



THE TILLEY AWARD

THE SUMMARY

An Application From:-

Stephen Moon PS 937 `C' Division Road Policing Unit.
Robert Beeston PC 494 `C' Division Road Policing Unit.

Project Title = DRINK - LINK

Although drinking and driving is now seen as an anti-social practice it was found that there is still a hard core of persistent offenders who have continued to drive whilst under the influence of intoxicants, The main problem in stopping these offenders was a lack of detailed intelligence, to enable patrols to apprehend them.

The evidence for this comes from an apparent increase in higher breath test readings obtained from offenders who had been driving in the early evening. With changes in the public's perception to this type of offence the once common instance of people being found to be in excess of the prescribed limit after the end of licensing hours appears to have decreased.

The main aim of the Drink-Link initiative was to attempt to alter the mind set of any potential drink driver, to become more aware of the fact that his/her chances of arrest were quite strong, thus preventing the offence being committed in the first place. This was achieved by ensuring that their awareness of the fact that the public now had a facility to inform on them, in confidence and that others were being arrested because of it,

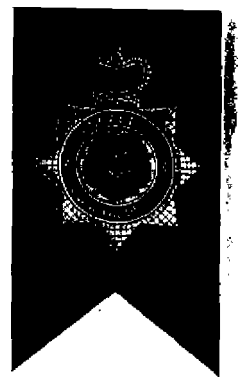
A confidential voice mail service was launched. A name and shame policy was adopted for all offenders. The assistance of the local press were obtained to publicise the number and all its successes.

A trial period of three months was used to assess the scheme at a local level. In that time some 75 targets were identified. This resulted in an arrest rate of 30%.

Because of the success of the scheme the local representative from national 'CrimeStoppers' charity approached the organisers, Sergeant Moon and Constable Beeston, asking that they be allowed to operate the system. This was agreed, resulting in a regional trial followed by a national release. To date, from information obtained from 'Crimestoppers', all forces operate a drink drive intelligence system. A number of which use the Drink-Link name.

On the 24th December 1998, Sgt Moon gave a live interview to 'Talk Radio Melbourne' in Australia. The programmes researchers having read about the initiative in the international press. After the interview and feed back from the listeners he was informed that a local organisation in that state were also attempting to set up a Drink-Link informant line.

Lancashire Constabulary



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A DESCRIPTION OF THE DRINK-LINK PROJECT

An Application From:

Stephen Moon, Police Sergeant No. 937 `C' Division Road Policing Unit

Robert Beeston Police Constable No. 494 `C' Division Road Policing Unit

The Lancashire Constabulary set an objective to reduce the instances of injury or fatal road traffic collisions by 5%. The objective of this project, in particular, was to further reduce the instances of injury and fatal road traffic collisions that occurred when one of the drivers involved was found to have an excess of intoxicants in his/her body. This task was given priority in its execution as part of the force objectives, to make the people of Lancashire feel safe, involved and reassured.

It was identified that although, arrests for persons driving motor vehicles with an excess of intoxicants in their system, was on the decrease. Anecdotally the instances of persons found to have a substantially high reading in the afternoons and early evenings was on the increase. It was obvious that although drinking and driving was

now sociably unacceptable there was still a hard core of offenders to whom an excessive alcohol intake was a way of life, and driving in such a condition the norm.

It was apparent that because of the ever-increasing demands on police resources, that using further staff to flood the area in an attempt to detect and arrest offenders was not possible. Other avenues and approaches would be necessary to reduce the possibility of these people continuing to offend.

Sergeant Moon and Constable Beeston, of the Lancashire Constabulary, Southern Division Road Policing Unit, stationed at Chorley, were aware that in other policing areas drink drive informant lines had been set up, to allow members of the public the ability to inform on the activities of drink drivers. They were also aware that all such lines had little or no prolonged success. In 1992 Sergeant Moon had attempted to set up a similar initiative, however, at that time it was not considered politically correct to use such methods to target drink drive offences. In 1998 both officers decided that it would now be an appropriate time to attempt to open up this facility.

Because of limitations placed on policing resources, it was decided that the system would best be utilised as a tool to change the perception of any would be offender to the fact that should he/she offend, the likelihood of being apprehended was great and the penalties substantial.

In recent years the police service in Lancashire have removed many of the barriers that stood between the lower ranks and the press. When Sergeant Moon first considered this subject he was unable to speak with the press directly without first

getting approval from a senior officer. Times have now changed and it is now an accepted practice that in order to achieve results, police officers, of any rank, can enlist press assistance when appropriate. To this end and with the help of the constabulary's information unit, both officers took it upon themselves to 'sell' the scheme to the local press and media. The delivery of the initiative was crucial and a suitable and memorable name was considered to be of a high importance. To this end Sergeant Moon requests ideas from the entire unit's staff. Constable 1194 Pilkington put forward the 'Drink-Link' title, which after a degree of deliberation was felt to be both focused and memorable.

The main difference between Drink-Link and other similar attempts was that the two officers had a vision. The main thrust of the proposed scheme was that it was not a quickly conceived attempt to obtain information on drink drivers simply to increase the arrest rates of individual road safety patrol officers. It was their vision, that with the correct handling, management and marketing, they could affect driver behaviour, not only in the short term and at a local level, but also for years to come and to the broadest audience possible.

Psychologically the difference between Drink-Link and other similar initiatives was that the main aim of Drink-Link was to focus the mind of any would be offender that they could and would be caught, should they risk driving a motor vehicle with an excess of intoxicants in their system. This was because of the fact that people were able to inform the police of their activities in complete safety.

A force voice mail line was obtained. When informants rang they were greeted by a corporate message thanking them for contacting the Drink-Link informant line. They were advised that the line was to be used for the collection of information, on the movements of suspected drink drivers. However, should the information they were attempting to pass on, be of an urgent nature, they should not continue and replace the hand set and contact their local police via the 999 system. They would then be allowed to leave their message.

The voice mail was checked on a minimum once a day basis and any calls recorded. Only pointed intelligence was acted upon, this being assessed and collated by Sergeant Moon. Each item of target information was allocated to an individual officer, dependant on the area the officer was programmed to patrol, at the time the intelligence indicated the target would most likely offend. This gave problem ownership to a particular officer and allowed for a geographical approach to a policing problem. A complete list was displayed in each the three Road Policing Units offices around the division. The list then enabled all the staff to have full access to all the available intelligence. The list also showed to whom each target had been allocated. Further to this there was a section where any arrests would be indicated, or any further information could be added. This was helpful in that within the police service it is still obvious that peer pressure can still be used as a motivation tool. There is also always a degree of healthy competition involved and posting results aided this.

The two officers themselves carried out the marketing of the scheme to the press and media. They engaged the press, as they had never done so before. Rather than

waiting for the press to come to them, they took the matter directly to the press. With the assistance of the force information unit; a general release was sent to every newspaper and radio station that serviced the locality. To enforce their conviction to the furtherance of the scheme the officers actually arranged meetings with the editors and reporters. By actually having face to face meetings they were able to convince the press of the moral benefits they could expect to gain from their publicising the issue. Through a determined effort the launch of Drink-Link was heralded by every newspaper and local radio station that covered the Southern division of the Lancashire Constabulary.

In order to maintain the scheme in the public's eye and to keep up the main thrust, that of attaining a change in the mindset of the public, both officers maintained a close liaison with their local press. A decision had been made at an early stage that one of the best methods available to maintain the interest of the press and general public was to adopt a 'name and shame' policy. This also fulfilled one of the major areas required to operate the scheme and deter people from offending in the first instance. Whenever targets of any note were arrested, the press was informed. Because of the manner in which the officers had instilled in the press that this was a subject of great importance to the welfare of the public, and therefore news worthy, the press were more than willing to afford such items print space. This in itself maintained the scheme's popularity with the public and after each success story there was a notable increase in calls to the informant number. All offenders when appearing at court found that there was a representative of the press present to listen to the case and report thereon. Front-page articles were not uncommon. Reports of

offenders who had been arrested because of the new Drink-Link line were given banner headlines, particularly when custodial sentences were imposed.

Regular, more general, up dates were also given on a monthly basis to the press. Sergeant Moon and Constable Beeston would contact the various offices on a regular basis and give them the most current arrest figures. It proved that each time an article was printed the instances of informant calls increased. After a time, it was seen by the various editors and reporters, that the Drink-Link scheme was working. They became more confident in the officers to provide them with sufficient stories to fill news space.

It is an obvious fact that in the Southern division, newspapers sometimes have difficulty in filling their news space. It was therefore to the advantage of both parties to facilitate each other's goals. It was agreed that the Drink-Link number would be printed in the 'helpline' sections printed in most newspapers, alongside Alcoholics Anonymous and The Samaritans etc. This facility also generated an increase in calls. It was also hoped that it would act as a reminder to any person with a drink problem who may scan the newspaper for help with his/her problem. The positioning of the Drink-Link number in the helpline section was a calculated one. Again, it fell into the ethos of the whole strategy, to continually push the fact that this facility was available to people, and that it worked in the overall hope that it would act mainly as a deterrent.

With the help of the press and media the actual necessity to arrest large numbers was not required. It was merely a case of making the most of any arrests that were

achieved. As long as the potential offenders perceived that the police were out in force, acting upon vast amounts of information, that had been obtained from the informant line and subsequently clearing the roads of Lancashire of any and all drink drive offenders, then the goal of the initiative would be achieved.

After a three month trial period it proved that intelligence leading to some 75 targets had been obtained. In the majority of cases the information was very precise, resulting in an arrest rate of almost 30% being achieved. All calls that provided sufficient intelligence to target a particular offender were investigated. Sergeant Moon assessed every call and a recording database was set up. Only a small number of malicious false calls were made. On each occasion the target was informed of the reason for their being stopped by the police. There were no negative comments made on any occasion. It was, in fact, the case that whenever a negative breath sample was obtained the subject gave their full support to the scheme.

Sergeant Moon and Constable Beeston had planned from the earliest instance that should Drink-Link be successful in their locality, then, after the trial period, they would attempt to expand it to a greater audience. Before they were able to pursue this on their own behalf they were approached by the Lancashire representative of the national 'Crime Stoppers' charity; asking that the officers consider allowing that body to administer the Drink-Link scheme. An official hand over date of 18th December 1998 was agreed.

Because of their activities in organising the Drink-Link initiative Sergeant Moon and Constable Beeston were selected to appear in a documentary filmed by an

independent television company, Lion TV. This programme was entitled, 'Britain's Worst Drivers'. The officers were followed, over a three day period, by a television film crew whilst they were engaged in Drink-Link targeted operations in connection with the Lancashire Constabularies 'High Profile' Christmas drink drive campaign.

A number of instances were televised when the programme was aired on the 12th February 1999.

It was noted that on the weekend that the film company were with the officers, that there was little sign of any drink drive offenders. On the weekend in question only 8 people were arrested for drink drive offences, in comparison to 15 on the same weekend of the previous year. This gave a reduction in arrests from one year to the next of 53%. The author will argue that this can only be because of the activities of the Drink-Link scheme.

On handing over the scheme to the 'Crime Stoppers' charity, a great deal of national press and media interest was developed. The matter was reported upon, on all five terrestrial news television channels and a number of local and national radio stations, including the BBC World Service. All the national newspapers ran the story. There *had* been a degree of press misrepresentation, in that it was claimed that the force was offering a £500 reward for any information leading to the arrest of a drink driver. This, of course, was not true. The scheme actually relied upon people contacting the police about such matters on a moral basis. However, when whoever said that there was no such thing as bad publicity, they were apparently right. The result of the huge media interest developed because of the wrongly claimed reward only brought the

scheme to a greater audience. Anyone who read a newspaper or watched television over that weekend could not be aware of the scheme.

One particular person who was targeted via the informant line is worthy of note. There had been a number of items of information taken off the voice mail system concerning this person. The target was a middle-aged female and as with the majority of calls, the intelligence was quite pointed. Between the various calls the targeting identified the driver by name and the full details of her vehicle. It also stated that she hid her car a short distance from the public house she visited. The day and times on which she went to these premises was given with the extra information that she always left at a precise hour because her husband was quite strict about her being home by a particular time. The main point of the information was that she always drunk to excess and on occasions required help to her car.

On the night in question the officers, together with the film crew, found the vehicle in the location stated. They mounted observations on the route that they had been told she would take home. Right on cue the vehicle moved and was seen driving along the road. The officers were able to stop the car almost immediately and speak to the driver. A breath sample was requested, but it proved to be negative. When it was explained to her that she had been identified as a drink drive offender from the Drink-Link informant line, she claimed to know all about it. When quizzed further she admitted that the Drink-Link line had been the talk of the pub owing to the publicity given to it in the press on the run up to Christmas and at the hand over to Crime Stoppers. She said that no-one would have been stupid enough to have risked drinking and driving in the Charley area on that weekend.

On the 24th December 1998 Sergeant Moon was asked to give a live interview with 'Radio 3AW, Talking Melbourne', in Australia. News of the Drink-Link informant line had reached Australia via the international edition of the Daily Telegraph. The programme took the form of interviews in the morning followed by feed back from listeners in the afternoon. The initiative appeared to gain unilateral support. There were a number of quite poignant replies. One call in particular came from a man who in the 1962 had been involved in a fatal, drink related, road collision. He had been found to be over the drink drive limit. He survived but all four occupants of the other vehicle had been killed. He explained that he had carried this guilt with him for over thirty years. It had affected both his work and personal life. His only wish was that if the Drink-Link scheme been available then, that someone had 'dobbed' him in and prevented the accident happening in the first place. The programme producer later contacted Sergeant Moon and explained that she had been contacted by a local organisation' that also intended to initiate a similar scheme in the state, using the Drink-Link title.

Sergeant Moon and Constable Beeston completely hand over the operation of Drink-Link to 'Crime Stoppers'.

Because of their efforts both officers have since received commendations for their initiative and organisational skills in developing the Drink-Link informant line to reduce road collisions, making the roads of Lancashire a safer place.

Although a target for the reduction of injury and fatal road traffic collisions was set by the Lancashire Constabulary at 5%. The officers in Southern division were able to pass this target by a long margin, over the 12-month period. Because of their actions and in particular because of the operation of the Drink-Link informant line a reduction of 9% was achieved. This was by far best result across the remainder of the force. The activities, at a local level, of the Drink-Link line, in identifying the problem of persistent drink drivers who ignored the drink drive legislation and put not only their own lives but those of other innocent members of the Lancashire community at risk, gave in impetus to informants to do the moral thing. To pass on the information required by the police to put a stop to those activities. Obtaining only a small amount of the right calibre of such information allowed the officers to return to the press with the type of story they needed to fill their news space. This then allowed of the circle of events to be completed. The Drink-Link line being high profile thus produced the necessary fears in the potential offender to prevent the offence being committed in the first instance. This then addressed the initial objective of reducing the instances of injury and fatal road collisions, and by a better margin than that sort.

One of the major selling points of this system revolves round its costs to operate. The systems for voice mail are already in place within the force and therefore require no further funding. The interest of the press and media were the most difficult section to maintain and therefore resources are required in the form of staff time to network with the press on a personal level rather than simply by faxed press releases issued from the force information unit. However, answering press queries and making statements to up date them take only a short time of any working day. If one officer

was to spend one hour per week in such work then when charged at an hourly rate this equates to approximately £16. For such a small cost the lives of many could be saved and the objective of keeping the public of Lancashire safe, involved and reassured can only give good value for money.

One of the major disappointments the officers found was that having handed over the administration of the initiative to the Crime Stoppers charity, the personnel involved in the Drink-Link scheme from that body appeared to have failed in putting the correct degree of time and effort into courting the press. As such, having attained a high degree of publicity on the hand over, which was obtained for them by Sergeant Moon and Constable Beeston and the force's information unit, little else was done. Subsequently after a huge initial response the number of call as dropped off considerably. There appears to have been little or no publicity about the Drink-Link line and therefore the impetus in preventing offenders was lost. The officers have now liased with the local Crime Stoppers representative and expressed their concerns on this point. An arrangement has been agreed upon that Sergeant Moon and Constable Beeston will again take on board the responsibility of regaining the initiative in placing the scheme in the public's eye. A re-launch date of mid July 1999 has been agreed to connect with the force summer drink drive campaign which is set to start on the first week of August.

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