

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

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 - **Operation Cracker**

Name of force/agency/CDRP – **Cleveland Police, Langbaugh District**

Name of one contact person with position/rank (this should be one of the authors) – **PC Karon Mackay**

Email address – **karonmackay@cleveland.pnn.police.uk**

Full postal address:

**Dawson House
11 Ridley Street
Redcar
TS10 1TT**

Telephone number – **01642 302078**

Fax number – **01642 302725**

Name of endorsing senior representatives(s) – **Dee Collins**

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s) – **Chief Superintendent**

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s):

**Dawson House
11 Ridley Street
Redcar
TS10 1TT**

2. Summary of application

In the year 2000/01 anti-social behaviour reports in Langbaugh rose by over 12%, forming almost a quarter of all calls received. 84% of those calls related to problems with youths. The period running up to Bonfire Night suffered from particularly high levels of anti-social behaviour, with a significant proportion of incidents being related to fireworks misuse.

A crime pattern analysis was commissioned in 2003 to examine the extent of anti-social behaviour activity associated with the period encompassing Mischief Chief Night, Halloween and Bonfire Night. It was identified that calls has reached unacceptable levels, averaging at 33 per day, with 14.3% of calls related to the misuse of fireworks. South Bank ward was identified as suffering from the highest number of calls.

As a result of the analysis undertaken a number of serious concerns were raised, including:

- Threat of serious injury or death from fireworks misuse.
- Threat of house/property fire as a result of fireworks misuse.
- Illegal trade in fireworks, supporting organised crime.
- Risk of injury from imported/illegal fireworks which did not meet required Health & Safety standards.
- The effect of fireworks misuse on the local community, in particular the elderly and domestic animals, i.e. loud noise, smoke, flames, flashes.

South Bank's two Police Community Support Officers tackled the problem by organising a multi agency initiative entitled 'Operation Cracker'.

Key areas of focus of the Operation were:

- Education – presentations given in local schools raising awareness of dangers of fireworks misuse, visits to all local shops reminding shopkeepers of responsibilities.
- Publicity – press releases, articles in local press and Force intranet, leaflets.
- Illegal Sales – freephone number to report illegal sales, pupils at schools and shopkeepers encouraged to share information, shopkeepers reminded of responsibilities.
- Visibility – CCTV patrol van, high visibility patrols, warrants executed.
- Disposal - protocol negotiated with Boulby potash mine to allow the safe disposal of any illegal fireworks seized during the Operation.
- Partnership Working – working in conjunction with Local Authority, Fire Service and Trading Standards to deliver a focused message.

Post operation analysis concluded that whilst anti-social behaviour incidents had risen by 6.3% across the District, South Bank ward had seen an 18.9% decrease during the time the Operation was running. There were no serious firework related injuries in South Bank in 2004 and the number of fires reported in 2004 fell by 78.2% when compared with 2003.

3. Description of project

SCAN

Langbaugh is a geographically diverse district, comprising of a large rural area with small communities, a large urban conurbation and a number of coastal towns and villages. As is the national trend, anti-social behaviour has become an increasing problem in the District over the past few years, this being reflected in the National Policing Plan and Local Policing Plan priorities to 'reduce people's concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour and disorder'. In the year 2000/01 anti-social behaviour reports rose by over 12%, forming almost a quarter of all calls received. 84% of those calls related to problems with youths.

Traditionally the period encompassing Mischief Night (30th October), Halloween (31st October) and Bonfire Night (5th November) suffers from particularly high levels of anti-social behaviour. This is commonly believed to be aggravated by the illegal sale and misuse of fireworks.

Until recently fireworks have only been sold in the weeks immediately prior to Bonfire Night, however they are now easily obtainable throughout the year, and can be purchased both legally and illegally from a diverse range of outlets. In recent years public opinion has started to turn against the use of fireworks, in most part due to their misuse by a minority of individuals, and this was reflected in the Fireworks Act 2003, which attempts to reduce the noise, nuisance and injuries caused by the misuse of fireworks. The Fireworks Regulations 2004 further enforced these measures by proposing:

- A ban on the supply of air bombs
- A clearer definition of mini rocket usage
- A change of the 'due diligence' defence of 'strict liability' for suppliers, in relation to the sale of fireworks to those under the age of 18.

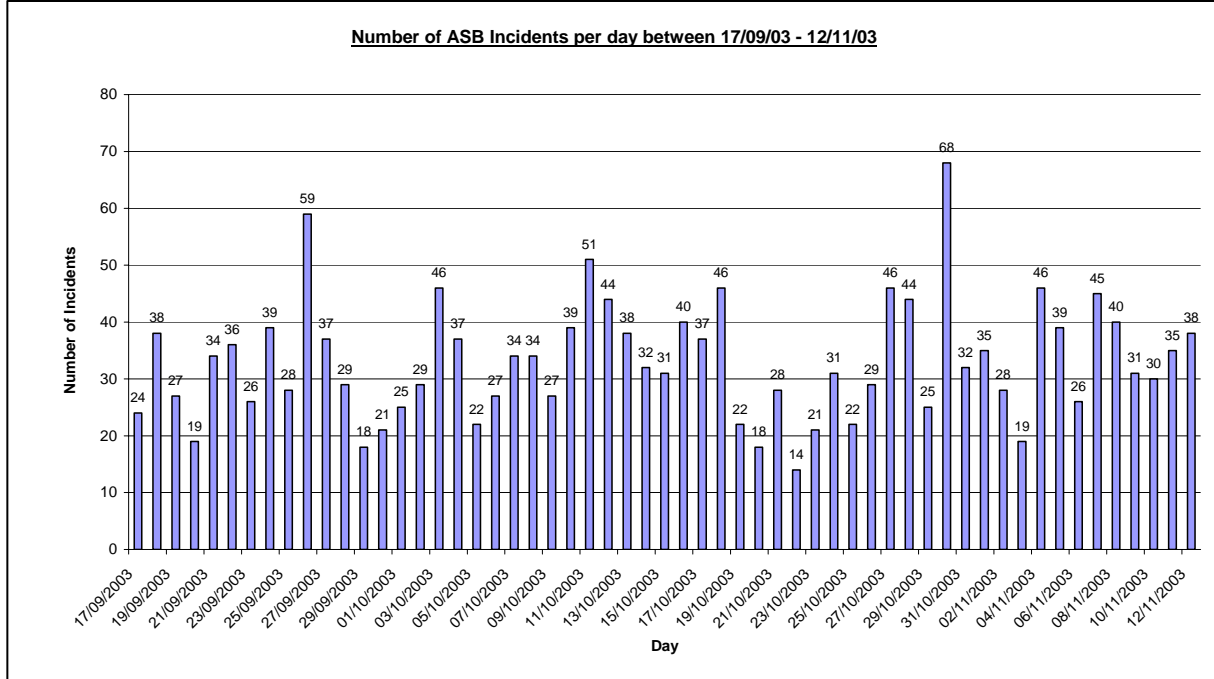
Pressure to tackle the issue of fireworks misuse and the associated anti-social behaviour was being received from local schools, resident groups, shopkeepers and in particular from South Bank councillor and shopkeeper Pearl Hall whose campaign for a blanket ban on domestic firework sales was increased following an incident where a firework was thrown into her shop in 2001 (see Appendix A).

ANALYSIS

In view of the public concerns regarding both anti-social behaviour and the misuse of fireworks, Redcar & Cleveland Local Authority Community Safety Department commissioned a crime pattern analysis to examine the extent of anti-social behaviour activity associated with the period encompassing Mischief Chief Night, Halloween and Bonfire Night. All anti-social behaviour incidents that had occurred between 17th September 2003 and 12th November 2003 were examined.

The analysis concluded that whilst there had actually been a 1.9% decrease in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents recorded in the Langbaugh District for the analysed period in 2003, compared with 2002, the level of incidents was still unacceptable, averaging at 33 per day. Of the 1886 calls received in 2003, 270 (14.3%) were related to the misuse of fireworks. As can be seen from the following graph (Graph A), the highest number of incidents (68) were recorded on 30th October (Mischief Night). Calls on this day were mainly received between 18:00-23:00, peaking between 21:00-23:00. Calls reported incidents of youths throwing eggs, fireworks and bangers in the street and at passing vehicles.

Graph A



The highest levels of incidents were recorded in Grangetown and South Bank wards, with each ward receiving 182 calls during the time period. Both wards are located in the L2 sub-district, which was the main area where fireworks complaints were received. Incidents involved youths throwing fireworks at residential properties, into business premises, at vehicles and persons.

South Bank received the highest number of calls for the time period in 2002 (184), so consistently displayed the most problems over both years analysed. Incidents of note in South Bank in 2003 were:

- Intergraph message K230554 - Call received from Cleveland Fire Service who had come under attack from local youths whilst trying to extinguish a bonfire.
- Intergraph message K206903 – Caller reporting her son had received injuries to his face and back after a group of youths had attacked him with a firework. Youth needed skin grafts to the affected areas.
- Intergraph message K200066 – Fireworks posted through the letterbox of a residence where children were present. Fireworks burnt out without starting a fire. One juvenile arrested for criminal damage.

Hot spot locations within South Bank were identified as:

- Cleveland Court
- Hampden Street
- Shinwell Crescent
- Normanby Road
- Victoria Street/Court

It was evident to the Police Community Support Team patrolling the South Bank area that anti-social behaviour over the Bonfire Night period in 2003 had reached unacceptable levels. From checking pocket note book entries, it was noted that incidents were reported from mid September and included:

- Burnt out cars.
- Fires in derelict properties.

- Fireworks being used as missiles – drainpipes were used as rocket launchers to fire at passing cars, resulting in both traffic problems and vandalism as the drainpipes were ripped from the surrounding houses.
- Numerous bonfires across the South Bank area.

Intelligence on the illegal sale of fireworks was received, notably:

- One school reported that bangers were being sold at the rate of ten for a pound.
- Large quantities of fireworks on the street well before the three week period when shops can officially sell them.
- Information received that certain individuals were making in excess of £10,000 selling illegal fireworks in the South Bank area.

In previous years 70% of complaints regarding underage sales of fireworks were related to residential properties. In 2004 fewer businesses applied for licences to sell fireworks, which led to fears of increased illegal sales from residential properties.

South Bank is situated adjacent to the industrial complexes of Wilton International and Corus. Industrial decline has severely affected the area, leading to high levels of unemployment, a significant amount of void properties and increased levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. Deprivation levels within the area are high with South Bank being listed within the top 10% of most deprived wards within England and Wales. From the analysis carried out it was apparent that South Bank was suffering from a serious anti-social behaviour problem that was focused over an intensive period around Bonfire Night. This led to serious concerns regarding:

- Threat of serious injury or death from fireworks misuse.
- Threat of house/property fire as a result of fireworks misuse.
- Illegal trade in fireworks, supporting organised crime.
- Risk of injury from imported/illegal fireworks which did not meet required Health & Safety standards.
- The effect of fireworks misuse on the local community, in particular the elderly and domestic animals, i.e. loud noise, smoke, flames, flashes.

RESPONSE

Bonfire Night 2004 Strategy Group

Concern surrounding the issues related to Bonfire Night resulted in the formation of the Bonfire Night 2004 Strategy Group, a partnership group comprised of:

- Cleveland Police
- Redcar and Cleveland Local Authority
- Cleveland Fire Service
- Local Housing providers
- Community Safety Wardens
- Town Centre Management
- CCTV

The group coordinated Local Authority bonfire removal teams, which operated for a 3 week period around Bonfire Night. A 24 hour freephone number was available for members of the public to report illegal bonfire sites, fireworks incidents and illegal sales. Local Authority policy was to remove bonfire fuel from all open spaces and to be proactive in looking for hotspots, thereby reducing the risk of unsupervised fires. In order to further discourage personal bonfires/fireworks displays, four public displays were organised across the District, in Redcar, Guisborough, Skinningrove and Eston, which is adjacent to South Bank.

These displays were well publicised in the local press, including the Local Authority's quarterly magazine, 'River, Coast and Country', which is distributed free to every household in the borough. The displays offered additional enticements to attend including an Abba tribute band, a fairground, arena attractions, drum band and a Harry Potter theme. All reports of noise nuisance/discharging fireworks in the street received through the freephone number were forwarded to the Police for appropriate action and intervention. Records of these calls were faxed to the joint Local Authority and Police Community Safety Team for further action, monitoring and information.

Operation Cracker

In addition to the Strategy Group, the Community Policing Teams across the District were tasked with targeting the problems around Bonfire Night. In the South Bank area, where problems had been analysed as being particularly abundant, the two Police Community Support Officers took the initiative and organised a targeted operation using a problem solving approach. Operation Cracker was launched on 1st October 2004 to clamp down on the illegal sale of fireworks in South Bank. The Operation was a multi-agency initiative, involving Cleveland Police, Cleveland Fire Service and Redcar and Cleveland Local Authority Trading Standards Department and HM Customs and Excise, which ran for 6 weeks. Other agencies were made aware of the Operation, including local community groups, housing associations, councillors and street wardens.

The overall intentions of the Operation were to:

- Reduce the levels of anti-social and criminal behaviour which is linked to fireworks.
- Reduce the fear of crime associated with the above.
- Restore public confidence and improve the quality of life of the local community.
- Prevent any serious harm/risk of injury as a result of fireworks.
- Reduce the risk of property damage/fire.
- Reduce all fire related incidents, e.g. fireworks, bonfires, missiles thrown at cars etc.
- Reduce vandalism linked to the above, e.g. damaged fencing etc.
- Educate the public in general, and local schools and retailers in particular, regarding responsible handling of fireworks and the possible repercussions of mishandling fireworks.
- Restrict the illegal trade of fireworks, thereby reducing organised crime.
- Safely dispose of any confiscated fireworks.
- Send a clear and unequivocal message that Cleveland Police would not tolerate the illegal supply of fireworks, or their misuse in any form, which affects the quality of life of the residents of South Bank.

Publicity

The Operation was well publicised with press releases (see Appendix B) and articles in the local press, backing from South Bank councillor Pearl Hall and information on the Cleveland Police website. Leaflets were also distributed at local schools, shops, libraries, youth clubs, community groups and any other venues attended by the team. Due to severe financial pressures faced by the Force as a whole during 2004/2005 funding for this and any other Operation was an issue of significant concern. In view of this it was decided to issue leaflets published by the Department of Trade and Industry rather than to finance specific leaflets for the Operation. The leaflets covered the dangers associated with mixing alcohol with fireworks, and incorporated a handy checklist for anyone planning a firework display or bonfire.

Education

In the run up to Bonfire Night Cleveland County Fire Service ran an education campaign across the county, with presentations being shown in 12 secondary schools across the borough and a campaign of firework safety advertisements on radio and television using Premier League goalkeepers with the slogan 'In Safe Hands'. In South Bank this was further reinforced by the Operation Cracker team. The two Police Community Support Officers heading the operation visited all six local schools (three primary schools and three secondary schools with total pupil numbers of 2890), together with a representative from the local

Fire Service. In each school a presentation was given to warn of the dangers associated with fireworks. The style of the presentation was tailored to the age range of the pupils, and was designed to compliment the County presentation in schools where this had been given. A presentation was given at school assembly, and took the form of a question and answer session. Pupils were shown photographs of injuries caused by fireworks as part of a 'shock tactic' approach.

The team visited all shops in South Bank, in conjunction with Redcar and Cleveland Local Authority Trading Standards Department, to remind shopkeepers of their responsibilities when selling fireworks, and the importance of not selling to underage children. Fireworks legislation governing the sale of fireworks was reiterated and the recommended practice of only selling fireworks in the three week period before Bonfire Night was also reinforced. The largest distributor of fireworks in South Bank is Asda supermarket, and the team liaised closely with Asda staff, displaying leaflets within store and providing support to staff.

Illegal Sales

All shops within the area were frequently visited throughout the operation to remind shopkeepers of their responsibilities regarding fireworks sales. Twenty young volunteers were recruited by Trading Standards to undertake test purchase operations where underage sale of fireworks was suspected.

All reports of illegal firework sales received through the Local Authority freephone number were fully investigated.

During the Operation a large quantity of display fireworks was stolen from within the Stockton area (Stockton District forms part of the Cleveland Police area). The burnt out remains of some of these fireworks were seized in South Bank, and intelligence on the primary suspect gathered and passed to the investigating team.

High Visibility Patrols

Throughout the operation the South Bank Community Policing Team and Police Community Support Officers carried out high visibility patrols throughout the South Bank area, and in particular within the hotspot areas as identified through the crime pattern analysis report and the National Intelligence Model. The mobile CCTV patrol van was used to gather intelligence. During the operation 21 intelligence logs were submitted, and as a result of these 5 warrants were carried out.

Disposal of Fireworks

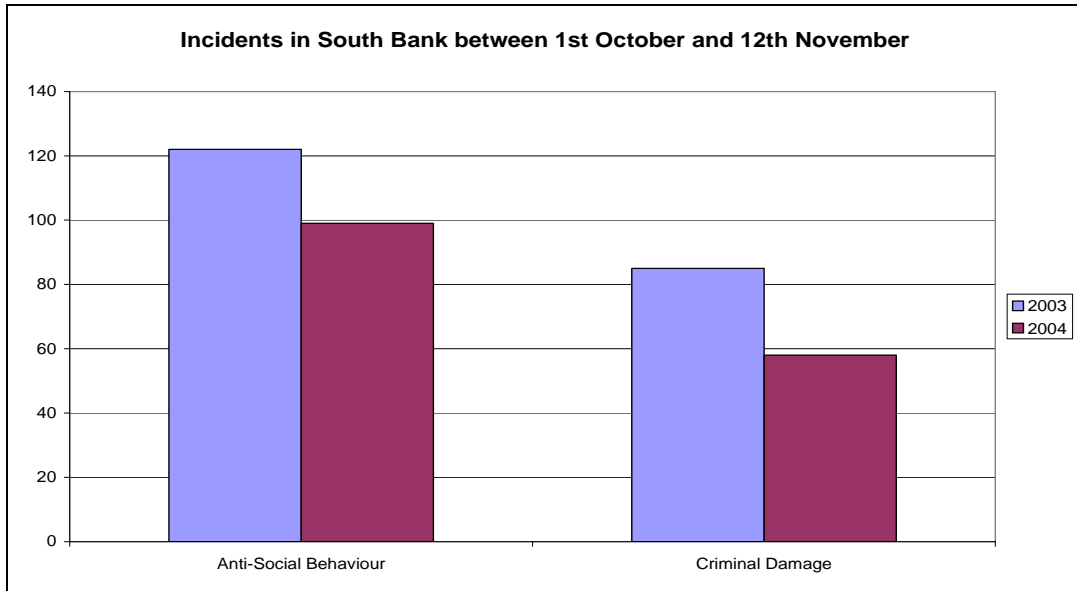
A protocol was negotiated with Boulby potash mine to allow the safe disposal of any illegal fireworks seized during the Operation. This service was provided free of charge.

ASSESSMENT

Following the completion of Operation Cracker analysis was undertaken to ascertain the levels of anti-social behaviour incidents and criminal damage during the 6 week period from 1st October to 12th November when the Operation was running compared with the same period in 2003. Although the Operation was concentrated on the South Bank area, the analysis report covered the whole of Langbaugh District.

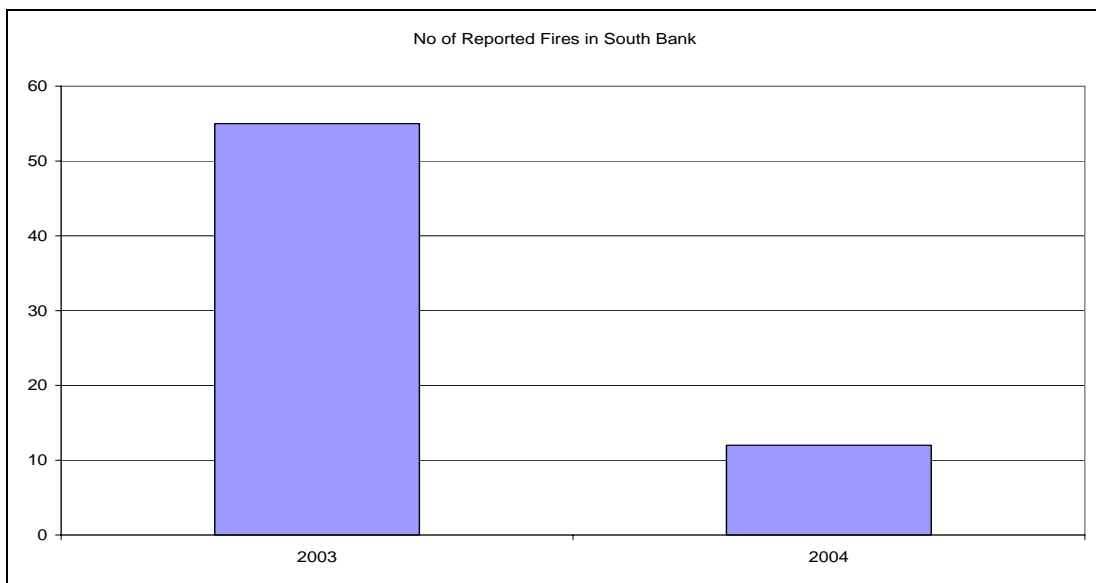
The report concluded that whilst there had been a 6.3% increase in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents reported across the District during the time period in 2004 compared with 2003, South Bank ward had seen an 18.9% decrease. Similarly, criminal damage had risen by 21.6% in 2004 compared with 2003, but had decreased by 31.8% in South Bank (See Graph B below for figures). In addition to this there were no serious firework related injuries in South Bank in 2004.

Graph B



In addition to the positive figures mentioned above, Cleveland Fire Service figures show that the number of fires reported in South Bank in 2004 fell by 78.2% when compared with 2003, from 55 to 12 (See Graph C below). With such a drastic reduction it would seem almost certain that the operation has had a major effect in discouraging youths in South Bank from starting fires.

Graph C



The Operation met with a very positive response from the South Bank community, who noticed a marked decrease in the number of fireworks/anti-social behaviour incidents in the run up to Bonfire Night compared with previous years. One residents group, South Bank Tomorrow, noted that:

'In previous years comments have been passed that living in South Bank during the months of October and November could be compared to living in a war zone. The success of 'Operation Cracker' was apparent to the community as the streets were much quieter and the community did not feel under attack.' (See Appendix C for full letter).

Positive feedback was also received from local schools, who felt that the safety talks given by the PCSOs and Fire Service were 'first rate, well delivered, organised and focused' (Eston Park School), and that the number of fireworks incidents both in and around the schools was substantially less than in previous years, one headteacher stating that, 'I am delighted to report that the days around Bonfire night were incident free' (St Margaret Clitherow's Catholic Primary School). Schools were also particularly impressed with the number of pupils who volunteered information on illegal fireworks sales which could then be passed to the Operation team – this demonstrated a raised awareness in the pupils of the effect of illegal sales and a willingness to cooperate with the team in tackling this.

Praise was also received from local shopkeepers, one stating that, 'It was noticed by my customers and myself how much quieter and safer the area was, with a noticeable difference in the reduction of firework activity compared to previous years.' (See Appendix D for full letter).

In all over twelve letters of appreciation were received, including two from local councillors who stated that South Bank had seen 'The quietest time leading up to Bonfire Night' and that this 'contribute(d) to a reassurance of public confidence and community safety'. Both expressed their hope that the operation would be continued in future years.

Operation Cracker is viewed as a highly transferable project for two main reasons:

- The anti-social behaviour associated with fireworks misuse takes part over an intensive time period around Bonfire Night, rather than for the full length of the year, so a relatively short and targeted operation such as this one can have a dramatic effect.
- Fireworks misuse is a universal problem, which affects a wide range of communities rather than being a location specific problem. For this reason the methods used can be applied across the District.

Due to the success of Operation Cracker and its transferable nature, the District plans to roll the operation out throughout Langbaugh in 2005, building on the success of 2004 by undertaking the following:

- Apply for a budget through local funding to provide posters/leaflets etc.
- More publicity through local press/TV/radio launch.
- Greater interaction with schools, i.e. poster competition etc.
- Visit all local Neighbourhood Watch meetings to provide street by street observations. Possible launch with a social event if funding is available.
- Draft in further resources, i.e. Neighbourhood Task Group, Specials, District Support Unit, Behaviour and Truancy Team, Local Authority Liaison Officer.
- Partnership working with Langbaugh Primary Care Trust to emphasise the consequences of fireworks misuse/ injuries etc.

Although Operation Cracker was a multi-agency initiative, the driving force behind the Operation came from South Bank's two Police Community Support Officers, who single-handedly devised and organised the entire project. Police Community Support Officers are a recent and valuable addition to Community Policing Teams across the country. Their role is designed to raise the profile of the Police by providing a high visibility presence. The level of initiative and innovation shown by the Officers behind Operation

Cracker is a credit to the role and to the substantial difference that it can make within a single community.

Appendix.

- A. Newspaper report on illegal sales of Fireworks in the area.
- B. Press release by Cleveland Police regarding 'Operation Cracker'.
- C. Letter of appreciation from South Bank Tomorrow regarding 'Operation Cracker'.
- D. Letter of appreciation from Local Newsagents regarding 'Operation Cracker'.

BANG OUT OF ORDER



Outrage over pirate sales of fireworks

MENACE IS BACK ALREADY: Cllr Pearl Hall says fireworks have been disturbing the peace for weeks

By **DAVE ROBSON**

PEOPLE who sell fireworks at the back gate have been blasted by a councillor - and are set to be targeted by police.

With Guy Fawkes Night still weeks away, South Bank councillor Pearl Hall says the fireworks menace has already returned with a vengeance.

Cllr Hall, who wants a blanket ban on domestic firework sales, says bangs, rockets and the like are already causing misery to many.

And she says with shops barred from selling fireworks until three weeks before November 5, they must be sold privately - often at the back gate.

She said: "It's got to stop. I know of

people with animals who are going to the vets to get their pets calming tablets.

"The first one went off on September 18 and we've had them ever since."

Cllr Hall stepped up her campaign after a firework was thrown into her shop, Open All Hours, three years ago.

She says the current firework problem is particularly upsetting as anti-social behaviour is down in South Bank.

She said: "We'd just got peace on the streets and then the fireworks started again."

"If people want to stop it, they've got to come forward with information about who's selling them, be-

cause it isn't the shops."

South Bank Police condemned the illegal sale of fireworks and said from tomorrow, officers and community support officers will be clamping down.

Inspector Trevor Forman said Operation Cracker will see police work closely with Grangetown Fire Station to hammer home firework safety messages to children.

Shops will be reminded of their responsibilities, and illegal sellers will be targeted.

Redcar and Cleveland's Cabinet

member for community safety Cllr Joyce Benbow said the council planned an extensive programme to deal with the issue.

Yesterday the Gazette reported how more than £30,000 worth of fireworks were stolen from secure storage on Stockton's Portrack Industrial Estate at Stockton Wholesale (Europe).

■ Anyone with any information about the raid or offered cheap fireworks should call Cleveland Police on 01642 302226 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

NEWS RELEASE

Press Officer Dealing: Noreen Jones



OPERATION CRACKER

Police in South Bank are clamping down on the illegal sale of fireworks in the area in the run up to November 5th and anyone found either selling them illegally, or misusing them will be taken to task.

From 1st October the Community Policing Teams at South Bank and the PCSOs will begin the clampdown – targeting those who are using fireworks to cause damage to property, which not only endangers their own lives – but also those in the vicinity where the fireworks are being misused.

Inspector Trevor Forman of the Community Safety Department said, “Traditionally, fireworks have been sold prior to Bonfire Night, and the majority of fireworks sold would fall in a one month period prior to Bonfire Night. However, fireworks are now easily obtainable throughout the year, and can be purchased legally and illegally from a diverse range of outlets. This has made them a ‘magnet’ for those who wish to misuse them and adapt them for other purposes.

“We will be working closely with the Grangetown Fire Station and carrying out schools presentations to reinforce the message to children that improper handling of fireworks can lead to injury and in some cases - death.”

Local shops will be visited frequently during the operation to remind them of their responsibilities in selling fireworks, and in particular, preventing the sale of fireworks to young people.

Tony Churchill, Station Manger of Grangetown Fire Station said, “We are happy to support this initiative, it is important for everybody to realise the dangers associated with fireworks. During this period we will also be visiting the local schools to warn the young people of the dangers; and to promote the attendance at the dedicated firework displays.”

PRESS OFFICE

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Fax: 01642 301206



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South Bank
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TS6 6SD
Tel: 01642 467050
Email: sbtomorrow@btconnect.com

22 March 2005

PCSO's Paul Walker and Andy Harrison
South Bank Community Police Team
South Bank Police Station
Middlesbrough Road
South Bank
Middlesbrough
TS6 6NA

Dear PCSO's Paul Walker and Andy Harrison,

I am writing on behalf of South Bank Tomorrow to thank you for your initiative "Operation Cracker".

This operation made a great difference to the life of the community during the lead up to Bonfire night. In previous years comments have been passed that living in South Bank during the months of October and November could be compared to living in a war zone. The success of "Operation Cracker" was apparent to the community as the streets were much quieter and the community did not feel under attack.

We believe that the key to the success of this initiative was the use of networking at both statutory and community levels. By using a multi agency approach to this problem, with clear objectives, you were able to address the issue from many different perspectives which ensured that those individuals who may have been involved in firework related incidences in the past were under no illusions as to what can happen if a firework is used inappropriately.

We hope, from the point of view of the community, that this excellent initiative will continue in future years to reassure public confidence.

Yours sincerely

Karen McGarrity
Community Action Officer



Mr Brian Watts
Watts Newsagents
3 Middlesbrough Road
South Bank
Middlesbrough
TS6 6NS

For the attention of the South Bank CPT
PCSO Officers, Andy Harrison and Paul Walker

21 March 2005

Dear Colleagues

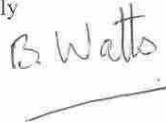
As a local shopkeeper within the South Bank area and a South Bank & Grangetown Single Regeneration (SRB) Board Member, can I take this opportunity to thank you for the good work and commitment that was put into Operation Cracker by the South Bank CPT in the run up to Bonfire Night.

It was noticed by my customers and myself how much quieter and safer the area was, with a noticeable difference in the reduction of firework activity compared to previous years.

I no longer sell fireworks due to the amount of anti-social behaviour associated with the misuse of them and any campaign that combats the illegal sale and misuse of fireworks should be applauded and has my full support for future operations.

On behalf of the community and fellow traders with the South Bank area, I would like to say that everybody benefited from the reduction of firework activity on the streets and it made our community a safer place to live and work in.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "B. Watts". Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Mr Brian Watts