



## Crime Reduction & Community Safety Group

### Tilley Awards 2007

#### Application form

Please ensure that you have read the guidance before completing this form. ***By making an application to the awards, entrants are agreeing to abide by the conditions laid out in the guidance.*** Please complete the following form in full, within the stated word limit and ensuring the file size is no more than 1MB. Failure to do so will result in your entry being rejected from the competition.

Completed application forms should be e-mailed to [tilleyawards07@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tilleyawards07@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk).

All entries must be received by noon on **Friday 27th April 2007**. No entries will be accepted after this time/date. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Alex Blackwell on 0207 035 4811. Any queries regarding publicity of the awards should be directed to Chaz Akoshile on 0207 035 1589.

#### Section 1: Details of application

Title of the project: Operation Jupiter

Name of force/agency/CDRP/CSP: Northumbria Police

Name of one contact person with position and/or rank (this should be one of the authors):  
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If known please state in which Government Office area you are located e.g. Government Office North West, Government Office London etc: Government Office North East

Name of endorsing senior representatives(s):

Gary Calvert

Name of organisation, position and/or rank of endorsing senior representatives(s):

Northumbria Police, Superintendent

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s):

Northumbria Police  
AREA COMMAND HEADQUARTERS  
ETAL LANE (E1)  
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE  
NE5 4AW

**Please tick box to indicate that all organisations involved in the project have been notified of this entry (this is to prevent duplicate entries of the same project):**



## **Section 2: Summary of application**

*In no more than 400 words please use this space to describe your project (see guidance for more information).*

The Benwell area of Newcastle has a large rented housing stock. During the summer of 2006, a significant increase occurred in the number of empty houses being broken into resulting in their boilers and piping being stolen.

The landlords represented a diverse group, and this, together with the lack of resources in the private sector made it apparent that this problem could not be solved by simply increasing the security of the houses with installation of metal boarding and house alarms.

The Pathfinder Community Policing Team formulated a number of initiatives to respond to the problem. Where appropriate, outcomes are described:

- 'Stinger House' – an empty house was set up with covert cameras. This was broken into and the boiler was stolen. From the cameras the offenders were identified and charged to court.
- Smartwater – boilers, piping and white goods left in empty properties were marked with 'Smartwater'. This was painted on the item and is invisible to the naked eye but fluoresces under ultra violet light. When analysed, the Smartwater's unique chemical code would enable identification of the premises from which the property originated.
- Signs – void premises had posters displayed indicating that the premises had valuables removed and any items left in had been marked so that they could be easily identified.
- Collaboration with local scrap metal dealers - local scrap metal dealers were issued with UV lamps and asked to check all boilers and piping for Smartwater. If the property had been marked with Smartwater then the scrap metal dealer was instructed to take a thumb print of the vendor and pass it on to the police. The police would warn the dealers should a boiler turn out to be stolen to encourage extra vigilance.
- Operation with VOSA and Trading Standards - intelligence that flat back vehicles seen at the scene of some of these burglaries were used in the stinger house burglary led to an operation with VOSA and Trading Standards to stop these vehicles, check the drivers' documentation including scrap licences and check the vehicles. The reasoning behind the checks was explained. Over 100 prosecutions resulted from 3 days of running this operation.
- Press involvement - the local press were appraised of these initiatives to achieve maximum publicity in order to deter would-be offenders and reassure the public.

The operation is ongoing to maintain the reductions in boiler and piping theft.

## **Section 3: Description of project**

*Describe the project in no more than 4000 words (see guidance for more information in particular Section 7 - judging criteria).*

The Benwell area of Newcastle is policed by the Pathfinder Neighbourhood Policing Team which consists of a sergeant, 9 police constables (PCs) and 4 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). This team was part funded by Bridging Newcastle Gateshead (BNG) and has now been mainstreamed into one of the 8 neighbourhood policing teams covering the Newcastle Area Command. The team covers the smallest geographical area in the city which reflects the high crime rate and number of incidents that occur in the area. BNG also funds the Benwell Neighbourhood Management Initiative (NMI) which seeks to improve the housing stock thereby making the area a better place to live. It also coordinates many of the agencies in the area to benefit the community. The NMI and the police work together very closely and since April 2004 when the collaboration began, a 45% reduction in crime has been achieved, together with a decrease of 60% in the number of empty properties in North Benwell.

Benwell housing stock comprises low cost housing most of which is in the rented sector. This housing is owned by the Arms Length Management Organisation of Your Homes Newcastle (YHN - formerly Newcastle Council Houses), Registered Social Landlords (of which the Guinness Trust is the largest) and a large proportion of private landlords supported by Newcastle City Council through the Private Rented Project.

There is a high turnover of tenants which leads to the houses being left empty for significant periods. In many cases these properties have very little security and neighbours cannot be relied upon to make reports of burglaries, through either fear of reprisals, lack of understanding of English (many asylum seekers and persons whose first language is not English reside in the area) or refusal to cooperate with the police.

### **The Problem**

Prior to the summer of 2006 relatively low numbers of reported burglaries to void properties where boilers were stolen occurred. One burglary was reported between April 05 and September 05 which increased to 2 burglaries for the period between October 05 and March 06. Between April 06 and September 06 the number increased to 5.

These figures appear relatively low because in many cases this type of offence goes unreported. Using historical data from Newcastle City Council and YHN it is estimated that only 10% of all burglaries of this nature are recorded. YHN did not routinely report burglaries to their properties where boilers were stolen during refurbishment, leading to these conclusions. Therefore a 500% (a jump from one type of this burglary between April 05 and September 05 to five between April 06 and September 06) increase in offences equates to a significant increase in the number of victims. It was evident that a problem requiring action was emerging.

Vast resources, both in terms of personnel and finance had been put into the area to improve the appearance of the area in order to improve the living conditions for residents. The goals of the NMI were not being achieved on schedule due to delays with refurbishment because of the theft of boilers. In turn the community were not seeing the returns they deserved. The burglaries also concerned residents as they did not differentiate between break-ins to dwellings and break-ins to voids.

### **Response**

Upon identification of the problem, a conscious decision was made to act immediately. It was imperative that research was undertaken so that resources could be allocated effectively and efficiently. Unfortunately there was no pattern to the burglaries; some were being committed overnight, some through the day and others could not be tied down to a particular time at all due to a delay in discovering them. From a previous stinger house operation, flat-back vehicles were identified as being used in the theft of boilers from vacant houses. Reports of suspicious vehicles were also reviewed as the boilers could not be disposed of on foot. Interrogation of Northumbria Police's computer system revealed that there were many incidents of suspicious flat back trucks in the area. Again there was no pattern as to the time of day these vehicles were used.

Due to the lack of an apparent crime pattern it was decided that an operation targeting offenders alone would be far too resource intensive and this may not guarantee results. It became apparent that one approach would not be able to significantly reduce the problem. Therefore The Pathfinder Neighbourhood Policing Team brought together a number of partners to act in cooperation to deal with the problem and help implement initiatives. Success would be measured in a reduction in the amount of this type of offence. Due to the relatively low numbers and actual target was never set.

The victim landlords, YHN, Guinness Trust and private landlords were consulted to see how they could protect their properties. They were also given crime prevention advice. As many tenants left the properties without warning, it was apparent that boarding up all void properties was not feasible as a means to protect empty houses. Alarms were not considered as they would require a response from a security firm, making the cost prohibitive for private landlords.

It was decided to embark upon a strategy of making these properties less desirable for attack. Landlords were instructed to remove as much property as possible upon vacation and any property left, generally the boiler and pipes, would be marked with Smartwater.

The BNG Initiative funded the Benwell NMI whose aim is to improve the environment and the housing market in Benwell. To help achieve this reduction, goals of the project were crime reduction and reducing the number of voids. If burglaries were reduced then the amount of time property stood empty whilst being refurbished or the boiler being replaced would also be reduced. The NMI had a quantity of Smartwater available under an initiative to reduce burglaries in the area and it was decided to utilise these stocks to reduce burglaries to the void properties. This strategy fulfilled the aims of the NMI and provided the landlords with free property marking which the police would use in identifying where the boilers had come from. Staff from the PRP, YHN and the Guinness Trust would mark the boilers and provide the police with the details so that they could be added to the database. This complied with Newcastle City Council and Northumbria Police's Newcastle Area Command's overall strategy of blanket coverage of the city housing stock with Smartwater to reduce burglaries. This not only brought the scheme to prominence in the rented sector but benefited from the publicity around Operation Jupiter.

The police had had significant success with stinger vehicles in the area. After arrests, as a result of these vehicles being broken into and offenders being taken to court, a dramatic reduction in theft from motor vehicles in the area was seen. On interviewing offenders, it became apparent to police that the offenders once caught became particularly wary about further offending in the area believing that a number of vehicles were 'stingers' and they would be caught again. A number of stinger houses were set up and one was broken into and 2 persons were arrested and taken to court for burglary having been identified by covert cameras. This is an ongoing operation, supported by the landlords who provide stinger houses rent-free for set periods of time. The success rate in using stinger houses is not as high as the success rate in using stinger cars. However the publicity around the successes is as much a benefit in deterring offenders in the area from committing the crimes as convicting them at court.

The Private Rented Project was set up by Newcastle City Council to help private landlords act responsibly by letting to good tenants and maintaining quality housing stock. To support the landlords the Project agreed to commission the production of a number of plasticised signs which could be placed on properties that were obviously vacant informing would-be thieves that the house had all the valuable property removed and any item left was marked with Smartwater and could be readily identified. These signs are now used regularly in the area and work as a deterrent. To date not one property which has been marked or has a sign has been attacked and only one boiler has been reported as stolen and this was on the periphery of the project area.

After analyzing intelligence and investigating previous burglaries it was apparent that flat back wagons were used in the theft of boilers.

Between October 2006 and December 2006, the police and VOSA ran an operation for seven days

targeting scrap dealers'/collectors' vehicles that may have been responsible for burglaries. This was extended to target vehicles used by rogue builders, possible bogus callers and vehicles driven by high profile offenders. Both stationary examination points and mobile stops were used to target the vehicles.

A total of 105 summonses were created. One scrap dealer was arrested and others prosecuted for offences ranging from dangerous driving to making a false statement to obtain insurance. Fifteen vehicles were given immediate prohibitions using the PG9 system taking these vehicles off the road until they passed an MOT test.

A number of prolific offenders were also prosecuted including a person suspected of stealing scrap from businesses in the area. All persons stopped were advised why the operation was running. Feedback has been very positive for this operation including that of one scrap dealer who is licensed and states that it helps legitimate businesses by stopping rogue operators stealing scrap left for them in gardens. Although no stolen boilers were recovered, a number of vehicles that had potential for being used in their theft were removed from the road and many more offenders were deterred from offending knowing that they could be caught through the ongoing initiatives. This joint operation is ongoing and runs periodically. Presently it will be expanded to incorporate trading standards and environmental health. The press have stated that they would like to report on one of these operations which will help sustain the publicity which is vital for the continued success.

The police in Newcastle had initiated 'Magpie Watch' which is run in conjunction with local second hand dealers. The dealers are given UV lamps and fingerprint pads. They agree to check all property for Smartwater. If it is marked with Smartwater, they agree to take the fingerprint of the vendor and inform the police. This scheme was extended to scrap metal dealers, and posters explaining the scheme were placed in these scrap yards.

A launch was organised with the press which publicised the different prongs of the initiative. This was given prominence in the local paper with visually impactful pictures of boilers being Smartwatered and showing how they can be identified under UV light. The resulting publicity also increased the amount of households requesting Smartwater for marking their personal items.

### **Evaluation**

As the numbers of burglaries involving the theft of boilers was relatively low, there was no justification for using limitless resources. The problem needed to be addressed but with the use of existing resources in an innovative manner. This returned the figures for theft of boilers from properties to the level prior to the spike in the summer of 2006. Between 1 October 2006 and 31 March 2007 there was only one burglary involving the theft of a boiler. As the operation used and adapted existing initiatives, the training was kept to a minimum and implementation was relatively straightforward. There was also an advantage in keeping these initiatives high in the awareness of the agencies and that of the general public. This was particularly so with the use of Smartwater. This product's main focus is as a deterrent and therefore public awareness is crucial for would-be offenders to remain reluctant to commit burglaries for fear of being caught with marked products which could be identified as stolen. Other partner agencies' staff are now trained in applying Smartwater, so more of the product can be used to protect properties in the area.

The success of the Operation lies in its simplicity and the fact that each agency involved is utilised to best effect to run the project efficiently with the correct people performing the correct tasks. It utilises existing resources in an innovative way to combat the problem. No one agency has too onerous a task and all benefit from the results in achieving their agencies' goals, which are:

Police – reducing crime and increasing public reassurance.

Landlords – reducing loss of appliances from their properties and subsequently reducing the time the properties are not able to be rented out due to refurbishment being required.

Private Rented Project – support for private landlords.

Neighbourhood Management Initiative – improving the housing stock in the area and making the area a more sought after place to live in. This can be seen in the price of housing stock. In the early 1990s

houses in the area were being sold for £5 and recently have sold for in excess of £150,000 as seen in the national press.

Newcastle City Council – publicity for Smartwater and subsequent drops in burglaries by 2.5%

VOSA – increase in prosecutions for unroadworthy vehicles which are a danger to other road users. In a number of cases the vehicles were so dangerous that they were removed from the road until their defects were rectified.

Press – had a newsworthy story which highlighted the successes in the area and acted as a deterrent to would-be offenders.

Scrap Metal Dealers – reduce their likelihood of buying stolen metal which may then lead to a charge of handling stolen goods or a civil suit.

It has also been found that the number of burglaries (other than to dwellings) in the area has dropped since Operation Jupiter was initiated (see attached chart).

It should also be noted that the detection rate has also increased but unfortunately Operation Jupiter cannot take the credit for this.

Operation Jupiter is an ongoing initiative which will continue to use Smartwater to mark boilers, check Scrap Dealers, have multi-agency traffic operations and use the press to publicise the work that is being done.

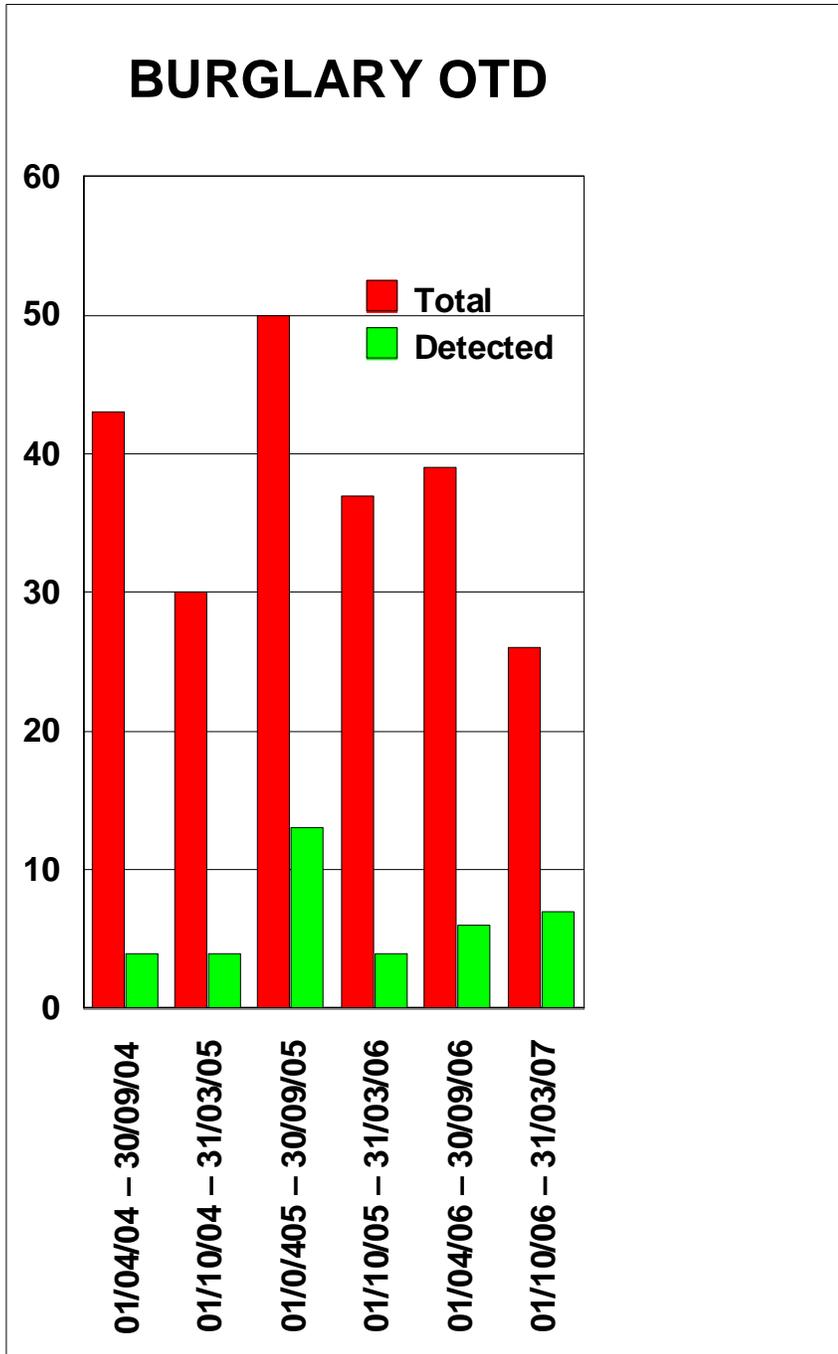
**Appendix A Table of burglaries involving the theft of boilers in Benwell**

	Apr 05 to Sep 05	Oct 05 to Mar 06	April 06 to Sept 06	Oct 06 to March 07
Number of burglaries	1	2	5	1

Initiative was implemented Sept 2006

**Appendix B Burglaries other than dwellings in the Benwell area -**

(these burglaries do not just relate to ones where boilers have been stolen)



**Section 4: Endorsement by Senior Representative**

*Please insert letter from endorsing representative:*

The Benwell area of Newcastle upon Tyne comprises a large quantity of rented dwelling houses, which, during the Summer months of 2006, suffered an increase in the number of burglaries to vacant and unoccupied premises. Thieves targeted the properties for their valuable copper boilers and associated pipe work.

The problem was analysed and it quickly became apparent that a multi-faceted, problem solving approach would be the most appropriate means of addressing the issue. The Pathfinder Community Policing Team took the lead and drew together key stakeholders in order to agree the strategy and tactics.

A number of key responses (as highlighted within this application) were initiated and co-ordinated by the Pathfinder Team.

The results speak for themselves, and although the numbers in the reduction of offences are low, the initiative's real success was in its overall achievements as highlighted on page 6.

I can therefore confirm the content and accuracy of this application and endorse its submission for consideration of an award.

G. S. Calvert  
Superintendent Neighbourhood Policing

### **Checklist for Applicants:**

1. Have you read the process and application form guidance?
2. Have you completed all four sections of the application form in full including the endorsement from a senior representative?
3. Have you checked that your entry addresses all aspects of the judging criteria?
4. Have you advised all partner agencies that you are submitting an entry for your project?
5. Have you adhered to the formatting requirements within the guidance?
6. Have you checked whether there are any reasons why your project should **not** be publicised to other police forces, partner agencies and the general public?
7. Have you saved you application form as a PDF attachment and entitled your message 'Entry for Tilley Awards 2007' before emailing it?

Once you are satisfied that you have completed your application form in full please email it to [Tilleyawards07@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Tilleyawards07@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk). Two hard copies must also be posted to Alex Blackwell at Home Office, Effective Practice, Support & Communications Team, 6th Floor, Peel Building (SE Quarter), 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF.