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# Summary

**Title:**                   **Auto Crime at Cherwell Valley Services**

**The problem:** Cherwell Valley Services is a Motorway Service Complex sited on the M40, at Junction 10, near Bicester, Oxfordshire. It is approximately half-way between London and Birmingham. The site is surrounded by open fields and woodland. Entry to the site is gained via an access road from the roundabout situated at the junction above the motorway.

Since the opening of the services, about eight years ago and in common with other service areas nationally, the site has attracted an increasing number of auto related thefts. These thefts from vehicles can broadly be divided into two categories, the first being the theft from curtain sided lorries during the hours of darkness and secondly the theft from cars during the daytime.

**Evidence:** Reported Crime figures for auto related crime were collated and comparisons made as shown below. (See Appendices 1 - 5) Additionally comparisons were made between those offences occurring at Cherwell Valley and other sites within the Thames Valley region which includes stretches of the M1 and M4 motorways as well as the M40. Although Cherwell Valley's figures were by no means the worst, during the period between 01/01/00 and 30/09/00 they represented 21% of the Bicester Police area's total autocrime. This was over twice the comparative figure for the same period in **1999**.

**Response:** Historically the response by the Police has been to do little more than record most of the crime. Typically there were no witnesses or other evidence to support any investigation after the event. Attempts to increase police patrols were not always possible and appeared to have little deterrent effect. However, there appeared to be ample scope for the introduction of crime reduction measures, and the purpose of this project was to: (a) Form a partnership of interested parties and (b) Implement a crime reduction strategy that would be both achievable and sustainable.

**Impact:** Problem identified and analysed.  
Partnerships with relevant agencies formed.  
Strategy formulated - short, medium and long term objectives set.  
Ongoing Partnership liaison and review.

## Description of Project

The aim of this project was to significantly reduce the level of autocrime at a specific location, this being Cherwell Valley Services, a motorway Service Area situated just off of junction 10 of the M40 at Ardley near Bicester, Oxfordshire, not as a short term measure, but through a sustainable long term initiative.

Cherwell Valley Services is now about eight years old, having been built in a rural setting situated virtually half way between London and Birmingham. Access to the site is via a combined entry and exit road immediately off of the junction roundabout.

In the planning stages, prior to being built, great care was taken to minimise the impact of it's existence to the local community and specifically the village of Ardley, it's nearest neighbour. To achieve this, intensive landscaping and planting took place not only to hide the complex from the outside world, but perhaps more significantly, to enhance the cosmetic appearance from within. A comparison can be made with that of the 'Centre Pares' holiday centres which have, by heavy forestation and shrub planting, created an illusion of isolation from fellow holiday makers, in other words, virtually no natural surveillance.

The site buildings consists mainly of the service area, run by Granada Services incorporating shops, gaming machines, restaurants, toilet facilities and a separate Travel Lodge. A petrol station is situated near the entrance/exit. Two areas of car parking are provided, one in front of the services and one to the front and side of the Travel Lodge.

A lorry park is also provided and stands alone at the far end of the site. This has the capacity to park approximately two hundred Large Goods Vehicles.

During 1999 thefts from curtain sided lorries which parked on the site overnight were occurring on a very regular basis. A police covert operation took place in November, 1999 which resulted in the arrest of offenders and the recovery of a stolen goods vehicle from the north of England. This operation was a success in that it had an immediate, short term effect on the incidence of this type of offence at that location. However, it was very manpower intensive and therefore expensive to run. It was therefore recognised that a longer term solution should be sought.

During the year 2000 a marked increase in offences of thefts from cars was noticed. Typically, and in common with national trends, laptop computers were the main target of the thieves. These and other property items such as mobile phones in many instances were left in full view within the vehicle. In isolated cases the boot was either opened from within the car or was forced open by the offender. This suggested that the victim had been observed placing property in the boot before leaving the vehicle.

In September 2000 it was decided that a radical and concerted effort should be instigated in order to address the problem. It was obvious that the presence of other customers and the occasional drive through by the local beat officer or traffic car was doing nothing to discourage the offenders.

Two factors were apparent from the outset. Firstly we, the Police, were never going to be able to tackle the problem on our own. A partnership approach was required and we therefore needed not only the co-operation of Granada- Services but also their active assistance. Secondly, the question arose as to how we were going to persuade Granada to become an active partner. Historically, crime issues have been seen as the responsibility of the police, and failing that, victim's insurance compensate any loss. Previous discussions with the manager of Granada had shown this to be the prevailing attitude. In any case, being a business, what was in it for them? The car and lorry parks were managed by another company, CP Pius, which further devolved any real or implied responsibility.



**Theft from motor vehicles**

**Offences within Cherwell District Council Area**

**01101(99-30109199)**

<b>Banbury</b>	<b>469</b>
<b>Bicester</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>Kidlington</b>	<b><u>166</u></b>
	<b>904</b>

**Of the 904 offences committed during the first nine months of 1999, 25 occurred at Cherwell Valley Seviles.**

**This equated to 2.76% of CDC area's and 9.29% of Bicester's theft from vehicle crime.**



**Theft from motor vehicles**

**Offences within Cherwell District Council Area**

**01/01100- 30109100**

<b>Banbury</b>	<b>488</b>
<b>Bicester</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Kidlington</b>	<b>83</b>
	<b>804</b>

**Of the 804 offences committed during the first nine months of 2000, 49 occurred at Cherwell Valley Seviles.**

**This equated to 6.09% of CDC area's and 21.03% of Bicester's theft from vehicle crime.**

**Analysis of all crime**

**01/01/99 - 30/09/99**

**Location:**

Cherwell Valley Services situated at junction 10, M40, Ardley, Oxfordshire.  
Beat code: JF16

**Report:**

There were 62 offences between the above dates. These are broken down as below:-

Burglary Non Dwelling = 1  
Obtaining Property by Deception = 5  
Theft = 14  
Theft From Motor Vehicle = 25  
Theft Of Motor Vehicle = 7  
Vehicle Interference = 1  
Criminal Damage to Vehicles = 9

The most prolific offence was clearly Theft From Motor Vehicles. This equated to just over 40% of all offences. This can be further broken down into 2 parts:

- (1) Thefts of laptop computers from cars.
- (2) The slashing of side curtains or forcing of the rear doors of lorries allowing entry and easy theft of property contained within.

(1) There have been 4 thefts of laptop computers from cars. They have occurred on a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday between the hours of 0830 and 1830. Entry was mainly gained by way of smashing windows with an unknown instrument. No specific type of vehicle was targeted.

(2) There have been 11 offences involving lorries. They were committed mainly overnight Tuesday/Wednesday or Thursday/Friday between the hours of 1900 and 0800.

**Analysis of all crime**

**01101/00-30109100**

**Location:**

Cherwell Valley Services situated at junction 10, M40, Ardley, Oxfordshire.  
Beat code: 3F16

**Report:**

There were 73 offences between the above dates. These are broken down as below:-

Burglary Non Dwelling = 2  
Obtaining Property by Deception = 5  
Theft = 1.1  
Theft From Motor Vehicle = 49  
Theft Of Motor Vehicle = 2  
Vehicle Interference = 4

The most prolific offence is again Theft From Motor Vehicles which equates to almost 67% of all offences. This can be further broken down into 2 parts:

(1) Thefts of laptop computers from cars.  
(2) The slashing of side curtains or forcing of the rear doors of lorries allowing entry and easy theft of property contained within.

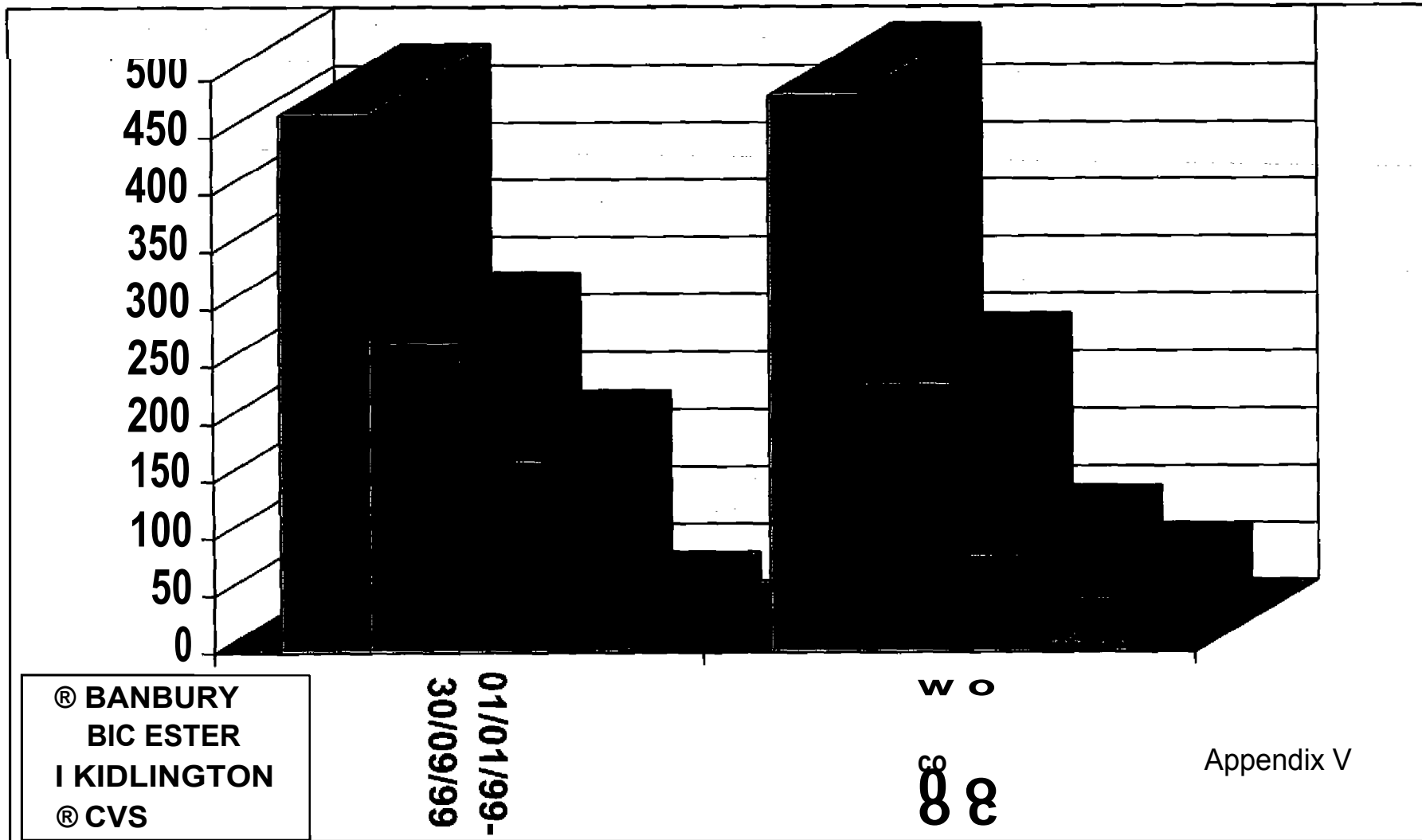
(1) There have been 16 thefts of laptop computers from cars. They have occurred mainly on Wednesdays and Thursdays between the hours of 0700 and 1900. Entry is predominately gained by smashing windows with an unknown instrument. The most targeted type of vehicle has been the Peugeot 406.

(2) There have been 14 offences where lorries have had the side curtains slashed or rear doors forced and property stolen. They were committed mainly overnight Wednesday/Thursday or Thursday/Friday between the hours of 2300 and 0900.



# THEFT FROM VEHICLES

## Northern Oxfordshire Police Area



® BANBURY  
 BIC ESTER  
 I KIDLINGTON  
 ® CVS

30/09/99-  
 01/01/99-

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Appendix V

# **All Auto Crime in Cherwell Valley Services**

