



Tilley Awards 2004

Reducing Violent Crime - Whitehaven Town Centre

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SUMMARY

Reducing Violent Crime, Whitehaven Town Centre

Whitehaven has a population of 20,000. Copeland Borough Council serves it, as the local authority. It is the largest town within the council area, and therefore has the largest number of nightclubs and public houses with late opening hours.

These are situated around a very small area in the town centre within Harbour Ward. Although offences against the person are low in number, there is a perception that Whitehaven is a town where increased incidents of violence occur on a Friday and Saturday night especially in the final quarter of the year in the run up to Christmas.

Analysis of incidents was carried out in November 2001, showing an increase in offences against the person during the final quarter of, 2000 and 2001. In November and December of 2001 a number of initiatives were started to address the issue of violent crime in the short term. The public perception was that incidents tended to peak by the last Friday before Christmas commonly known as 'Mad Friday.'

The objectives;

- Reduce assaults both inside and outside licensed premises.
- Provide a sustainable response without incurring excessive cost.
- Provide public reassurance.

Work continued on the initiatives started at the end of 2001, with the aim of having them well established by October 2002, in anticipation of an the monthly increase in violence on the run up to Christmas.

Other initiatives carried out in other areas to address such violence, appeared to have significant funding allocated to them, no substantial funding was available to the Police at Whitehaven. The issues had to be addressed utilising the resources available within the town, the goodwill of Officers who would change their shifts in order to address violent crime and through partnership working with licensees.

Although overall violent crime on Harbour Ward has risen the number of assaults occurring at the weekend has dropped by 17%. Working in partnership with licensees, simple measures have been put in place, which have reduced assaults both inside and outside the town's licensed premises.

1. SCANNING
2. ANALYSIS
Police Data
3. RESPONSE
 - 3.1 Door staff regulation
 - 3.2 Pub watch
 - 3.2 Radio Link
 - 3.3 Crowd Dispersal
 - 3.4 Camcorder Patrols
 - 3.5 Licensees Course
 - 3.6 Patrol Strategy
 - 3.7 Bottle Bins
 - 3.8 Legislation
 - 3.9 Publicity
4. ASSESSMENT
5. REFERENCES

SCANNING

In November 2001 concerns were raised by the police about the increasing numbers of assaults, occurring within Whitehaven town centre on a Friday and Saturday night, the perception was that this was caused by the build up to Christmas.

Whitehaven Town Centre has numerous public houses; concentrated in an area of approximately one square kilometre. Two of the nightclubs and four of the public houses in this area close between 0100 and 0200. All employ registered door staff.

There are four takeaways in the area. In normal circumstances there would also be two mobile burger vans.

The pubs and clubs are situated on a one-way road system, which includes twelve taxi ranks for the use of, in excess of 100 taxis, registered in Whitehaven.

The harbour side outside the Park Nightclub was used as an unofficial taxi rank, causing crowds coming from both nightclubs to congregate there, to await taxis and buy food. The area is well known as a flash point for potential disorder, making it difficult to police due to the numbers involved.

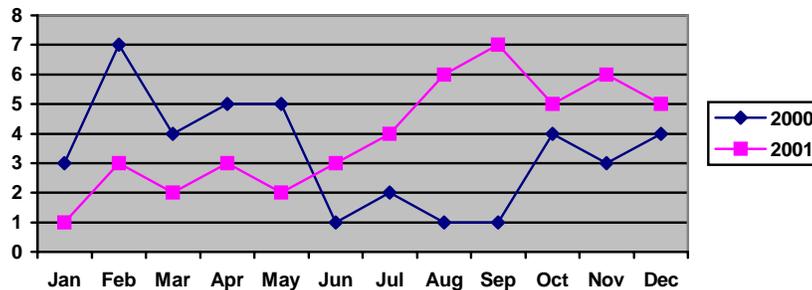
Gallaghers Nightclub exits onto Tangier Street. Although the crowd that would remain in this area was smaller, similar difficulties were experienced in policing it.

By scanning offences against the person for 2000/2001, through the use of the oracle crime system and the Polis incident database, a steady increase in assaults could be seen

Using the oracle crime system details of reported assaults within the Harbour Ward of Whitehaven, beat V02, were obtained for 2000 and until the end of October 2001.

These are shown in the chart below.

November/December 2001, are added for comparison.



Prior to November 2001 little work had been carried out with licensees of the two nightclubs, or other licensed premises, to address incidents of violence occurring inside and outside.

It was apparent through the scanning of assault related incidents that a significant number of these types of offences were occurring within the two nightclubs and the areas adjacent to them.

At this stage it was also found that no significant amount of funding was going to be made available to reduce offences against the person. Any response would therefore have to utilise Police and partnership resources already available within the town.

ANALYSIS

Police Data

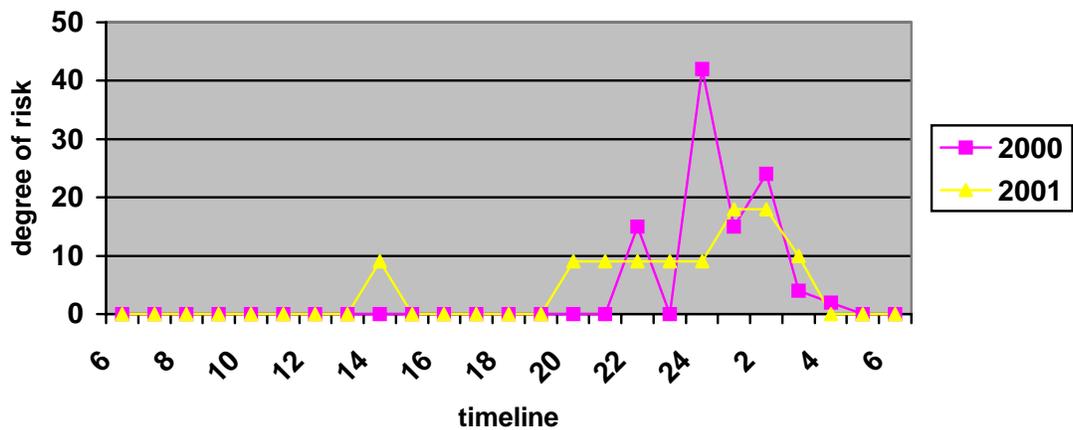
The area surrounding the nightclubs is regarded as high in incidents of violent crime.

Assaults include Common Assault, ABH and GBH.

In 2000 of 62 assaults, which happened on the V02 beat 40 were carried out on either a Friday or Saturday night, which equates to 65%. Although the total number of assaults is low the percentage occurring at a weekend, when they could be witnessed by other members of the public accounted for the perception that Whitehaven town centre was a violent place. V02 has the highest numbers of assaults occurring on any beat within the town.

Analysis of incidents, show they occurred, between the hours of 2000 hours and 0400 hours.

Whitehaven Time Risk Analysis



Analysis of the locations of the assaults show that a significant proportion of them were committed within licensed premises.

The chart below compares locations of assaults, in the final months of 2000 and 2001.



As outlined in the summary very little work had been carried out with the licensees.

No consideration had been given by licensees, to excluding from licensed premises, those regularly involved in violent crime. When some licensees were spoken to it was obvious that they were unsure of what their responsibilities were.

None of the clubs with late licenses were in contact with one another and were therefore unable to forewarn each other of those who may be involved in violence.

Although the local authority registered all door staff, no attempt had been made by the Police or the Local Authority to regulate this. Many of the assaults, which occurred inside the nightclubs, both reported and unreported, were perceived to be committed by the door staff, the analysis proved, this was not the case.

The road layout outside The Park Nightclub caused a bottleneck for taxis and members of the public. This was due to the Nightclub exiting into the area, fast food outlets being located in the same area and the taxis using the area as a temporary rank.

It was not unusual to have in excess of 800 people congregating in this area between 0200-0300 hours. Taxis persisted in driving through the crowds in order to use the turning circle on the harbour. The location where this was occurring is an area 20m x 50m. Due to the congestion it was incredibly difficult to police.

In November 2001 Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners were becoming increasingly concerned about the amount of damage being caused to the harbour side area near to the Park Nightclub, as a result of taxis using the area as a temporary rank. This caused damage to the road surface and damage to harbour side furniture as revelers exited the nightclubs looking for transport on the harbour side.

CCTV covers the area, but it was obvious from incidents occurring on the streets that this was not acting as a deterrent to those involved in incidents of violence.

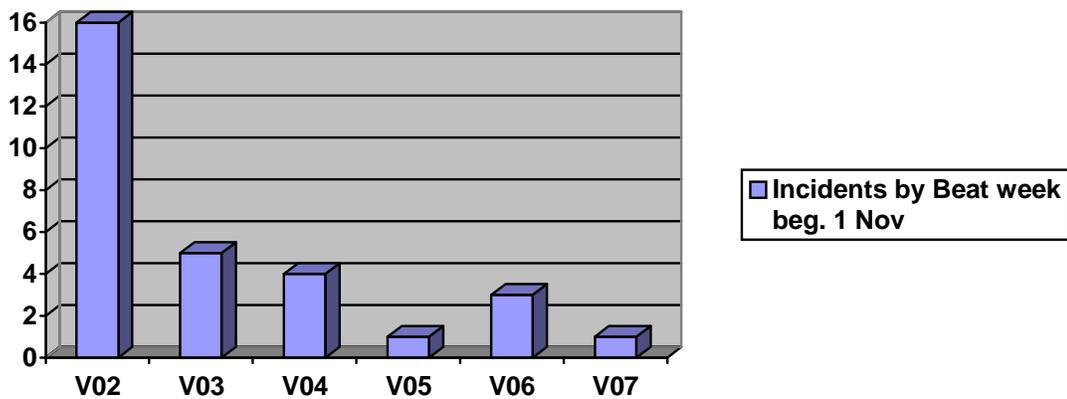
There are no other nightclubs or late licensed pubs anywhere else in Whitehaven town.

Whitehaven is a non-designated station, with full custody suite facilities from when it had designated status. Any prisoners held in custody over the six-hour period, had to be transported to Workington, eight miles away. To transport a detainee took away two officers for up to two hours.

As a minimum between 2200 and 0300 each Friday and Saturday night there would be two sergeants and six constables available to police Whitehaven. Officers over and above the minimum staffing requirement would supplement these along with officers from the town's Community Unit and the Force's Tactical Support Group, Dog units and Special Constables.

Officers from Whitehaven would normally be deployed double crewed, in vehicles with no provision made for high profile patrolling of an area in which the majority of the assaults were occurring.

The number of incidents occurring on the town centre beat, V02, in comparison to the rest of the town was far higher on a Friday and Saturday night, as the chart below indicates.



Of all incidents occurring, few required an immediate response. Jobs were never allowed to 'stack.' If a patrol were free it would be sent to an incident no matter how trivial that incident may be. This was a major cause of all officers being deployed as mobile patrols.

Attempts were made to obtain details of assaults dealt with by the local health authority however these details were refused on the grounds of patient confidentiality. Therefore the scanning and analysis relied purely on police data along with notional evidence from members of the public.

RESPONSE

Scanning and analysis of assaults in the area gave us a firm base to work from when identifying an area of offences being committed against the person, which we had a chance of effectively addressing.

The first five initiatives mentioned below were hurriedly implemented in order to reduce the number of offences against the person prior to 'Mad Friday' 2001.

These initiatives developed throughout the year with a view to having them established by the final months of 2002, in anticipation of a perceived increase in violence.

This had to be achieved with the resources available at Whitehaven, as no major sources of outside funding were available. They also had to remain sustainable.

The intention is outlined in the summary.

3.1 Door Staff regulation

In November 2001 the Police and Local Authority visited licensees and gave advice regarding their responsibilities towards the door staff they employed.

The Police carried out monitoring of the scheme, with the Local Authority Enforcement Officer, through regular checks and visits to licensed premises employing door staff.

After the initial contact with the licensees/door staff at the end of 2001, good relationships developed throughout the following year.

3.2 Pub Watch

In November 2001 the Police initiated a meeting with licensees and as a result 29 of the towns pubs and clubs signed to the Pub-watch Scheme. This initiative was implemented as a short-term solution with longer-term consequences.

As with all such schemes, it is run by a committee of licensees and enabled a licensee to nominate a person involved in violent crime within their premises to receive a blanket ban from all other members named in the scheme.

3.3 Radio link

As a result of funding being made available in November 2001, £1000 was granted, from a Targeted Policing Initiative, to purchase hand held radios.

Five radios were purchased and issued to the licensed premises with door staff. The intention of the radio link was to allow immediate contact and a quicker passing of information between door staff.

The licensees manage the scheme, although the Police have the ability to monitor the door staff radios, which gives a quicker police response to incidents, involving door staff, as they occur.

3.4 Crowd dispersal

To overcome this, in November and December 2001 a temporary barrier was placed at the entrance to the harbour side, preventing vehicle access. This was blocked off with consent from Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners

As a result of the success of this simple initiative, funding was sought from a targeted policing initiative. The funding was granted and approximately £5000 was provided for a permanent barrier.

The Park nightclub also had it's own lighting which would illuminate the front of the club and area where the crowd would gather. This encouraged the crowd to remain in the area. The licensee, would turn the lights off when his club was empty, provided a simple solution to this, causing the crowd to disperse far quicker.

3.5 Camcorder Patrols

The analysis had revealed that although CCTV covers the area, it was felt that this was ineffective. To address this a Camcorder was purchased for use by Officers on foot patrols who would use it to film anyone believed to be in the first stages of committing violence/disorder related incidents.

It was intended that this would, be used as a deterrent, as it was obvious when a person was being filmed with a camcorder where it wasn't obvious to a person that they were being filmed on CCTV.

As a result of assessing the work carried out in the latter part of 2001. The next three initiatives were developed throughout 2002, and were in place by September of that year to run alongside the five already mentioned.

3.6 Licensees Course

As a 'Safer Streets' initiative was due to start in October 2002, it was decided to organise a course for the licensees whose premises were in the area. This was to inform them of the initiative and to give training in legislation, which they were unsure of but would be expected to use to reduce incidents both in and outside their premises.

Licensees from the 14 licensed premises in the area identified that they required training in the following areas

- Powers of search.
- Powers to refuse entry and powers of ejection.
- Management of disorder within their premises.
- Controlled substances.

A two-day course was organised to cover the above and all licensees and their staff from the area were invited to attend.

Ten of the fourteen licensees along with members of their staff supported and attended the course.

3.7 Patrol Strategy

This was introduced to allow the deployment of officers on high visibility foot patrol. This was intended to reduce the fear of crime thereby improving the perception of the area and also to prevent the number of offences being committed.

Working from the minimum staffing criteria of, two Sergeants and six Constables, the following was adopted after 2200 each Friday and Saturday night.

- Two single crewed units are deployed to respond.
- Two constables are designated to patrol the area on foot.
- Two constables are designated to use a personnel carrier, which is parked in the area and then patrol this area on foot.
- One Sergeant patrols the area on foot and liaises with licensees.
- One Sergeant acts as a Custody Officer enabling detainees to be dealt with at Whitehaven.

Additional staff, are deployed on foot patrol.

3.7 Bottle Bins

Although the nightclubs had door staff, they had no provision for removing bottles and glasses from club goers as they left their premises. This was identified from the licensees' course.

As a result of this there was a tendency for members of the public to remain drinking on the street when the clubs closed. This was more evident outside Gallaghers nightclub.

At a cost of £600 highly visible bins were provided to the clubs to place at their entrances. Door staff, were encouraged to persuade clubbers to deposit their bottles in the bins as they left the premises.

3.8 Legislation

- **Exclusion of Certain Persons from Licensed Premises**

Although this legislation existed it had not been used at Whitehaven. In consultation with the Crown Prosecution Service, Decision-Maker and Licensees it was agreed that should any person be convicted of a violence offence within their premises, this legislation would be applied. Initially the Crown Prosecutor would request the magistrates to exclude the offender from all licensed premises in the area.

This was to be managed by the area Admin Support Unit who would identify offenders who this legislation could be applied to as relevant paperwork passed through their office. This would then generate a request to the crown Prosecution Service to apply the legislation.

- **Consumption of Alcohol in Designated Places**

Work towards implementing this legislation began in the early part of 2002, using analysis of incidents of violent crime from the previous years.

The area in which the town's nightclubs were situated was identified as one area to which the legislation could be applied. This was put forward to Copeland Borough Council, who accepted the proposal and agreed to implement the legislation.

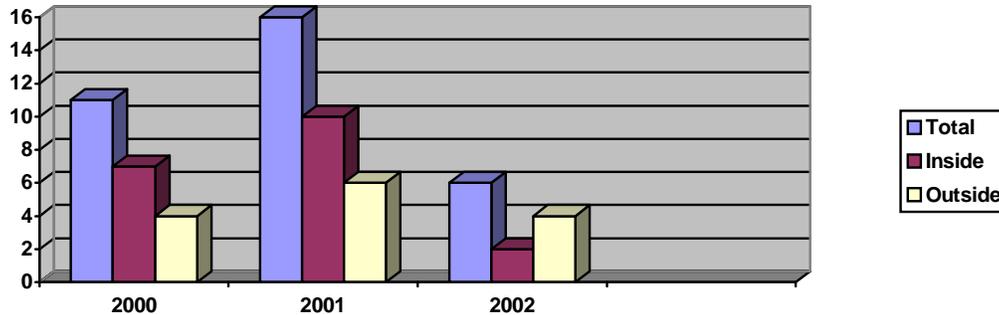
3.9 Publicity

Maximum use was made of the local press to publicise each initiative as it occurred. Regular updates are given to the press and reporters are invited to patrol with officers. This is used as a way of reassuring members of the public using the area at the weekend.

4. ASSESSMENT

The initial objective was to reduce the numbers of assaults occurring in the final months of each year in the build up to Christmas and 'mad Friday'.

Although it is difficult to reduce offences occurring in such small numbers, this was achieved in the final months of each year. Overall, assaults in the area have been reduced to six in 2002 compared with 16 assaults committed in the same period of 2001, as the chart below indicates.



Assaults within licensed premises have been reduced to the extent that there have only been two assaults in a licensed premises in the final three months of 2002 compared to seven in 2000 and ten in 2001.

The locations of assaults during the final months of each year have been displaced to other parts of the area targeted and are now no longer being committed outside and inside the two nightclubs.

Each part of the response to address the objectives identified through scanning and analysis has played a significant part in the above reductions. Brief assessments of each part of the response follow.

The Park Nightclub

The licensee of this club fully supported the Police in their efforts to reduce violence both in and outside his premises. This licensee attended the course held in September 2002. Assaults reported within the club have reduced.

Although the nightclub exits in to the same area, the provision of a permanent barrier at the harbour side entrance has prevented taxis using this as a rank. This has caused the crowd to disperse from the area quicker as they look for transport. People now move off in smaller groups and fighting no longer occurs over taxis.

The harbour side barrier also reduced the amount of damage caused in this area by taxis and clubbers. No statistics are available for this as much of the minor damage went unreported.

The simple intervention of turning the exterior lights out at the club has assisted in dispersing the crowd; with no lighting there is now no reason for the crowd to 'hang' around.

Gallaghers Nightclub

Through working with the licensee, violent incidents both in and outside the premises have been reduced.

Door staff

After the initial advice regarding the requirements expected of door staff, which was given in 2001, a good working relationship has developed between them and the Police.

Prior to 2001 no working relationship existed at all.

Pub Watch

Throughout its existence the pub watch has been an excellent tool for the use of licensees in excluding those involved in violent incidents in their premises.

The numbers of exclusions have reduced, coupled with a reduction in assaults within licensed premises.

The scheme is regularly publicised, those excluded by the committee are named and shamed in the local press. This has meant that exclusion by the committee has carried a great stigma for those who have been excluded.

Radio Link

This has worked well between the various clubs, as they are now able to forewarn each other of impending disorder. The scheme was offered to other licensed premises but became unworkable for those without door supervisors as operation of the system became impossible at busy periods

The Police monitor the scheme enabling to respond quicker to incidents in and outside licensed premises as the door staff, are now able to circumvent the normal telephone or 999 systems in cases where assistance from the Police is urgently needed.

Crowd Dispersal

This assessment has been carried out above, see The Park nightclub. In normal circumstances the majority of clubbers have now left the area by 0230. Prior to these initiatives it was not unusual to have large crowds in the area until well after 0300.

Taxis are prevented from entering the area; this causes the crowds to disperse to look for transport

Camcorders

This has worked well as a deterrent for those becoming involved in the first stages of disorder. It has been found that as soon as the filming starts the potential disorder stops.

Licensees Course

The licensees felt this course was very beneficial as it brought them up to date with current legislation relevant to their licensed premises.

The training delivered has gone a long way to reduce incidents in and outside licensed premises. This was evident during the first month of the Safer Streets initiative where 12 of the 30 people arrested for disorder offences were as a direct result of being refused entry into the nightclubs. Had they not been refused entry there was the potential for them to then become involved in disorder within the relevant licensed premise.

Patrol Strategy

This has had a dramatic effect on the way the area is policed on a Friday and Saturday night, using the resources available at Whitehaven and therefore not incurring any extra costs through overtime.

The two mobile units respond to incidents as they arise and non-immediate jobs are allowed to 'stack' leaving the other resources free to police the area of pubs and clubs.

The officers deployed on foot patrol have had the following effect;

- Arrests for public disorder related offences initially increased as potential assaults were addressed at an early stage. In 2002 it was found that both assaults and arrest for disorder were being reduced. On mad Friday 2002, 29 disorder related arrests were made and five assaults reported. On the same day in 2003 seven arrests were made and one assault was reported.
- The public perception is that the area is 'flooded with cops.' In reality all that happens is that those on duty have been removed from vehicles to target the area generating most incidents in Whitehaven on a Friday and Saturday night. This is achieved through foot patrol.

Reassessment

By the end of 2002 it was accepted that this strategy should be employed each weekend and not just in the final three months of the year.

By extending these patrol methods throughout the year a reduction in the percentage of assaults occurring within the Harbour Ward on a Friday and Saturday night has been achieved.

	2000	2001	2002	2003
Yearly Assaults V02	62	75	105	128
Weekend Assaults V02	40	49	58	61
Weekend assaults %	65%	65%	55%	48%

Although the numbers of assaults occurring annually have risen, the percentage of those occurring at the weekend has dropped. There is no evidence of weekend assaults being displaced to weekdays. If these methods had not been employed it is likely that percentage of weekend assaults would also have risen.

Initially officers were regularly approached and asked where had all the Police come from and why were so many Police officers in the town. It could be seen that this initially raised concern as there was a perception that the police were only there because, 'something was going to happen.'

Officers are now approached by members of the public who tell them that they feel far safer on the streets due to the numbers of Police carrying out high profile patrolling. By employing the methods throughout the year and not just in the last three months, the sight of large numbers of officers on the streets is widely accepted by users of the nighttime economy.

By utilising the custody facilities at Whitehaven officers who have made arrests are deployed back on to the streets far quicker than those who used to have to travel with detainees to the custody suite at Workington

Bottle Bins

These were intended as a stopgap prior to the introduction of the Consumption of Alcohol in Designated Places was introduced.

Door supervisors; have found them a useful reminder to people exiting nightclubs to deposit bottles and glasses in. Any effect this has had cannot be measured. In general terms it is felt that this initiative has reduced bottles and glasses being taken onto the streets.

Legislation

Exclusion of Certain Persons from Licensed Premises legislation has not been used, however the systems are in place to utilise this legislation should it be needed.

The area of the town centre was designated under the Consumption of Alcohol in Designated Places Act in June 2003. To date it has been impossible to assess what impact this has had in contributing to the general reduction in assaults.

Publicity

The publicity generated has been significant in turning public perception that Whitehaven is not a violent town. Although public perception is not measurable the feedback officers receive when patrolling is that people feel safer and are pleased to see officers on the beat.

The objectives identified at the start have been achieved,

- Assaults on the build up to Christmas have reduced.
- Assaults within licensed premises have reduced.
- Public perception of the area appears to have changed for the better.
- Reductions have been achieved by utilising the police resources available at Whitehaven, working in partnership with the licensees. The initiatives can continue without having to rely upon outside funding.

The objectives have been reassessed and the methods employed have been used to target assaults throughout the year.

‘One of the best things the Police have done to curb trouble is to have a high visibility presence in the town.’

Mr. Ray Trotter, manager of The Park nightclub,

We have experienced, a lot of problems in the early hours, which have disturbed our guests. This has been addressed and it isn't as bad as it used to be.

Cheryl Twinn, owner of the Waverly Hotel opposite Gallaghers Nightclub

Jeremy Hinde the manager of ‘Wetherspoons,’ maintains that the reduction in incidents on mad Friday is as a direct result of this initiative.

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