

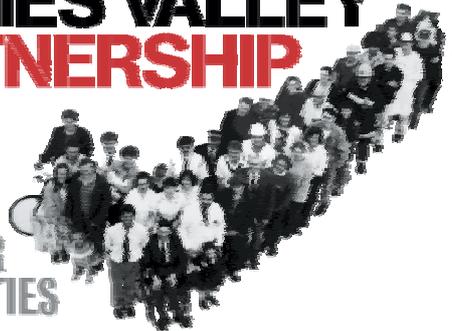
Safer Vehicles – Safer Streets

A Strategy to
Reduce
Motorcrime

February 2003

**THAMES VALLEY
PARTNERSHIP**

WORKING
FOR SAFER
COMMUNITIES



Foreword

Hugh Marriage,
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We love motor vehicles. They are an important part of our life and sometimes dominate it. Exactly the same applies to crime: cars are an important part of all forms of crime and sometimes drive it.

This booklet takes the debate about motorcrime forward in a new and interesting way. It demonstrates the thread of deeply anti-social behaviour which runs from stolen, abandoned and burnt out cars, through the use of cars in burglary, drug dealing and robbery, to dangerous driving and deaths on the road. You cannot begin to tackle anti-social behaviour or crime without taking into account how cars are involved.

That is equally true in respect of the fear of crime. Dangerous and anti-social driving and riding, particularly in residential areas, is often a major source of fear of crime. We need to take seriously these day-to-day concerns of many people.

I greatly welcome this booklet and congratulate those who have worked so hard to put it together, and trust that it will be valued by all those who share an interest in tackling crime and disorder within local communities.

Introduction

This paper has been jointly written by Siri Moorby, Thames Valley Partnership and Viv Nicholas, European Secure Vehicle Alliance, to encourage those involved in tackling crime and disorder to think more broadly about what is meant by vehicle crime.

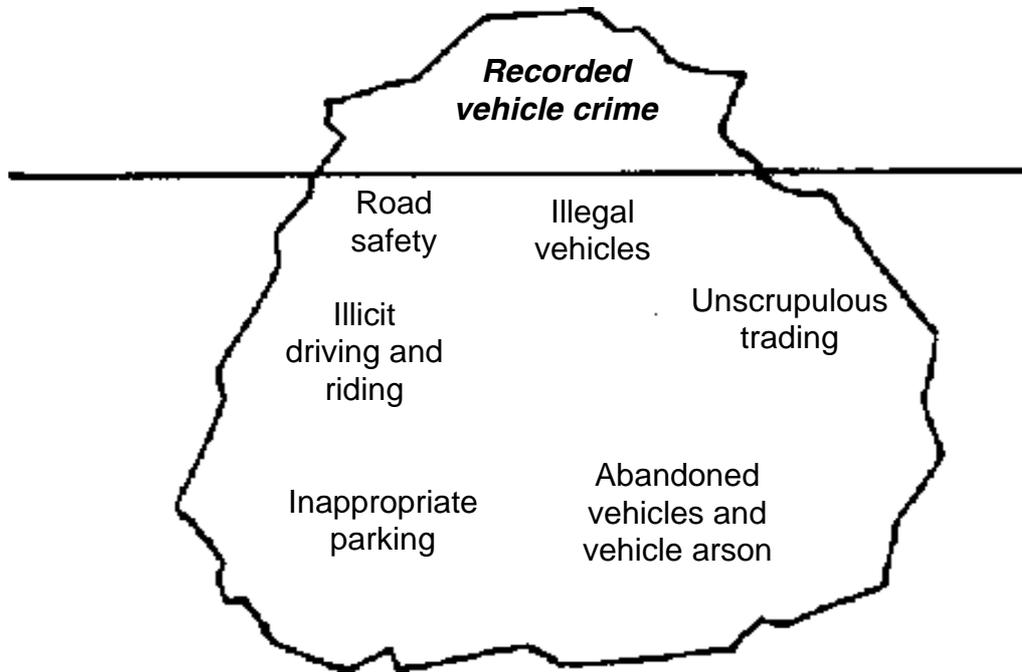
We are suggesting that there is a wider definition, which we call motorcrime, which encompasses anti-social vehicle use and other illegal activities involving vehicles as well as recorded vehicle crime. In fact, the term motorcrime was first coined seven years ago by Crimestoppers in their acronym **SMART** (Stop Motorcrime And Ring Today).

The aim of this paper is to get everyone, especially in the Thames Valley, thinking differently about motorcrime and making a real impact locally to deliver safer vehicles and safer streets. We want to encourage debate at all levels, among all partners, locally, regionally and nationally and we want to hear from you.

The Iceberg

It is helpful to see motorcrime as an iceberg, with recorded vehicle crime above the water. Here local activity by the police and crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs) is driven by national reduction targets that are set out in crime and disorder strategies and policing plans. There are plenty of examples of good practice of joint working although there continue to be challenges in working together, in particular in conducting effective vehicle crime analysis.

Other categories are shown below the water line. We propose that these issues could be dealt with in a more joined up way, across agencies, and that communities would benefit as a result.



The cost of vehicle crime is estimated by the Home Office to be £3.5 billion. What then is the cost of motorcrime? In excess of £16 billion! This cost alone must justify a more coherent approach to tackling the problem of motorcrime.

As part of this work we brainstormed a list of all the issues that could come within the definition of motorcrime: -

Recorded vehicle crime

The police record vehicle crime as either theft of or from vehicles and attempts, criminal damage or vehicle interference. However, most reduction targets relate only to thefts of or from vehicles and attempts to do so.

Road safety

Speeding, rat runs, thoughtless and bad driving, young and inexperienced drivers, congestion and speeding outside schools.

Abandoned vehicles

Unwanted, burnt out, untaxed, stolen.

Illicit driving and riding

Under age, disqualified, under the influence of drink and drugs, dangerous, causing death by careless or dangerous driving, off road.

Illegal vehicles

Uninsured, untaxed, unsafe condition

Inappropriate parking

Obstruction of roads, pavements and gateways.

Unscrupulous trading

Repairing in the street, selling in the street, breaking up stolen vehicles for parts, clocking.

Some of these activities are clearly illegal. Others are examples of anti-social driving often by otherwise responsible residents. Some of the problems can be addressed by the police alone, others through joint agency working, and many by residents themselves given the chance to make a difference.

Many of these issues are closely linked with the way in which estates were designed and could be significantly improved through better management of layout, clearer responsibilities of different authorities, and higher visibility patrolling by community wardens and the police.

The Community Safety Case for Local Action

At the same time as improving the quality of life for local residents, a neighbourhood focus and a coherent strategy to tackle motorcrime will help CDRPs meet more formal objectives including: -

- National and local targets to reduce vehicle crime
- Community safety targets to reduce the fear of crime and promoting a sense of security and wellbeing
- Targets on active community participation and consultation in community safety
- Local public service agreement targets on vehicle crime, road safety, environmental improvements including abandoned vehicles, community involvement and reducing home to school car journeys
- Achieving a measurable impact in deprived and disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- Priorities one and two of the National Policing Plan
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment of local authorities

It is widely accepted that those involved in crime do not operate within discrete sectors such as vehicle crime or burglary, but engage in a wide range of offending. Those involved in vehicle crime are also likely to be involved in motorcrime, including bad and dangerous driving, drug and alcohol use, disqualified driving, no insurance and so on. It follows therefore that by tackling motorcrime as a whole an impact is likely to be made on more formal targets such as vehicle crime reduction. This has been proved during the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) project in Northamptonshire, where drivers of vehicles stopped for no tax or disqualified driver have been found to be involved in other crime such as credit card fraud and theft.

Reflecting the Community's Concerns

Those of you who have been involved in community consultation will know that a community's concerns often differ from what we, the professionals, expect them to be. Residents are consistently concerned about motorcrime in their neighbourhood. There seems to be a particularly strong association between run down estates, poor management of a neighbourhood and high levels of concern about motorcrime.

Neighbourhood Empowerment

The Thames Valley Partnership is aware of these concerns through the development of its own model of community consultation, called Neighbourhood Empowerment. It has been developed to help professionals and residents work more effectively together. The approach recognises that communities are full of thinking, intelligent people, who, given the correct information and the whole picture, can take control and be involved in solutions just as effectively as those who are paid to do the job.

The approach puts emphasis, in the early stages, on getting together the professionals who already work in an area, plus local councillors, churches and voluntary organisations, so they can get to know each other. Although many will have worked in the area for some time, they often have not met before. They are then brought together with the local residents to identify their concerns.

Consistently residents identify the various elements of motorcrime, which includes aspects of anti-social behaviour, as of most concern to them. High levels of motorcrime can result in people feeling unsafe. And rightly so. For example, while the UK has a relatively low level of road deaths compared to European neighbours, we also have a high proportion of child deaths. Children living in deprived neighbourhoods are most at risk of death or serious injury in road accidents.

The wider definition of motorcrime is inclusive because it takes into account the fears and concerns of local residents and in recognising them gives us the opportunity to work together to do something constructive about them.

Illustrations of the Potential for Joint Working on Motorcrime

The Strategic Challenge - Thematic, Technology and Tactics

The strategic challenge associated with tackling motorcrime needs to be addressed skilfully in order that the energy and 'buy in' from partners more than compensates for the feared loss of focus in not tackling specifically recorded vehicle crime. We would suggest that a carefully developed motorcrime strategy needs to address the following three aspects: -

Thematic

Select a handful of themes that can be developed to cover short, mid and long term issues whilst also addressing the three Es - engineering, enforcement and education - a proven approach developed by road casualty reduction experts in the 1980s.

Technology

The benefits of improved lighting and CCTV must be explored and their contribution in addressing fear of crime as well as actual crime reduction should be considered.

In terms of technology, the most significant contribution to motorcrime reduction is likely to come from Automatic Number Plate Recognition. ANPR provides the police with previously unheard of levels of intelligence on illicit driving and vehicle use.

Tactics

What actions are relevant and excite all the partners in your team? What expertise is already available to your team?

One tactic available to partnerships is to introduce a motor project along the lines of the SKIDZ motor project in High Wycombe, a world leader in its field - providing training and education as a diversion for young people at risk.

Could action to tackle unlicensed vehicles lead to a reduction in vehicle arson?

Could a targeted Crimestoppers campaign detect and deter drunk and disqualified driving?

Could police action to inspect records and vehicles at registered vehicle salvage dealers help to reduce theft of and from vehicles?

Road Safety - A Concern

Road Safety Officers in Buckinghamshire recognise their local communities' concerns. They also know that legal and safe use of vehicles reduces the fear of crime. They have identified the following issues as of particular concern for local people: -

- Speeding by motorcycle riders and drivers - young inexperienced drivers take time to develop their hazard perception skills. They are particularly at risk of losing control of vehicles driven at higher speeds. The Road Safety Section sends out information packs, including a Thames Valley Partnership leaflet on getting and staying legal on the road, to pre drivers and new drivers through Buckinghamshire schools. They also provide a drama presentation to schools, addressing the dangers of speed.
- Seat belts - not wearing a seat belt means that any collision is likely to be more serious not only for the person not wearing a belt but also any other passenger who they might hit in the event of a crash.
- Mobile phones - whilst most young people use them most are aware of the danger of using them while driving.
- Drugs and driving - while the risks of drinking and driving are well understood and taken seriously by young people, the risk of using drugs and driving is not. The effect of drugs in the bloodstream can be very long lasting. In a recent fatal accident a young driver had several different drugs in his blood - including cocaine, cannabis and ecstasy.

Trading Standards Issues

Buckinghamshire Trading Standards Section is particularly interested in the motorcrime definition because it encompasses a number of trading issues, including mis-described and unsafe vehicles sold by traders who often masquerade as private sellers.

Trading Standards also investigates clocking of vehicles, where the mileage clock is run backward, increasing the value of a car by £100 per 1,000 miles reduction. This deception is worth approximately £60 million per year without taking into account the cost to the buyer.

Unsafe vehicles can threaten the lives of drivers and other road users. 'Cut and Shut' vehicles are a particular menace. Some garages are charging for a service without doing the work, resulting in further risks for road users. Buckinghamshire Trading Standards has run a project for two years to address the servicing problems.

Buckinghamshire Public Service Agreement (PSA)

This project, recently undertaken by Buckinghamshire County Council, sets out to reduce vehicle crime in Buckinghamshire by a 'stretched' target of 33% over five years. A multi-agency steering group has formed to deliver the results.

The group considers that any strategy to reduce vehicle crime needs to include the three elements: enforcement, education and diversion. But the first stage is to analyse the problem! The top 10 vehicle crime hotspots in the county have been identified and a crime prevention survey completed for each one. The next step is to engender support from partners to take the agreed action.

Hotspot analysis is not the only tool, however. It is evident that only 9% of vehicle crime takes place in the above 10 hotspots, which therefore emphasises the need to adopt an holistic approach, not just isolated actions.

Individuals have a responsibility to reduce their own chance of becoming a victim. To that end a public information and education campaign has been approved.

The use of modern and emerging crime fighting tools is also needed. An ANPR sub group has been formed to look further into this new technology but also taking into account the fact that the scheme would require considerable police and other resources to make it work effectively.

No approach would be complete without attempts to identify offenders or future offenders and encourage them to change their path. In Buckinghamshire this will include work with schools, restorative justice approaches and diversion projects such as SKIDZ.

The strength but also the challenge of the PSA project is to work in partnership. Initial difficulties over the role of district councils versus the county council have been overcome. A good working relationship between partners is being developed and quick wins have already been made.

Mediation - An Opportunity

Community mediation schemes have been developed around the country and are involved daily in the resolution of disputes between neighbours. These schemes, which are usually charitable and have to find their own funds, receive referrals from a range of agencies and local authority departments, including community safety and housing departments, plus the police. Mediation is a good example of joint working and of a problem solving approach, which seeks to resolve problems at their roots and therefore save resources in the longer term.

In West Berkshire, the local mediation scheme, Resolve, has dealt with a number of vehicle related disputes to good effect. Mediation schemes would welcome the new definition of motorcrime because it recognises as they do that technical or formal definitions such as vehicle crime are meaningless to local people when compared to their own real experiences. Motorcrime offers a more victim focused and relevant approach.

A Solution for Untaxed Vehicles

Every neighbourhood is littered with abandoned and untaxed vehicles, much to the annoyance of local residents. Bracknell Forest Borough Council's housing department has come up with a novel solution to the proliferation of untaxed vehicles left on its estates. An agreement has been reached where they submit written witness statements to the Local Vehicle Licensing Office, which investigates each case. In the meantime a notice is placed on the vehicle by the housing officer stating that the car is being reported to the LVLO. This often results in its prompt removal.

The Fire Service Finds a Way In

Public Service Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships are providing a window of opportunity for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to work jointly with local authorities and other partners. They have been approached to work on arson, anti-social behaviour and young offender schemes. In particular Reading Borough Council has invited them to work on a specific PSA target to reduce vehicle fires. Berkshire Fire and Rescue is leading the way in data analysis including GIS and is prepared to share information with CDRPs. They plan to be part of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's 'true partnership website' which is in development. They are working with businesses in Slough to develop links for working with young people to prevent arson. They have offered to train community wardens in fire issues.

Crimestoppers

As we have heard, the term motorcrime was first coined by Crimestoppers for their SMART campaign to attract calls about car criminals to their number 0800 555 111. As it turns out many calls (31% of all calls made to Crimestoppers in the Thames Valley) relate to the wider definition of motorcrime, including disqualified and drunk driving, and untaxed cars.

The Next Step

First of all we would like you to contact us and actively engage with us in the motorcrime debate. This leaflet is just the start. You can find our details at the end. Second, we want you to develop some joint projects to tackle motorcrime in your neighbourhoods to develop this work. Thames Valley Partnership in particular is able to provide support to local groups and has considerable experience in doing so. So give us a call!

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reducing crime



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