget. However, this would have been insufficient to fund the whole project, therefore further multi-agency meetings took place and funding was found from within B&NES Council which could be directed specifically to the problem. It was estimated that the total cost would be in the region of £4,500. This amount was financed by B&NES entirely.

Once all parties had agreed the way to proceed with this matter there were very few problems which had to be overcome and matters proceeded quickly from this time onwards.

A site meeting was held at which the local authority presented their plan for the erection and installation of the bollards. A local farmer who owned fields adjoining Haycombe Lane pointed out that the position of at least one of the bollards would prevent access of large agricultural vehicles into his

field and the layout was adjusted to accommodate his needs. This being agreed the work was carried out, with approximately 30 bollards being installed, and completed by late August 2002.



Assessment

Monitoring took place from August 2002 to May 2003. This revealed only one vehicle abandoned but not burnt out during this period.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the project a questionnaire designed by the Corporate Development Officer was sent to all residents of Haycombe Lane. Five very satisfied and two satisfied responses were received and two of the residents felt sufficiently pleased to write to us separately (copies attached at Appendix 'D'). Gordon Glass, the writer of one of these letters, had been featured in the original newspaper article highlighting the problem.

After a long period of assessment we can confidently say that our goal to reduce the number of abandoned and burnt out vehicles at the location has been and continues to be achieved. In a period of over a year since the installation of the bollards there have been only two reported instances of abandoned vehicles at the location and recent telephone calls to residents confirm that this positive result has continued.

Further degeneration of Haycombe Lane has been prevented and the appearance is now far better than before the project commenced. This is shown in the accompanying illustrations.

Furttther analysis of the period from June to December 2003 has revealed only one more vehicle abandoned in the area. This again was not burnt out. There have been three vehicles abandoned and burnt in the surrounding area. This may indicate some evidence of displacement albeit at a much reduced level.

Bath Chronicle Article – 29th January 2002

Bristol United Press - Digital Archive 22-1-2004 10:20 pm

January 22, 2004 New Search: Basic - Standard - Advanced BUP Digital Archive

Burn your cars here, please!

Bath Chronicle 29/01/2002

Edition: Bath Chronicle
Page Number: 1/3
Record Number: 29433
Picture Filename: 01burnt cars sign 68754_1.jpg
01burnt cars sign 68754_5.jpg
01burnt cars sign 68754_6.jpg
bc2901020001.html
Photographer:
Date Indexed: 11 February 2002



A FED-UP resident who has been plagued by car arsonists has launched a protest at what he says is lack of official action.

Gordon Glass, who lives at Haycombe Farm in Haycombe Lane, Bath, is so frustrated at the number of cars being set alight near his home that he has put up a sign to show where they should be discarded.

Mr Glass, whose sign reads Car Burning Area, says there is a car left outside his home every other weekend.

"A few months ago all our phone lines were down because the fire had burnt through them," said Mr Glass.

"To try to stop this I have put up a sign away from the wires.

"The purpose of putting up the sign is not to encourage people to come here but to say if they are going to do it, to do it in the right place.

"I have seen the process that these people go through. They dump the car here and then someone else comes to pick them up. Then they set the car alight."

He said that he has had to call the fire brigade many times when cars have been dumped.

And he feels the police are not doing enough to combat the problem, despite a new campaign involving officers and the fire brigade.

In an effort to tackle the problem of cars left on the streets, emergency services have set up the Clear Car Scheme hotline, which can be called at any time and a dumped vehicle taken away within 24 hours.

Mr Glass said that this would not be much help.

"The cars are usually taken away pretty quickly anyway," he said.

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Bristol United Press - Digital Archive 22-1-2004 10:20 pm

"This is dealing with the consequences rather than the cause."

Mr Glass found the latest vehicle in Haycombe Lane on Friday morning.

He said: "I don't think anyone seems to be doing anything to stop it.

"We are now planning to put up concealed video cameras so that we can gather some evidence to give to the police."

Inspector Julian Moss said the new project could help combat crime.

"If there are a lot of abandoned vehicles on the streets, people don't mind dumping another car. I am hopeful about the scheme.

"Since it was launched last Thursday we have recovered five cars and there are four pending."

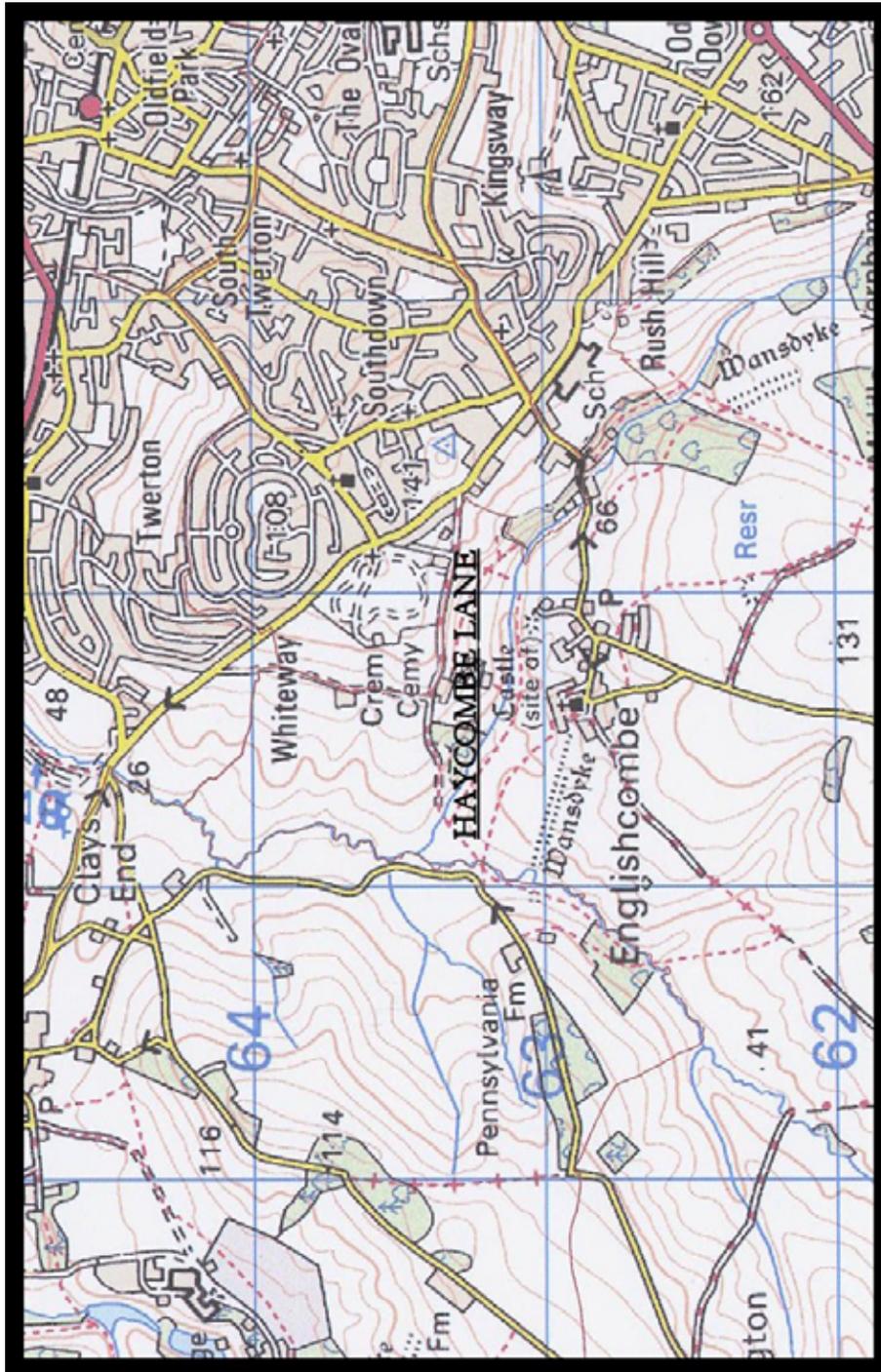
There have been numerous incidents of cars being burnt out by arsonists in Bath in recent months.

The Car Clear hotline is 842499.

APPENDIX 'B'

Area map showing location of:-

- Haycombe Lane
- Adjacent Cemetery
- Nearby housing estate



APPENDIX 'C'

| <u>CMU</u> | FIRE BRIGADE | BANES | HINTONS | STORM SINCE APRIL 2001 28 VARIOUS CALLS | STORM LOCATION FROM WHICH STOLEN |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|---|---|
| 25.05.01 F 461 EYA Vaux Astra | 22.05.01 Vaux Astra | 24.05.01 Cavalier | 10 vehicles recovered in 18 months | 1. Moped XPP 807 X 31.01.02 | 1. Stolen Bath |
| 14.09.01 J 780 SGS Vaux Cav | 24.05.01 E 327 ME | 25.09.01 Make U/K | | 2. Sierra E 459 HVC 02.01.02 | 2. Stolen, Banwell Road, Bath |
| 17.11.01 FIL 5002 Citreon | 27.08.01 White Van | 16.10.01 " | | 3. Citreon FIL 5002 19.11.01 | 3. Stolen West Close, Bath |
| All burnt out | 15.09.01 No details | 23.10.01 Vaux Astra | | 4. Citreon 2X No reg 17.11.01 | 4. Not known if/or recorded as Stolen |
| | 06.10.01 No details | 23.10.01 Ford Escort | | 5. VW Golf No other details 09.11.01 | 5. " |
| | 21.10.01 L 870 TCD | 19.11.01 Citreon | | 6. Vaux Astra F 676 NPC 23.10.01 | 6. 23.10.01 – stolen from London |
| | 23.10.01 Ford Escort | 06.02.02 Vaux Astra | | 7. Ford Orion Reg unknown 23.10.01 | 7. 23.10.01 – not known if/or recorded as stolen |
| | 17.11.01 No details | | | 8. Blue Fiesta L 870 TCD 21.10.01 | 8. Stolen from Bath? |
| | 24.01.02 Ford Escort | | | 9. Vaux Astra H 74 BHW 09.10.01 | 9. Stolen Sainsburys Car Park, Bath |
| | 01.02.02 E 459 HVC | | | 10. Ford Orion H 135 PRG 06.10.01 | 10. Stolen from Southdown Road, Bath |
| | | | | 11. VW F 913 GMR 27.09.01 | 11. Abandoned veh, not burnt out |

| <u>CMU</u> | FIRE BRIGADE | BANES | HINTONS | STORM SINCE APRIL 2001 28 VARIOUS CALLS | STORM LOCATION FROM WHICH STOLEN |
|------------|--------------|-------|---------|--|---|
| | | | | 12. Make/Model/Reg unknown 22.09.01 13. Make/Model/Reg unknown 15.09.01 14. Van – no other details 27.08.01 15. Ford Escort Van F 69 XWO 31.05.01 16. Ford Escort E 327 MEF 24.05.01 17. Vaux Astra F 462 EYA 22.05.01 18. Vaux Nova G 842 XAC 09.05.01 | 12. Not known if/or recorded as stolen 13. “ 14. “ 15. Used in crime – not shown As stolen. Not burnt out 16. Not known if/or recorded as stolen 17. Not recorded as stovec 18. Stolen from RUH Bath |

APPENDIX 'D'

Letters of thanks –

Gordon Glass, Haycombe Farm Barn, Haycombe Lane
Paul Strasburger, Inglescombe House, Haycombe lane

