

## Tilley Award 2005

### Application form

The following form must be completed in full. Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the competition.

Please send completed application forms to Tricia Perkins at [patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

All entries must be received by noon on the 29 April 2005. Entries received after that date will not be accepted under any circumstances. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Tricia Perkins on 0207 035 0262.

#### 1. Details of application

Title of the project Steart – Reclaiming the Common

Name of force/agency/CDRP: Avon & Somerset Constabulary – ‘G’ District

Name of one contact person with position/rank (this should be one of the authors): PS Ray Hulin

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Telephone number: 01823 363313

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Name of endorsing senior representatives(s) DCC Steve Otter. Endorsing letter signed by ACC Jackie Roberts in absence of Mr Otter.

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s) Deputy Chief Constable

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s) Police Headquarters, Valley Road, Portishead

Stear - 'Reclaiming the Common'

## G District

Endorsed and commended by

*Avon and Somerset Constabulary*

*DCC Steve Otter*



Contact

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## **2. Summary of application**

In no more than 400 words please use this space to describe your project. Include details of the problem that was addressed a description of the initiative, the main intervention principles and what they were designed to achieve, the main outcomes of project particularly in relation to the problem, evidence was used in designing the programme and how the project is evaluated.

# **Stearth 'Reclaiming the Common'**

## **Executive Summary**

Stearth Common, an area of outstanding natural beauty, is situated on an isolated peninsular on the estuary where the River Parrett joins the Bristol Channel. It provides sanctuary for a variety of fauna and species of Britain's rarest coastal wildlife. For hundreds of years a small group of local residents, known as Commoners, have enjoyed unrestricted access to graze their livestock.

Over the last 20 years the common has attracted increasing numbers of predominantly young people seeking a venue for unregulated weekend parties. The associated noise pollution was impacting on the quality of life for residents, the livelihood of the commoners and adversely affecting the local economy. Tourists were becoming reluctant to book holidays in the nearby resorts of Burnham on Sea and Weston Super Mare because their experience was such that they were kept awake by the incessant noise on Rave weekends.

Young people, amplified music and noise pollution equates to "raves". Community tension was on the increase and the fear of crime rising. As Central Government introduced legislation expectations and pressure on the authorities rose.

In June 2002, the weekend of the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations a 4 day rave attracted an estimated 10,000 people to the common. The Police response proved totally inadequate. A fact later highlighted by the Local MP to the Chief Constable and raised in the House of Commons. Confidence in the Police's ability to protect local residents was evaporating.

The unique topography dictated that enforcement alone to prevent raves would not be sustainable. A problem solving multi-agency approach was essential. The Common bordered two separate CDRP's, the rave was occurring on the doorstep of one of the country's largest nuclear power stations, the Common is controlled by English Heritage, the Environmental Agency and the Stearth commoners. All had different agendas and responsibilities. Agreements were negotiated, finance secured and a package of target hardening measures implemented. The local community rallied and formed an early warning "Rave Watch". Members of the voluntary Special Constabulary committed themselves to implementing a Police Operational Order.

The intervention has, to date, proved successful. There has not been a rave held on the common since June 2002. The efforts of the rave organisers have been thwarted. There have been substantial savings to the Police and Local Authority. More importantly the confidence in the local Police has increased dramatically. This is evidenced by the comments of the Local MP Ian Liddel-Grainger, and the many letters of thanks received from the local community.

### **3. Description of project**

Describe the project following the guidance above in no more than 4000 words

## **Stear Common**

Stear Common in Somerset is designated by English Heritage as an area of outstanding natural beauty. It is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to a wide variety of aquatic and bank-side plant species. Rare species of Invertebrates and insects unique to the area add to the national importance of Stear Beach. Thirty minutes drive from Bridgwater and in an isolated spot down country lanes Stear Beach is off the tourist track and mainly used by locals and farmers, who have Commoners rights to allow livestock to graze on the common.

## **Scanning**

For the past twenty years the peaceful tranquillity of the area has been periodically destroyed for days at a time by organised and illegal 'raves'. The events fitted the definition of 'raves' due the loud amplified music at night causing serious distress to the locals. The raves started on a fairly low-key basis without any major impact on the community or wildlife. Community intelligence clearly demonstrates the effect of these illegal gatherings on such a tight-knit rural community and should not be underestimated. Residents were afraid to leave their houses unoccupied. Some individuals even cancelled their annual holidays in order to stay and protect their property from what they perceived to be "the invaders." The feedback received by the Police, Local Authority and the Members of Parliament for the area was that residents felt they were being imprisoned in their own homes and there were genuine fears as each Bank Holiday approached.

Politically, the Raves were being used by some to highlight the disparity between police resources allocated to incidents in the city and those in the rural community. It was being used as ammunition by ratepayers who were protesting about high increases in the Council precept for policing. The local Parish Council were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with what they perceived to be a lack of policing in the immediate area. People felt isolated and vulnerable and the credibility of the Avon and Somerset Constabulary was being called into question.

Prior to this SARA a rave in June 2002 was attended by over 10,000 people and collectively cost various agencies and businesses an estimated £50,000, the event brought the whole areas transport infrastructure to a standstill and caused major embarrassment to the Police.

## **Analysis**

<i>Political</i>	1 <i>Adverse public opinion from local residents towards local politicians and the Avon and Somerset Constabulary</i>
<i>Economic</i>	2 <i>Policing costs (including use of helicopter / horse &amp; dogs etc)</i> 3 <i>Defence costs (including reinforced metal gates / boulders / ditches etc)</i> 4 <i>Lost tourism</i> 5 <i>Cost to local businesses through lost trade</i>
<i>Social</i>	6 <i>Impact of noise pollution</i> 7 <i>Clogging of local road networks</i> 8 <i>Cancellation of local events</i> 9 <i>Health and safety of residents, ravers and Police</i>
<i>Technological</i>	10
<i>Environmental</i>	11 <i>Rubbish pollution (also associated clear up costs)</i> 12 <i>Killing of sheep</i> 13 <i>Damage to environment</i>
<i>Legal</i>	14 <i>Costs for criminal justice system</i>

The analysis phase involved examining storm logs, crime reports, intelligence reports, force policies, operational orders, debriefs with Officers involved in past incidents, local community consultation, information sharing with other stake holder agencies, viewing of video Police footage, video footage obtained from the organisers of the rave and rave web sites.

### ***Location Analysis***

When analysing and researching the problem in 2002 it became clear that the surrounding location was currently incredibly difficult to Police and indeed far more so than other potential rave sites within the force area. Due to its isolated location, travelling distance from Bridgwater Police Station where limited resources are based any unpredicted incursions onto the land simply could not be defended.

The site can only be accessed through narrow country lanes. Recent historic events demonstrated that Police units on the ground preventing an incursion, cause these lanes to be blocked by traffic which in turn prevents the potential ravers from leaving the scene. This also leaves the first Police units at the scene isolated and vulnerable to attack when trying to prevent access to the common. In June 2002 a few local Police Officers held back thousands of ravers whilst awaiting further support. This resulted with one Police vehicle being rammed and another with its windscreen shattered during an attempt to overturn the vehicle. Once the lanes are blocked any back up resources have to leave their vehicles some distance away and make their way on foot. Realistically the supporting Officers will be in the form of Sergeant and sixes from other districts with little or no local knowledge and would find difficulties in reaching the vulnerable Officers. A major point of concern in relation to these facts was that the organisers of the raves were fully aware of this scenario. Video footage obtained from organisers of the event evidenced the fact that attending ravers had been briefed on how to respond to any Police road-blocks which prevented their incursion onto the site. They were instructed via a rave phone hotline to block the roads, remove their keys and walk away from the vehicles and watch the mayhem which follows, namely the local transport grinding to a halt and fearful residents unable to leave or return to their homes. (This will be graphically demonstrated during the POP final by the use of video footage.)

Co-ordination of the Police response to prevent incursion onto the land relies heavily on the helicopter. Without road markings Officers on the ground have to rely on grid references for locations. The helicopter itself is an expensive resource and one that is not always available. Fuel consumption dictates that any helicopter support is intermittent due to the travelling distances involved.

When surveying Steart Common and the beach area further problems presented themselves. The beach itself, where traditionally the sound systems are erected, is pebbled and provides the ravers with an endless supply of dangerous ammunition. There is no street lighting in the area, which in turn adds to the vulnerability of Officers when darkness falls. This is compounded by poor radio communications in the area. Previous risk assessments made during raves have always dictated it was necessary to withdraw the Police presence during the night. Any generic risk assessment would struggle to put measures in place to minimise these hazards.

A review of the last 10 years indicates there have been on average six raves per year. During this time the organisation of each rave has improved and attracted larger numbers. It was becoming an escalating problem hence the need to adopt a problem solving approach.

### **Victim analysis**

It could be argued that the number of victims from a rave at Steart out-numbers any recorded crime category with the Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

When analysing the 'victims' we concentrated on a large rave that took place in June 2002. This was our most recent rave and gave us our most accurate indication of what lay ahead should our response to the growing problem fail.

The noise pollution from 35 sound systems for four days and nights caused serious distress to the local community and complaints were received as far afield as Burnham-On-Sea and Weston-Super-Mare. With the sound systems pointing in different directions some were pointed out to sea hence the complaints on other seaside resorts. In the Brean and Berrow areas of Burnham-On-Sea there are 60,000 bed spaces for tourists in caravans along the coast (statistics obtained from Sedgemoor District Council). Every caravan park has been contacted and provided a consistent response to the questions asked. All the caravan parks were full because it was a bank holiday weekend. This was not a unique situation because the majority of previous raves in Steart were on bank holidays.

At the time of this event the phone lines for the Constabulary were inundated for the entire weekend. Thousands of calls were taken by the Constabulary and operational policing across the force suffered as a consequence.

*"The noise was intolerable, it was like trying to sleep with a car alarm going off outside your bedroom window. The noise was continuous for the entire Bank Holiday weekend. Our holiday was spoilt and by the Sunday morning we packed up and left. The children were in tears as it was the first holiday we had had for three years. I will not be bringing my family back down to this area again."*

Quote obtained from a complaint form returned to a Brean caravan park.

During the June 2002 rave, 42 sheep were killed. Some had been found with their throats cut, and some savaged by dogs; others were missing presumed eaten by the ravers. Farmers' land was damaged when hundreds of vehicles tried to make their way across country to the event having been stopped by roadblocks.

On the site of the rave agricultural fences and gates had been destroyed for fire wood, three cars and a caravan were burnt out and left on the common, and hundreds of square yards of rubbish were left behind. During the clear up of the site four days worth of human excrement from 10,000 people, needles and dead animals sent the cost of the clear up soaring for the Local Authority of Somerset West.

### Offender analysis

*"Hear hear!! What a storming party. I cannot wait for the next one. Well done to everyone involved and everyone who turned up. And well done the Police for realising we were going to do it no matter what and for realising when it was time to give up and go and chase some real criminals instead. I'll be buzzing about the party for weeks!"*

Quote, anon. Website [www.quilfin.net](http://www.quilfin.net)

*"What an amazing party! The trek down the motorway was torture spotting vans in traffic you know could be getting out of their rigs and partying on the M5! We got a full summer holiday sunburn and sand in the shoes included. The vibe was wicked the people beautiful and the music was fucking mental! Loved every second of it and not shut up about it since we got back. Thank you to everyone involved and for making it happen. It was a party I don't think any of us will forget. See you the next time."*

Quote, anon. Website [www.quilfin.net](http://www.quilfin.net)

*"Multi-rig party?????!!!!!! Get down there, we went down and were escorted from the area by police. Fucking loads of them for about 5 miles from the site. But went and chilled and from about 5 pm not a pig in sight. Had a mad 36 hours, must be 40 rigs over a mile of beach. When we left at 10 am this morning it was still going off. And mates we left with a rig are staying down till Thursday. You gotta see it to believe it. Utterly fucking awesome, best free party I've ever been to."*

Quote, anon. Website [www.quilfin.net](http://www.quilfin.net)

An offender profile demonstrated that the majority of the ravers were aged between 18 and 30 years. Age and taste of music were the only common denominators amongst the ravers, it was found that sex, social standing or ethnicity had no bearing.

The participants of the raves are from all over the UK and across parts of Europe. During our more recent raves sound systems from as far afield as Holland were on the site. The common theme however was that a few locals were involved with the organisation of the events in conjunction with rave web-sites. Web-sites such as 'Tribe of the Munt' had advertised the events in advance and named the South West region of the country as a likely venue. Acting upon this information the ravers met up at RV points awaiting contact via mobile phones. This kept the Police guessing and created large convoys of ravers.

The offenders were highly motivated and known to have used violence and intimidation to achieve their aim. Once a rave site is established all the relevant web-sites advertise the fact and 2,000 ravers can become 10,000 ravers within hours.

There are 36 web-sites dedicated to the raves over the years at Steart Common, some of which sell official photo albums, music and videos from the raves.

## **Response**

Agencies including Police, Sedgemoor District Council, West Somerset District Council, English Heritage, DEFRA, British Nuclear Fuels, the Commoners and local resident groups had regular meetings to create a long-term solution to the problem and strategies for the short term.

It was acknowledged that all previous attempts to prevent these raves had failed and only a committed multi-agency response would have any chance of success. Police and local community pressure ensured that both Local Authorities accepted they had a key role to play. Sedgemoor District Council residents suffer the brunt of the noise pollution however Steart itself is within the jurisdiction of West Somerset District Council.

The following objectives were agreed then actioned.

### ***Objectives***

- 1) To prevent any unlawful incursion onto Steart Common***
- 2) Reduce the fear of crime***
- 3) Re-establish confidence of the local community in the Avon and Somerset Constabulary***

### ***Actions required to achieve stated Objectives***

- overcome the complicated land ownership and access issues which have prevented target hardening of the location***
- find the finances required and then implement target hardening measures***
- create an early warning notification system by using local residents as the eyes and ears for agencies***
- improve information sharing systems between agencies and for the police to actively seek intelligence on potential raves***
- implement an Operation to prevent raves for each Bank Holiday weekend of the year***
- highlight the knowledge of the location as a potential rave hotspot throughout the A & S Constabulary***

### **Land Ownership**

The land ownership problems were complex as Steart Common itself is owned by the Commoners and has been so for over 200 years. In addition to the Commoners West Somerset District Council, English Heritage and the Environmental Agency have statutory responsibilities and rights of entry. All the interested parties claimed differing agendas and priorities. Traditionally this Common has been open and accessible to the Commoners and public alike. All parties were persuaded after much-debate to allow gates and fortifications to be constructed on the land. This was a major step forward and came about due to the political fall-out following the Jubilee weekend rave. It was agreed that each of the twelve Commoners would have keys to the fortified



gates that they agreed would be locked between April and October each year.

### **Finance and Fortification**

Having overcome the land ownership issue, finance was sought from the stakeholder agencies to implement the fortification required on the land. The following Agencies provided funds: Police £1000, English Heritage £2,300, Sedgemoor District Council £1,000, West Somerset District Council £1,000, and British Nuclear Fuels £500. The Police Architectural Liaison Officer surveyed the ground and created a plan that was adopted. The £5,800 paid for the gates, strategically placed trenches and large boulders. It was hoped that these measures would assist the Police in preventing an incursion onto the land.

### **Early Notification**

With Police backing, a local action team was set up for the area in the form of a 'Rave Watch' and was the first of its type in the country. The 'Rave Watch' exchanged information and intelligence with the Police. They acted as the eyes and ears for the community by checking the defences, locking the gates and reporting early activity on the beach. An exchange of mobile phone numbers between the 'Rave Watch' and the beat manager for the area eased the fear of crime and empowered their activities.

Rave web sites and hotline phone numbers have been identified and are monitored by both FIB and local Officers. The early warning systems we have set up can then be activated. The local FIO is tasked with risk assessing all the information received from the various sources. This information still forms part of weekly Bridgwater Sector Management meetings and as Community Tension Indicators on the Level 1 TTCG.

### **Operation Groundforce**

For each bank holiday weekend of the year, Operation Groundforce is implemented in the surrounding area of Steart. This includes an inner cordon and an outer cordon. Following the analysis and debrief from officers attending previous Raves, it was clear that an outer cordon covering the larger roads some distance from the rave site was required. This ensures that when vehicles are turned back the roads remain clear and the traffic infrastructure does not grind to a halt as on previous weekends. To assist this, an agreement was made with Sedgemoor District Council to provide road barriers at 12 key locations that are placed at the sides of the roads. These interlocking barriers can be used to protect officers should ravers arrive at the road junctions. This would also prevent damage to police vehicles and their mere presence sends out a message to the organisers that the relevant agencies are ready and prepared. The cost for this arrangement is one that the Police negotiated and is shared between West Somerset District Council and Sedgemoor District Council.

Operation Groundforce relies heavily on the volunteers of the Special Constabulary. Additional training was provided for the Special Constabulary to enhance their knowledge of illegal gatherings and public order legislation. A minimum of fourteen members of the Special Constabulary are involved and fully committed to the cause. This Operation is a key factor as to why the G District Special Constabulary outnumbers any other district both in numbers, and for the hours they work. Several junctions are covered from Friday afternoons until the Sunday when we are confident any potential Rave has been prevented.

Part of the Operation involves regular officers including the Beat Manager, visiting local residents

known as involved in the organisation of previous Raves. The message is clear to these organisers, the Rave will not take place. The fear of crime is addressed by reassurance patrols and the main junctions being covered by the Special Constabulary. This is an ongoing Operation and is carried out several times per year depending on risk assessments and the number of Bank Holiday weekends. The Operation costs, despite the size of the Operation are minimal due to the resources used. The volunteer aspect of the Operation is huge, Special Constables, Commoners and Rave Watch will number over fifty sets of eyes and ears.

## **Assessment**

Referring to the SARA response objectives.

Objective 1) To prevent any unlawful incursion onto Steart Common.

- Not a single unlawful incursion onto the land has taken place with a view to carry out a rave. This has been the case since June 2002 and the creation of the multi-agency SARA.
- All the 'response actions' are still in place as the SARA continues to run its course.
- Several attempts to organise a rave have been monitored by both the Police and Rave Watch members on the rave web-site chat rooms. Dialogue on the web-site indicated that the ravers were deterred by the fortification, and Police presence.
- Genuine probing attempts by ravers with sound systems to reach Steart have been stopped in their tracks by the outer ring plan.

Objective 2) Reduce the fear of crime.

Objective 3) Re-establish confidence of the local community in the Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

By achieving objective (1) and by implementing all the actions we set ourselves, the second objective was automatically achieved. This is best evidenced by letters of thanks received by the various agencies (in particular the Police), and the comments made by community leaders and politicians. Other evidence is the reduction of crime, the eradication of unacceptable and seriously distressing noise pollution. The same evidence demonstrates the achievement of the third objective.

### ***Efficiency gains***

When establishing the cost savings for this SARA we used the relevant experts to ensure the savings were accurate, honest, relevant and could be attributed to the SARA. For example when assessing Police savings we used the experience of the Corporate Development Department rather than a local 'guesstimate' or wishful thinking. Where costs can not be quantified we have stated this fact.

Costs are based for a two-year period assuming we have prevented 6 raves per year. An average calculation has been made on the costs attributable to a Steart Common rave. The exception to this is the Police efficiency savings that are based on the average cost of the previous 12 force wide raves. Due to the smaller scale of the average force wide raves this provides us with a conservative estimate.

**Economic savings (for full Police efficiency analysis refer to appendix A)**

<b>Type of Savings</b>	<b>Per Rave</b>	<b>2 year Rave free period</b>
Killed injured/livestock	£3,150	£37,800
Damage to farmers and residents land, fences and irrigation systems	£8,000	£96,000
Cleanup costs	£1,000	£12,000
Police	£13,032	£156,384
Tourism	Cannot be quantified	Cannot be quantified
Local business	Cannot be quantified	Cannot be quantified
Transport infrastructure in use	Cannot be quantified	Cannot be quantified
Community confidence in the responsible authorities	Cannot be quantified	Cannot be quantified
Eradication of serious noise pollution	Cannot be quantified	Cannot be quantified
<b>Quantifiable costs</b>	<b>£25,182</b>	<b>£302,184</b>
<b>Non-quantifiable costs</b>		<b>Refer to quotes and presentation at the finals</b>

*“Traditionally we have fought to keep the common open and accessible to the commoners and the public alike. We recognise times have changed, the actions of the minority of the public, non of whom live in the area, was impacting on our way of life. Our livestock was being killed, there was mess left behind, discarded needles, human waste, all of which posed dangers to us and our animals. By working with the police and local residents we have hopefully put all these problems behind us.”*

**Quote: Mr Michael Hill Chairman of the commoners**

*I have worked here for 8 years, I remember a number of weekends over the years when the noise has been very loud during the day and night. I am aware that this is due to illegal gatherings across the bay. The Jubilee weekend in particular was bad. I received countless complaints from my customers, advance bookings dropped dramatically and some of the families left the site early. This was a great disappointment as the leisure park was full to capacity. I am most grateful to the police and other agencies that this situation has not reoccurred for the last two tourist seasons. Bookings are now back to pre 2002 levels.*

**Quote from a Brean Leisure Park Bookings Manager.**

*Stearr Beach provides a unique sanctuary for a variety of British breeding coastal birds and diverse invertebrate fauna. The peace and tranquillity of the area was constantly being disturbed by the raves. It seemed to be coming more frequent and this was having a detrimental effect to the local environment. We are pleased to be involved in this initiative and we have seen some tangible benefits in that the balance of nature has been restored.*

**Quote: Robin Prouse English Nature.**

*“The level of complaints from local residents and business was simply not acceptable. Such was my concern that I raised this issue with the former Chief Constable, Steve Pilkington and with Ministers in the House of Commons itself. Agencies needed to work together to develop long-term solutions for this problem. The Management team at Bridgwater police station grasped the nettle, drove the project forward and co-ordinated the multi-agency response. I have a 5 inch thick file of complaints from members of the public about illegal raves at Stearr. Over the last two years however because of the work that has taken place I have only received letters of thanks and compliments about the situation. I am aware that the police have an on-going operation and commitment to keep the area rave-free and I wholeheartedly support and congratulate them on their efforts.*

**Quote: Ian Liddell-Grainger, M.P.**

## **Conclusion**

This ongoing POP approach has achieved its set objectives. Success can be attributed to the co-ordinated efforts of stake-holder agencies and the empowerment of local citizens coupled with the effective use of the Special Constabulary. This two year SARA follows 20 years of unsuccessful and uncoordinated attempts to resolve the problem.