

## Tilley Award 2006

### Application form

Please ensure that you have read the guidance before completing this form. By making an application to the awards, entrants are agreeing to abide by the conditions laid out in the Guidance. Please complete the following form in full and within the word limit. Failure to do so could result in disqualification from the competition.

Completed application forms should be e-mailed to Tricia Perkins; [patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

All entries must be received by noon on Friday 28th April 2006. No entries will be accepted after this time/date. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Tricia Perkins on 0207 035 0262. Any queries regarding other aspects of the awards should be directed to Michael Wilkinson on 0207 035 0247 or Lindsey Poole on 0207 035 0234.

Please tick box to indicate whether the entry should be considered for the main award, the criminal damage award or both;

Main award

Criminal Damage Award

Both Awards

#### 1. Details of application

Title of the project **SAFE PLATES**

Name of force/agency/CDRP: **LANCASHIRE**

Name of one contact person with position/rank (this should be one of the authors): **PC 1477 Mark Wilcock**

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Name of endorsing senior representatives(s) **Acting Deputy Chief Constable Mr Adrian Mc Allister**

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s) **Acting Deputy Chief Constable – HQ Corporate Services Directorate**

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s) **Lancashire Constabulary Police HQ, PO Box 77, Hutton, Preston, Lancs PR4 5SB**

## 2. Summary of application

In no more than 400 words please use this space to describe your project. Include details of the problem that was addressed a description of the initiative, the main intervention principles and what they were designed to achieve, the main outcomes of project particularly in relation to the problem, evidence was used in designing the programme and how the project is evaluated.

Between 2004/2005 there was a marked increase of 12% in drive off's from petrol stations from 107 to 120. Results showed that Number plates were being stolen and placed onto vehicles to commit petrol station drive-off's. A total of 93 number plates stolen and of those 31 were positively identified as being used to commit drive off offences.

This analysis shows that a third of stolen plates were positively identified as being later used on vehicles to commit drive offs. Following the offences several Number plates were discarded. As secondary victims the vehicle owners were more often unaware of the crime until the police arrive at their homes.

The Victims of Number plate thefts are believed to be chosen at random by the opportunist thief with several repeat victims reporting the offences. Likewise the petrol stations are also hit indiscriminately with no defining pattern.

The root cause is believed to be the high cost of fuel and the ease at which offenders can disguise their own vehicle using false Number Plates. The lack of effective deterrents, i.e. poor CCTV and very low detection rates.

The manufacture of Number Plates is now restricted with only registered manufacturers supplying the Plates. Legislation has forced the offenders away from car spares shops where number plates were once easily obtainable. Stealing of Number Plates is part of a national phenomenon. The Metropolitan Police service says that it is responsible for a 1% increase in overall crime in London.

Utilising Clarks 25 techniques of situational crime prevention a response was devised. I planned to fit CLUTCH HEAD SCREWS to Number plates. The clutch head screw is a security screw that can be easily fitted but is very difficult to remove. 10 events have been held with 3200 vehicle having been fitted with the security screws.

Partners in the initiative were two Local car dealers who came on board and started fitting the screws onto new cars driving off the forecourts. The ultimate aim is to encourage all car dealers in the country to fit the security screws at source. The initiative was highlighted as good practice by the Home Office and A.C.P.O and has been taken up by many forces.

Initially after the project started there was an 11% decrease In offences but with more criminals turning to this crime levels are increasing so the drive to fit all cars with the security screws continues.

### 3. Description of project

Describe the project following the guidance given in no more than 4000 words

#### Scanning

##### **Problem**

In my local policing area of Nelson I identified a problem that is not just linked to Lancashire Police is a major issue in every policing area throughout the country, indeed perhaps the world. The Offence of **“Making off without payment”** or more commonly known as **“Drive off’s”** were occurring at all the petrol stations throughout the borough. Those garages include large companies such as Esso, Total and BP. Independent garage sites were also being targeted and suffering the losses that come with these offences. This was having quite a marked effect on the staff with stress becoming a major factor that the management of each franchise had to address. The repeated number of drive offs were causing staff to become anxious and this had the result of several days lost to illness. The crimes also affect takings at each site with one garage making losses over a twelve month period in excess of £950. This was one of the reasons that staff health was being affected as quite often the garage would make the cashier at that time stand the full loss.

Persons involved in drive offs leave without making payment for fuel taken and It is more common place nowadays for there to be CCTV on petrol station forecourts and if that system is effective the offender and their vehicle is captured on the CCTV. The offender, their vehicle Make, model and if very lucky the registration number are all caught on camera.

Following a drive off the usual course of the investigation would involve the officer attending the registered keepers address to conduct enquiries. These details are made available on the PNC system (Police National Computer) where the details are passed to the Police from the D.V.L.A. Should the incident be a mistake the situation is usually rectified easily with the keeper attending any paying for any fuel taken.

Offenders determined not to be caught have started a new trend with which they can commit the offences and not be caught. Number plates are being stolen from parked vehicles. These number plates are then placed onto their own vehicles before driving onto the petrol station and taking fuel. Later checks with the current keeper are often the first time that the keeper is made aware that their number plate has been stolen. This is because the offenders steel number plates and commit drives offs usually within a very small time frame and Police Knocking on the door is often quite a shock.

In 2003 The law changed which affected the way in which we could purchase number plates for our vehicles. Number Plates were once easily obtainable from any high street car spares shop. With the new legislation number plate’s suppliers must be registered and any person wishing to have a number plate made must provide the necessary documentation to prove that they are entitled to the number plate. This new legislation has in effect forced offenders to steel number plates in order to commit petrol station drive offs. With the identity of the vehicle used in the drive off disguised the CCTV is heavily relied upon to proved an image of the offender, this obviously has many drawbacks as many offenders are just on the start of their criminal career and as such cannot be identified as they are unknown to the Police offices working the local areas.

##### **Confirmed By**

Over the period 01/04/04 to 01/04/05 there were 118 reported incidents of drives off’s within the Pendle area. Over the same period there were 47 reports of theft of number plates from vehicles. The crime affects both the victim of the number plate theft and also the garage where the drive off takes place. The victim of the number plate theft has the problem in having a new number plate’s made, the upset and the worry that goes with that. The garage has increased cost losses with the theft of fuel which also takes the time of staff in recording details with the police and also the future knock on affect of increased fuel prices. There is a definite problem that is confirmed in the reports to the police plus from members of the public. The trend is currently increasing on a daily basis. Offenders obviously aware of the unlikely hood of being caught are passing on information to other similar like minded

individuals. The DVLA also attempted to combat the problem by asking number plate manufacturers for ways to address the problem. Having spent 2 years attempting to develop a costly answer the tests have failed and now are turning towards Safe Plates as a real working possibility.

### **Analysis**

#### **Location**

The initial Number plate theft can occur on any road or street throughout the country. There is no specific pattern or victim profile that distinguishes any target areas selected by the offenders.

The garages (petrol stations) are the obvious locations for the drive off's. Over a period of 12 months the managers of each site were approached by myself and advised re best practice in dealing with any suspect customers. Advice also regarding the closure of the pumps furthest away from the cashier in the evening time along with any doubts asking for pre payment of fuel. All the managers completed on site training for staff but the incidents continued with no marked decrease in offences committed

#### **Victim**

The victim of the Number plate thefts are chosen at random. There are also reports of several repeat victims. The victim's are genuine victims of crime and all incidents are reported as soon as the crime is discovered. The incidents locations vary from all areas, from new housing estates to largely populated terraced neighbourhoods. The garage sites are well covered by CCTV and several crime prevention initiatives have been tried to no avail. It was thought that employing a policy of pre payment for fuel at all the garage sites would alleviate the problem and lessen incidents. None of the garages would take this initiative as there were fears that having such a policy would effect sales.

#### **Root Cause**

The root cause of the crimes are the appropriation of fuel. Those involved are actually committing two offences with the intention that they obtain any amount of fuel, effectively for free. High fuel prices, the ease at which offences can be committed and the unlikely hood of being caught are an obvious enticement for persons to begin this new crime trend of steeling number plates to commit drive off's. The success that the offenders have so far had, has been noticed by an ever alert bunch of prospective criminals with many new faces coming onto the scene wanting to become '**JUICE BURNERS**' (titled name the offenders gave to them self's). The offender's are usually captured. Number plates are stolen and then placed onto a car disguising its identity. This means that a prosecution is highly unlikely unless the person can be identified from the CCTV. With so many of these offenders very surveillance aware convictions are very rare indeed.

#### **Partners**

Perry's-Peugeot dealership 01282 606606  
Walker Farrimond-Citroen dealership 01282 661911  
Hillendale-Land Rover Dealership 01282723723  
Barnes Distribution-Car parts dealership 07711829100  
Blakey's Hardware distributors 01282 613593  
RYDERS of Bury Hardware supplier  
B + Q Nelson DIY Store 01282 698008  
Morrisons Nelson Supermarket chain 01282 449196 Provided Free venue  
ASDA Colne , Burnley Superstores 01282 870156 Provided Free venue  
Tesco Burnley, Rawtenstall Provided Free venue  
Kwik Save Colne Provided Free venue  
Clayton Street Mosque Nelson Provided Free venue

Local Media 2BR Radio station, Lancashire evening telegraph, Nelson Leader Series

## Response

### **Planned Police Response**

Having identified that most measures were put in place at the petrol stations I then looked at the initial start of the chain the theft of the number plate. I knew that I had to prevent the number plate being stolen in the first place. Offenders are currently removing number plates with a standard screwdriver such as a flat head or Phillips style screwdriver. I knew of the existence of the '**CLUTCH HEAD SCREW**' a security screw that has been in circulation for many years but has never been used on number plates. I knew that fitting these screws to number plates would seriously restrict the number plate's removal. The screws cannot be removed by the use of a standard screwdriver, thus making the removal of the screws a difficult and time consuming task for any potential thief. The requirement to spend time to remove the screw is not something the thief can afford as the offence has to be completed as quickly as possible in order to avoid detection.

I started my response by organising an event called SAFE PLATES. The Clutch head screws were sourced from a local supplier and the event date was set. I offered to fit the screws to the motoring public's vehicle free of charge. The day was a huge success with approximately 200 vehicles being fitted with the screws. The event was well publicised and people attended from over 20 miles away. The event also included partners from Auto Glass who completed window etching free of charge. Crime prevention advice and mobile phone marking was also included in the day. This was a free service funded from the crime prevention budget. The public's response was fantastic with requests for future events to be held. A further 9 events were held within a 10 month period with some 2500 vehicles being fitted with the security screws.

On each event proceeding the first in April 2005 each event has grown and become so much more. I now include a Neighbourhood Policing surgery (P.A.C.T - Police and Communities together where issues can be discussed with a Police officer) with each and every member of the public who attends with their vehicle. Being such a captive audience issues can be raised from people who may not normally attend or call the police regarding specific matters. This initiative has been a resounding success in engaging the public, providing reassurance in an ever unsure world.

On each event I also collect for a local charity Pendleside Hospice a well known local charity and well favoured by most local people. The collection tubs are left on site and members of the public provide a donation if they wish. This came about as many people asked if they could leave some money even though we were providing a free service. The people of Pendle have been very generous and have donated over Two Hundred Pounds.

The media quick to catch onto a simple but effective way to deal with number plate theft have placed numerous articles into the local and national papers. Auto Express a major motoring magazine also ran an article explaining Safe Plates. From that the TV program Fifth gear also highlighted the problem. I took the Initiative to ACPO (association of chief Police Officers) who have given recommendations into the fitment of the screws at car manufacturer level and also at MOT level. Such was the response I have received a personal letter of thanks from the A.C.P.O committee with recommendations that other forces take up the initiative as best practice.

I have also produced a CD-ROM PowerPoint presentation outlining the fitting process. The disc has been sent out to every Police force in the UK, the response has been phenomenal with most forces contacting me for further information on the initiative. I have supplied details of supplier etc and several others forces are currently organising their own Safe Plate days. West Yorkshire Police have been holding their own days since January 2006 with approximately 500 vehicles fitted with security screws, more days are planned as they have come to understand the potential for engaging the public that Safe plates creates. The task of fitting all the 40 million plus cars in the UK with security screws on their number plates is a mammoth task but with other forces rolling out the initiative I feel confident that we can and will make a difference.

My main objective has been to make the Car manufacturers sit up and listen to the problem of number plate theft. I have now achieved a massive first step by obtaining two key partners. Perry's Peugeot and Walker Farrimond Citroen are the first dealerships in the Country to be fitting the security screws before new cars leave the forecourt. They have listened and see the potential to hit car crime head on. This massive step will prompt other dealerships to also address this important issue. With dealerships onboard my next task is the implementation of the fitment of the security screws to vehicles over three years old. When the vehicle goes in for an MOT test a recommendation will be that the car has the security screws fitted. This will be supplied at a cost to VOSA the organisation that governs the MOT system. Until safe plates they had no crime reduction strategy and are very keen to roll it out countrywide.

I am making a presentation at the Motor Vehicle Crime initiative seminar in May 06. All the main car dealerships will be present and I have been invited to give a talk outlining the problem and the solution. From this meeting I hope we can focus our efforts in partnership with the key players and make a real difference.

### **Planned Partners Response**

Future plans are for all car dealerships as well as Perry's and Walker Farrimond to be fitting the security screws along with all MOT stations. The media attention that the two dealerships benefited from will prompt other car dealerships to take up the initiative. The media attention and extra sales that could possibly be generated from Safe Plate days will still be held to provide a service to those vehicles that escape the net.

### **Time Scale**

With the massive scale of the planned POP the initiative cannot be justifiably measured. With only 2500 local vehicles fitted with the screws this number is still only 4% so effective assessment is still in the early stages although there is a decrease in drive offs. From the period 01/04/04 to 01/04/05 there were 118 drive offs. The same period 05 to 06 and whilst Safe Plates has been running has shown 11% decrease down to 105 drive offs.

### **Resources**

In the beginning the initial resources were low but with costs as little as 10p per car for the full kit (screws and caps). The full outlay has been less than 500 pound. All the remaining items are stock and to be used for the planned events in the very near future as there are a further 7 days arranged over the next 3 months. It will be estimated that there will be approximately 5000 cars fitted with the security screws by July 06 and will be approximately 8% of the areas total. Now that Partners are going to be bearing the full cost of the fitment of the screws the outlay goes to zero.

### **Assessment**

Success is already upon us with widespread media coverage with the local and national press along with local radio and mainstream TV, dealership recognition and mass satisfaction by the motoring public. This is emphasised by their response and enthusiasm. Requests come daily enquiring as to when the next security events are being held. This I feel is the measure of its success. The reassurance this furnishes to all including previous victims of Number plate theft (as they are invited along to have the screws fitted) is immeasurable. The true results will come in time as the figure for drive offs and number plate theft decrease. Until all cars are fitted with the screws these offences will be committed. The message needs to continue throughout the country that we can and will combat these crimes and the decent law abiding citizens of the UK can make that difference whether or not, they will be another crime statistic.

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# AUTO EXPRESS

THE CAR NEWS WE

FUEL ECONOMY

## EXPOS OFFICIAL

...and the TRUE figures

### SHOCK 18-PA



...and a more logical, higher quality interior layout. The revisions also appeared on the 3502 S2 Proto, a prototype for the Japan-only 3502 S-tune. Modified by Nissan's performance team Nismo, the S-tune gets 130bhp, a beefy bodykit, uprated suspension and a big rear spoiler.

### Kids' head start



NAULT has developed a art seat for kids who fancy some in the back. The chair swivels from an adult head rest into this protective it's next. Suitable for ages to 10 years, the Sleep Safe is available as a factory option to Espace for £250, or as an aftermarket accessory on the Aro and Scenic for £85.

## Cops turn screw in plate blitz

MOTORISTS are being handed crime prevention on a plate - a number plate. With cases of stolen registration marks rising, Lancashire Police is replacing, free of charge, ordinary fixing screws with tamper-proof items. Leading the



Clutch screws cannot be undone.

drive is PC Mark Wilcock. "We'd had a lot of criminals using false plates on vehicles, and this idea seems so simple," he said. "A clutch-head screw takes a normal screwdriver to put in, but you can't use one to get it out."

So far, the force has fitted more than 2,000 vehicles with the screws at special open days. The programme, the first of its type in the UK, comes as the AA Motoring Trust warns as many as 250 vehicles on London's roads may have false registrations. With 14,176 plates stolen last year, the Trust is advising car owners to report thefts to the police.

A Metropolitan Police spokesman added: "If your plates are stolen, report it and get a crime number. This will help when the speeding fines lead."

PAGE 22: Did You Know?



PC Mark Wilcock is leading screw replacement campaign in Lancashire

...then those occupants closer to the steering or interfere with seatbelts.

Experts at the Motor Industry Research Association developed a computer model to investigate the risks of extra padding. "Adding cushions may hinder safety devices," claimed a spokesman.

### Bid to end grey import invasion

A VWR has taken out between Mitsubishi and gages importing its cars and selling them at low prices. The maker is taking legal action against the dealers, according to the British Independent Motor Trade Association.

Mitsubishi says the firms are in breach of trademark, as they don't have permission to import new cars.

# CAR PLATE CON OVER KEN'S FEE

**CHEATING** motorists are trying to beat London's £8 Congestion Charge by stealing number plates and fixing them to their own cars.

Cops have seen a massive increase in the number of thefts of plates around the fee zone imposed by Mayor Ken Livingstone. Last year 8,200 were reported stolen from cars in the area compared to 5,000 in 2004 and just 600 in 2003.

Met police Assistant Commissioner Tim Godwin said: "We have made some arrests."

*He said police were looking into just how many plates were specifically stolen to avoid the Congestion Charge.*

But the overall rise in plate thefts has pushed up Scotland Yard's crime figures by one per cent.

Last

**By PHIL  
NETTLETON**

year courier Graham Thompson, 44, was jailed for six months for using black tape to alter his registration number in a bid to fool the cameras.

Thompson, 44, of Wigan, Lancashire was traced after officers made a detailed study of CCTV images.



**CHARGES: Livingstone**

News Paper article The people 16<sup>th</sup> April 2006

Car Security Event Morrisons Nelson

