

Tilley Award 2003

Project Title: Fylde Mobile CCTV

Category: Crime and Disorder reduction

Police Force: Lancashire Constabulary

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Fylde Mobile CCTV Unit Lancashire Constabulary

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Summary:

The Borough of Fylde is an affluent area encompassing the towns of St Annes, Lytham and Kirkham and surrounding rural villages. A low-crime rate means that funding can be difficult to achieve for ambitious projects, yet Fylde accounts for 3700 - 4500 recorded crimes per year, around 20% of the BCU annual total (but has 64% of the geographic area of the BCU).

The relatively low crime rate dictates that the BCU's resources are targeted at Blackpool, thus there are fewer police resources in Fylde. Residents of Fylde have a much higher than average fear of crime and an awareness that policing resources are concentrated elsewhere. 71% of the public surveyed stated they were not comfortable out in public at night. Furthermore the town centre ward of St Annes had a crime rate 50% higher than the Lancashire average.

The Community Safety Audit found that a high number of respondents wanted a CCTV system and a higher police presence in the Borough, and between 1999-2001, Fylde Borough Council and partners submitted a bid for a CCTV system. This bid was unsuccessful and the local agencies were required to continue to safeguard 70,000 residents and over 45,000 tourists per year without any monitored or public CCTV.

This initiative aimed to achieve a low-cost and specific solution to the lack of adequate CCTV in the Borough, in order to impact on the regular crimes of violence and disorder, and to address crime and disorder in outlying rural areas. Furthermore, the project intended to reassure residents by being bold in displaying partnership working with crime and disorder targeting in action.

Costings for a CCTV mobile unit were in the region of £55-60,000, far beyond the funding capabilities of the Community Safety Partnership. However by imaginative use of available equipment, funding and sponsorship, a mobile CCTV unit was constructed for only £11,800; nearly £45,000 less than the cheapest quote.

The project was measured by the reduction in crime during the Christmas period 2002 during the Town Centre Operation, by shopkeepers and customers' comments, and positive coverage in local media. The project has been inspected by Government North West, and praised for innovation and achievement on such a small budget. Another £15,000 was awarded to Fylde to purchase and equip another CCTV unit. Fylde now has two mobile CCTV units and a sustainable solution to the previous lack of CCTV.

Introduction

The Borough of Fylde and Blackpool Unitary Authority are policed by the BCU of Lancashire Constabulary's Western Division. Blackpool has for some time been an area subject to significant investment by government and European regeneration funding as it is an area that has long suffered from significant crime levels.

Fylde Borough is quite the reverse; an apparently affluent area which covers the urban towns of St Annes, Lytham and Kirkham and rural townships and villages around these major towns. An accepted low-crime rate and low population density means that funding can frequently be difficult to achieve for ambitious projects.

Fylde accounts for between 3700 and 4500 recorded crimes per year, approximately 20% of the BCU annual total, yet geographically the area of Fylde Borough accounts for 64% of the BCU area. This leads to a contradictory situation; the relatively low crime rate dictates that the BCU's resources must be targeted at the areas with higher problems, which in this case will always be central and south Blackpool. Thus there are fewer police resources in the area of Fylde, yet the area is much bigger so the resources are stretched even further.

Fear of crime has been identified as a major issue in Fylde Borough by both anecdotal evidence provided by the public to all of the major Community Safety Partnership agencies, and also via information recorded by the Borough Council and the Community Safety Partnership itself. Clearly the situation is not eased by inadequate police resources for such a large area, and there is a difficulty in reassuring the residents of Fylde, especially when visible police presence is needed to achieve any reassurance.

This POP aimed to achieve a low-cost and specific solution to the fear of crime and concerns of local residents. Many were concerned about the outright lack of adequate CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) in the Borough. In order to have an impact on the regular crimes in the town centres of violence and disorder, and to address fear of crime and disorder issues in the outlying rural areas, the project aimed to fund and utilise a mobile CCTV unit which could be used anywhere in the Borough at short notice.

Fylde Borough - Scanning

The Borough is home to around 70,000 people and welcomes over 45,000 visitors a year, in particular to the coastal towns of Lytham and St Annes. Like any major towns, there are regular problems with drink related crime and violence, daytime offences and juvenile nuisance.

The Borough Council failed in a bid to establish a large and widespread CCTV system, and could not afford to do so without significant external funding. Nonetheless, the problems and crimes which affected the residents' quality of life continued, and a solution to these problems had to be sought by other means.

Individual POPs and projects aimed to reduce certain aspects of local crime and disorder, but many of these frequently came up against a similar problem: a lack of evidence due to the lack of CCTV or witnesses, and local frustration from the public and pressure groups, at what they perceived to be a lack of progress or change.

This led to a fairly low perception of both the Council and the police by local residents, in particular in St Annes, as the town centre is particularly prone to night-time drink related crime. As a residential town centre, the local populace are keenly aware of continuing disturbance to their quality of life, and felt a bitter blow when the fixed CCTV bid failed. This culminated in a number of heated public meetings and a website¹, all charting what the residents thought was inaction and a lack of adequate police and community safety resources.

Due to the proximity of Blackpool, much of the local media coverage concentrates on the much higher crime rates in that area, which leaves the low crime rate in Fylde forgotten. The residents of Fylde have a much higher than average fear of crime, and any project to reassure them would have to be bold in order to overcome that and accomplish significant change in local perceptions of crime, as well as show real reductions in recorded crime.

This was confirmed by a residents survey in Fylde. In September 2002, 17% of respondents stated that they did not feel safe in Fylde Borough during the daytime, and at night that increased to 66% of respondents.²

Other Community Beat Managers outlined how their respective beats all had problems with nuisance, disorder and crime in differing places varying with time and day of the week. All of these comments illustrated that the area needed a highly-visible reassuring presence, which could be used to prevent and detect crime, but most crucially, allay some of the unnecessary fears of the residents, especially in the more rural beats where a police presence would be occasional at best.

¹ www.stdavidsroad.co.uk

² Fylde Listening Day Residents Survey August/September 2002

Fylde Borough - Analysis

Fylde based research showed that reassurance was a major requirement of local policing as there was a significant fear of crime. 71%³ of the public stated they were not comfortable out in public at night. Furthermore the main ward of St Annes, Central Ward (an area covering the majority of the town centre and most of the Borough's low-cost housing and rental properties), had a crime rate 50%⁴ higher than the Lancashire average. As the main hub for evening and night-time entertainment in the Borough, many residents of Fylde visit St Annes both during the day and at night. Thus they were coming to an area with a much higher than average crime rate, and most felt unsafe.

The Community Safety Audit found that a high number of respondents wanted a CCTV system and a higher police presence in the Borough. "Surveillance Cameras in town and a more visible police presence scored highest as to what would make the person feel more secure."⁵

As the Community Beat Manager for the Town Centre of St Annes, PC Willmot was tasked with finding ways to reduce the prevalence of night-time disorder, violence and damage. This area had the highest annual crime rate in the Borough, and had been identified as the consistent ward / crime location hotspot since at least 1998⁶. Analysis by PC Willmot of the annual crime reports for the ward showed that there was a clear pattern of night-time violence, damage and disorder due to drunken persons leaving the town's nightclubs and making their way to late-licensed take-aways in the residential edge of the town centre. The regular disturbances, most often occurring between 0200 and 0400 hours on weekend nights, became a source of great concern to the local community, leading to an intervention by the local MP (Michael Jack) to find a way for partnership working to reduce the incidents and crime.

The nightclubs could not be closed as they were not directly responsible for their clients once they left the premises and travelled some 300 metres to the takeaways, nor could residents be moved and action was required to give them a better quality of life. Thus any intervention had to focus on the offenders, through direct police action, prosecution or other partnership avenues.

The only other avenue was to adapt the location. Given that the residents, nightclubs and takeaways could not be removed, the only other possibility was to alter the location by inserting an element of change. Currently the main areas of disorder and violence in the Town Centres are not covered by any CCTV; placing such a system in those locations would make a significant change in detecting crime and reassuring the residents.

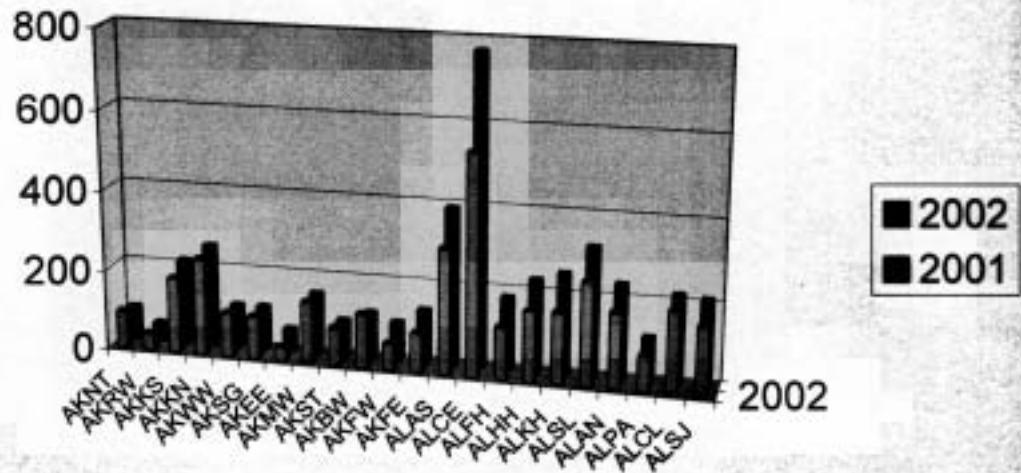
³ Community Safety Audit for the Borough of Fylde, 2001

⁴ *ditto*

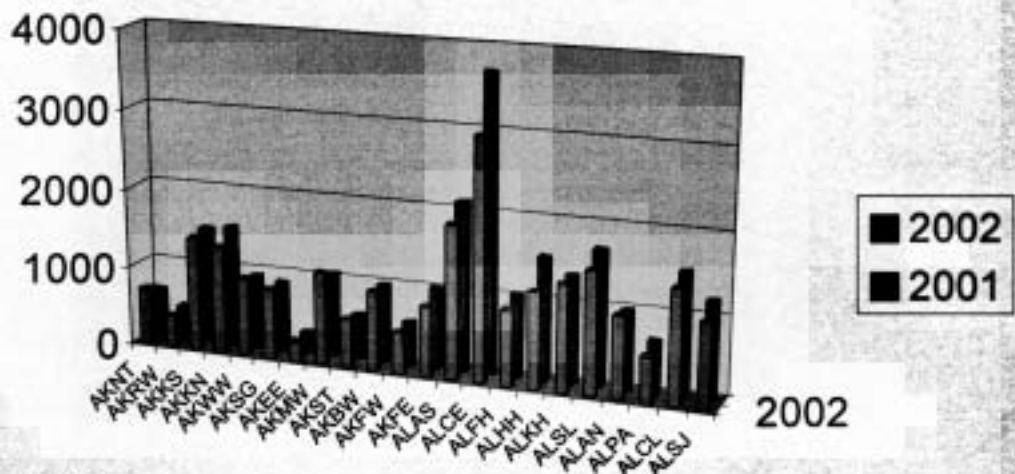
⁵ *ditto*

⁶ *ditto*

All crime (Fylde) 2001 / 2002 by ward



All incidents (Fylde) 2001 / 2002 by ward



Both graphs illustrate the consistent high concentration of crime and incidents in the town centre wards of ALAS, ALCE (St Annes), ALCL, ALSJ (Lytham) and AKKN, AKKS (Kirkham). Furthermore the graphs illustrate that crime and incidents are recorded across the borough, with some outlying rural wards showing significant levels of crime or incidents.⁷

⁷ Data from year end crime / incident figures, Lancashire Constabulary Western Division

Between 1999-2001, as part of ongoing regeneration, Fylde Borough Council and partners bid for a Borough-wide fixed and monitored CCTV system to link in with the highly successful scheme in Blackpool. Sadly this bid was unsuccessful, and until 2002 there was no clear alternative. This was despite the identified repeat disturbances every weekend in the town centre at St Annes. Due to the low crime rate in the Borough as a whole, the area does not qualify for much of the funding which is attracted to areas of much higher deprivation, so the residents of Fylde saw a highly successful CCTV system operating in Blackpool, attracting regular media attention, but the same was not available in Fylde just 3 miles down the road. This was despite a clear desire by the public for a surveillance system to link with the police on an operational basis. A fixed system simply could not be funded locally due to the high costs involved, thus the regular problems continued without OCTV (Open Circuit TeleVision) evidence to assist the police.

Other areas in the North-West had overcome such difficulties with differing success. Other BCUs in Lancashire Constabulary had opted for vehicle-based CCTV systems, as had the Merseyside and Greater Manchester forces.

In 2002 the idea of CCTV was revisited by the new Fylde Community Safety Partnership. CCTV was again identified as a vital tool in the reduction of recurring crime, nuisance and disorder, especially in St Annes where all of the Borough's nightclubs and hence late-night problems are situated. While the idea initially was to fund a small number of re-deployable lamp-post mounted cameras, PC Willmot suggested that a mobile unit would be more useful given the large geographic area and rural nature of the Borough. The only hurdles were the quoted cost of around £60,000, which was quickly deemed unfeasible, and the difficulties presented by crewing such a resource.

PC Willmot made enquiries with other BCU areas within Lancashire to see how they had dealt with the issues raised by lack of fixed CCTV systems in mixed urban / rural areas. Both Chorley and Wyre Borough police areas had access to mobile CCTV units, and these had cost on average £60,000 each. Both projects had been problematic in that they required direct control – a member of staff had to remain with the vehicle and control the cameras while they were in use. This was found to be particularly resource intensive as frequently police officers were unable to perform the duties of camera operator as staffing levels simply meant that it was an inappropriate use of an officer or civilian resource.

Nonetheless both areas had benefited from positive publicity about the CCTV vehicles, and equally the resource was available for use.

Fylde Borough - Response

The inaugural financial year of the Community Safety Partnership, which accompanied the first year of major structural regeneration in St Annes, was an opportunity to purchase a small number of OCTV cameras, which would be mounted on a lamppost in specific places. The system itself requires that an operative (Police or Police Community Support Officer) download any recorded images from the cameras within 24hours of any incident. This required that certain equipment be transportable to the camera sites.

Whilst this system would be a vast improvement on what was essentially zero provision, the system still requires some planning and an OCTV camera cannot be moved around the Borough several times a day, repeated weekly. Furthermore, while the investment of £40,000 was significant, it would still only provide a total of four cameras (one camera for St Annes, Lytham, Kirkham and Freckleton respectively), and this was clearly not a systematic solution to a Borough-wide problem.

The solution to the geography of the Fylde was clear: a mobile self-sufficient CCTV vehicle. To be successful as a resource, any such unit would have to be a) self-sufficient and not reliant on an officer or member of staff to operate it, b) highly mobile in order to visit multiple sites in any given day, to meet the needs of the large area of Fylde, and c) absolute minimum cost, as the majority of the available £40,000 was earmarked for the lamppost cameras.

A further analysis of the sub-division's crime reports and incident logs by PC Willmot confirmed what was already anecdotally known by local officers: The main areas in which a mobile camera might be required on a regular basis were the Town Centres and open air car parks at Lytham, St Annes and Kirkham to provide daytime reassurance and crime prevention / detection, in the public parks of the same towns to prevent and assist officers in dealing with nuisance, and outside the night-clubs and late-night refreshment houses of St Annes where the great majority of night-time crime and disorder, for the whole Borough, occurred every weekend.⁸

The solution from a technical point would be to adapt a vehicle so it would operate in conjunction with the OCTV lamppost cameras as well as independently. It would have to be quick and easy to deploy, and had to be non-resource intensive; it must not require a member of staff to stay with it during deployment. It could then be used anywhere in the Borough as circumstances required, and it could be easily moved from one location to another immediately without difficulty. This would overcome the difficulties inherent in the use of the OCTV cameras – they could not be everywhere at once and although movable they could not be deployable at a moments notice to anywhere in the borough. Furthermore they are not high-visibility; the public would not realise they were there.

To achieve real success, any response would have to be highly publicised in order to maximise any reassurance factor, and be clearly visible in order to act as a deterrent and serve as a constant reassuring presence. This would address the highlighted issues of lack of CCTV and lack of police presence in one move.

⁸ SLEUTH Crime Reports & CRS incident logs, both Lancashire Constabulary recording systems

The first hurdle to be overcome was that of cost. The cost quoted by both Lancashire Police HQ Fleet Services and a private company to convert a large van into a mobile CCTV unit was in the region of £55-60,000. This was clearly impossible as there were simply no funds identified for such a use, and as stated above there were huge difficulties in obtaining such large amounts of funding, as the overall crime and deprivation rate in the Borough is relatively low.

Fortunately the project suggestion had caught the attention of both the Community Safety Co-ordinator and the Director of Environmental Services at Fylde Borough Council, who had funded the initial 4 OCTV cameras. They agreed to donate a second-hand (near retirement) van, from the Fylde Borough fleet, to the project, and to meet any ongoing vehicle related costs such as fuel and insurance. Thus £2000 of Astravan appeared at no cost to Lancashire Police or the Partnership. The vehicle would be described as a partnership vehicle to promote the partnership working within the Borough, and liveried in pseudo-police scheme so that the public would be under no doubt that it was a police-related vehicle.

The next step was to earmark £10,000 of Small Businesses in Deprived Areas funding to pay for the extra video equipment which would be required to operate the vehicle both alone and in concert with the OCTV cameras. The understanding was that the mobile CCTV unit could be deployed to protect and reassure shopkeepers in far-out rural villages and the areas of the main towns where the main OCTV would not be deployed, but there were problems with crime just as in the town centres. Two areas in particular, St David's Road South and St Albans Road, were both within the Town Centre area, but would not fall under the initial catchment of the OCTV cameras, yet were in the highest crime ward of the whole Borough. These roads featured heavily in late-night crimes of violence and damage, due to the late-night takeaways that served intoxicated revellers leaving the towns nightclubs.⁹

Having obtained a vehicle and the electronics, a LANPAC (Lancashire Partnership Against Crime) bid for £900 was successful, and match funded by £400 by a local business, and the BCU to £500. This modest amount paid for internal engineering, a respray, livery and works on the van in order for it to be fitted out with a telescopic tower taken from a retired police accident unit. The tower elevated through the roof of the van, upon which a camera could be located and then left, in situ, so the officer could redeploy to other tasks.

⁹ SLEUTH Crime Reports & CRS incident logs, both Lancashire Constabulary recording systems

The total expenditure for the van was:

LANPAC	£900
Trident	£400
Western Division	£500
Small Businesses fund	£10,000
Total expenditure	<u>£11,800</u>

nearly £45,000 less than the cheapest quote.

Following donation of the vehicle, re-spray and livery and delivery of the electrical equipment, the van went 'live' in December 2002, to a great deal of positive publicity (see appendix 1), only 6 months after the idea was first raised.

Fylde CCTV Van – Assessment

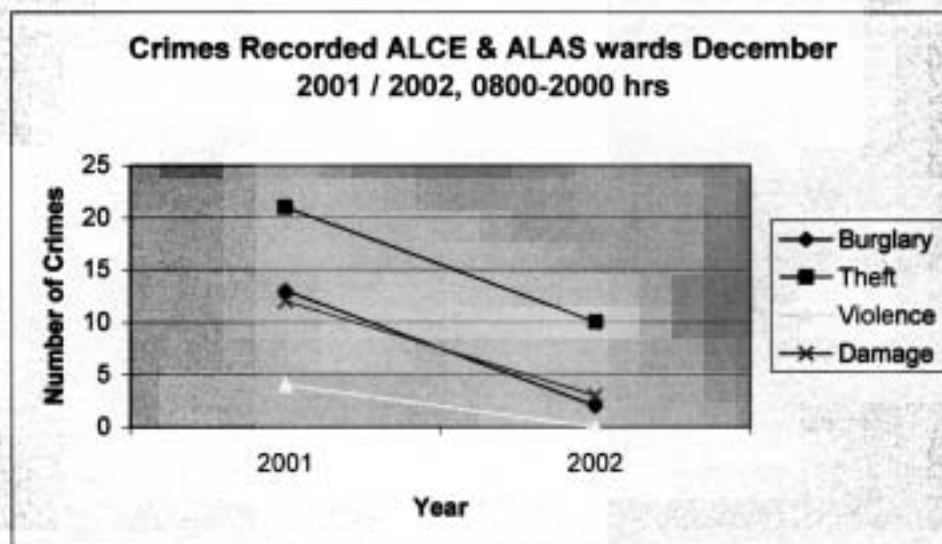
The day-to-day use of the resource was initially as planned: the launch of the project coincided with a policing operation designed to provide maximum reassurance in the three town centres in the run up to Christmas 2002. Each day the camera van was deployed in different locations in the town centres. During the two week period, all recorded crime (0800-2000hrs) in St Annes Town Centre fell by 70 % year on year, with burglary falling by 85% (see below).

Crime Figures for Christmas Operation (Archangel)

(First operation to feature specific and targeted use of Fylde CCTV Van)

Table: Crime on St Annes Town Centre Wards (Central & Ashton), reported as having occurred during Archangel hours of 0800 – 2000, 13 – 28th December 2001 / 2002.

Crime	ALCE 2001	ALCE 2002	ALAS 2001	ALAS 2002	Total 2001	Total 2002
Burglary	11	2	2	0	13	2
Theft	12	5	9	5	21	10
Violence	1	0	3	0	4	0
Damage	7	1	5	2	12	3
				Total	50	15



70% year on year crime reduction of finalised end of year figures. (Initial assessment of 90% has been distorted by late reported historic crimes).

The vehicle was also used immediately outside the nightclubs in the run up to Christmas and as part of the New Years policing operation, and was used daily by the newly arrived PCSO staff, which further highlighted their presence.

After Christmas the van was deployed in an area of Lytham which suffered a spike in dwelling burglaries, in an effort to gather intelligence and deter the offender or offenders.

It has also been used in juvenile nuisance operations across Fylde Borough; specifically in Wesham, Kirkham and the rural areas of Freckleton and Warton. Now that the summer season has arrived in the coastal towns, the vehicle is deployed at weekends and bank holidays in the main carparks to prevent and detect autocrime offences and provide reassurance for the visitors and residents alike.

The project was measured in terms of the overall crime drop during the Christmas period when the unit played a major role. Subsequently, the year-end crime figures for Fylde show a yearly reduction of 23% and the CCTV unit has been deployable during a quarter of that crime year.

Furthermore success has been measured by the repeated positive PR shown in the local media (appendix 1) and coverage on the local radio stations. A survey of the town centre stores after the Christmas operation brought many favourable comments and it was clear that the CCTV Van had been widely noticed and praised by the shopkeepers and staff and the customers alike (appendix 2). These comments show that the visible presence of the CCTV Van has met the objectives of reducing the fear of crime and disorder.

The data protection information on the CCTV van has now been extended to all of the local police vans and the Fylde Borough Council fleet, further advertising the partnership approach and providing more reassurance and deterrence, whilst meeting the requirements of data protection information provision (appendix 3).

The vehicle itself is capable of being deployed at a moments notice to anywhere in the Borough. The equipment can be deployed by any officer with only 10 minutes training, and is simple to use. The vehicle has fully achieved the goal of being self-sufficient. Whilst the camera on the vehicle is not monitored, which was deemed to be beyond the capabilities of the project, the vehicle can be left with video recording, in the relevant areas, with no need for an officer or member of partner agency staff to remain with it.

Thus the vehicle is extremely efficient as it does not impact upon local police resources as it does not require an officer or member of support / volunteer staff to remain with it or operate the equipment other than in terms of simply moving the vehicle and deploying the equipment.

The launch of the van was attended by a representative of Government North West, and the project was praised for innovation and achievement on such a small budget. Because of this one resource, another £15,000 was awarded to Fylde Community Safety Partnership, to allow for the purchase and equipping of another more advanced CCTV unit, and that is being fitted out at the moment (Appendix 3). With match funding from the BCU, two CCTV vans have now been purchased, liveried and equipped for around £42,000, still £20,000 cheaper than an original quote for just one.

Both are available for use by Community Beat Officers, Police Community Support Officers and other partnership agencies as required (the Fire Service have expressed an interest already). As partnership vehicles, there are no on-cost implications for Lancashire Constabulary, as Fylde Borough Council are maintaining and fuelling the vehicles. The project is therefore sustainable at the current level at no cost to the Constabulary.

The Project has been hugely successful in providing vital equipment for policing a large rural area and the town centres therein. The costs have been significantly less than other similar systems and projects, and the response from the media and public has been overwhelming positive. The CCTV van(s) project continues to impact upon the fear of crime in the Borough, especially outlying areas, and to prevent crime in peak areas, and has contributed to significant reductions in crime across both Fylde and the BCU¹⁰.

¹⁰ SLEUTH Crime Recording, Year End Crime Figures 2002-03, All Crime for A Division BCU.