



Tilley Awards 2004

Castle Park

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Summary

Castle Park is situated on the Eastern edge of Whitehaven town centre. The park consists of a large open area surrounded by trees, there is a children's play area to the southern end of the park and a bandstand to the north. The park is also overlooked by residential flats and is bordered on one edge by a main road.

In July 2001 the Police at Whitehaven began to note an increase of incidents occurring in the park, which related to youth disorder. Incidents in the park centred on gangs of youths congregating to drink alcohol. The previous year only a minimal number of similar incidents had occurred.

The Police at Whitehaven launched Operation Vimto to tackle the disorder problems and by the end of the summer these had begun to reduce. Breaking with the traditional quick fix response, officers worked with the local authority and local licensees to prevent a re-occurrence of incidents anticipated in 2002.

This work included the removal of foliage, improved CCTV coverage and work with licensees.

2002 saw the advent of Ibiza Mania, a young persons club event, which drew several hundred youths into the town and into the park. Incidents continued but the Police found themselves in a better position to deal with them, through the problem solving approach, which had been adopted.

By 2003 incidents in the park had been reduced to the same levels experienced during 2000. Although by this year the youth disorder problem was resolved continuous scanning and analysis noted an increase in incidents in July. This was caused by an on street drinking ban in the town centre that pushed a group of young adults from the town, where they would drink, into the park. Action taken against this group once again reduced incidents to an acceptable level, at which they remain.

1. SCANNING

2. ANALYSIS

Polis Incidents
Residents Complaints
Lambrini drinkers

3. OBJECTIVES

4. RESPONSE

Operation Vimto
Partnership working
Licensees
Operation Vimto, the sequel
Ibiza Mania
Consumption of alcohol in designated places

5. ASSESSMENT

1. Scanning

Whitehaven is a small market town on the West Coast of Cumbria. Castle Park is situated to the eastern edge of the town centre and is the former garden to the home of the Earl of Lonsdale. The garden was given to the people of Whitehaven for recreational purposes.

The park itself has a large open 'green space' and is surrounded by woods on two sides. A main road runs along the front edge of the park and it is also overlooked by, two blocks of residential flats. Also contained within the park are a bandstand, children's play area, war memorial and a toilet block.

In July 2001 we began to notice through normal patrols of the area and the Polis command and control system that there was an increase in the numbers of youths congregating in the park in the evening, apparently going there to consume alcohol. It appeared that this was fast becoming the latest place to hang out.

Driving to work for early shift on Saturday and Sunday mornings provided further evidence of alcohol abuse in the park as the mess from the night before could clearly be seen. Bottles, cans plastic bags and food papers would be strewn about the area.

The gangs of youths tended to stay away from the children's play area and centred themselves in the main on the area of the bandstand. This was most evident from the mess left in the morning from the night before.

It was obvious by July 2001 through patrolling and dealing with the incidents with the youths that the park had been taken over by them each Friday and Saturday evening. This caused the more normal users of the park to shy away from entering, as they felt intimidated by the large gangs of youths drinking. This evidence was gained by Police officers being approached by members of the public who had used the park but now wouldn't.

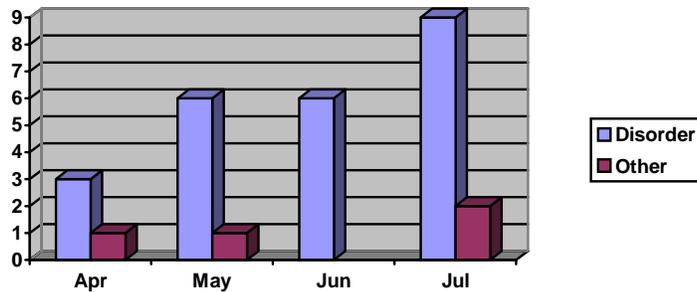
2. Analysis

Polis Incidents

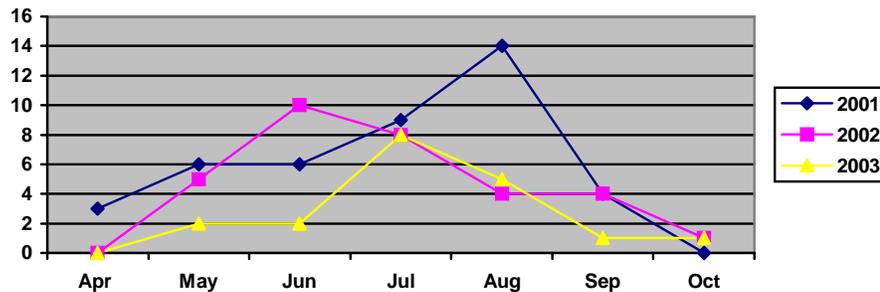
Polis incidents were initially checked for 2000 in particular for disorder related incidents occurring in the park. A check of the incidents revealed that during that year the maximum number of disorder incidents, which had occurred, was two in any one month.

Analysis of incidents relating to the park for January to March 2001 again revealed no more than two incidents in any one month.

Analysis of incidents for April to July 2001 was then carried out which began to reveal an increasing pattern of youth related disorder. The table below indicates the number of incidents in the park and the comparison in numbers between, disorder related incidents and other recorded incidents.



The chart below gives details of incidents for three years, including 2001. This also indicates a seasonal shift in disorder.



Members of the public, who either used the park for walking dogs or other recreational use and residents who overlooked the park, reported 79% of the disorder incidents recorded. These people had become victims of the gangs' abuse.

The other incidents were recorded by the police when making arrests and confiscating alcohol.

Of all of the recorded disorder during this time all of it occurred either on Friday or Saturday night between the hours of 1800 and 2300.

This disorder involved youths between the ages of, ten to eighteen years.

Alcohol was a factor as physical evidence of discarded bottles and cans could be seen when dealing with the youths and amongst the rubbish left in the park on a Saturday and Sunday morning.

Two letters written to the Police and one to the editor of the local newspaper, complaining of youths congregating in the park added further weight to the analysis.

From the scanning and analysis it was identified that the park had become the latest place in Whitehaven where youths were congregating to drink. Although in the past youths had congregated in large groups within the town they had been in places where they had been ignored by the Police and members of the public. Now because of the location they had made themselves far more visible and intrusive.

3.Objectives

The initial response in 2001 was to reduce the number of youth related incidents occurring in Castle Park relating to youth disorder.

4.Response

Operation Vimto

As an initial response to the problem we immediately began to target patrols towards the area at the relevant times identified through the scanning and analysis. These were highly visible patrols intended to reassure the normal users of the park and to deter youths congregating in the area.

Officers made maximum use of their powers under the Confiscation of Alcohol from Young Persons Act. By using these powers officers were able to identify where youths were buying alcohol, they also found that because alcohol was readily available youths were traveling from outlying areas in to the town to use the park.

Offences under the Public Order Act were also used resulting in eighteen arrests being made within the park area, during the month of August 2001. The pro-active policing caused an increase in incidents to a total of 14. What we immediately saw was a shift in the percentage of incidents being reported by members of the public as the more proactive Policing now generated 60% of these.

On one weekend a reporter from the local press was invited to accompany patrolling officers. This was used to reassure members of the public by publicizing the fact that the Police were taking the disorder, occurring within the park, seriously.

Partnership working

Through the targeted patrols we found that the majority of youths would congregate close to the bandstand. Looking from the bandstand out of the park it soon became obvious why they would gather there. Although bordered by a main road, trees and shrubs obscured the view into the park towards the bandstand. This gave the gathering youths excellent cover from outside view.

A CCTV camera is situated at the corner of the park. Unfortunately this is situated beside some trees the branches of which had grown across the front of the camera obscuring the view.

The local authority parks and open spaces officer was contacted and made a joint visit to the park with the police problems of the view from the road and the view via the CCTV were pointed out to him. The solution? A man, with a chain saw. Various trees and shrubs were trimmed back which gave a clear view via the CCTV of the park and also gave a view into the park from the main road.

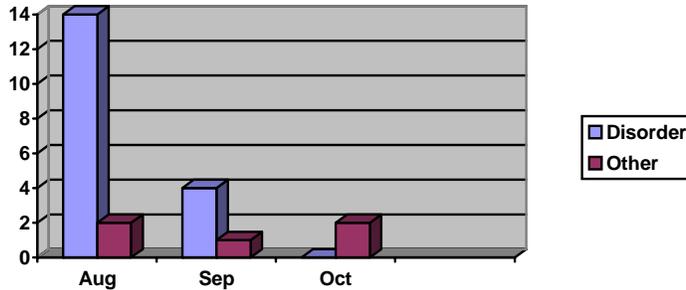
The local authority also provided signs at the entrances to the park to warn CCTV covered it.

Licensees

When dealing with the youths in the park some were very forthcoming with information as to where they were buying their alcohol. Two off-licenses situated close to the park were supplying alcohol to underage youths. Initially it was thought that this was the fault of the licensees however when they were spoken to we found that lone female members of staff were being left to serve in the shops at night and were being intimidated by gangs of youths buying or attempting to buy alcohol.

Working with the licensees rather than against them? We were able to offer training and advice on relevant legislation. Patrols were increased in the area of the off-licenses to reassure staff and to deter potential offenders. One licensee went to the extent of employing a second member of staff during the relevant time to prevent lone working.

From July 2001 onwards and through partnership working with the local authority and licensees and also through pro-actively policing the area incidents were reduced. This reduction is shown the table below.

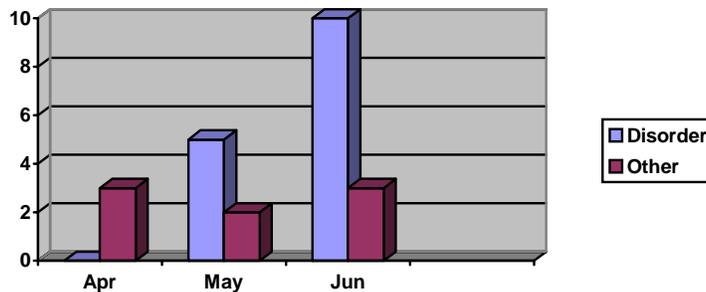


From October onwards constant scanning and analysis of incidents in the park revealed that they were reduced to the previous levels, of no more than two incidents of youth related disorder per month. The end of British summer time possibly caused this.

Operation Vimto-the sequel 2002

In anticipation of an increase in incidents occurring in 2002 Operation Vimto was resurrected in April of that year. Patrols were targeted towards Castle Park and the off licenses in the area. The initial intention of these was to provide reassurance to members of the public using the park and to prevent a repeat of the disorder, which had occurred in 2001.

Incidents were constantly monitored throughout this period. As a result of constant scanning and analysis, in June 2002 we once again began to see a rise in the number of youth disorder related incidents occurring within the park, see table below.

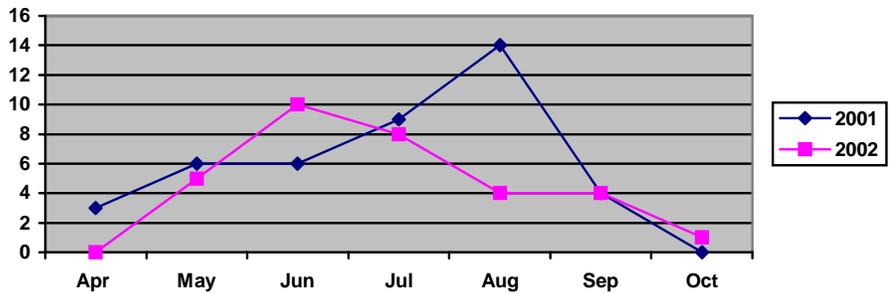


Ibiza Mania

The increase in incidents in June 2002 was directly attributable to Ibiza Mania. This is a club style event directed at under 18's. Events were held one a month on a Friday night and the first event which was held in June increased the youth population of the town by several hundred between 1900 and 2300. This increase in youths caused an increase in youth related incidents but the Police found themselves in a better position to deal with these because of the work they and already carried out.

This became a monthly event throughout the summer but as we were prepared for it there was no further increase in disorder.

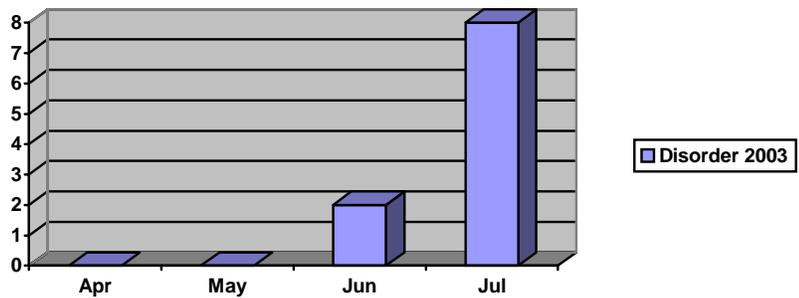
By the end of that summer disorder incidents had been reduced in comparison to the previous year.



Consumption of Alcohol, in Designated places.

In 2003 we were learning from our experiences from the past two years, the local authority has continued to maintain the shrubbery in the park allowing visible access to be gained.

Once again scanning and analysis of incidents was continuously carried out so that we could respond to any increase in disorder. This enabled us to identify an increase in disorder in July last year as the table below indicates.



Through analysis it was identified that this disorder although happening at the same times as previous years was being caused by a different group of individuals. In July legislation had been put in place, which caused the town centre to become designated under the consumption of alcohol in designated places legislation.

This legislation pushed a group of young adult males from the town centre, where they would drink in public places into the park, which was the closest place they could get to the town centre to legally openly drink in public. So although similar problems were being seen to previous years the cause of the problem was different.

In response to this patrols were targeted towards the area. The group, were regularly spoken to and the problems they were creating were pointed out to them, in some cases this was accepted. In others it wasn't and legislation under the public order act was used, to deal with these individuals. One adult who was arrested on three separate occasions was asked to sign an Acceptable Behaviour Contract preventing him from being drunk and abusive towards others. As he was one of the ringleaders we were very surprised when he accepted what he was doing was wrong and agreed to sign.

By the end of year the incidents within the park had reduced to previous levels of two per month.

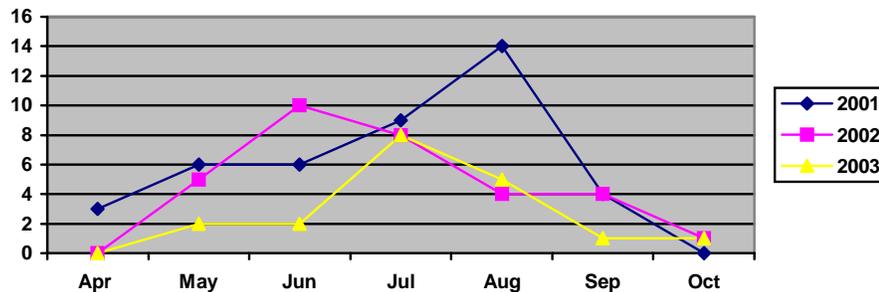
5. Assessment

During the last three years incidents within the park have been reduced and therefore the objective set has been met. The intention to do something more than just the usual quick fix operation, has been successful in reducing incidents.

Partnership working with the local authority and with licensees has ensured that the police have actively encouraged other partners to contribute to the solution and has brought the key people together who could make a difference in addressing the problem.

Through continually scanning and analyzing the problem we have been able to identify when and more importantly why those incidents have increased, such as Ibiza Mania and the on street drinking ban. This has also enabled us to adapt the response as by 2003 the problem was being generated by young adults rather than youths who had initially caused the problems.

The yearly reduction in incidents can be seen in the chart below.



As a group the large gangs of youths experienced in 2001 and 2002 have not been seen in 2003. No doubt the problem has been pushed somewhere else in the town through these interventions, although nowhere in the town has seen the numbers of youths congregating in one area as we saw in the park. So although the problem is displaced it appears to have been displaced in to smaller pockets in different locations.

Over the years there has been a large decrease in the amount of rubbish left in the park after Friday and Saturday night, this can be seen when travelling in to work for early shift.

In 2001, local residents reported 79% of disorder. By 2003 only 19% of incidents were reported by the public. When residents have been spoken to this reduction is not because they have given up but because there is less to report.

The young adult placed on the Acceptable Behaviour Contract hasn't offended since and even took the contract to court with him to show he was trying to address his behaviour.

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