

Tilley Award 2005

Application form

The following form must be completed in full. Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the competition.

Please send completed application forms to Tricia Perkins at patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

All entries must be received by noon on the 29 April 2005. Entries received after that date will not be accepted under any circumstances. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Tricia Perkins on 0207 035 0262.

1. Details of application

Title of the project
Kingscote Park 2004

Name of force/agency/CDRP:
Lancashire Constabulary

Name of one contact person with position/rank (this should be one of the authors):
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Name of endorsing senior representatives(s)
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Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s)
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2. Summary of application

When I came to Layton Ward in 2004, it soon became apparent that the residents had been let down by the police in our ability to deal with anti-social behaviour by young people on Kingscote Park. We had failed to deal effectively with underage drinking and disorder being caused on the park, leading to criminal damage of residents' cars and homes and assaults when they vacated it. Blackpool Council had allowed recreational facilities to decline, with poor maintenance and upkeep.

It was classed a no go area at night with little confidence in the police to do anything about it.

Evidence of the initial problem was gathered through articles in the local media and public meetings, but most noticeably through my own observations when on patrol.

This initiative was based in four parts;-

Visibly reduce anti-social behaviour

Increase community engagement with police and partners

Youth diversion activities

Target deep root physical issues in the park

The plan was to score an initial goal by 'reclaiming' the park and pro-actively targeting the gang leaders, using various tactics.

Then, to engage with the community and form a residents group to shape the park for the future. This brought Blackpool Council into the project compelling them to take part and make improvements.

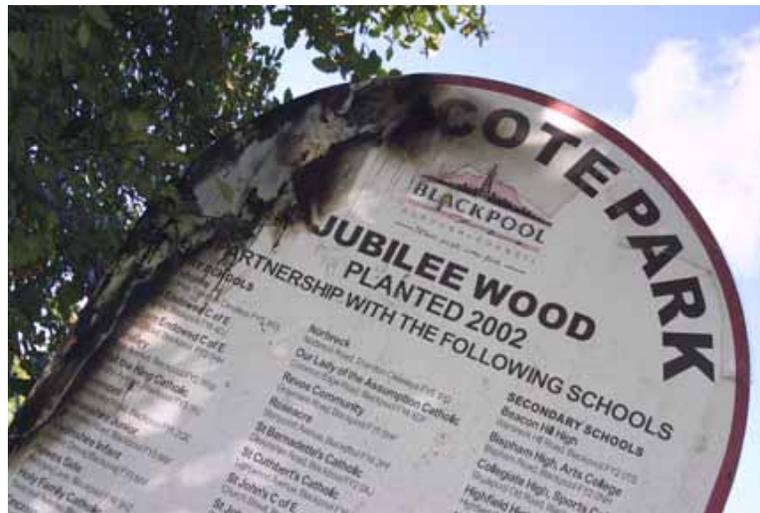
Youth diversion, integrity testing of local off licensees, improving park facilities and a project to plan a much needed community centre for the area were means used to target the deep root cause of Kingscote Park's decline.

Success would be measured on an increase in people using the park for lawful activities and a reduction in troublemakers, together with a reduction in police recorded crime and attendance logs.

A reduction in juvenile nuisance led to a perceived reduction in crime. Public satisfaction was improved. The Friends residents group increased engagement between police, partners and the community, and 'kick-started' a rejuvenation of the park and it's facilities, making it a safer and happy place for the public to visit and make use of.

The project was assessed through feedback from the public at resident groups meetings and from police gathered statistics. Crime in and around the park was reduced over the summer and autumn of 2004 when compared to figures from 2003. Police logs also went down although not dramatically in number, and this is undoubtedly due to an increase in public confidence in the police to deal with their problem.

3. Description of project



The Problem

I took on the role of Community Beat Manager for Layton Ward, Blackpool in April 2004.

Layton is centred on Kingscote Park and has historically drawn youths from throughout Blackpool as a meeting point at night. In the past, youths had generally not been policed, not as a deliberate ploy to ignore the problem, more so for fear of driving large numbers onto residential streets where complaints would follow.

Was after all, a public park not the safest and most appropriate place for young people on a summers evening?

The situation on Kingscote Park had however deteriorated to the point where it was a beer and alcho pops fest for teenagers, resulting in damage to the park, residents' homes and their cars.

The failure of police to uphold the law and maintain order public safety on the park. had resulted in a decline of its facilities, with vandalism and arson occurring time and time again.



The children's playground was the gathering point at night for youths – and subsequently the play furniture had been virtually destroyed.



This was once a slide before it was destroyed by fire

The ball games area was constantly covered in glass, making it dangerous for children to play there. It became a no go area for recreational use. At night it was unlit due to vandalism



When I walked round the park and looked at it closely, it became obvious that there were serious problems with the park itself, which were encouraging it to be used for anti-social behaviour.

The grass was mowed infrequently and to a poor standard. In fact the general upkeep of the park was to a very low standard.



Poor drainage led to large stagnant puddles with rubbish floating on top

There was only one dog bin for the entire park. With no incentive for dog owners to clear up, the green areas were awash with excrement



At the centre is the old derelict changing rooms. Built with wood panelling these are like a magnet for youths, and the fire service is regularly called here to arson attacks. It has a flat roof so it became a football pitch.



The park had no lighting. It was a dark place at night. Many people were scared to walk through, with memories of a rape occurring there the previous year.

Trees were damaged from rope swings – made by the children because the swings in the playground were dangerous and unusable.

The paths are in a poor state, due to subsidence and flooding.

There was no community spirit. It was a dead park.

The park has seven entrances and is surrounded by off licences on the main roads around it. Suspicions were strong that one or more of these shops were selling alcohol to under 18s, either deliberately or carelessly not checking for identification.

As the lighter evenings came, so did the complaints from the public. Concerns were raised from Neighbourhood Watch and other resident groups. Police were deployed there to rowdy youths every evening, and subsequently the next morning to report cases of damage overnight.

Between 1st April 2004 and 30th June, police were called to the park 59 times. This can be compared to 39 times in 2003 between the same dates.

7 crimes were reported in and around the park between 1st April 2004 and 30th June, compared to 13 crimes in 2003 between this time.

A plan was needed to improve quality of life for the people surrounding the park and to reduce the burden on police responding to calls for assistance.

Response

“K-Day”

The Kingscote operation began on Saturday 18th June 2004.

The immediate priority was to re-establish law and order.

Information was received from local people that a large gathering was planned to take place on 18th June, to commemorate the life of local teenager Benjamin Prunty, who was fatally stabbed the previous year. What had initially been planned as a candlelight vigil was rumoured to be hijacked and become an alcohol fuelled party, with up to 200 youths on the park.

For the 7 days prior, PCSO Martin Pasqualino and myself were heavily engaged in spreading the word that no alcohol would be tolerated in Kingscote Park (under the council byelaw). The feedback from the Layton youth was, “try and stop us!”

On the night, uniformed police patrols were present from 4pm onwards. We took control of the park before the arrival of any disruptive element.

The CCTV van (provided by the local Community Safety Partnership) was parked in a prominent position not only to monitor activities, but as reassurance for local residents.

Alcohol was seized from young people as soon as they entered the park, whether they were aged above 18 or under, using the local byelaw, which covers the majority of Blackpool green spaces. In total, over 60 cans of beer and alcopops with 12 bottles of wine were recovered. This was all drink which would be consumed during the evening.

In the end, approximately 100 youths attended the vigil. Many local nominals were there, and they did their best to stir up animosity. One was arrested for bearing his buttocks to police. By 11pm, most gave up and went elsewhere, leaving two dozen die-harders outnumbered by police.

This was a key date in making steps to reclaim the park.

I formed a plan to win back public confidence in the police. To let them know that we would challenge the behaviour that had occurred for so long, and respond to the needs of those who lived around and used the park.

The following tactics were employed over the forth coming summer of 2004:-

- **Publicise the ‘no alcohol’ zone by signage and word of mouth.** There was no signage available from the local authority, so I made my own signs, laminated them and placed them around the park. Many of these were torn down, but were replaced immediately. This ban was policed zero tolerance style. To their dismay, those under 18 had their drink poured away in front of them.
- **Uniformed foot patrols provided a high visibility presence every Friday and Saturday evening.** Overtime was secured to provide these patrols on a Saturday, and I worked every Friday. Youths were proactively engaged with, to educate them with the reasons for our presence and to establish what their needs were. Anti social behaviour legislation was positively enforced, continuing the zero tolerance policy.
- **Random patrols with the CCTV van** to provide a visible reassurance to the public and record evidence of any offences occurring.

- **Youth diversion activities**
 - **The Kingscote Boxing Club** established the previous year is run by PCSO Pasqualino on Monday and Wednesday evenings. We publicised the club at every available opportunity, encouraging teenagers to attend in the hope that it would remove them from causing problems outside and channel their energy into a hobby.
 - **The Community Minibus** is a converted ambulance, fitted with seating, petrol generator, TV and Playstation console. It was provided by the Community Safety Partnership and had been rarely used prior to Kingscote. The bus was placed next to the playground in the park on either a Friday or Saturday evening between 6pm and 10pm. Youngsters up to 13 years visited and made use of it's facilities – their parents could rest knowing that they were in a safe environment. The bus had the additional benefit of deterring troublemakers. With young children returning to the playground area, it became very un-cool to be seen hanging around in an area with youngsters, as well as having police officers to 'mind' them.
- **Off licences in Layton** were visited every Friday and Saturday evening, and at least three times a week. In addition to being reminded of legislation, shop owners were given reassurance that they would receive support to deter persistent persons from trying to purchase alcohol illegally. Western division licensing department were tasked to carry out test purchases in order to challenge the integrity of rogue shop keepers
- **A Dispersal Order under Section 30 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 was obtained for the boundary of the park**
- **To inform the residents of Layton about police and partnership work at a public meeting, to:-**
 - Increasing community engagement
 - Increasing public spirit
 - Increasing confidence in the police
 - Encouraging the public to come forward with information on individuals committing crime and anti social behaviour
 - Form a residents group with the intention of rejuvenating the park

Our Partners

I arranged an on site meeting the head of the Blackpool Council Parks department, Mr Joel Lavery. He was not aware of the poor state of its upkeep and lack of facilities.

Mr Lavery immediately employed a new parks manager for Kingscote, Mr Gary Clucas.

- New playground furniture was ordered.
- Additional rubbish and dog bins were ordered.
- Daily sweep ups of the ball games area began.

Local Councillors Mrs Sue Wright and Mr Roy Fisher were key figures in the Chief Executive's authorisation of the Section 30 Dispersal Order.

At the Layton Ward Forum public meeting held in April, the floor had voted to use councillor's funds to install street lighting in Kingscote Park.

The Friends of Kingscote Park group, to be formed later in July 2004, brought the public, police, local authority and other guest visitors together, with a shared vision to work together to make improvements to Kingscote Park. The group was aided by the local authority Community Development Unit, which assists groups such as this with management and funding.

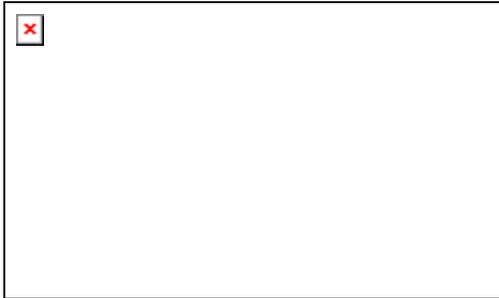
Through this group, assistance from agencies was given, for example increased patrols by the dog wardens targeting dog owners refusing to clear faeces, visits by Lancashire Fire Service to check on the old changing rooms, and patrols from the Mounted Branch when on scheduled visits to Blackpool.



Friends of Kingscote Park

In the first week of July 2004, I delivered an invitation to a public meeting to every household surrounding the park, or with roads leading from it, numbering approximately 300 homes.

The meeting took place at Layton library on 8th July, and was attended also by Councillors Wright and Fisher, Joel Lavery and Gary Clucas from the Parks Department.



I chaired the meeting, and counted in excess of 60 people there, which was a 20% turnout from my invitations. This high attendance showed to me the level of dissatisfaction felt by the public.

I stood up and apologised to the people for the poor service, which they had received in the past from the police. I stated my findings as detailed earlier regarding the poor maintenance and lack of facilities. Details of work already in progress to drive out the jobs were given, starting from "K Day" on 18th June.

I then gave a commitment that the anti social behaviour from the past would not be tolerated or allowed to continue in the future.

Finally I proposed the forming of a residents group, to take forward changes and work in partnership to make the right improvements for the future.

Joel Lavery then stood up and apologised for the council's failure in maintaining the park, and gave a commitment to do better.

By both organisations admitting their failures, showing honesty and transparency, we gained public support. In fact, the police received no open criticism, and it was the local authority who received the complaints about poor maintenance and decline in the park.

Future meetings were arranged, and eventually the Friends of Kingscote Park was formed on 21st July 2004, chaired by Mr Martin Bailey with objectives:-

- 1. To promote Kingscote Park and its historical, ecological and horticultural values**
- 2. To assist the Parks and Recreation Manager with management projects on site and to invite members of the public to events**
- 3. To raise funds for the purchase of equipment or materials for use on the site**
- 4. To assist the Parks and Recreation Manager with events held in the park**
- 5. To arrange social events for members of the Friends group**



The group meets once a month, and it is here that consultation occurs between the public and the local authority on how and where improvements are made.

Some quick fixes that have already been successful are;-

- New park benches
- New bins (including dog bins)
- New playground furniture with additional pieces planned for the future
- Increased mowing of the grass
- Daily clean ups
- The painting of the old changing rooms to make it visually more attractive



To make this building useable as sports and community hall, the present estimation is that it will cost £50,000. Funding and money-raising has already started, with £5000 being secured from the Community Chest for an initial evaluation survey. The dream is to convert the changing rooms into a community centre for all the people of Layton, encompassing;-

- Sports facilities
- Youth facilities
- Meeting hall
- Police office

The hope is that this building will be a major step in providing a meeting place for the youth of Layton to spend their free time, thereby reducing anti social behaviour in the area.

Work has now moved forward to consulting the public on future developments.

Committee members are canvassing those that visit the park on issues such as facilities for the youth and dog walkers.

The group have proposed to make the park into zones;-

Red – no dogs

Amber – dogs only on lead

Green – Dogs off lead

The provision of a fenced-off section as a dog only zone will make the park cleaner and safer. It would be the first park in Blackpool to provide such a facility.

The group meet once a month to review it's progress and receive updates from the Parks and myself. Through feedback at these meetings, my level of policing activity can be raised or lowered, depending on the level of anti social behaviour occurring in the park.

For example, with the second summer approaching, the Playstation Bus will be re-deployed onto the park from May onwards. This year, as well as being run by police, on occasions it will be staffed by volunteers from the group, thereby freeing up my time to patrol Layton. This is the first time the bus will have been run by members of the community, in Blackpool

Mobile phones have been bought through Community Chest funding, as has a portable radio to communicate with the Layton Retail Radio Link, for additional safety. The extension of the shop radio scheme onto the park will, I hope, further deter shoplifters from the area.

Other tactical changes for this year include the application for a further Section 30 Dispersal Order, but this time increasing the designated area to a wider range. This will target those displaced out of the park and prevent them from immediately causing problems in other nearby 'hotspots'.

Successes

From the beginning, response from the public to this initiative was excellent. High visibility patrols were welcomed. The overall target of reducing anti social behaviour was met – this is measured not from police statistics but by the public's perception.

For example, praise was given at the Layton Forum open meeting, and the initiative was voted the winner in a telephone poll as best policing initiative in the Blackpool Gazette local newspaper.

Test purchases at off licences have identified one premise in particular, which has integrity issues.

The Kingscote Boxing Club has a regular attendance of over 60 youths, boys and girls. Several young men have been entered for competition fights.

Community engagement has been increased within a sector of Layton not previously met. A representative from the Friends sits on my Police and Communities Together (PACT) panel, which is a multi agency meeting setting local police priorities for the forth-coming month.

Evaluation

The initial aim of Kingscote was to reduce anti social behaviour by decreasing the number of troublemakers on the park and increase the number of legitimate users. Thereby, crime would decrease as would police logs, assisting in the reduction of litter and damage to the park.

Undoubtedly the first two of these objectives were met – troublemakers have been discouraged and in turn the number of legitimate users has increased, in particular young children.

Overall, there has been no significant change in the level of reported crime, although it can be shown that there was a decrease in crimes occurring at times of increased hi visibility patrol.

For example, between 1st July 2004 and 30th September 8 crimes were reported in and around the immediate vicinity, compared to 12 from the preceding year.

There was actually an increase in the level of police logs created. I suggest that this is most likely due to my encouragement of residents to report problems and the increased confidence that police would actually attend and do something about it.

Cost was minimal with only £1200 additional overtime spent for patrols. Beat Manager time was extensive. The park was given high priority with over 200 hours patrol myself. Other areas undoubtedly suffered displacement and a lack of visible policing at times of need.

In 2005, this will be met with a more shared approach between the park and other hot spot areas. It will be sustainable due to the forward moves last year, which have been carried over.

From a police perspective, public reassurance and decrease in the fear of crime is evidenced through letters of thanks, feedback at meetings, and the Blackpool Gazette telephone poll. Positive publicity was gained for the police service. Community engagement has transferred ownership of a longstanding problem from the police to the community, who are now working to a goal of achieving Green Flag status for their park, with only minimal police input required.

Our major partner, Blackpool Council, has seen positive results. The formation of an active community group will aid their target to achieve a Friends group for every Blackpool park in the next 3 years. Strong links have been formed between the council, community and police. Improved facilities have raised public perception of the council, and although work slowed over the winter months, further improvements are now proving the council's commitment to this venture.

For example, street lighting has now been erected, and work on a boundary fence has begun. Further commitment has been made with the provision of 2 park keepers throughout the summer.

Kingscote will continue throughout the summer of 2005. The tactics as used last year will remain as options for this year. Already, public expectations are high, as complaints have already been made of anti social behaviour occurring in the park. When compared to last year, the incidents appear insignificant, for example in 2004 it was not uncommon to find 50 drunken teenagers in and around the playground. This year, I am finding occasional groups of 4 or 5, sometimes in possession of alcohol, but few who have had time or the opportunity to drink large quantities. I believe this point in view of public perception evidences the success of Kingscote 2004.