

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE**  
**CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION.**

BIRCOTE5 AUTOCRIME PROJECT :  
A MULTI-AGENCY INITIATIVE TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM  
OF 'BURNT OUT MOTOR VEHICLES IN DROVERSDALE  
WOOD AT HARWORTH.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**WITHOUT THE HARD WORK AND SUPPORT THAT HAS BEEN  
GIVEN BY THOSE PEOPLE LISTED THIS INITIATIVE WOULD NOT  
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## **SUMMARY**

**Title :** **Bircotes Auto crime Project - a multi-agency initiative to tackle 'burnt out' motor vehicles in broversdale Wood at Harworth.**

**Nature of problem:** In May 2000 it was identified through the emergency services and the local community that a trend was emerging whereby vehicles were being abandoned and set fire to on a daily basis in a number of areas around Harworth and Bircotes. At this early stage it was envisaged what success would look like. There was a cost benefit to tackling this problem; a 'real' quality of life issue for the local community and a lack of any type of partnership working. Success would deal with all of these issues.

**Evidence used to define:** Police Command and Control data  
Fire Service incident data  
Physical counts of burnt out vehicles in various locations around the village

**How we responded:** April 2000 - An informal meeting took place between the Fire Service, Police and local landowners, which identified the initial key elements of the problem.

May 2000 a larger group was formed (Bircotes Auto crime Project (BAP)) involving all partners who could assist in the tackling of the identified problem. Over the subsequent months the issues were analysed and it was at this stage that the initial understanding of the problem was found to be rather shallow and that the problem was multi-faceted. The responses were developed from these findings.

## **.Offender**

**There was a small identifiable nucleus of offenders responsible for abandoning and setting fire to motor vehicles. Intelligence supported this theory as well as arrest data. These offenders were prolific and had not responded to diversion or support, which had been offered to them in the past.**

**The agreed Police action was to focus on these targets through intelligence and take positive action wherever possible i.e. arrest. As a result of this approach one of the group was successfully targeted and sentenced to 3 years imprisonment and two are currently on remand.**

**Covert and overt operations were carried out in the local area to disrupt offenders' criminal activities and to coincide with other measures being undertaken by BAP.**

**'Hangers on' to the main group were identified through the education system and diversion/support offered through the local Senior Youth Worker. (BAP have recently funded one young man onto a local motor project)**

**An educational video is to be designed by local school children, highlighting the dangers of burnt out vehicles, in conjunction with BAP.**

## **Victim**

**The local community of Harworth and Bircotes has become blasé to the problem with auto crime. This has clearly resulted in under reporting of matters of arson and unwillingness by the public to give information to the Police. A multi-agency approach was required to tackle**

the auto crime issue as well as promote stronger links with the local community. Positive action by the Police i.e. arrests and the clearing of the woods has improved public confidence in the Police service and has visibly addressed a quality of life issue for the local community. 100% of local residents surveyed stated that they had noticed a visible improvement in the area of Droversdale Wood.

### Location

Droversdale Woods are in an isolated location on the edge of the village. Historically there has been easy vehicular access to the woods. In May 2000 there were 33 burnt out vehicles within the woods. In October 2000 BAP cleared the woods and blocked all access points.

A vehicle removal scheme was introduced with the assistance of a local recovery company. A policy was agreed to remove all such vehicles from the village within 24 hours, thus addressing the 'broken window' syndrome, which had been evident in Droversdale Woods.

Once vehicles were recovered, they were identified by the recovery firm thus saving Nottinghamshire Police the cost of a vehicle examiner attending from Nottingham. Where identification couldn't be established then a vehicle examiner would attend. This was simplified as the vehicle was not in the middle of a wood along with 32 others but was at a compound, which was easily accessed from the A1, again saving time and money.

The local Senior Youth Worker on behalf of the North Nottinghamshire Youth Disaffection Partnership conducted a survey of local children.

**It identified a lack of leisure facilities for them and the facility most favoured was a BMX track.**

**A national standard BMX track is being designed and built in Harworth by a local contractor. A committee of local youths will run this project. This officially opens July 2001**

**A local landowner has donated 9.5 acres of woodland for development as a Motorcycle Trials Park. This project is ongoing.**

**Impact and how measured:**

**Partnerships created with 12 organisations and a multi agency approach developed through the Bircotes Auto crime Project (BAP).**

**0 vehicles abandoned and burnt out within Droversdale Wood (Between October 2000 and April 2001).**

**70% reduction in burnt out vehicles between Oct 1999 and April 2001 in the Harworth/Bircotes area.**

**95% of burnt out vehicles recovered within 24 hours.**

**100% perceived improvement to the area by the local community in relation to Droversdale Woods**

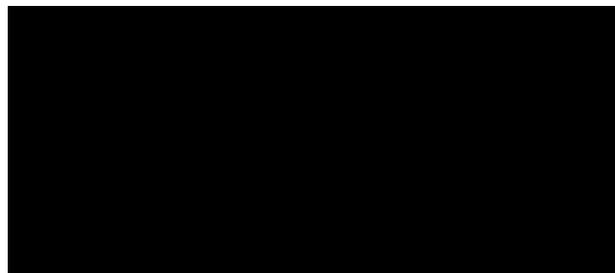
**19% reduction in fire Service call outs since Oct 2000.  
£1440.00 cost saving.**

**Total cost of recovery of burnt out vehicles -  
£ 1425.00.  
Cost to Bircotes Auto crime Project - £0.00.**

**£29000 funding raised by BAP.**

**S**

# OBJECTIVES OF THE' BIRCOTES AUTO CRIME PROJECT (BAP)



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**(a) How was the problem identified?**

The local Beat Manager Pc 511 Pilsworth who was attending these incidents of abandoned and burnt out motor vehicles within Harworth and Bircotes on an almost daily basis initially identified the problem. Considerable time was being spent by the police, fire service and recovery companies locating the cars within woodland areas and identification was proving difficult and unsafe for police vehicle examiners.

One particular area known as Droversdale Woods contained 33 shells of cars. The majority of these had not been reported to the police as the local community had become blinded to the problem and had become almost accepting of it. Those that had been reported had not been collected by insurance companies and in some cases vehicles had been left in the woods for over 6 months. Difficulties were being experienced in the recovery of these vehicles and in several cases those insurance companies who had arranged collection recovered the wrong shells.

The Fire Service also raised the issue of safety and environmental concerns re Hydrofluoric Acid, which is released *once a* vehicle has been set on fire. (Refer to Appendices (i)) This was a major concern as children and locals walking their dogs used Droversdale Woods regularly.

**(b) What was the project trying to achieve?**

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The projects aim from the outset was to draw together a number of people who had a vested interest in the local community and who wanted to tackle the issue of auto crime within the area. The problem was seen not only as a Police matter but also a community issue.

The project examined what each agency could offer and looked more closely at the problem with the ultimate aim of doing something positive about it.

Hotspots were highlighted within the village and Droversdale Woods was chosen as a location that could be tackled by a multi agency approach. The project was initially aimed at the clearing of Droversdale Woods and then restricting future vehicular access. This would then remove the availability of this 'suitable location for the car thief to dispose of vehicles.

The approach had to be two pronged, dealing not only with the location but also the offenders. These individuals had to be targeted, and dealt with positively giving out a strong message to the local community that auto crime would not be tolerated. It was important to gain the confidence of the local community to help us in dealing with this problem. Various agencies were repeatedly attending these incidents but no one was attempting to solve the problem and stop these crimes occurring.

The project aimed to provide diversion to other younger children by encouraging them to design a video about arson and auto crime and this linked in with the education system. The Local Senior Youth Worker would also identify those on the edge of crime and divert them where possible onto local projects.

**(c) Why was this problem prioritised over others?**

There was a perceived lack of trust from the Bircotes and Harworth mining community towards the local Police, which was reflected in the under-reporting of auto crime and the unwillingness of some members of the public to give information.

This project enabled vital links to be developed between the Police and the local community. As a group we were then able to tackle a problem that had been endemic within this area for a number of years and had been accepted within the local community as the norm, whilst still drastically affecting their quality of life.

## **HOW WAS THE AUTO CRIME PROBLEM DEFINED?**



**From October 1999 to April 2000 there were 33 vehicles abandoned and burnt out in broversdole Woods at Harworth, causing a significant reduction in the quality of life of local residents.**

**(a) What information and information sources did you use to analyse the problem?**

**Community Consultation**

Letters of complaint from local residents.

Talking to other agencies e.g. Fire service; School liaison officers; Local Councillors; Tidy Britain Group; Highway Recovery: etc.

Minutes of Parish Council Meetings.

Survey of Local Children re local facilities (North Nottinghamshire Youth Disaffection Partnership'-Young People Survey 2000. Refer to appendices (ii))

Local landowners.

**Intelligence systems**

Fire Service call out figures.

CRIS. (Crime recording system)

Police Command and Control Database.

Intelligence system (CRIMINT).

Stolen Vehicle register.

Liaison. with surrounding Police Forces.

Force Custody system

Police Vehicle Examiners

**0**

**Area Profile**

Physical count of burnt out vehicles within the area.

Beat Officer observations.

Survey of the geographical area.

**(b) How did you go about analysing the information**

A basic crime pattern analysis was carried out once the figures and information had been obtained from the various sources. Hot spots were identified in terms of locations of burnt out vehicles and it was clear that Droversdale Woods was a problem area.

Once this information was gleaned a locally held database was designed to store this information thus making it easier to access for assessment purposes later on in the project. (Refer to Appendices (iii))

Offenders were identified with the aid of CRIMINT and the most recently active were targeted. These were put forward at the weekly Operations Meetings and actions agreed upon. This was then filtered through to all staff on the Local Area Command.

The Problem Analysis Triangle was used to assist in the analysis stage and the results of this are as below.

**(c) What did the analysis reveal about the causes and underlying conditions that precipitated the problem?**

#### **Victim**

Reluctance of the local community to 'get involved' for fear of reprisals.

Local people accepted it as the norm to see burnt out cars in the area.

Police not seen to be dealing with the problem so feeling of "why should they?"

#### **Location**

Isolated location on edge of village.

Far enough away for the crime not to be witnessed.

Easy access to site.

'Broken' window syndrome- vehicles not being recovered therefore attracting other burnt out vehicles-seen as a safe place to commit the crime.

Lack of facilities for the youth in the area.

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## Offender

Small group of six prolific offenders who were not afraid of being caught and had not responded to diversion/support tactics. Also seen as 'heroes' by some younger children.

Linked drug use.

### (d) What did the analysis reveal about the nature and extent of the problem?

Harworth had an escalating auto crime problem involving vehicles being abandoned and burnt out. Between October 1999 and May 2000 this figure peaked.

The hotspot for this was' broversdale Woods with 33 vehicles burnt out within it. Other areas attracting this type of activity included land known locally as `dead dogs' and the adjacent school field. Prioritisation was needed and the problem had to be dealt with in manageable chunks!

Through meetings with the local Parish Council it became clear that the local community had turned a blind eye to the problem and there was a general feeling that the problem couldn't be sorted. It was seen at this point as being a matter only for the Police.

Due to the inaccessibility of most of the cars in the woods, insurance companies were simply leaving them in situ rather than recover them. Through the identification of the vehicles it transpired that over a third of those abandoned had no previous keepers and were not recorded as stolen.: Therefore there was no one responsible for removing the burnt out shells.

Linked with this vehicles were being left in this state around the village for some considerable length of time thus attracting more abandoned vehicles in the vicinity. Recovery was delayed for a number of reasons such as awaiting insurance company to collect; no owner known and vehicle on private land - it falls to the land owner to arrange and pay for removal; no owner and vehicle on public land - it is the responsibility of the local Council who have lengthy procedures to go through prior to recovery! An issue over recovery was identified during the analysis stage.

Prolific offenders were responsible for the auto crime and burnouts and intelligence suggested that they would continue to offend. Arrest was seen as the way in which to deal with these and to show the local community that positive action would be taken by the police.

**(e) Who was involved in analysing the problem?**

All agencies that had joined together to form the Bircotes Auto crime Project had some involvement in the analysis stage of this project. Most of the figures were gained from the Police and the Fire Service and the analysis carried out by them. However the community feeling was brought out by the Parish Council and the local Headmaster and Senior Youth Worker carried out a questionnaire of local children as to what facilities they would like to see within their area. Valuable intelligence was also being gained from school children as to who were the main offenders and where they were carrying out their crimes.

**(f) What gaps of information were there and how did you deal with this?**

During the analysis stage a number of information gaps were identified. They included: -

**GAP A lack of communication between the Police and Fire Service Control Rooms. A number of incidents of burnt out vehicles had been attended by the Fire Service that the Police were never informed of. Therefore the figures were slightly different between the two agencies.**

**DECISION Fire Service to inform Northern Area Control Room of any incidents of arson at Harworth/Bircotes to ensure accurate recording of crime.**

**GAP At the time of the commencement of this project there was no crime analyst on the Police E Division who could carry out an overview of the suspected problem with auto crime.**

**DECISION To be carried out manually using tables and maps to plot information and highlight hotspots. This was time consuming but necessary.**

**GAP Not all vehicles that had been identified within the woods had registered keepers.**

**DECISION BAP to organise recovery of all vehicles within the woods.**

**(g) What were the desired outcomes?**

- 1 Forge links with the local mining community and other agencies.**
- 2 Clear Droversdale Woods of the abandoned vehicles and to keep the area clear.**
- 3 Reduce the number of burnt out vehicles around the area of Bircotes and Harworth.**
- 4 Newly discovered burnt out vehicles to be recovered within 24 hours.**
- 5 Improve the quality of life for the local residents using these areas.**
- 6 Develop and design a 'diversionary' video for school children.**
- 7 Raise funding for the project.**

**9**

**HOW DID BAP DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM?**



**The laying of the first block to prevent vehicular access to the woods  
(October 2000)**

**The Bircotes Auto crime Project worked together to devise a solution. Information from the analysis highlighted a number of approaches that were needed but the priority was the 'hotspot' of Droversdale Wood. An action plan was drawn up and agreed which was achievable and realistic and it would show the group and local community that action was being taken to tackle this problem and that BAP was not just a 'talking shop: All actions were categorised into short, medium and long term.  
(5T; MT; LT)**

### **Location**

**Stone blocks to be placed at access points into Droversdale Woods - RJB  
(ST)**

**Vehicles to be cleared from within the woods - Highways; Police and Local Landowner (ST)**

**Develop a vehicle recovery scheme to remove any burnt out vehicle in the village within 24 hours - Police; highways (MT)**

**Clear one other hotspot 'Dead bogs' and ascertain ownership of this land - County Council (Environmental Health)(LT)**

**To publicise the project locally - Fire Service Public Relations Department. (LT)**

**Discover what leisure facilities are wanted by local youth in the area and what can be done to provide these - Senior Youth Worker/Local Headmaster (LT)**

### **Offenders**

**Encourage the submission of intelligence from local Officers re the auto crime offenders - Police (MT)**

**Positive action to be taken re those identified and where offences are discovered - Police (ST)**

**Operations to be carried out in local area to target hot spots - Police (ST; MT; LT)**

**Publicise good arrests and convictions for auto crime. - Police (MT)**

**Diversion through education - video - Fire Service/Local School (MT; LT)**

### **Victim**

**Publicise the good work that is being done - Police PR department (ST)**

**Continue BAP and the multi agency approach involving the community (LT)**

**Did you have a costed plan, and resources available to support the response?**

Costing plans from BAP have been provided for all bidding applications for funding e.g. Fire Service bid on behalf of BAP for SRB5 (Single Regeneration Budget) required time sheets etc of all persons involved in BAP. All proactive Police operations have also been costed.

There have been numerous hidden costs which have been 'donated' to the project from the various agencies who have become involved e.g. donation of land for Trials Park (£14 500); raw materials; labour time; plant hire for BMX track (estimated cost in excess of £40 000); vehicle recovery including initial clearance operation (£1400); planning application costs waived for BMX track and car park (£1500); etc. All of this goodwill has stemmed from BAP in order to support the planned response.

Bids for funding have been so successful that the appointment of a treasurer has become necessary to manage the accounts. Funding received to date: -

<b>£10000</b>	<b>Mr Macdonald (Local businessman)</b>
<b>£ 7500</b>	<b>RJB</b>
<b>£ 5000</b>	<b>SRB5</b>
<b>£ 2500</b>	<b>Charities Aid Foundation</b>
<b>£ 4700</b>	<b>5RB4</b>
<b>£ 5000</b>	<b>East Midland Development Agency (EMDA -Match Funding)</b>
<b>£ 100</b>	<b>Parish Council</b>
<b>£ 600</b>	<b>District Council</b>

The BMX track is being built by a local contractor and is being funded by the project, as is the planned trials park. Diversion scheme costs have also been paid by BAP for access to the motor project for local people.

**What difficulties did you encounter and how did you respond to these**

Initially there was a lack of understanding about the roles of different agencies and what each could and would be willing to offer.

This was fully explored through regularly organised meetings and the responses were taken forward and actioned. These meetings have been fully minuted. (Refer to Appendices (iv))

These meetings have enabled each to come to a better understanding of how the other works and what can be achieved when skills and resources are pooled together.

The Police have primarily undertaken the role of co-coordinating the response. This has involved a lot of self-motivation on the part of the local Beat Officer often dealing with issues when off duty. This was discussed at a BAP meeting and decided by all that this role should not fall to the Police but would more comfortably sit with Youth Services. The post of coordinator is presently being advertised and will be funded through SRB5.

Once the scanning and analysis stages were completed the true scale of the task became clear. It was tempting to start a number of mini projects all at once. However, through the group and the results of the analysis, BAP were able to structure a realistic and achievable response accepting that not everything could be done at once. We had to accept that some of our success criteria would only be achieved in the long term.

There was very little experience within BAP as to where funding for such projects could be sought. The local Headmaster and the Senior Youth Worker took on this element and submitted numerous bids for funding which were available for a 'deprived coalfield area' such as Bircotes and Harworth. Local businesses were written to by the Police asking for their financial support and the Fire Service also submitted bids on behalf of BAP. All of these were successful and funding has been received in excess of £29000.

What ongoing review mechanisms were put in place and what changes came about as a result of this process?

Regular BAP meetings have been held to review the progress of the project and to push the project forward. Some examples of the changes that have been brought about as a result of this process are as follows: -

The location of the BMX track has been changed as a result of consultation with the local community. (Refer to Appendices (v) for literature used to canvass local opinion) Two sites were identified and it was the local community who chose the final site, albeit not the one preferred by BAP.

In the initial days of implementation of the vehicle recovery scheme for Harworth and Bircotes it became apparent that the policy was not being followed and vehicles were not being recovered. This was examined more closely and discussed with BAP and it was decided that a control room policy was required to inform them of what their responsibilities were in relation to abandoned burnt out vehicles within Bircotes and Harworth. A control room and vehicle recovery scheme was devised and implemented. (Refer to Appendices (vi))

Auto crime figures were reviewed on a weekly basis at the Police Operations Meeting and weekly targets identified as a result of intelligence submissions. Targets of the day were also identified and positive action taken to arrest.

At early meetings of BAP and the clearing of the woods it was decided that we required a Media Policy in relation to the project. It was agreed that the clearing of the woods should be low key to avoid the criminal element taking up the challenge of trying to force vehicles into the woods again. Initially it was agreed that the media would be handled by the Fire Service Publicity Department. However, due to their lack of attendance at BAP meetings the Police Media and Public Relations Department have been tasked with this.

The BMX track was scheduled to open April 2001 however due to the outbreak of Foot and Mouth this has now been delayed until July 2001. This time has been used to pursue the medium and long-term objectives of BAP.

**Did the response achieve what was intended, and if so, how do you know?**

**Partnerships created with 12 organisations and a multi agency approach developed through Bircotes Auto crime Project (BAP)**

**Not a police response but multi-agency.**

**0 vehicles abandoned and burnt out within Droversdale Wood (between October 2000 and April 2001)**

**70% reduction in burnt out vehicles between Oct 1999 and April 2001 in the Harworth/Bircotes area.**

**95% of burnt out vehicles recovered within 24 hours. (See Appendices for vehicle removal scheme policy)**

**1009E of local people interviewed (sample size 20) who use Droversdale Woods stated that they had noticed an improvement in the area since the removal of the burnt out shells. (Refer to Appendices (vii))**

**£29000 funding raised to assist in the project and to provide facilities within the local area for the young people.**

**Other achievements from the project that were not part of the initial success criteria include a 13% reduction in the numbers of stolen vehicles between October 1999 and April 2001. A cost saving to both the Police and to the Fire Service. The latter have seen a 19 % reduction in Fire Service call outs, which translates into a cost saving of £1500 over the last six months.**

**The vehicle recovery scheme has collected 57 vehicles since the inception of the project at a cost of £25 per vehicle. In total this would have cost £1425 however in reality this has cost the project nothing. Money has also been saved through the Police Vehicle Examiners not having to attend to identify vehicles. (Refer to Appendices (viii))**

**BAP have funded the building of a national standard BMX track in Harworth that has been built by a local contractor in conjunction with the**

community for their use. A committee of local people will run this project. Also funding has been provided for diversionary measures e.g. the motor project.

Overall the project has been a success with the only outcome not achieved being that of the diversionary video. Equipment has been purchased and liaison is now taking place with Youth Justice Officers in Nottingham City in relation to developing a joint video project.

### **What methods of evaluation did you choose and why?**

Statistical analysis before and after implementation of plan:

#### **Quantitative**

Police and Fire Service figures - Arson to motor vehicles in the Wood.

Police Figures - Auto crime within Harworth and Bircotes.

Location of vehicles subject to arson after implementation of response.

The number of incidents attended to by the Fire service.

Money saved through the Recovery Scheme Project.

Number of people in the BAP partnership and their continued support.

These areas are easier to quantify and figures are available to evaluate the response before and after.

However the qualitative analysis was more difficult to evaluate.

#### **Qualitative**

Improvement in aesthetic value of Droversdale Wood.

Perceived reduction in auto crime by the local community as a result of the project.

Local Community awareness of BAP and its work.

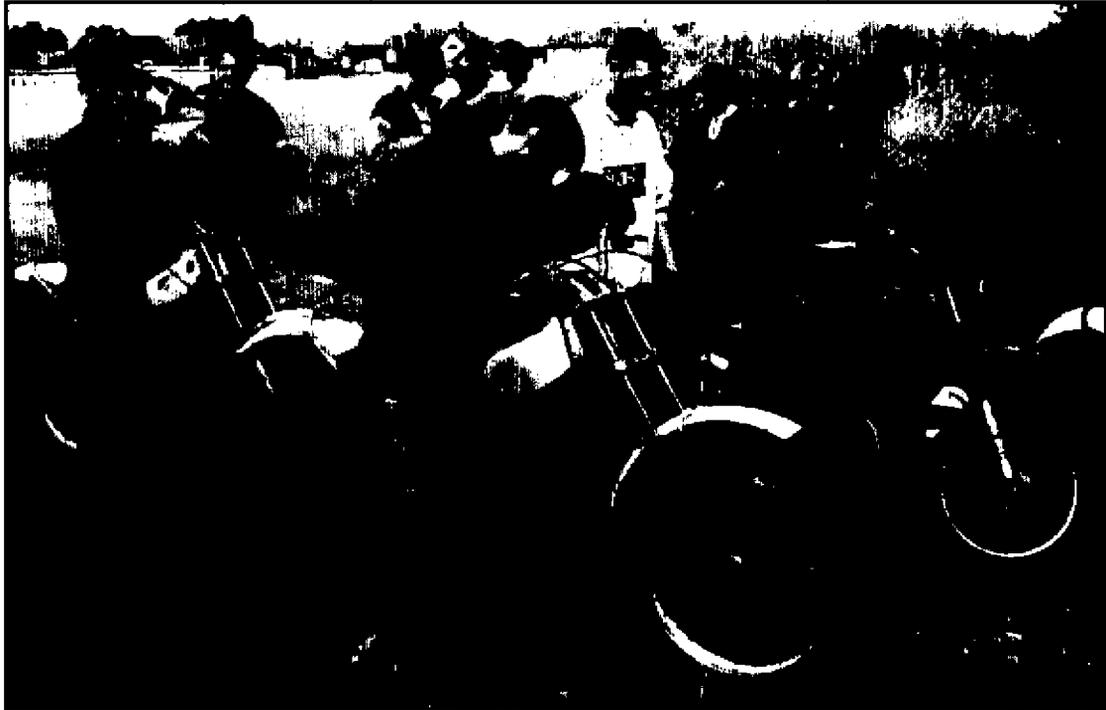
Local youth have been involved in the solution to the problem e.g. BMX track and Proposed Trials Park.

The first three were addressed by way of a questionnaire aimed at those people who were using Droversdale Wood. It was important to ask the local community (victims) whether or not the project was seen as a success from their perspective as well as from the Police and Fire Service angle. (Refer to Appendices (vii))

### **Who was involved in evaluating the project?**

Police; Fire Service; Highway recovery; Members of the local community;

**WHAT IS IN THE FUTURE FOR BAP?**



**9.5 acres of local woodland have been donated to the project for a planned motorcycle trials park. This phase is still in the consultation stage.**

### **A one-off or part of an overall approach?**

During the response phase the group expressed their concerns about the possible displacement of abandoned and burnt out vehicles once Droversdale Wood was cleared and access restricted. This has occurred but to a lesser extent than was initially feared. BAP are now moving on to address a new identified hotspot on the school field. The same formula will be used as was successful for Droversdale Woods.

Although the local community noticed an improvement within the area of Droversdale Woods it was also evident from the results of the questionnaire (Appendices (vii)) that auto crime is still very much perceived to be a problem within the local area.

### **Other Information**

Nottinghamshire Police have not yet adopted a problem solving policing approach although it is in the development phase. Despite this there are numerous projects such as these ongoing throughout the Force, which are following a similar structure to that of SARA without actually identifying it as that.

Due to this the BAP initiative has remained local. However liaison has taken place with other areas suffering similar problems within the Force to share ideas on how to tackle these types of problems thus taking away the need to 'reinvent the wheel'. To support this approach the BAP project is to be placed on a Force database being set up to contain examples of problem solving policing initiatives within the Force.

**O**