

**Do YOU
have
that
Special
quality?
- Page 7**



NEWS *beat*



A community newspaper from
Lancashire Constabulary and
Lancashire Police Authority

Issue Three

A HUNDRED THANKS

**That's
my
boy!**

Force is chasing cash on all fronts

THERE will soon be 100 more police officers on the streets of Lancashire thanks to the realistic attitude of you, the county's council taxpayers.

In an independent survey no fewer than seven out of 10 of you said you would be willing to pay an increase in tax provided you could see a difference for the extra cash.

Well, you can't be more visible than uniformed police on the frontline because that's where the additional officers will be deployed.

There will be 70 new response officers available to respond to calls from the public - particularly anti-social behaviour incidents.

IMPRESSIVE

And there will be 30 new Community Beat Managers to add to the 249 already in post; 80 of them were recruited in the last financial year. CBMs have an impressive track record in tackling nuisance incidents - a high community priority for police action.

All this adds up to a shot in the arm for the quality of policing services in Lancashire - and all for just an extra 25 pence a week for the occupier of a Band D property.

In fact the Police Authority's research revealed that many of you were prepared to pay even more than this - the most acceptable proposal being 43 pence a week or £22 a year which would have funded the recruitment of even more officers.

More than 4,000 members of Lancashire's Citizens' Panel were consulted in addition to over 300 residents who attended a series of meetings held across the county.

More officers on the beat - and it's due to all of you

But the Authority faced a clear conflict between the increase in council tax that the Government were prepared to permit in Lancashire and the increase that a majority of Lancashire people seem willing to pay for their policing.

A bigger increase in the policing precept (the part of your council tax bill that is allocated to the Constabulary) would have run the risk of the entire police budget being capped.

In addition, both the Constabulary and the Police Authority are acutely aware of the council tax burden on many

of the county's citizens who are on low or fixed incomes.

Nevertheless, an increase in the policing precept that was limited to the rate of inflation would have meant cut-backs which would claw back the gains in police numbers made in recent years.

Lancashire taxpayers still get value for money compared with other policing authorities. Last year Lancashire's police bill was the second lowest of the 31 shire authorities. This year, despite the increase, it is still the fourth lowest.

County Councillor Dr. Ruth Henig, the chair of the Police Authority said: "The increase has been very carefully considered. The recommendation to the Authority was for a rise in the council tax to make up for cut-backs in Government funding and to enable the Chief Constable to begin to address rising demand and continue to improve the quality of policing services in Lancashire.



JUST when Excalibur the police horse was looking ahead, perhaps with some trepidation, to his retirement at the age of 20 Lancashire Police mounted branch officers decided that they couldn't bear to let him trot off into the sunset. So, after a lifetime on the beat, the popular old grey is still primed for action - and still being mollycoddled by his pal Jeanette Taylor. For Excalibur's thoughts on missing out on a quiet life, please turn to Page 2.

£31m to the front line

THE recruitment of 100 new officers is made possible not only by the increase in council tax but also by efficiency savings implemented by the Constabulary.

Over the past six years more than £31m of recurring costs have been redirected from backroom functions to operational policing and a further £6.5m are expected in 2004/5.

The demands on police resources are increasing year on year - not all of them operational. Some examples:

- The number of 999 calls has risen by 12.4 per cent in the last three years
- Since 1997 there have been 267 Acts of Parliament with policing implications.
- In the last 12 months the Constabulary has

received 800 'organisational' demands from Government and regulatory bodies.

- The nature and pattern of crime is changing. The police are faced with a range of 'new' crimes, such as internet pornography, electronic crime and terrorism, which require new and innovative policing techniques to combat them.
- The public has legitimate rising expectations of what it wants public services to deliver.

And a final point to ponder: Even with the 100-officer increase in strength it can be shown that the Constabulary is still understaffed by more than 400 officers.

ALTHOUGH both the Constabulary and the Police Authority believe that extra funding is essential to maintain and improve the quality of its policing they are acutely aware of the financial burden on council tax payers many of whom are on low or fixed incomes.

And that's why the Force continually scans the market for other sources of funding whether it be from Government, Europe or commerce.

Every ethical avenue is explored to generate extra cash to add more resource to the force's battle against crime and to improve the value for money that the public of Lancashire deserve.

In the last financial year in addition to more than £2m secured from the Home Office to help introduce Police Community Support Officers, a further £1 million was raised through grants, fundraising and sponsorship.

Commercial Development Officer Ronnie Webb said: "Funding has been raised from a myriad of different sources to support a wide range of diverse projects.

"This year, amongst many other projects, we have secured funds to provide Lancashire with a modern video facility to meet the needs of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses including those with disabilities.

"We have also received monies to support and increase the numbers of special constables and funding to help improve the recruitment of police officers from minority groups in order to better represent the people we serve."

But contrary to popular belief the Constabulary does not receive an income from speeding fines.

All income and expenditure from fine money is monitored by the district auditor. The police do not make a profit and neither does the Partnership for Road Safety who can only reclaim their operating costs. The remainder goes to the Treasury.

**New moves
on cameras
- Page 8**

Driven off the road

TRAVELLING criminals who use Lancashire's roads are being driven from the county by modern technology.

As part of Project Laser, the Automatic Number Plate Recognition System (ANPR) has been denying criminals the use of the roads since it was introduced in the county in June 2003.

It has been responsible for nearly 600 arrests for a wide range of offences and the recovery of stolen goods and vehicles worth more than £250,000.

Under ANPR, video cameras monitor passing vehicles and feed the image into a system that "reads" registration numbers and automatically checks them against

information on a series of databases.

It is capable of reading up to 3,000 number plates every hour on vehicles travelling at speeds of up to 100 mph, identifying vehicles of interest regardless of how busy the road is. When a suspicious vehicle is recognised, it can be intercepted for further enquiries to be made.

As well as detecting motoring offences and offenders, ANPR plays a vital role in reducing death and injury on Lancashire's roads by making sure that vehicles are safe and roadworthy. It is also a vital tool in reducing the number of stolen vehicles.

Chief Inspector Tracey O'Gara, Road Policing Co-ordinator said: "Project Laser

has already been responsible for a number of noteworthy arrests.

"Our aim is simple: we want to deny criminals the use of our roads. It is known that motoring offences such as driving without tax and insurance are often associated with other crimes such as burglary and drug dealing. Experience has shown that when vehicles are stopped for a motoring offence this has often led to an arrest for more serious crimes.

"We have arrested several people for possession of Class A drugs, offenders who have been wanted by other forces, disqualified drivers, and even someone wanted for attempted murder."

What the Police want to deliver

HIGH quality and effective policing doesn't just happen. It evolves from careful planning, an overriding commitment to fairness and consultation – after all a police force can only operate effectively if it polices with the consent of the public.

And who do the Police Authority and the Constabulary consult with? Well, you, basically.

Throughout the year, members of the public from all walks of life are asked for their views on what the policing priorities should be.

These opinions are very much to the forefront when the Annual Policing Plan is drawn up.

The local policing plan serves a number of purposes.

It sets out expectations for the Constabulary, what it is expected to deliver in the year ahead in terms of both national and local policing priorities; the resources available for doing so; and how its performance will be measured and judged.

The local policing plan is also the key document through which the Police Authority communicates to local people telling them what they can expect from their police service.

Each year the Authority agrees annual policing objectives for the coming year with the Chief Constable. These objectives form a crucial part of the plan.

This year, the Authority consulted widely with the public of Lancashire through its citizens' panel, OPINION!, and through extensive local consultation meetings in each of the Constabulary's six divisions.

Careful note was made of what was said and the views of local people were reflected as far as possible in the policing plan.

The Constabulary's and Authority's two policing objectives take into account the national priorities for policing set by the Home Secretary in his National Policing Plan and provide a framework for the policing of Lancashire. Linked to each objective are a number of performance indicators and targets on which the Constabulary will be expected to deliver.



Paul Stephenson
Chief Constable of Lancashire



Dr Ruth Henig
Chair of the Police Authority

The policing objectives for 2004/5 are:

To reassure the public, particularly those who are vulnerable

Giving emphasis to:

- Accessibility and visibility,
- Alcohol related and other anti-social behaviour,
- Public safety and security,
- Road safety,
- Support of victims and witnesses,
- Offences brought to justice.

To reduce and investigate crime, particularly those offences that are of concern

Giving emphasis to:

- Serious and organised crime,
- Crime associated with Class A drugs,
- Domestic burglary,
- Vehicle crimes,
- Street crimes,
- Violent crime including domestic violence,
- Crimes arising from prejudice (hate crime),
- Counter-terrorism.

The plan sets out in detail the Constabulary's style and philosophy of policing, reinforcing its reputation for being at the forefront of new initiatives, playing a major part in the development of a problem-solving and intelligence-led approach to policing.

The challenge of providing high-quality, comprehensive policing services for the people of Lancashire should not be underestimated.

The safety, security and quality of life of communities are heavily dependent on an ability to deal with the entire range of criminal and anti-social behaviour.

On any typical day the Constabulary will be investigating serious offences, combating organised crime, disrupting the supply of addictive 'Class A' drugs and targeting the most persistent offenders who prey on communities.

Whilst this is happening they will deal simultaneously with 4,038 calls for assistance from the public, including 631 emergencies (based on the average daily total in January).

Over and above these demands, the Constabulary will be active within communities, identifying issues of concern and working with local people and partner agencies to solve problems and develop the lasting solutions that make Lancashire a safer place.

Under the leadership of Chief Constable, Paul Stephenson, Lancashire Constabulary is meeting this challenge and continually working to improve all aspects of service delivery.

The Constabulary is an innovative and pioneering organisation, that is ready to meet new challenges and is a recognised leader in key areas of policing.

The plan contains many examples of the ways in which they have developed new, more effective ways of working which will help to achieve the objectives for 2004-2005.

In order to meet the inexorable demand for their services and make effective use of new legislation, they continually review their working practices and promote a problem-solving philosophy throughout the organisation.

It is the Constabulary's 'Ambition' to be the best police service in the country and to achieve this they have identified five factors that are critical to success which they aim to address in all aspects of their work. They are:

- Leadership
- Resource Management
- Communications

Retirement? Neigh, it's not for me!

Now I know that most blokes look forward to their retirement. At last you can tackle all those DIY jobs and decorating you've been putting on one side for ages. The garden is going to take on a new lease of life and the old shed is going to get a spring clean. Shopping will, finally, become a delight.

You can even take up bowls (if the back is holding up), dominoes (if the eyes are still focusing) or even line dancing (if the knees...). Well, perhaps not line dancing, but you get the picture.

It's the same for horses. What could be more pleasant at the age of 20 and after a hectic life on the beat than a leisurely stroll round a field. Or a leisurely stroll round a field the other way. Or staring, even more leisurely, for hours on end at the sheep in the next field or the traffic whizzing along on the other side of the hawthorn hedge.

Yes, I'm kidding. The thought of retirement actually filled me with horror. And, I must say, it's the only thing in close on 16 years as a Police horse that has had me worried. Battles, football pitch invasions, hare coursing demonstrations, all sorts of disorders the length and breadth of the county . . . I've taken them all in my stride. But retirement?

I'm called "Excalibur", by the way; cool name for a cool guy! Time off? The odd day here and there except for that spot of bother over in Nelson a few years back when some young tearaway deliberately ran a stolen motor-bike into me. I ended up sprawled rather inelegantly on the

tarmacadam and had to have quite a few staples in a badly cut leg. We never did catch him. But it was very nice of the locals to invite me and my pal Lancer back to the town when I'd fully recovered to switch on their Christmas lights.

Right, where was I? Oh, yes. So there I was, staring retirement in the face when - bingo! Everyone was wondering whether I might care to carry on a bit longer even though I'd reached retirement age. Would I!

Inspector Dave Taylor and Sergeants Alison Davies and Tony Critchley who run the show here at Hutton reckoned I was still as fit as a fiddle. And my pal Jeanette Taylor, police staff manager at mounted, says I can probably still teach the youngsters a thing or two. So you'll be seeing me knocking around for a bit longer yet.

You can't miss me. I'm the rather handsome and distinguished grey with more than a passing resemblance to Desert Orchid, the famous winner of the Cheltenham Gold Cup a few years back.

Oh, one last thing. The Lancashire Constabulary has a full complement of horses at the moment but I do know that Manchester, Merseyside and other areas are on the lookout for good prospects. Recruits must be three or four years old, at least 16:2, well built and muscular; the heavy hunter type and preferably they will have been backed and ridden a bit; just to get the idea without having picked up any bad habits. They'll be well looked after and they'll have a great time. I certainly have

- Community Engagement
- Delivering Results

Chief officers of the Constabulary and members of the Police Authority have taken the lead in developing new ways to

improve performance and will continue to do so during the lifetime of this Annual Policing Plan and beyond.

To view the plan in full log on to www.lancspa.gov.uk.

VICTIMS AND WITNESSES HAVEN'T BEEN FORGOTTEN

IMPROVEMENTS to the Criminal Justice System are not solely concerned with the administration of justice.

Victims and witnesses, too, are having their needs addressed and a range of initiatives have been introduced including:

Keeping victims and witnesses better informed – Agencies are working together to inform victims and witnesses about the progress of police investigations, and where an offender has been arrested, the progress of the case.

A Victim Liaison Unit is being piloted at Blackpool Police Station. Here Victim Support volunteers work alongside police officers to update victims of certain crimes of the progress of their case through the criminal justice system. Some 1800 individuals had received information from the unit by December 2003.

Increased use of Victim Personal Statements – These statements enable victims to state formally the impact that the crime committed against them has had

on them. This might be emotionally, financially or physically. This can then be used throughout the criminal justice process – for example it will be considered as part of the sentencing process.

Repeat victimisation – The crime recording system has been upgraded to identify repeat victims of crime at point of call to the police. A graded response is then implemented to assist the victim. Further assistance will be offered based

on the victim and the crime – for example a security assessment check on a victim's property in the case of repeated burglary.

Improving court facilities for victims and witnesses – Victims and witnesses can now make use of separate entrances and segregated waiting areas at several courts across the county. Live TV links are also in place at Preston Crown Court, removing the need for victims and witnesses to attend court in some instances.

GET ANOTHER JOB; THIS ONE DOESN'T PAY!

GOING DOWN! – Both the number of burglaries in Lancashire and the hard-core of villains responsible for most of it. Often for long terms of imprisonment. Lancashire Police are certainly winning the war against the burglars and domestic burglaries are down by six per cent to a 10-year low. Many factors have combined to make the impressive figures but the force have no doubt that what they call their "intelligence-led" targeting of persistent

offenders has been vital. Police aim to make life very difficult for the repeat offender – and their tactics, boosted by rapid advances in forensic science, are working. Most burglars are heavily into drugs and offend repeatedly to feed their habit. The successful targeting of these people together with a determination to disrupt the familiar cycle of crime-prison-re-offending via the Tower Project has been paying big dividends. This approach,

combined with the hard-hitting Operation Nimrod which targets Class A drugs offenders, has been persuading criminals to abandon a life of repeated burglaries. Fifty per cent of all serious crime is committed by just 10 per cent of offenders. And now the force is hammering home the message to those career criminals – Get another job; this one doesn't pay.

Brave Elsie's sad story

BECOMING a victim of domestic burglary is a distressing experience. Often it is not the recovery of stolen items that is of foremost concern to victim; what they really require is a personal response from the police that aims to give explanations, advise and reassure.

When the Burglary Project was launched a seven-minute video of a Blackburn pensioner's burglary ordeal and her subsequent treatment by the police was screened at presentations and workshops.

Elsie, not her real name, a 65-year-old widow, was the victim of daylight burglary at her terraced home. Her distressing story underlined the necessity of restoring public confidence in the police response to domestic burglary.

Tears are never far away. But she speaks with a quiet dignity and without anger or bitterness. It is this gentleness that makes her narrative so compelling.

Elsie went out late one morning to visit a friend. When she returned a couple of hours later at around 2 p.m. she found her front door open.

'I started shaking and phoned the police. It took ages to get through and I was shaking all the time. They said they would get somebody to me in a 'short while'. But it was 10.30 at night and dark when they came.

'They said they had only just got the message because they had just come on shift. I was scared that the burglars would come back. I'd phoned again to ask when the police would come. Again, they said in a 'short while'.

'I would have liked them to have come back to see if I was all right. The two police officers said they would but they didn't. They never came anywhere near. I never heard anything. I kept wondering if they had got someone. But you never get to know.'

Despite her ordeal Elsie is not and never has been anti-police. However, the poignant interview helped to ensure that victim care has become a top priority for officers dealing with domestic burglaries as detailed in the next column . . .



Call now with information about crime. You will never be asked for your name and your call will never be traced or recorded.

SmartWater makes mark

BURGLARIES are steadily fading from the county crime map, especially in the Blackpool and Fylde area where a determined assault on the problem from the local Community Safety Partnership is starting to pay big dividends.

The 14 CSPs in Lancashire are initiatives committed to finding local solutions to local problems. Members of the emergency services, civic authorities, health care professionals, housing associations and local

businesses all play their part in tackling problem areas.

On the coast the CSP's Burglary Working Group has been extremely successful. Blackpool and the Fylde recorded only 68 dwelling burglaries in December last year, the lowest monthly total for a decade.

Detective Chief Inspector Peter O'Dwyer said: "We have shown significant reductions in dwelling burglaries over the last couple of years, a success the partnership can clearly claim some credit towards."

Criminals are being hit with a variety of successful initiatives.

SmartWater is starting to show dividends. This is a new high-tech weapon which is now making its mark – literally on thieves and burglars. When a SmartWater installation is triggered by an intruder a harmless substance is sprayed on to them. It stays on their skin and clothing for many weeks, invisible until it is put under ultra-violet light. And each batch is chemically unique so a criminal can be matched to a specific location.

SmartWater can be used to protect just about anything. Several recent arrests on the coast have led to property being recovered thanks to SmartWater hits. All the Division's support unit vehicles now carry high-intensity UV searchlights for use during searches.

Magpie: The project has shown some excellent results in identifying target criminals and recovering property from disposal routes within the town. Over 200 traders have been identified and are regularly visited by Ian Taylor, the Magpie officer.

Rented houses and flats have been targeted and an Accredited Landlord's Scheme and a Tenants' Reference Scheme have been instrumental in forging closer links with local property owners through a Landlords' Forum group.

The Council's Care and Repair service and the charity Help the Aged continue to work closely with vulnerable householders over 60. The fight against crime is a team operation these days. And that teamwork is certainly paying off in Blackpool and the Fylde.

Did you know?

Last year Lancashire Police Authority analysed hundreds of questionnaires from Lancashire folk and used the results to influence its policing priorities.

Reassurance for burglary victims

A UNIQUE initiative aimed at boosting the quality of service to burglary victims has produced remarkable results in East Lancashire. Satisfaction levels among traumatised victims have soared and investigative processes and standards have been taken to new levels.

The Burglary Project was launched in Lancashire Constabulary's Eastern Division. It has been hailed as an example of best practice by the Home Office and has attracted interest from a host of other forces as well as the Police Standards Unit and a number of police authorities.

The project is now being rolled out across the county as the police continue to improve the service they offer to victims of domestic burglaries.

The project team, led by Divisional Commander Chief Superintendent David Mallaby, set out to significantly increase the proportion of burglary victims who were very satisfied or totally satisfied with police performance.

Identifying the critical factors that led to victims experiencing a higher level of satisfaction was seen as vital to improving the way the police deal with incidents of burglary.

Focus groups were used to enable victims of domestic burglary to freely discuss their thoughts, feelings and reactions to both the

crime and the involvement of the police. Through these discussions a valuable and personal insight was gained into the experiences of victims.

Some victims had praise for the way the police dealt with them. However, it was clear that in other cases the police failed to respond sympathetically to the victim's plight, and there were examples of police action or inaction that had aggravated the effects of the burglary.

Eastern Division's PR and Communications officer Liz Riding, a member of the project team, explains:

"There was a difference between what we as a police force perceived a burglary victim's priorities to be and what the focus groups and our research actually established them to be.

SYMPATHY

"For instance we may have expected a victim's top priorities to be the recovery of the stolen goods and the arrest of the burglar. But in fact they were more concerned about reassurance, being kept informed of developments and being given advice and sympathy.

So how did the Burglary Project make such a successful impact?

More than 150 staff from the Blackburn and Darwen area attended workshops on the Burglary Project including communications operators, uniformed constables and senior managers in the force.

The emphasis of the workshops was squarely on increasing victim reassurance and developing procedures that would enable every reported burglary to be thoroughly investigated. A results-motivated approach ensured that officers left the workshops re-

invigorated and keen to actively embrace the aims of the project.

A Quality of Service Agreement was drawn up as a means of reassurance that clarifies the response that the victims of burglary can expect.

The Police will:

- Visit you as soon as possible
- Find out what has happened
- Attempt to preserve and recover evidence
- Explain what will happen next
- Offer and explain the Victim Support Scheme
- Make house to house enquiries
- Give you a crime reference number
- Give you the details of the officer attending your home
- Investigate the crime, try to recover property and identify those responsible
- Keep you informed of our enquiries
- Let you know when they can do no more

Trained independent researchers conducted an evaluation of the project. The results showed a remarkable improvement in victim satisfaction.

It was revealed that 75% of victims were now completely satisfied that their burglary would be thoroughly investigated compared to just 60% before the project was launched. Chief Supt. Mallaby commented: "We set out to increase satisfaction levels in victims of burglary and the project has indeed helped us to achieve these amazing results.

"However, the results are also a reflection of the hard work, determination and commitment of our staff and they should be praised for making it happen."

Did you know?

Lancashire Police Authority held 42 Police Authority Community Meetings last year enabling 1330 members of the public to have their say directly to senior Police officers and members of the Authority.

AN ANGRY complaint from a Lancashire builder about a car sales scam put a Clitheroe detective and the Constabulary's Major Crime Unit on the trail of a free-spending international fraudster.

The investigation ended with the jailing of 26 year-old Blackburn man Edward Van Vessem but the journey to the Crown Court took the officers on an exhaustive trawl through the complex worlds of the Internet, mobile phone technology, electronic money transfers and credit card dealings.

It was in August 2002 that Detective Constable Alan Procter of Clitheroe CID interviewed an irate builder who suspected he had been conned into electronically transferring a £4k deposit on a pair of imported BMWs.

The builder had been impressed with the bargain price tags displayed in a full-page advertisement in a local evening newspaper.

After contacting the 'car dealer' through what proved to be a virtual office (a service which offers businesses an electronic message-taking and forwarding service, e-mail and postal addresses and banking facilities) the builder made a moneygram transfer of the £4k and began to look forward to receiving his luxury motors. He was in for a long and fruitless wait.

As the days turned into weeks the builder contacted the dealer again via Dutch mobile phone number to protest over the delay. The man at the other end apologised, blamed his boss and generally proved evasive about



THE LYING DUTCHMAN

delivery dates. Police contend that the 'boss' never existed

The would-be car buyer eventually contacted Clitheroe police and was interviewed by Alan Procter and his partner DC John Whitehead.

Alan made enquiries both in Lancashire and further afield and was contacted by police in Weston-super-Mare and Windsor who had received similar complaints about probable deceptions that employed the same methods.

The first breakthrough came when an electronic money transfer in the name of Van Vessem was traced to a Blackburn building society.

SUSPICION

When he appeared to collect the cash DCs Procter and Whitehead arrested him on suspicion of deception.

Van Vessem, who has Dutch parents but dual-nationality, was later charged and remanded in custody but just before Christmas he was given bail against police wishes by a judge in chambers.

During the period from his release to his re-arrest in February the fraudster

went on a criminal spree on such a scale that officers were amazed at both his audacity and his energy.

It was at this point that fraud specialists from the Major Crime Unit, in particular DC Ian Stirling, joined the investigation.

It wasn't long before the on-going investigation revealed the first batch of what was to prove an extensive list of offences.

It was discovered that Van Vessem was behind professionally-produced websites which offered cheap deals on imported cars and motor-cycles, holidays, electrical items, computer equipment and mobile phones.

He also placed advertisements in newspapers throughout the country. Van Vessem's beguiling websites and advertisements offered a huge variety of merchandise from a £10 mobile phone to a £170,000 Aston Martin Vanquish.

But none of the goods existed. Van Vessem's sole motive was fraud. His aim was either to acquire cash through money transfers or – as in most cases – obtain complete credit card details including the three-digit card

verification code printed on the back of the card. The credit accounts were then milked with a vengeance.

Prospective buyers were invited to contact Van Vessem either by e-mail, a mobile phone or via virtual offices – he employed at least six of these around the country.

Astonishingly hundreds, if not thousands, of people, proved gullible enough to make contact with the professional conman and trustingly handed over their card data in the unrequited hope of landing a bargain.

Van Vessem was an astute and convincing liar. Victim after victim parted with their most confidential financial data.

INTRICATE

The fraudster used the cards to fuel a luxurious lifestyle. He stayed at £400-a-night hotels, entertained lavishly, and commuted between England and Holland. Police unearthed wardrobes of unworn designer clothes.

But the police's painstaking work, innovative techniques and sheer hard graft began to pay off.

Slowly, the net began to close on Van Vessem. Investigators built up a

picture of an intricate web of fraud which stretched the length and breadth of the country

With the expert assistance of Leonie Barnes, the Major Crime Unit's Intelligence Analyst, patterns of criminality were identified. In some cases this resulted in credit card companies being alerted to fraudulent spending even before the cardholder had become aware of the discrepancy.

A seized computer offered up its own electronic admission of offences once it had been subjected to intensive interrogation by DC Richard Horton of the Computer Crime Unit.

On his second arrest Van Vessem admitted 18 specimen charges and asked for a further 80 cases to be taken into consideration.

The sum involved amounted to some £43,000 although officers involved in the case believe that the deceptions could well have cost victims and credit card companies closer to £240,000.

Van Vessem was jailed for two and a half years.

Said Ian Stirling: "There was no evidence that Van Vessem amassed vast amounts of money. What cash he got he spent on a grand scale. What he couldn't buy with cash he paid for with credit cards. It was certainly a complicated case to crack but, ultimately, very satisfying."

Added Alan Procter: "Van Vessem was arrogant and probably thought he was untouchable. But at the same time he went to great lengths to retain his anonymity. If he felt in danger he would simply close the website or change his phone number or virtual office."

"But we got him in the end,"

Newsbeat asked Naomi Walker, the Police Authority's Communications Manager, about how the police watchdog consults with the community. She writes:



WE know that you want to see more bobbies on the beat; we know that you want the police to respond to your calls more quickly and we know, too, that anti-social behaviour is a big issue for you.

We also know that most of you want to help make your local area a better place to live, we know... well, we won't bore you, we know a great deal more about what's important to you.

And how exactly do we know this? Not because we at the Lancashire Police Authority are a bunch of psychics, but because we regularly take time to listen to the people of Lancashire.

So how and when do we listen?

- We have a Citizens' Panel consisting of 4,000 people from throughout Lancashire whom we approach at least three times a year to ask about policing and community issues - that's 12,000 opinions from just one consultation project.
- We hold Police Authority Community meetings three times a year in each of the 14 districts across Lancashire to which all of you are invited.
- When an issue arises, we carry out targeted consultation on that issue with the relevant groups and individuals.
- You can even choose when to give us your opinions - just by visiting our website (www.lancspa.gov.uk) and filling in one of our on-line surveys or by e-mailing us directly.

Diane Flynn, chair of the Police Authority's Consultation Working Group that is responsible for co-ordinating consultation, explained: "We seek feedback from the public of Lancashire on an ongoing basis, through a wide variety of methods. These include face-to-face interviews, questionnaires and telephone surveys, focus groups, Police Authority Community meetings and online surveys."

We're listening...

* Youngsters in Lancashire can make their voice heard through YELO which stands for Youth Expressing Local Opinions and which is aimed at children aged 11-16.

Lancashire Police Authority want to hear what young people have to say on a wide range of issues that affect the quality of their lives and your input can help shape the decisions that the Authority, Council and other organisations make about the things that affect you.

Consultation will take place in schools and community venues in local neighbourhoods and there will be on-line questionnaires and focus groups. More information on the Authority website: www.lancspa.gov.uk

"We also talk to a wide range of organized groups to ensure our consultation is as broad as possible and includes representatives of all members of the community." We don't just accumulate this knowledge; we also act on it.

Last year you told us that you wanted to see more police on the beat. In 2003-04 we set a budget that provided 80 extra Community Beat Managers.

Last year you told us that you wanted the policing objectives amended to include some new issues. This year's Policing Plan includes these new issues.

Over the coming year the Police Authority will be seeking your views on a wide range of issues by continuing to undertake consultation within your local communities.

Also this year we will specifically be targeting young people and members of the business community to address their issues.

DO YOU have something to say about the way your community is policed? Do you have some criticisms, suggestions or even a compliment to pass on?

Then why not take the opportunity to have your say about the way policing is carried out in the county?

Police Authority Community meetings – or PACs – are held three times a year across each of the 14 police districts in Lancashire so there are plenty of openings for everyone to get involved.

PACs give people the opportunity to talk directly with their local Police Divisional Commander and Police Authority member. They can find out about new projects or initiatives that are active in the area and pass on concerns about policing and such things as anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

Hana Patel is Lancashire Police Authority's Volunteer Publicity Officer and she plays a vital role for the Authority in publicising her local Police Authority Community meetings to residents in Preston.

She is very enthusiastic about the success of the initiatives.

HAVE YOUR SAY

"People who have attended area meetings have told me how they appreciate the fact that there is now a much greater focus and emphasis on how ordinary people can have a direct opportunity to talk about the way policing is carried out in their area," she says. "It's a big step forward."

The public are invited to express opinions on any aspect of local policing. They can get information from the Constabulary about locally-based policing initiatives and successes and find out more about community safety projects in their area. They can also use high-tech interactive voting handsets to let off a bit of steam. Hana got involved with PACs when she saw a feature about them in a Citizen newspaper. She says she had a general interest in policing, crime prevention and community safety and went along to a meeting. Her enthusiasm quickly led to her being appointed Preston PAC's Publicity Officer.

Why not take Hana's tip and pop into the next police community meeting in your area?

* Innovation has always been a Constabulary strong suit. The force prides itself at being at the leading edge of modern-day policing and is often called upon by the Home Office to pilot new and exciting projects.

One such pilot for the National Reassurance Policing Programme is under way in Brunswick Ward in Blackpool and Preston's Ingol Ward.

This community-led partnership initiative turns traditional policing practice on its head, enabling neighbourhoods to prioritise their own customised policing plan.

The programme tests whether tackling "signal crimes" can impact on the public's perception of insecurity.

A "signal crime" is an incident, physical or social disorder that may trigger a member of the public to worry about their safety.

Evidence of drug dealing, burglary and theft are obvious examples, but vandalism, building security, anti-social behaviour and environmental issues can also have negative impacts.

* Do you want to have a say in how policing in Lancashire is run? Then here's the opportunity you have been waiting for -- log on to www.lancspa.gov.uk

so keep talking!

It's more than a job - more a way of life

THINKING of a career in the Police Force? Then you should have a word with Thom McLoughlin. Perhaps "a word" doesn't quite hit the mark; say an hour-long chat.

You'd probably sign up there and then. And if you were as keen as the Inspector you would be quickly having a great time and enjoying one of the most challenging jobs you could imagine.

Inspector McLoughlin is passionate about the role of the Police in society and can talk with pride and eloquence

about what he calls "more than a job; more a way of life."

Insp. McLoughlin is proud that in Lancashire and certainly in his Central Division there is a massive focus on frontline, inter-active policing. "We need to get involved with the people who pay our wages," he says.

"We have to focus our resources and balance them with other priorities - local, regional and national. But we never lose sight of the people we serve. We are a key influence on the daily lives of so many people and that's the way it should be."

Insp. McLoughlin says: "We are a public service - but run on business line. Any savings that can be made are ploughed back into frontline policing; the prevention of crime, the detection of crime and the disruption of criminality."

Objectives and standards in the Lancashire force are set to a high level and he says: "I am proud of those high standards. The uniformed branch is just one part of a service in which everyone has a part to play. It's a real team effort."

He is also proud of the way the force is tackling anti-social behaviour and bringing about a culture change for the

better. "It's worse now than it has ever been," he says. "Not many years back an elderly resident might have gone outside and given a gang of young lads a ticking off for playing football outside his front door. These days he would think twice before opening that door."

"Aggressive, loutish behaviour has become all too common. It has got to stop. The police are looking ahead to tackle this sort of thing before it becomes the norm."

Drugs have long been a problem. The same goes for the use of firearms. "We live in a smaller world," he says.

"Everything is that much closer. Finance is easy to move around; just a few clicks on a computer mouse. And it's much easier to inherit problems from around the globe such as drugs, firearms and human trafficking."

The future? Strategic planning and tactical tasking coupled with the co-ordinating of community problems is the key, he says

He is too modest to add that enthusiastic and dedicated officers such as himself will be another major contribution in the coming years to the ongoing fight against crime.

THOM McLOUGHLIN joined the Metropolitan Police in 1994. Now, less than 10 years later and at the age of 31, he is an inspector with the Lancashire Constabulary, running a response team from Central Division headquarters in Preston. His wife is a teacher and they have two children. He says he has "a great job" and is certainly putting everything into it, currently studying for an MSc in Police Leadership and Management. In this feature he talks about his job and about the challenges which the Police face.

999

IT'S FRIDAY night. It's warm and dry and Preston city centre will soon be heaving. Most of the 20,000 revellers who will be packing into the area's clubs and pubs will just have been paid and they are all out for a good time.

But it doesn't always work out like that. Many of them will be drunk by midnight and although most will fade away and make their way home some will become noisy, aggressive and violent; others will end up in hospital.

Thom McLoughlin's team will be right in the middle of it, picking up the pieces. And with the prospect of doing it all again the following night. It's a scene repeated in every big town in the county every weekend, especially when everyone has just been paid "It's tidal," says Insp. McLaughlin. "It will probably be quiet early in the month but it will build up and the third and fourth weekends can be hectic."

Inspector McLoughlin's typical Friday night shift would run from 9pm to 7am on the Saturday. A second Inspector would be running a shift from 5pm to 3am so there would be a considerable police presence between 9pm and 3am. Considerable, but not always big enough.

Says Inspector McLoughlin: "We are fortunate in Central Division in that we have a fairly compact area around Preston to deal with. Other divisions have much bigger areas to cover. But there are times when we are stretched to the limit. The thin blue line is occasionally very thin."

AWARE

His main job is to respond to and prioritise emergency calls. It's often a close call. "We are all learning, every day. I am always happy to seek advice from my officers, most of whom know the area well. But the buck stops with me and I'm well aware of that."

Insp. McLoughlin will have charge of the whole division, from communications and custody staff, to firearms and dog teams to the road policing unit. Each sergeant is in charge of a sector and they will have about 22 constables working with them.

Insp McLoughlin will oversee every 999 call or major incident

Did you know?

Last year Independent Custody Visitors visited 1107 detainees held in custody suites in police stations throughout the County.

that comes into the Preston HQ during his shift. The call could be about anything; you never know what might come through.

Often, after 5pm he will be the only Senior Officer on duty at the Divisional Headquarters. His officers will be out handling anything from a domestic argument to a brawl in a nightclub; from a vicious attack to a burglary; from a missing person alert to a firearms scare.

But there's no doubting where he would sooner be - out on the streets with the men and women under his command.

With the advances in communications in recent years an Inspector tasked with initial response and co-ordination can do the job almost as well from a street corner off Fishergate as he could from the comfort of his office in headquarters.

Domestic violence is a continuing problem in his division as it is almost everywhere. When a call comes in Insp. McLoughlin has to make an instant risk assessment based, often, on little information. Each call is treated as a priority and the follow-up investigation is just as important

as arriving quickly. Two cars, possibly three officers, could be tied up for anything from 10 minutes to three or four hours.

And no matter how insignificant an incident might appear on the face of it the officers on the front line have to be prepared for any eventuality.

"It's the ones you perhaps wouldn't expect to flare up that often do," says Insp. McLoughlin. "But I am more than confident in the ability of all my officers to respond appropriately to any situation."

FIRM

"They are all extremely well trained and, armed with tact and a good sense of humour, they are often able to diffuse potentially violent situations."

"However, each officer carries a baton, handcuffs, CS sprays, body armour and a personal radio and each receives regular training in defensive tactics."

"You never know what might be coming your way. It might be a bottle, a knife, a screwdriver or a syringe," he says.

Any 999 call reporting violence or the threat of violence is immediately called a Code 1



The start of another busy night for Inspector Thom McLaughlin

emergency and Insp. McLoughlin would expect his officers to respond within a few minutes.

Meanwhile, back in Preston town centre it's midnight and the area is teeming with revellers - although not with bottles, cans and beer glasses; at least if they know what's good for them.

Preston has an on-street drinking ban within the city centre boundary and this has greatly reduced disorderly behaviour and assaults in the area. Anyone failing to conform will be given a firm warning and then locked up if they refuse to co-operate.

Police officers in their luminous coats are a very visible presence in the centre and they intervene early to prevent disorderly behaviour from becoming violent.

Says Insp. McLoughlin: "We aren't against anyone having a good time. But we have boundaries and we take a fairly tough line on disorderly or violently behaviour."

The CCTV cameras play an important role in both prevention and detection of crime and Insp. McLoughlin praises their experienced staff as "key players" in the fight against crime and disorderly behaviour.

It doesn't take many incidents to stretch the force almost to breaking point.

One night there was a serious fire at a block of flats and 15 officers were tied up evacuating residents, cordoning off the scene, and working with the fire and ambulance services.

Another day there was an armed robbery at gunpoint and minutes

later across town a similar incident. At the same time Blackpool were requesting assistance in a car chase that was spilling into Central Division. And all that was on top of an elderly woman who had gone missing from home and a couple of bad road accidents. "The Police Force is an easy target and takes a lot of flak. But I wouldn't think of doing anything else. I can't imagine

anything I would enjoy as much."

Inspector Thomas McLoughlin, an Inspector by the time he was 30, is just the sort of ambitious and dedicated young officer that the Police Force needs in the continuing fight against crime.

It's an increasingly tough fight for Police officers everywhere. But it's also challenging and enjoyable. As he says: "It's a great job!"

A Force for all

EAST LANCASHIRE Police are working hard to attract a bigger cross-section of their local communities to ensure that the force is truly representative.

The Force wants to recruit local people to become police officers, special constables and police staff from across the community, particularly from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. It also aims to strengthen existing partnerships with agencies and the local minority ethnic organisations and communities.

A new initiative will allow the Constabulary to concentrate on the two Divisional areas where there is the greatest need to recruit local people to better mirror the communities - Eastern (Blackburn with

Darwen, Hyndburn and the Ribble Valley) and Pennine (Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale).

A variety of events are being undertaken including consultations, focus groups, presentations and workshops, "familiarisation days" and sporting events.

Another initiative under way is Positive Action which is provided to those candidates who are under-represented within the Constabulary throughout the recruitment process. Advice and guidance is provided on areas such as the completion of the application form, the assessment process and the physical fitness test.

For further information or an application form, please contact the Recruitment Team on (01772) 410336.

Surprising who ends up in a cell

EVER spent a night, or at least a bit of time, in the police cells? Probably not, but if you had you'd have been in good company.

A station commander, a youth worker, a nurse, a retired head teacher, a midwife . . . they've all spent some time behind bars at police stations across Lancashire.

Not once, but scores of times. And they haven't done anything wrong! Just the opposite, in fact.

They, and many other respectable citizens, are Independent Custody Visitors for the Lancashire Police Authority, who visit, unannounced, police custody suites to ensure that those in custody are being dealt with properly.

The Authority currently has about 70 volunteers who undertake this unpaid role.

They receive training and undertake a probationary period which consists of induction training working in tandem with experienced colleagues. Regular meetings organised by the Police Authority between groups of Independent Custody Visitors, provide an opportunity to share information and experience.

Custody Visitor Sheila Maw explains why she undertook this vital role:

"I have always considered myself a community-minded person and at the time I was chair of the then Police Committee, I felt it was something I could do in order to extend my role and give me an insight into the work of the Police.

"Primarily, I visit custody areas to ensure that detainees receive all their rights and that their welfare is being sustained. I also think that, additionally, I am there to see that

"rights" work both ways such as in the case of a complaint by the prisoner against the custody officers or the arresting officers."

Sheila says that being a custody visitor has broadened her relations with, and understanding of, the work of the Police.

Ian Dickinson is responsible for the organisation and co-ordination of the scheme in Lancashire. He says it performs a very useful function.

"Most members of the public would not know what happens to someone when they are arrested. This scheme ensures that detainees are treated fairly and are given everything to which they are entitled.

"Anyone can find themselves in Police custody and most people would welcome an unbiased and independent eye and ear to be kept on them."

Making the right call

A SOPHISTICATED new telephone call handling system has arrived at Lancashire Constabulary. The state of the art system, known as Symposium, has the ability to tell the difference between 999 and non-emergency calls and can automatically prioritise emergency calls.

More than 1.5 million non-emergency calls are handled every year by the county's Police Communications Centres. Last year they dealt with 260,000 emergency 999 calls - 5,000 emergency calls every week!

It was recognised that the huge volume of calls could be managed more efficiently if a new handling system was implemented. Through detailed consultation with BT over several months, Symposium was born. It is groundbreaking in that it is the first call handling system of its type to be used by any British police service.

Symposium emerged as the solution to providing an improved response to calls from the public, as well as enabling Lancashire Constabulary to meet police and government performance targets. It has received widespread acclaim from the Constabulary and, most importantly, the general public. Symposium provides "real time" information about performance including how many calls are waiting, how quickly calls are answered, how many call handlers are available and how many calls individual operators answer.

Inspector Mike Alexander, the Project Manager said: "The implementation of Symposium has enabled Lancashire Constabulary to further improve its call handling performance and quality of service to the public. When members of the public feel more confident with our call handling capability it increases levels of reassurance and promotes greater community engagement."

A local newspaper decided to put it to the test by making a number of random calls to Eastern Communications Centre in Blackburn. Virtually all of the calls made were answered within five seconds and the majority were responded to within two seconds.

KERRY MULHALL is in her mid-30s and, despite the demands of a busy family life, found time every week to volunteer as an Independent Custody Volunteer for Lancashire Police Authority.

She enjoyed her role so much that she wanted it to become her day job and in September last year she was accepted as a cadet with Lancashire Constabulary and has been undertaking her probationary training.

Here, Kerry explains why she enjoys her new role and how being an ICV helped her choose a career as a police officer.

OPPORTUNITY

"When I saw the advertisement for ICVs I was in my first year of study for a degree in forensic science at the University of Central Lancashire. As the Police Force was an area in which I eventually wanted to work, I was intrigued to know more and at the same time thought it would be an ideal opportunity to do something for my local community.

"I thoroughly enjoyed my time as an ICV because it enabled me to take a peek at the inside of a Police station and the cell areas. Sometimes the visits were quite hectic and what you saw

Cadets face challenge

A UNIQUE insight into policing is being experienced by a group of young men and women in a new initiative known as the Volunteer Police Cadet Scheme.

It is anticipated that the project, launched in March this year, will give the Cadets access to behind-the-scenes police work as well as an understanding of life on the beat.

Lancashire Constabulary is one of only 11 forces across the country that is offering teenagers this insight into the work of a police officer.

Demand was high for places on the Pennine Division scheme with more than 124 applications received from youngsters wanting to tackle the challenge of being a police cadet.

Just 28 applicants made the final cut -17 young women and 11 young men - after impressing the selection panel with their motivation, determination and commitment.

They have been finding it hard work, but very challenging and rewarding.

Kerry fell for the hard 'cell'

(and smelt!) wasn't always pleasant but this made the visits more interesting.

"I must say that every time I went into a police station the detainees were well cared for and if they had asked for a doctor, solicitor, food or even extra blankets, all their requests had been adhered to."

Kerry became an ICV in April 2003 and made approximately 11 visits to Blackpool Central Police station and Fleetwood Police station during the seven months that she was a member of the team. She was accepted as a cadet in September last year.

HELP

She has found the training to be quite intensive and tiring but fun at the same time. "I think to be a good ICV you need to have a genuine interest in people's welfare and a dedication to help the community. You also need to be a team player and it helps to have a mature and responsible approach to life."

Not surprisingly, she feels that her work as a custody volunteer will be very helpful in her new career.



Meet the

COMMUNITY policing is all about talking . . . talking to the man in the street, the woman in the shop, the child in the school; building relationships, establishing partnerships, creating mutual respect and trust.

And talking is what Lancashire's new breed of police officers, Community Beat Managers, are good at.

Each one of them has built up a network of contacts who can be called upon to work together to solve problems which are affecting the community - their community.

Not all members of a CBM's team are elected or paid officials - not by a long way.

Business people, vicars, licensees, charity workers, taxi drivers, play group leaders - the list is truly cosmopolitan . . .but they all have one thing in common - a desire to make their community,

their place of work places to live and eat. They are member network of Wider whose multi-talents making real dif communities.

Our photograph s Beat Manager PC head of part of his t Springhill.

But the important t that probably every CBMs will have a di to their team.

Next time you encoi if you can get a plac . after all it's great team.

In our picture PC W special constable police community

Do you have that Special quality?

THERE'S A LOT to being a police officer. And there's a lot to being a Special Constable!

Could you tackle anti-social behaviour, educate school children on road safety and help out at the scene of an accident?

Are you dedicated to your local community, a quick-thinking team player and able to stay calm in a crisis?

Then you could have what it takes to become a valued member of the Special Constabulary.

Special Constables are unpaid volunteer officers who take part in all aspects of policing. They have the same powers as a full-time officer and wear a similar uniform.

Now, Lancashire Constabulary, in conjunction with a nationwide Home Office campaign, is after more Special Constables.

Lancashire Constabulary's target is to have the number of Specials on the beat equivalent to 15% of the number of full-time officers.

Chief Inspector Val Prince explains: "We are actively encouraging members of the public to work with us to help make our communities safer. Joining as a Special Constable can give a person a great sense of fulfilment."

For a Special Constable typical duties are focused on local high visibility patrols and crime-reduction initiatives but for a volunteer police officer no two shifts are ever the same.

A Special could be policing a crowd at a pop concert one weekend and conducting stop-checks to prevent anti-social behaviour the next. There's plenty of variety. Many Special Constables are motivated by a desire to give

something back to their community and the ongoing support provided to Specials ensures that they have the ability and confidence to effect positive changes in their own locality.

Full-time officers who quickly develop a strong rapport with their volunteer counterparts usually accompany Special Constables on their patrols.

Being a Special Constable can also be a unique and valuable insight into police work. It allows people to "test the water" before they commit themselves to applying to become a full-time police officer.

Comprehensive training ensures that prospective Special Constables develop their problem-solving and negotiating abilities within a supportive atmosphere. Knowing how to resolve disputes with tact and sensitivity is a vital skill for a Special Constable along with the ability to communicate effectively with people from all backgrounds.

It is therefore vital that Special Constables in Lancashire are representative of the communities they serve.

It doesn't matter that they may not have any formal qualifications or that they may have been out of work for sometime. They could still have the qualities Lancashire Constabulary are looking for.

Specials are asked to contribute a minimum of 200 hours per year, which works out to be a commitment of just four hours a week.

If you are between 18 and a half and 50 and would like to find out more about making a positive and valuable contribution to your neighbourhood as a Special Constable then please contact Wendy O'Leary of the Lancashire Constabulary Recruiting Department on 01772 410313. Alternatively you can visit the website, www.specialconstables.gov.uk for more information.

All aboard for a vital service

THE LATEST arrival on Platform 2 of Town Green Railway Station is really going places! No, it's not some famous name from the days of steam. It's Aughton Police Station.

And it's being manned by local volunteers determined to ensure that this vital community service in the West Lancashire town is being maintained.

Police presence at the rather unusual police station had been restricted due to patrolling duties but, after Lancashire Police and the parish council had canvassed the views of local residents, volunteers came forward.

Since the groundbreaking initiative was launched in August last year the number of eager volunteers who are dedicated to manning Aughton Police Station has rapidly increased. Currently there are 30 locals who work on a rota system and PC Neil McLaughlin, the Community Beat Manager for the area, has had to set up a reserve list of willing helpers as the level of interest has soared.

The majority of the volunteers are retired and have a strong sense of loyalty to their local area and they have devised a schedule that enables those who are still in employment to offer their services in the evenings and at weekends.

Aughton Police station is now open for more than 16 hours a week providing a service that deals with a wide variety of enquiries.

Typical duties involve responding to telephone queries, making appointments for PC McLaughlin, offering advice on crime prevention and helping to

resolve local issues. But the volunteers also get out and about around Aughton. Examples of their activities beyond the confines of Platform 2 include conducting door-to-door leaflet drops in the vicinity of a burglary and talking to fellow residents to help identify areas of concern for the local police to tackle.

Chief Constable Paul Stephenson has visited Aughton Police Station to see for himself the impact that this volunteer initiative, the first of its kind in West Lancashire, has had on the community. In addition the volunteers have had training opportunities in the form of trips to the Southern Communications

centre at Lancashire Constabulary's Headquarters and the CCTV Monitoring Unit.

The Aughton volunteers have organised "coffee morning" get-togethers for themselves that have generated a real sense of teamwork. All 30 volunteers are kept fully informed of events and activities through the use of Lancashire Constabulary's Ringmaster communication system.

Through their dedication and teamwork the volunteers have generated an open-door policy at Aughton Police Station that encourages local residents to interact more effectively with the police.

Multi-roles for rural CSO's

SIX new officers are fulfilling unique duties in rural Lancashire.

The Emergency Services Community Support Officer (CSO) posts are a new role for the force and represent an innovative partnership with Lancashire Ambulance NHS Trust and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Services.

The Emergency Services CSOs, the first in the country, have taken on a multi-agency role in the community.

Employed and managed by the Constabulary, the Emergency Services CSOs each have a mentor in the Fire and Ambulance services.

For the Constabulary the Emergency Services CSOs are responsible to a Community Beat Manager and provide visible reassurance in the community and general support to police officers.

They are heavily involved in deterring incidents of nuisance and anti-social behaviour. The new officers work with other interested parties to tackle environmental matters which impact on the quality of life such as abandoned cars and graffiti.

For the Ambulance Service they can provide immediate first aid when necessary to complement the existing First Responder scheme.

For the Fire Service they will undertake pro-active work by carrying out fire risk assessment visits and providing fire prevention advice to vulnerable persons.

Deputy Chief Constable Steve Finnigan said: "The new officers are based in rural locations in Lancashire where perhaps people have felt isolated from main stream

services from the police, fire and ambulance services.

"I want to make it clear that this is not policing on the cheap but an opportunity for rural communities to benefit from a unique service from the three emergency agencies. These new posts are yet another extension of the police family."

The first six Emergency Services Community Support Officers are based in the following areas:

Northern Division: The Lune Valley area (Caton and Hornby) and the Bolton-le-Sands, Over Kellett area.

Southern Division: The Coppull area of Chorley and the Tarleton area of West Lancashire.

Eastern Division: The Bolton-by-Bowland/Waddington area and the Forest of Bowland area.



family...

, their homes safer
arn a living.

's of Lancashire's
Policing Families
ed approaches are
ferences in our

shows Community
Mick Walsh at the
eam in Accrington's

ring to remember is
one of Lancashire's
fferent composition

unter your CBM see
e in their line-up ...
t to join a winning

Walsh is flanked by a
on the left and a
support officer;

behind them are a community warden/accredited person, a ward councillor and a youth and community worker; on the next row are representatives from Beyond Sport, sport and community, ethnic minority and youth participation.

And then you will find a member of the neighbourhood watch, a headteacher, a council events officer, a vicar and a youth service team leader and behind them a neighbourhood manager, a drug worker, a town centre CCTV manager and an environmental officer.

The team is completed by a county councillor, a representative from the DHSS, a local businessman, a detective and finally a public enquiry assistant, a police team leader, an environmental health worker and a health worker.

Picture: Ian Yates

NEW RULES surrounding cannabis came into effect in February – shifting the emphasis away from arrest.

Although the drug remains illegal, the reclassification from Class B to Class C will have direct implications for the way police deal with simple offences of possession of cannabis by adults.

Under the old legislation, possession of cannabis as a Class C drug would not ordinarily have been an arrestable offence under Section 24 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

However, the law has been changed in order that, even as a Class C drug, possession will continue to be defined as an arrestable offence, but with a presumption against using the power for simple offences.

Force Drugs Champion Detective Superintendent Bob Helm said: "While the Constabulary acknowledges the retention of the power of arrest for cannabis possession, our advice is that

Cannabis is still illegal

officers should use their discretion, taking account of all the surrounding circumstances.

"We have identified Class A drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and crack-cocaine as a significant threat. Dealing with such drugs remains a key policing priority in helping to tackle persistent offending, volume, and acquisitive crime.

"While this reclassification will allow us to focus more time and resources on Class A drugs, possession of cannabis will remain illegal and we will continue to take firm action where appropriate and necessary." There are

certain circumstances where arrest could still take place:

- If it is smoked in public view
- When a person repeatedly offends
- If there is a local policing problem linked to cannabis use
- If in possession of cannabis and close to youth premises
- If the user is a vulnerable person

Added Mr Helm: "The smoking of cannabis in public view would conflict with the illegal status of the drug.

"Similarly, if an officer is aware of a person who is repeatedly dealt with for

possession of cannabis, he is likely to make an arrest.

"There may also be occasions where the possession of cannabis may create a risk to young people. Officers may consider arresting people who are in possession of cannabis near schools, youth clubs, and play areas.

"Anyone under the age of 18 will be arrested if found to be in possession of cannabis. However, as one of the aims of reclassification is to reduce police time spent dealing with simple possession offences by adult offenders, in the absence of any aggravating factors an officer on the street will generally seize the drug and administer a formal warning."

The Government has launched a £1m publicity campaign and is supporting the reclassification of cannabis through their FRANK public education drugs campaign: www.drugs.co.uk/campaign

Safety camera review

THE Lancashire Road Safety Partnership's safety camera enforcement policy has been an undoubted success in achieving its main aim of reducing the numbers of those seriously injured or killed on the county's roads.

Research has shown that 54 per cent of motorists in Lancashire have reduced their speed and that the average speed is down by 11 per cent.

Since the introduction of the cameras, road traffic collisions at 47 of the sites has fallen by more than 28 per cent.

It is now anticipated that the 10-year target for people killed or seriously injured will be achieved ahead of schedule.

However, the cameras have not escaped controversy.

Although a majority in the community support the prosecution of speeding motorists some opponents have claimed that the cameras are simply a way for the police to collect revenue. In reality, after operating expenses are deducted, all surplus revenue is returned to the Exchequer.

Nevertheless, Chief Constable Paul Stephenson has listened to all sides of the issues and has established a small team at headquarters to review some aspects of the policy.

He said: "Speed cameras have created a great deal of interest, particularly over the way we enforce lower level infringements but our primary aim remains that of changing driver behaviour to reduce their speed and therefore the danger they create.

RESPONSE

"The Constabulary is committed to speed cameras and we recognise the value they have in reducing speed. Unfortunately, certain aspects of the Partnership's work has been misrepresented and an unbalanced picture painted but we know that the majority of people support our aims of sanctioning motorists who speed.

"There is a perception that people who commit criminal offences and who, quite properly and according to guidelines, are cautioned, get an easier ride than those who speed at the lower levels.

"Whilst the comparison is not a helpful one, I do nevertheless have some very real sympathy for this perception.

"Any criminal justice system has to be seen to be fair to be effective. It just cannot be right when people feel that our response within that system is disproportionate.

"We recognise that there may be an opportunity, without damaging the positive outcomes we have already achieved, to soften the enforcement approach at the bottom end.

"There will still be enforcement but we need to be more imaginative in the way we deal with drivers who might just be over that speeding limit.

"The review is looking to introduce cautioning for the bottom-end range of speeding offences and at a different trigger-point for the speed awareness course that currently operates.

"We will still be enforcing the law appropriately but with a better range of sanctions to bring a balance to the system and make sure the punishment is proportionate to the offence.

"Quite simply, if we can achieve the same very positive outcomes of making our roads safer, whilst at the same time demonstrating that we do listen then I for one would be delighted."

Dr Ruth Henig, Chair of the Police Authority, said: "We fully support this initiative as we believe it is paramount in continuing to produce the same sort of outcomes in terms of speed reduction and accident rates. The use of different penalties supports longer-term education and promotion of road safety issues, but with less damage to public confidence and reassurance."

• Because of Newsbeat's distribution schedules the details of the speed camera review may already be available in your area. See your local press for details.

Cracking down on dealers

IT'S now more than two years since Lancashire Constabulary launched Operation Nimrod as a pre-emptive strike against the tide of heroin and crack cocaine that had engulfed the streets of so many other areas of the country.

Today, hundreds of arrests and drugs busts later, the campaign shows no signs of battle fatigue – in fact the charge continues to gather momentum, sweeping drugs offenders in front of it in a relentless fight against those who peddle death and misery.

The senior officers leading the operation, Intelligence chief Det. Supt. Gary Stephenson and Force Drugs Champion Det. Supt. Bob Helm, know this is a war that won't end in an armistice . . . there will never be a ceasefire or a surrender on either side – just a continuing war of attrition.

But there is no doubt that police tactics are gaining the upper hand as the targeted, intelligence-led operation disrupts the open Class A drugs markets, arrests offenders and provides the type of solid evidence package which predisposes conviction and a prison sentence.

Such is the quality of Nimrod's evidence gathering that the overwhelming number of offenders brought before the courts plead guilty. The average sentence handed down to dealers is four years.

Nimrod is the enforcement arm of Lancashire's approach to tackling the county's drug culture, but it doesn't end there. The multi-agency Tower Project helps persistent offenders to break the

Q: WHAT'S got dozens of eyes, scores of ears, a nose for crime and the longest arms you'll ever see?

A: Operation Nimrod

cycle of offending- prison-re-offending by offering help with housing, benefits, probation support, drug counselling and employment.

Other programmes provide drugs awareness advice, community-based care, medical services and consistent support. Together they provide balanced and effective and long-term solutions

But Nimrod is pure business – swift, tough, professional police business.

The operation was launched as part of the "Safer Streets in Lancashire" campaign. The links between street robbery, acquisitive crime, domestic burglary and drugs were clearly established.

IMPACT

Put simply, 10 per cent of offenders were responsible for 50 per cent of all serious crime. The majority of these persistent offenders were chaotic drug users who stole and dealt in drugs to feed their habit. Target those offenders and put them out of business and the impact on crime and community reassurance would be significant.

Explains Gary Stephenson: "The targeting of these offenders is carried out using proven NIM (National Intelligence Model) techniques.

The county's outstanding example of teamwork by police officers, probation officers, drug treatment services and community safety partners has won an International Community Justice Award 2004. The Blackpool project is now being rolled out across the county.



POLICE didn't waste any time in implementing ground-breaking anti-social behaviour legislation with a Closure of Premises order on a late-night club in Great Harwood, between Blackburn and Accrington.

The move was believed to be the first enforcement involving commercial premises at national level.

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (Part 1) a Closure of Premises Notice can be used in connection with premises that are concerned in the production, supply or use of Class A drugs and where the premises are also associated with the occurrence of disorder or serious nuisance.

A police spokesman said there had been "numerous complaints" from local residents about noise levels and late-night activity linked to Monroe's club.

Policing operations had been run over several weekends prior to the raid because of the complaints. Various tactics had been used including roadside checkpoints and the stop-and-search of both vehicles and people.

"NIM enables us to co-ordinate intelligence from all quarters, draw up offender profiles and establish priorities and action plans. It gives us a framework within which we can establish the nature of the threat, identify the perpetrators and allocate resource. It works – and it works brilliantly at local, force, national and international levels

"Sophisticated intelligence techniques are employed by talented detectives seconded to the Nimrod case preparation team from all over Lancashire. The detailed case profiles they produce mean that when we carry out a Nimrod raid we know exactly who we are looking for, where they are, what they've been doing and where their gear is.

"A raid, usually carried out by the local division, is a high-profile affair involving support units, search teams, dog handlers as well as detectives.

"We have taken along MPs, local councillors, members of the media and the residents of the area to witness at first hand what we are doing to combat the drugs menace.

"Members of the local community are the people who have been most affected by the activities associated with open drug markets – the discarded needles, the queues outside phone boxes, the drugs users in the streets, the robberies, mobile phone thefts and burglaries.

"When folk they see offenders being arrested it has a dramatic effect on their level of reassurance . . . their feel good factor starts to return. We've even had spontaneous applause from people when they've seen us taking offenders into custody.

"We launched Operation Nimrod in response to a growth in Class A drug problems. Hopefully we have now stemmed that tide."

NEW FIRE POWERS TARGET GUNS

GUN CRIME in Lancashire is relatively low but the number of police firearms deployments has risen significantly with the mass manufacturing and proliferation of very realistic imitation replica or toy guns.

Air weapons and ball bearing guns, often in the hands of juveniles, have increased the difficulty officers faces in determining whether a firearm is real and armed officers responding to an incident often face a dilemma.

While it is likely in Lancashire that they will not be called to face an offender with a deadly weapon, they can never discount this possibility. It places a considerable strain on the officers and on the county's resources.

The Armed Response Units of the Lancashire Constabulary are a highly-trained and professional resource. The officers, in the main, perform general patrol duties and this "on the ground" approach facilitates a rapid response to any firearms incident.

Officers are carefully selected as much for their general police qualities, in particular negotiation skills, as for their marksmanship.

New laws which empower police to remove more guns from the streets came into effect in January with the introduction of the Anti Social Behaviour Act. The new Act makes the possession of air weapons and imitation firearms in public places much more restrictive and, in most cases, a criminal offence.

Superintendent Clive Tattum, the Force Champion on Firearms matters, said: "Anyone committing an offence in Lancashire under this new legislation will be dealt with in a robust manner. We want to send out a firm message that this type of activity will no longer be tolerated".

Specific offences and lengthy jail sentences now apply to illegal possession of air weapons that use a self-contained gas cartridge system. The gas cartridge systems weapons will now

have to be covered by firearms certificates and standard firearms certificate conditions.

The legislation offered people owning this type of weapon until May 1 this year to either hand the weapon over to the police or obtain a firearm certificate. Those who did not, despite a widespread publicity campaign are in breach of the new laws.

Supt. Tattum said: "The majority of our firearms deployments are to instances involving air weapons, toy guns and ball bearing guns, with anti social behaviour at the heart of the problem.

"A number of problem-solving initiatives involving a great deal of effort have been employed across the Constabulary in an attempt to resolve these issues. It is intended that these and other initiatives will continue alongside this recent and much welcomed legislation".



PC Graham Lancaster with some of the guns subject to new legislation

The gang busters

THE first application of tough new anti-social behaviour legislation? Birmingham maybe, London perhaps . . . Liverpool? ... Manchester? Try genteel St Anne's – and in off-season, too!

Yes, on the first day that the police were granted new powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) a Community Beat Manager got together with Fylde Borough Council to engage a powerful new weapon in the battle against juvenile nuisance.

Rampaging gangs of up to 80 youths aged from 12 to 19 had been causing weekend mayhem in the Ashton Gardens and town centre areas of the resort.

Thousands of pounds of damage was caused as the gangs, fuelled by alcohol, smashed shop windows and used abusive language to intimidate passers-by.

Explains Community Beat Manager PC Martin Taylor: "There was a hard core of youngsters who were known to us augmented by a considerable number of hangers on and an influx of youths from Blackpool some of whom were subject of Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) there.

HELPFUL

"They congregated in the vicinity of Ashton Gardens' café which has a covered veranda.

"Our team of four or five CBMs and PCSOs had some success and we made arrests for drug possession, breach of ASBOs, bail conditions and public order offences. But we failed to make sufficient impact on what was a growing problem. We had neither the appropriate legislation nor the powers to deal with such gatherings

"We knew that some helpful new laws were contained in the ASB Act which was coming into force on January 20.

"But the problem was urgent and we planned Operation Ashton, a robust reactive police response, for the weekend of January 16 and 17, with several officers giving up their weekend off to assist."

The weekend operation was a limited success. A strong police presence, including uniformed and plain clothes and CCTV operators managed to move the gangs around the areas. However, the sheer numbers of youths was a difficulty. No sooner had the main body been broken up than they reformed in another area of the locality.

But all this was to change the following weekend. Said Martin Taylor: "We were planning to use the new powers as soon as possible and we put the word out during

Operation Ashton: 'Come back next week and you could be in trouble. We'll be able to arrest you.'"

The new powers involved the use of Section 30 of the 2003 Act that gives police the right to order groups of more than two people, of any age, to disperse, or direct individuals who are not resident in the relevant locality to leave that area and not to return for a period of up to 24 hours. Additionally between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., the power to remove a person under 16 years of age to their place of residence – in other words take them home to their parents.

Those who refuse to comply with a direction can be arrested, charged, prosecuted and, if appropriate, imprisoned. The under 16s taken home are answerable to their parents rather than the courts.

Police spent the week after Operation Ashton spreading the word about the new powers and publishing statutory notices in the locality.

But the police could only proceed with the agreement of the local authority.

Because of their excellent relationships forged through Partnership working this agreement was never in doubt. With the co-operation of Fylde Borough Council's Christine Miller, the Community Safety Partnership Co-ordinator, PC Taylor had his necessary authority by 1 p.m. on January 20 - just 13 hours after the section of the new act came into force.

Police repeated Operation Ashton the following weekend, January 23-24. The new act was in place, the paperwork complete, the plans drawn up. All systems go . . . except the grapevine had done the work for them.

Word had reached the streets that the new legislation was in force and that police would not hesitate to use it in the right circumstances. The gang kept well out of the way...

BOOZE BLITZ

OPERATION Calm has been hailed a success after more than 200 litres of alcohol was seized from underage drinkers in the Leyland area.

The initiative was launched in a bid to tackle juvenile nuisance and underage drinking in various hotspots around the town.

The multi-agency scheme involves working closely with councillors, local schools and off-licences to combat the problem.

Instant justice via the PND

POLICE in Lancashire are tackling routine low-level offences with a pioneering fixed penalty scheme. The Penalty Notice for Disorder was introduced in Pennine Division in January and is being rolled out across the Force.

The Constabulary is the first in the country outside of the five pilot areas to introduce the new method of dealing with a range of minor offences and anti-social behaviour.

Tickets are being issued by police officers for a range of offences from £40 to £80. They are used as an alternative to a caution and are being issued on the streets as well as in custody offices after arrest.

Said Inspector John Clucas: "By issuing PNDs we are freeing up officer time, reducing bureaucracy, and relieving the burden on the courts. By dealing with minor offences in this way, we believe we will save around two hours of administration for each and many thousands of pounds a year. Unless the individual contests the PND and elects to go to court, this is expected to have a significant impact on the workload of the courts."

"The police do not receive any of the money that is paid by offenders - it goes straight to the Exchequer. This is solely about dealing swiftly with low-level and anti-social behaviour offences."

Offences included in the scheme

For a Penalty Notice of £80:

- Wasting police time.
- Persistent use of a telephone for causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety
- Giving a false alarm to Fire Brigade
- Causing harassment alarm or distress

For a Penalty Notice of £40:

- Drunk and disorderly
- Trespass on a railway
- Throwing stones at a train
- Drunk and incapable
- Buying alcohol for an under 18 for consumption in a bar
- Throwing fireworks
- Drinking in a designated public area

MIX together an appetising blend of alcohol, pleasure-seeking youngsters, superb atmosphere and great sounds and you've got a heady recipe for fun.

However . . . add a dose of binge drinking and a measure of rowdy behaviour and the same volatile cocktail can combust into violence and disorder.

Home Office research reveals that 39 per cent of 18-24 year olds are binge drinkers. The majority are male and an alarming 60 per cent become involved in criminal behaviour whilst drunk. The findings also reveal that between 20 and 30 per cent of violent offences and disorderly behaviour occur in or near licensed premises.

With more than 60,000 vertical drinking spaces and a throughput of 11 million visitors a year Blackpool has more than its share of youthful drinking problems.

But now a brave and innovative campaign is tackling the problem head on. Superintendent Andy Rhodes is an officer with several years experience of tackling crime and disorder problems in towns and cities across Lancashire.

With a background in public order and licensing he has spent more time than is healthy for a man approaching 40, observing and addressing the issues associated with consumption and supply of what he ruefully refers to as the "low priority drug" . . . alcohol.

TRADITION

For Andy it was not good enough to adopt a traditional approach to the challenge. He had had too much experience of 'feeding' the fall-out by pushing in additional resources.

Lancashire Constabulary is the market leader in partnership policing and he was determined that the initiative to tackle alcohol-fuelled incidents would be underpinned by this creative philosophy.

He is passionate about this style of policing, explaining: "Essentially it was necessary to harness all the tactical experience we had and then get a group of creative people together to 'think outside the box'. Nightsafe was the result."

Nightsafe adopts a four-pronged approach to the issue – education, enforcement, treatment and the environment. It brings the police, the local authority and those who sell alcohol together to provide a collaborative approach.

Research and focus groups confirmed the core offender/victim group – white males aged 16-25 – and analysis revealed four key risk factors which led to drunken offences:

- Effects of binge drinking – Overconfidence, aggression, lack of awareness.
- Attitudes and motivations – Desire to push limits, stress / anger relief.

Nightsafe coalition tackles alcohol menace

- Drinking environment – Crowded venues, lack of transport, quality of venue.
- Social / peer group norms – Group overconfidence, social tensions / prejudice.

Research had shown that one key motivator for young men to drink excessively were the feelings of confidence alcohol gave them to approach girls.

But excessive alcohol tends to make the drinker less attractive and this fact emerged as a theme for a critical part of the educational element – the 'Walk Away' campaign.

A local model, 22 year-old Rachel Hall, was used to front a personal safety message to the target group of males and to young females, too.

Her image and 'Walk Away' advice was featured in hard-hitting marketing campaign that utilised radio, posters, t-shirts, beer mats and bus advertising.

The Nightsafe team adopted a robust but co-operative approach with Blackpool's licensed premises using innovative tactics such as:

- Overt video filming inside premises
- Covert observations followed by Test Purchasing operations
- Test Purchasing with Trading Standards on off-licences.
- Analytical profiles of the top ten problem premises.
- Door staff registration
- CCTV radio links

Supported by the well-established Licensees' Forum the team tackled the drinks industry and asked the breweries to sign up to a protocol which ruled out irresponsible discounting practices, speed drinking games and Happy Hours.

The Police Authority's Trish McGirr said the Nightsafe initiative was a smooth fit with the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy which seeks to harness government, drinks industry, health and police services and the community into encouraging a long-term change in drinking behaviour.

BBC TV's "Secret Policeman" exposé provided a wake-up call to the Police service in general, the Deputy Chief Constable of Lancashire, Steve Finnigan, has admitted.

Although no Lancashire officer was involved in the blatant racism discovered and exposed by an undercover reporter at the Bruche Training School in Cheshire, the Deputy Chief Constable declared: "We must never think we have won the war against racism. We have to be constantly vigilant."

A Lancashire Constabulary review of its approach to preventing racism is being led by Superintendent Ian Cardwell and his Community Safety team and is examining three main areas – recruitment, training and ongoing monitoring.

The current consultation process has had input from a wide variety of interested parties, among them the race relations steering group, the Police Authority, the Black Police Association and the Constabulary's Independent Advisory Groups as well as senior officers and the force's recently-appointed divisional Diversity Champions.

Said Supt. Cardwell: "A lot of good work has already been done in Lancashire. But we are reviewing and testing all of our earlier actions as well as examining areas where we can reinforce our anti-racism and discrimination policies."

FOCUS

In a report to the Police Authority's Human Resources Committee, Supt Cardwell pointed out that although, initially, the focus of the review had been the Constabulary's approach to preventing racism, his team recognised that many of the issues relating to racism also applied to other aspects of diversity, particularly discriminatory and negative attitudes towards some minority groups, such as gay and lesbian communities and the disabled.

We must be vigilant on racism, says Police chief

'We must ensure that the behaviour of a small minority does not undermine the dedication and high quality service provided by the majority'

– Deputy Chief Constable Steve Finnigan

"For example, it is right to recognise that the individual who displays racist behaviour is also highly likely to display homophobic attitudes.

"The review team has consulted with, amongst others, representatives of the gay and lesbian community who are members of the Constabulary to both gauge their views and reassure them that this particular focus on racist behaviour will not detract from our efforts to eradicate all aspects of discriminatory behaviour."

Said Supt. Cardwell: "It is critical that we understand that inappropriate behaviour and attitudes can be translated into discriminatory behaviour and, in turn, can

affect how we exercise police powers".

There are encouraging signs that these attitudes are increasingly being challenged by members of the force. Mr Finnigan has revealed that a Lancashire probationer at Bruche was dismissed for making racist comments. The incident was reported by other officers on the initial training course.

Said Mr Finnigan: "It is good news that fellow officers are showing that they will not tolerate racist attitudes within their ranks. They have my full support."

Supt Cardwell was keen to emphasise that the review team was not looking to

"catch people out" or drive debate on sensitive issues underground.

"It is critical that there is an open, honest and mature approach to this subject."

Mr Finnigan added: "The main objective of this review, is part of the continuing effort to ensure that racist attitudes will not be tolerated in the Constabulary, ensuring that the behaviour of a small minority does not undermine the dedication and high quality service provided by the majority."

The outcome will be an action plan that will lead to even more improvements in the way Lancashire Police tackle these important issues.

Ibby Master, a member of the Lancashire Police Authority added: "The challenges of policing a diverse county such as Lancashire require a high level of awareness and professional standards among officers. We must do everything we can to strengthen the confidence of the public in our Force."

HAVE YOU JOINED UP YET?

Secret Army is on the march

THERE'S a new determination in the never-ending fight against crime in Lancashire - a determination backed by a Secret Army of ordinary men and women dismayed and angered at what they feel is an erosion of their way of life.

Burglaries, theft, shoplifting, drug dealing, car crime . . . the list is endless. And on top of all the crime which today pervades society is the increasing menace of what the Police and other officials call "anti-social behaviour".

The man-in-the-street would probably have another name for the noisy, reckless, threatening and occasionally violent conduct which runs through so many communities. And it wouldn't be very polite.

The Constabulary is forcefully targeting this insidious spread of "anti-social behaviour". But now they have an increasingly alert and unshakeable Secret Army of ordinary citizens to back them up.

Every year this Secret Army is becoming increasingly watchful; ever vigilant.

And its name? Crimestoppers!

And that's exactly what they are doing, every week, every day . . . stopping crime. And with just a phone call to a single number: 0800 555 111.

That's all it takes for any member of the public to blow the whistle on crime and criminal activities which they may have heard about or seen themselves. Just a phone call.

Crimestoppers was launched in Lancashire in 1991 and every year since then they have had an increasing number of calls from the public. Last year was its most successful ever with more than 10,000 calls.

ARRESTS

Not only the Police but other law enforcement bodies such as Customs, Trading Standards and the Benefits Agency have picked up valuable information. Everything reported by the Secret Army is looked into carefully and, often, the calls lead directly to arrests.

Last year over £114,000 worth of drugs were recovered; nearly twice as much as was recovered in a wide variety of goods.

Chief Constable Paul Stephenson said: "Crimestoppers continues to be a major tool in our armoury against both local criminals and those travelling across borders into Lancashire to commit crime."

He said information from vigilant Lancashire folk had led to the arrest of more than 200 people last year.

"Every snippet of information, every suspicion, is very valuable to us. Even where it is not possible to make an arrest, the information helps us to build up a picture of who is committing crime in the area. Information can be developed and acted upon in many different ways. It

often gives us a valuable insight."

The Crimestoppers facility enables anyone to talk in confidence if have concerns or suspicions - without revealing their identity.

Often a call brings new criminals to the attention of the police. As many as a quarter of them have never come to the attention of the law enforcement agencies before, thanks to the increasing vigilance of the Secret Army, they are finding their activities closely scrutinised.

One of the attractions of the Crimestoppers scheme since its inception is the fact that anyone helping the Police in this way is eligible for a cash reward which doesn't compromise their anonymity.

REWARD

Perhaps surprisingly not many folk take advantage of what can be a generous pay-out. Last year, for instance, only a handful chose to pick up a cash reward.

Said a Police spokesman: "In the early days we thought a cash incentive would give the Crimestoppers scheme a boost. But it hasn't really worked out like that.

"We have made some big payments but, increasingly, callers are happy to be doing their public duty. They are fed up with drugs and theft and loutish behaviour and all the rest of it and are determined to do their bit to help the Police. I must say it's very gratifying."

The Secret Army is playing an increasing part in the War on Crime. Have you joined up yet?



Getting it right first time

LAWYERS are now working alongside police at stations across the county to offer officers legal advice before an offender is charged

The aim is to reduce the number of cases that are discontinued, often where there is not enough evidence to justify prosecution or to support the original charge.

By involving the Crown Prosecution Service lawyers at an early stage, after a suspect has been identified, but before a charge is prepared, legal advice can be provided to investigating police officers to ensure that relevant and sufficient evidence is obtained to support a charge that reflects the criminality of the offence.

Getting the charge right first

time has an impact on everything that follows, resulting ultimately in a reduction of wasted hearings and avoidable adjournments – improving the experience of victims and witnesses and freeing up valuable resources throughout the criminal justice process.

The success of the charging arrangements will be measured by a rise in conviction rates, a reduction in discontinuance rates and a likely increase in guilty pleas.

Whilst it is still early days, first indicators, such as the rise in the number of cases dealt with at a first hearing or within one adjournment, show that the new charging arrangements are already proving a success.

LANCASHIRE Police Force is determined to promote good race relations in the county and a new Race Equality Scheme is providing a firm basis.

The project demonstrates how the Constabulary is determined to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different racial groups.

A police spokesman explained: "We are committed to a vision of making all the communities of Lancashire feel safe, involved and reassured."

"We are working on

Equality on a firm footing

improving standards both internally and in the community."

The Constabulary is also looking closely at its approach to the needs of other communities, such as the disabled, in view of recent legislation. Communications is just one avenue that is being explored.

It's payback time!

THE Constabulary have been hitting the county's criminals where it really hurts . . . in their pockets – or anywhere else they keep their illegal assets.

And the police have been wielding a new weapon in the form of the Regional Asset Recovery Team which became operational at the beginning of January.

RART is a dedicated multi-agency team formed to confiscate as large a proportion as possible of the £25 billion pounds generated each year by the criminal economy – that's an amazing two to three per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product.

Empowered by the provisions of POCA (Proceeds of Crime Act 2002) the North West RART is one of five teams being established throughout England and Wales.

The north-west team is headed by the Constabulary.

New regional team will deny offenders crime rewards

The man in charge is Lancashire Chief Inspector Mike Kellett. His deputy is Customs and Excise senior investigator Cliff Allen and Assistant Chief Constable Julia Hodson will chair the team's management board/steering group.

The high-powered group will eventually employ a staff of 35. The Constabulary will be joined by the Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and North Wales forces in addition to staff from Customs and Excise, the Assets Recovery Agency, NCIS,

CPS and the Inland Revenue.

The five regional teams (others are based in the Midlands, North East, Wales and London) are being funded by the Home Office to the end of 2006 to the tune of £36m – the north west has been allocated approximately £11m.

As well as police officers the team will also include analysts, financial investigators and clerical staff who will be employees of the Constabulary.

Said Mike Kellett: "A lot of our officers are very experienced in this field – training can

take up to a year – and we intend to establish a centre of excellence in asset recovery. We

are here to help and advise all our partner agencies."

Mike emphasised that the 2003 Act allows police to take civil proceedings to trace and recover proceeds of crime without the need for a conviction in a criminal court or indeed, in certain circumstances, the identification of a specific offence or offences.

"It is now up to the individual to prove that the asset or cash has been legally acquired – the onus has now shifted to them."

He added: "The objectives of RARTs and the ARA is to send out the message that crime does not pay, prevent criminals from funding further criminality, remove negative role models from communities and decrease the risk of instability in financial markets. This is certainly a growth area for law enforcement and one which can do severe damage to career criminals."

Double trouble



SPEED enforcement cameras and the latest Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology have been harnessed by the Lancashire Major Crime Unit's Stolen Vehicle Squad to trap resourceful car thieves across the county.

The aptly-named Operation Gemini targets criminals who clone stolen vehicles by 'twinning' them with legitimate cars.

The squad's Sergeant Andy Dixon explained the scam: "The thieves note the registration numbers, model and colours of cars maybe parked in the street but more likely advertised on garage forecourts, in specialist magazines or on the internet.

"They apply the registration number to a stolen car which has the same outward appearance as the legit one.

"The stolen vehicle will then pass a cursory ANPR check because its 'twin' has not been reported stolen, has current insurance and tax, and matches the DVLA description. Only a more detailed check will bring the offence to light."

One of the ways in which the identity swap is discovered is when the unfortunate owner of the original car is issued with a speeding ticket earned by the stolen 'twin'.

Now Operation Gemini targets 'twinned' cars

This occurs more often than we may think. A criminal is more likely to commit a speeding or parking offence than a law-abiding driver. After all, they have no respect for the law and realise that any speeding or parking ticket will not be sent to them but issued to another driver.

When the innocent motorist protests to Central Ticket Office they are asked to provide clear pictures of the side, back and front of their vehicle which are compared point-by-point with the speed camera pictures of the offending vehicle. Close liaison is maintained between the Central Ticket Office and the Stolen Vehicle Squad.

CLARITY

Says Andy: "Sometimes the differences are quite obvious, a different shaped number plate, an aerial or a model badge.

"But quite often we have to enhance both photographs to a considerable degree to get the clarity we need to pinpoint the inconsistencies."

When it's established that a vehicle has been twinned, ANPR comes into its own.

At first glance the public could confuse an ANPR check with a mobile speed enforcement camera. But ANPR cameras are not concerned with speed. The target vehicle's registration number is captured and is electronically checked against a series of databases containing stolen vehicle, insurance, excise duty and intelligence information. The procedure is completed so rapidly that the offending driver and vehicle can be stopped within a short distance.

After warning the innocent owner of a cloned vehicle that they may well be pulled over in an ANPR operation and discussing the safety implications the vehicle's number is flagged on the system along with the unique reference number contained in the legitimate vehicle's excise licence.

A stolen car is likely to be displaying a stolen or forged excise licence. Thieves haven't got the necessary documentation to get a legitimate one.

Sooner or later both identically numbered cars are likely to pass through an ANPR check area when the flag will be triggered.

If the excise licence URN matches the database the driver is cleared with a thank you – if it doesn't ... the motorist has a lot of explaining to do.

Said Andy: "We currently have 33 twinned vehicles flagged on ANPR. We've caught six in the trap and I believe it is just a matter of time before we get the others. The problem is a growing one. Greater Manchester Police have identified 240 vehicles that need to be flagged and Merseyside another 120."

The squad's turnover of identified vehicles has more than doubled in recent times. In 2001 they identified £800,000 worth of vehicles. Last year it was £1.2m and at the end of November last year the total had risen to "three or four vehicles short of £2m."

SUCCESS

Andy puts the increased success down to "working smarter and better and being more focussed."

New cars, stolen to order predominantly in 'hook and cane' burglaries, are at the top of a car thief's shopping list. A quantity of these would appear to be immediately exported by driving them straight into shipping containers. Cars stolen in the North West have been intercepted en-route to Dubai, Africa and Singapore.

LANCASHIRE, already one of the most successful asset recovery forces in the country, is set to launch Operation Loot which will target role model criminals who flaunt their wealth in the community.

The initiative intends to use the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) to its fullest extent to confiscate both assets and cash from the county's criminals.

Superintendent Gary Stephenson, head of the Force Intelligence Department, said: "The ostentatious display of wealth exhibited by drug dealers and career criminals angers the community and sends the wrong message to impressionable youngsters.

"Where we can establish the grounds we will be depriving these arrogant offenders of their trappings and driving home the message that nobody is untouchable.

"We are determined to take the profit out of crime and show that it doesn't pay.

"And when we confiscate an appropriate vehicle – and we will – I intend to have it driven round the

'We are determined to show that crime doesn't pay'

The role model criminals will get message

neighbourhood displaying the legend 'Confiscated from a drug dealer.' I feel sure that will get the message across."

Since POCA 2002 came into force Lancashire has made 20 cash seizures totalling more than £500,000 putting the Constabulary in the top five of the country's most successful forces.

In addition the Constabulary has currently obtained five restraint orders relating to assets valued in excess of £530,000 which is well ahead of most other Crown Prosecution Service areas of similar geographic size and population.

A WIDE range of accredited organisations and their employees are bringing yet another layer of public reassurance to the streets of Lancashire.

The Community Safety Accreditation Scheme was launched at the end of February in seven local authority areas and is being rolled out to other councils and the private sector.

The scheme gives "Accredited Persons" limited powers which are aimed at providing a better quality of life in the community.

Only after an organisation has satisfied strict criteria that includes positive vetting, training, accountability, employee standards and approved complaints procedures will they be awarded accredited status.

Individuals must receive training in many areas of law, procedures and powers that include human rights, race relations and equal opportunities.

Typical applicants are likely to include NHS Trusts, the employers of neighbourhood wardens, sports stadia operators, countryside wardens, retail park wardens, parking attendants, private security operators and any organisation involved in community safety.

The Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service was also among the founder members.

The scheme was developed in consultation with the Police Authority who gave much assistance during the preparation of the final documentation.

Said Lancashire Chief Constable Paul Stephenson: "By bringing these organisations and their staff into the wider policing family we are aiming to achieve improved liaison, better information sharing, and a step-change in local

New community safety scheme extends wider policing family

problem-solving initiatives. Under their powers, accredited persons may be able to issue fixed penalty notices for a range of offences and request the names and addresses of people acting in an anti-social manner. They will also have powers to confiscate alcohol and tobacco from young people and some powers in relation to motor vehicles.

SUPERVISION

"By displaying the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme logo, the public will instantly be able to tell that an individual has reached acceptable standards of competence, training, management, supervision, and accountability," added Mr Stephenson.

"While a small number of schemes have been initiated in various parts of the country this is the first of this size. This is a further example of the work done to achieve the Constabulary and Police Authority's ambition to make our communities safer.

"We have had much interest from other forces and several have visited to learn from our scheme. We are pleased and proud to share our experiences with our colleagues."

Lancaster City Council, Preston City Council, Blackpool Unitary Authority, the Borough of

Pendle, Hyndburn Borough Council, Fylde Borough Council and South Ribble Borough Council have all assisted in the development of the scheme and provided some of the first wardens to be accredited.

There has been significant interest from the private sector and applications are being considered for accreditation in the near future.

Accredited individuals wear a Home Office approved badge and carry an identification card. The card sets out the powers the individual is trained and accredited to use.

They can be permitted to use some or all of the following powers;

- Issue of Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling, littering and riding a bicycle on a footpath.
- To request a name and address for Fixed Penalty offences and offences that cause injury, alarm and distress to another person or damage or loss of another's property.
- To request the name and address of a person acting in an anti-social manner.
- To confiscate cigarettes and tobacco products from young people.
- To require the removal of abandoned vehicles.

- To regulate traffic for the purpose of escorting abnormal loads.
- To stop a vehicle for emissions testing.

Project manager Inspector Chris Gradwell, Lancashire's CBM Co-ordinator, believes that public sector accreditation could soon involve 300-500 individuals but that once the private sector firms are accredited that figure could rise to over a thousand.

Says Chris: "Accredited individuals will increase the visibility of authority figures on our streets even further."

"By their presence and activities they will be able to address certain issues on the spot without the involvement of the police."

"While an accreditation scheme can only be set up after a process of consultation with the police and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, we will not be directly involved in the direction of accredited people or control their roles or day-to-day activities.

"However, by bringing them into the wider police family there will be considerable liaison between us and accredited organisations. The resulting information will enable us to better address and prioritise issues affecting the local communities."

What do YOU think?

Each police force has an official complaints procedure to deal with less than satisfactory individual performance such as misconduct, abuse of authority, neglect of duty or incivility.

We are interested in finding out your views on the process of making a complaint to, or about, the Police.

1) If you wanted to make a complaint, would you have confidence in Lancashire Police to properly investigate that complaint?

Yes No

2) Is there anything more that could be done to increase your confidence in the police complaints system?

.....

3) If you wanted to make a complaint, which of the following ways would you prefer to make that complaint?

- Via the Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Via the Internet
- In person at the local police station
- By telephone
- By letter

4) What would your main reasons be for NOT complaining?

.....

Please return this coupon to: Media and Marketing Dept., Lancashire Constabulary FREEPOST PR1117 Preston, PR4 5BR

Thanks for your help

Question of trust

New complaints procedure set to raise standards

MAJOR changes to the way the police complaints system works in England and Wales came into force at the beginning of April as part of a wider package of measures brought in by the Government in the Police Reform Act 2002.

The new system is designed to raise standards, cut delays, increase public confidence and transform the way police forces handle complaints from the public.

Gail Stanley, a member of the Lancashire Police Authority, welcomed the induction of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). "This system is intended to increase public confidence in the way complaints are handled. There will be an increased independent scrutiny and speedier resolution."

Why the change?

There have been calls from outside and inside the police for improvements to the current complaint system. The aim of the new system is to increase confidence in the complaints system and thereby increase trust in the integrity of policing.

It is intended that the new system will deliver increased independent scrutiny and speedier resolutions, in an open manner, that are fair to both complainants and those complained against.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) has replaced the Police Complaints Authority (PCA). The IPCC has stronger powers to initiate, carry out and oversee investigations and has a wider responsibility to monitor and inspect the way that complaints are handled by the police.

What changes will there be?

- People other than victims are now able to make a complaint. Anybody who has been adversely affected by the incident - which could include a relative or a witness - can register a complaint.
- People can register the complaint either direct to the police using a variety of methods (e.g. by visiting a station; in writing; by email or by telephone.) They are entitled to ask someone to make the complaint on their behalf, which could include a solicitor or a friend. Alternatively they can register their complaint with the IPCC who will forward it on to the police.
- People making a complaint now have the right of appeal to the IPCC against the non-recording of a complaint, if they feel that the police have not given them sufficient information or if they are unhappy with the outcome of an investigation by the police.
- The IPCC has powers to carry out independent investigations into serious issues using their own investigators. These may include incidents such as death in custody

or the shooting of a member of the public by a police officer. The investigators have full police powers and rights of access to premises, documents and other evidence when requested.

- Anyone working for the police service, not just police officers is covered by the new arrangements. This includes police staff, special constables, community support officers and contracted escort and detention officers

Will the police still record and investigate complaints themselves?

It is important that the police are able directly respond to the concerns of the public. For many complaints a local, speedy response by the local force is the best way of dealing with the concern, for example an apology may be what is required.

However the IPCC has the power to oversee investigations and in some cases they will undertake investigations using their own teams of investigators, which are independent of any police force.

Encouraging response

Two hundred and fifty people have responded to a request from the Lancashire Police Authority for members of the public to sit on Misconduct Panels. Says Communications Manager Naomi Walker: "It was a very encouraging response. We were very pleased that so many people were willing to give up their spare time to support us." There will be one independent member on each Panel of three.