

<u>Title</u>	Trafalgar Square - Illegal trading and crime.
<u>Category</u>	Crime and disorder reduction.
<u>Force</u>	Metropolitan.
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Trafalgar Square - Illegal trading and crime.

Charing Cross Division.

Summary.

Scanning

Trafalgar Square was becoming a 'blot on the landscape'. Illegal street traders, aware of the lack of authoritative powers and small penalties were being attracted to the Square to sell their wares. These 'obstructions' meant that the Square became very crowded, attracting undesirables keen to relieve visitors of their possessions.

Analysis

Each year the reported crime figures have increased, there being a surge in the summer months. Also complaints from local residents groups, plus the Trafalgar Square Association had become more prolific. Both, Londoners and visitors no longer saw Trafalgar Square as the premiere historic Square in London.

Response

- Officers posted to Trafalgar Square were wearing high visibility jackets, on a meet and greet policy.
- One officer was given specific responsibility for Trafalgar Square.
- Closer work with the Royal Parks Constabulary.
- A removable bollard was installed to hamper ice cream vans (but not emergency vehicles).
- A change of legislation was required - working with the Department of Media, Culture & Sport, - Westminster City Council, - StrandAldwych & Trafalgar Square Association, and the Greater London Authority. The outcome has been the 'Trafalgar Square & Parliament Square Bylaws', under the Greater London Authority Act 1999.
- Outstanding warrants for offences committed in Trafalgar Square were executed.

Assessment

Whilst the main difficulties were tackled, other responses were used as an interim measure. The impact has been very successful (even more than we had hoped). This improvement has been measured by comparing crime allegations, which have fallen by approximately half and the number of response calls received in the Control Room for police assistance, which reveal a similar decrease.

The Square has returned to being the much loved, important and dignified area of the past, according to the views expressed by our resident and visitor populations.

TRAFALGAR SQUARE - ILLEGAL TRADING & CRIME

CHARING CROSS DIVISION

Scanning

Trafalgar Square had a long history of illegal trading, pickpockets, rowdyism, street robbery and some drug dealing. During the summer months the Square became congested with illegal food traders, especially ice cream vans. In the early hours of the morning the Square became heavily pedestrianised when 'clubbers' arrived to catch their night buses home. This meant that the Square was heavily congested at **all** times over the 24-hour period. This encouraged the opportunist thief who was able to "disappear" amongst the crowds and steal from the unsuspecting visitor.

Police were regularly called to the Square to report crime and attempt to disperse and report the illegal traders.

The division had already adopted a wide use of problem solving techniques, including local community meetings, liaison with Westminster City Council, the Department of Media, Culture and Sport and many uniform and plain-clothes initiatives. At the community meetings many complaints were made about the condition and use of the Square, which was seen by many as one of the most important Squares in London. The Square resembling a 'circus' was a regular comment.

Before the 1st October 2000, the Square was the responsibility of the Department of Media, Culture and Sport and the legislation and by-laws came under the Royal Parks Regulations. This act did not give police, or any other authority any power of arrest or seizure for illegal trading. Police officers from this division reported the offender and diplomatically persuaded the offender to leave the Square. The reports were forwarded to the DMCS for their legal department to prosecute. Due to the large number of reports many offenders were not prosecuted. There were no effective follow-up procedures to arrest offenders who failed to pay their fines, or failed to appear at the local Magistrates Court.

Analysis

The local community believed, (mistakenly) that the problem with the illegal traders in the Square were ranked low on the police list of priorities.

The offenders were employed by a small number of companies mainly located in North London. They were aware of our lack of effective powers and were not that concerned on being reported.

Our own resources did not allow for a permanent police presence in the Square over the 24-hour period.

The problem of illegal trading on the Square had given concern for many years. However, during the last few years the number had increased, especially during the summer months.

The various pitches set up by the traders, encouraged people to remain in the Square, many joining queues to obtain food and other services. This attracted the opportunist 'pickpocket' and other undesirables.

Robbery and drink related public order offences were mainly being committed during the early hours of the morning, especially on a Saturday and Sunday morning.

Our main target was that we needed to clear the Square of illegal traders. To do this we needed new legislation, as well as some form of 24-hour preventative patrols. This could only be achieved by working closely with local community groups, Westminster City Council and the Greater London Authority (GLA).

Response

Clearly a change of legislation was required as soon as possible. This could not be achieved overnight and together with the agreement of other community groups the following steps were taken.

Regular meetings were held with the Department of Media, Culture and Sport, Westminster City Council and the Strand/Aldwych and Trafalgar Square Association. Constant political pressure was applied. Two or three Private Members Bills were commenced but for different reasons were not pursued in Parliament. Once a decision had been made that the Greater London Authority would take over responsibility for the Square, extra meetings and pressure for change was applied. We had to ensure that any new legislation had a power of seizure for illegal trading, an increase in

finances and power not only given to Police but also to the agents working on behalf of the GLA. The possibility of some kind of 24-hour security patrol was also discussed.

Once the new legislation had been agreed, considerable effort was made to ensure that all the illegal traders were aware of our new powers and what consequences they were liable to encounter.

Pro-active uniform and plain-clothes patrols and observations were targeted at illegal trading and pickpockets.

Outstanding warrants for offences committed in the Square were followed up.

An Officer from 3 Sector was given specific responsibility for Trafalgar Square.

He liaised on a daily basis with our partners. This greatly assisted with the flow of information.

Officers from the weekend 8pm-4am shift were deployed in the Square on a 'meet and greet' policy. This was a high visibility tactic to ensure a visible police presence to those arriving in the area and to those leaving via the numerous night buses.

A closer working link was formed with the Royal Parks Constabulary on intelligence regarding the illegal traders, who were also working in St James' Park.

A new removable, (for the emergency services), bollard was erected in the south-west corner, preventing the large ice-cream vans from entering the centre of the Square. However, they were still able to access other areas.

On the 1st October 2000 the new Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square Garden bylaws came into force. This new piece of legislation gives police and those agents working on behalf of the GLA power to seize goods being sold by the illegal traders. The amount of any fine, available to the Court, has been considerable increased.

Since the above date uniformed 'Heritage Wardens', (Capes Security), working in pairs have been patrolling the Square over the 24-hour period. They have been supplied with high visibility jackets in order to be clearly identifiable. A protocol between the wardens and police has been agreed regarding their specific role and actions, together with communication links and when and how to call for assistance. A regular contact is maintained between the sector inspector and the security supervisor.

Assessment

Since the introduction of the Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square Garden Bylaws under the Greater London Authority Act 1999, no illegal street traders have attempted to set up within the Square.

An officer called to clear and/or report an illegal trader would take approximately two hours to complete his written process report and statement, on his return to the police station. This time does not include that spent on the removal of any abandoned property left in the Square by the illegal traders. This property being dealt with as that 'found in the street'.

Since the new scheme no property has been brought into the police station as the 'Wardens' have their own arrangements. This has meant we no longer have to make arrangements to deal with any perishable goods.

When comparing the crime figures for the period September - November 1999, with the same period for 2000, (when the 'Heritage Warden' patrols began), there has been an approximate reduction of 50% in the number of reported crimes. The largest decrease being in thefts from the person, down from 117 to 35.

The GLA has not renewed the pigeon food seller's license. His appeal was settled out of Court. The GLA estimate they will save considerable money on their cleaning bill.

The amount of police time spent on reporting and moving on the illegal traders and the reporting of crimes has been considerable reduced. Rowdism and other outbreaks of disorder have also been reduced.

The number of reports that were being forwarded to the Department of Media, Culture and Sport, over a 12 month period, were averaging about 10 per week. This means an approximate saving of 80 police man-hours per month in dealing with the traders alone.

Local residents and businesses believe that improvements in the management of the Square have gone a long way to reduce many of the problems. Whilst yet not totally crime free, instances of loitering, assaults and drug dealing have also fallen.

Community groups have commented on how much more pleasant the Square has become since the arrival of the 'Wardens'. The 'fear of crime' on the Square has been reduced.

As a result of the partnership with the GLA, stronger liaison has been formed when planning public order events and large-scale demonstrations in the Square.

The initial contract awarded by the GLA to Capes Security was for six months. This contract has recently been extended for a further five years. This is due to the success of the scheme, helped by the positive approach from the key players, which has resulted in a large amount of positive media coverage. We

Agency and officer information

This initiative was started "at sector level (Constables, Sergeant & inspector) with the full support of local senior management.

Encouragement was always provided from the local community via the local consultative groups.

Several members of the team were involved in the various meetings with the Greater London Authority, Westminster City Council and the Strand/Aldwych and Trafalgar Square Association.

No additional incentives were given to those involved apart from the satisfaction of "getting rid of the traders"! No additional funds were used or needed.

Although the tackling of this problem was started before officers were given training in 'problem solving', their subsequent training has helped in conclusion of the problem, and the on-going assessment.

Chris TOBITT Insp. StrandfWhitehall sector.

are hoping similar schemes will be introduced. Every effort will be made to retain this scheme as any removal may lead to a return in illegal trading and higher crime figures. The GLA and our other partners are aware of our support.

By identifying the main cause of the problem i.e. the illegal trading which attracted large crowds, as a result of the ineffective legislation, the time and resources committed by this division has been considerable reduced.