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Welcome to the Neighbourhood Policing spring newsletter of 2014

The Neighbourhood Policing Teams across Wales continue to provide an excellent service to the railway community and in this spring 2014 newsletter are just a few examples of the work they are carrying out.

As I write this we are entering a new period within BTP as the old seven areas are being slimmed down to three. The three-area model will better align with our industry partners and will allow us to realise efficiencies that can be redirected to the front-line. We will be able to respond to more incidents more quickly, expand our footprint across the country and make progress in reducing serious and volume crime. As of 1 April 2014 we will be part of ‘C’ division which comprises four sectors namely; Wales, Pennines, Western and Midlands. Leading ‘C’ Division is Assistant Chief Constable Stephen Thomas and Chief Superintendent Peter Holden. Leading the Welsh Sector is Superintendent Andy Morgan and Chief Inspector Sandra England. The structure of our NPT in Wales remains the same.

I am pleased to welcome new staff; in Bangor PCSOs Rob Thomas, Jamie Atkinson, Chris Neely and Ann Britton; in Cardiff, PCSO Steve Redmond; and in Pontypridd PCSO Kevin Canavan. Farewell to PC Jon Dando, who has left Pontypridd to take up his new post on the Welsh Sector Operation Support Unit, and PCSO Jonathan Horton, who has left Pontypridd to join Arriva Trains Wales as a driver.

Well done to all staff that assisted with the recent Six Nations rugby. It is a time where all partners come together and work efficiently to ensure passengers get home safely. Across Wales we look forward to the annual 5-a-side schools football competition. Network Rail are providing educational sessions to the children between matches regarding rail safety and the NPT officers will be backing this up with talks on the effects crime has on the railway.

Over this spring and summer we will continue to patrol trains and stations and engage in activities with the community to help reduce crime and the fear of crime. I hope you enjoy this newsletter.

Inspector Mike Edwards
Cultural awareness training for town taxi drivers

As part of the Problem Solving Plan for the Pontypridd taxi rank, our NPT held a cultural awareness session, whereby taxi drivers from different ethnic origins attended a BTP-led discussion on all matters relating to appropriate language, terminology and behaviour. Also present were South Wales Police and the local authority licensing department. Through discussion and debate (on occasion, very heated!) the learning outcomes were achieved, which will hopefully pave the way to better relations and fewer instances of racial abuse and crime recorded at the front of Pontypridd railway station.

Cardiff NPT plays its part in tackling metal theft

Cardiff NPT has led a series of operations alongside South Wales Police, VOSA, HMRC, Natural Resources Wales and Vale of Glamorgan County Council on days of action for metal theft. This has included visits to scrap dealers to ensure they are aware of current legislation regarding scrap metals. Previously metal could be bought and sold by dealers using cash; the new legislation, however, prohibits this, making it easier for investigators to trace transactions as an audit trail is now left. During these visits records are scrutinised and if offences are established, prosecution follows.

Pontypridd Team combat fuel thefts

Thieves have been stealing diesel from trains stabled overnight in the depot at Treherbert. The Pontypridd NPT ran a multi-agency diesel dipping operation targeting five known suspects in the Rhondda valley. The NPT worked alongside HMRC officers, South Wales Police traffic units and Treherbert NPT officers. Our aim was to deter, disrupt and detect offences in the locality. Our main target was found to have red diesel in his vehicle; he was fined £550 by HMRC, which he had to pay on the spot. Unfortunately, word quickly spread and the remaining 4 targets were nowhere to be found. Five main perpetrators have been identified and arrested for thefts from the depot.

Wales’s NPT success in national complementary policing awards

The annual BTP complementary policing awards were held in London at the end of March. The Pontypridd NPT was nominated in four separate categories; Anti-Social Behaviour Intervention of the Year, Community Engagement of the Year, Problem Solving Plan of the Year and PCSO of the Year. PCSO Liam Perry won the prestigious PCSO of the year award for his excellent overall contribution to community policing, and especially his work with the disabled community and the Travel Buddy scheme. Well done Liam and the Pontypridd team!

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Members of the Cardiff and Pontypridd teams have embarked on a program engaging with the Local Education Authority and Network Rail, and as part of the project will be attending Crucial Crew events. Schoolchildren from all over the region will attend a large venue where several partner agencies will provide various educational lessons. BTP and Network Rail will present rail safety messages to the pupils on a regular basis over the coming months.

Operation Wiggins is a national operation to combat cycle thefts on stations across the country. Our NPTs have been conducting both overt and covert operations to support this. We have held monthly station surgeries at Cardiff Central and Newport where members of the public can have their cycle’s property marked with a unique number and register this on a national database so if their cycle is ever stolen and recovered it can easily be identified and returned to them. A proactive operation has caught a regular cycle thief after a “sting” operation was carried out at Cardiff Central. Officers placed a new looking cycle in one of the racks and after keeping observations for most of the day a male was seen to approach, cut off the lock and try to make good his escape. With all exits blocked the thief was apprehended, arrested and charged with theft.

As part of the Cardiff Neighborhood Policing Team’s community engagement process, we identified schools in the Cardiff area which would benefit from Rail Life presentations. One of the schools identified was Cantonian High School in Cardiff, which has a Specialist Resource Base (SRB) for pupils with autism. Having previously worked with the SRB it was decided that the standard Rail Life presentation may not fit the needs of the pupils and a different approach was needed. After consulting with the school’s head of department and Arriva Trains Wales (ATW), it was decided to arrange a visit to the ATW train drivers’ simulator. The visit included the pupils “driving” the train simulator but also incorporated a rail safety presentation. Staff from the SRB stated that this would be a good life skills experience for the pupils, including travelling to and from the simulator on public transport. On the day, officers from Cardiff NPT met the pupils and staff at their local train station and escorted them on the train to Cardiff Central railway station, where the driver simulator is based. They were given a talk on rail safety tailored to their needs and also took it in turns to “drive” the train. The visit was educational in terms of rail safety but also enjoyable for the students that attended. The event has cemented the good working relationship the Cardiff NPT has with staff from the driving centre and also with staff and pupils from the SRB. It is our intention to make these visits a regular occurrence.
Innovative use of iPads improves schoolchildren’s behaviour on trains

After an increase in anti-social behaviour (ASB) by children of school age, the Pontypridd NPT - applying the tried and tested 4 E’s approach to the problem (engage, educate, engineer and enforce) - sought to engage with several local schools and began to patrol the problem trains, enforcing the byelaws. We attended school assemblies and presented a rail safety talk and attempted to educate the local schoolchildren. We came up with an innovative solution involving the use of iPads, with the ethos being to provide an opportunity for the children to teach each other.

After a successful funding bid for equipment, Hawthorn High School students have produced work as part of their Welsh Baccalaureate. The students entered into a project based contract, placing them into real situations where they had to act professionally, become responsible team players, understand their assigned role and research the effects ASB had on others, consider alternative view points, problem solve, communicate ideas and take forward their experience to the next school. As a result of the project, the students produced several bodies of work ranging from a video about ASB where the students filmed, edited and acted in the production, to a radio question time interview. All facets of the production and research were carried out using the iPads, meetings with several different community groups were conducted with pupils engaging with members of the local Neighborhood Policing Teams, pensioner groups and disabled schools. The iPads were used to shoot film clips, take photographs, record interviews and edit the end product.

The pupils’ behavior improved on board the trains and the number of ASB reports has decreased steadily. We believe this educational project has made a significant difference on our trains, to the local pupils and more importantly to the passengers and staff who use our trains.

This project has contributed towards a successful decrease in reports of ASB along the Rhondda Cynon Taf line.

Follow NPT on Twitter

After a successful pilot scheme, the Cardiff, Pontypridd and Bangor NPTs now have their own Twitter accounts, where officers provide regular updates on activities, community events and initiatives.

You can follow us:
@BTPcardiff
@BTPpontypridd
@BTPbangor

Operation Avert; NPT helping to reduce suicides on the railway

Over the last 3 months all our NPT teams in Wales have been engaged in Operation Avert. The aims of the operation were preservation of life, raising awareness of suicidal behaviour and vulnerability, proactive intervention on pre-suicidal behaviour, targeting trespass offences/behaviour, visibility and reassurance and minimising disruption.

Educational/preventative measures included NPT’s across Wales visiting schools and including an aspect of suicide prevention within their ‘Rail life’ safety presentations.

Operational Activity included officers patrolling designated hotspot locations identified by BTP and Network Rail.

Officers made interventions if they saw any vulnerable passengers on or near the line.

The operation has seen a 9% reduction of suicides on the railway and an increase in life saving interventions by officers.

Operation Magnum – Cardiff NPT tackles theft of passenger property

Members of the Cardiff Neighbourhood Policing Team have been working alongside First Great Western to tackle, disrupt and deter thieves who prey on unsuspecting commuters between Cardiff and London Paddington. As well as luggage being stolen, snatch thefts are becoming more prevalent, with brazen thieves simply snatching expensive smartphones out of the hands of unsuspecting passengers. Officers have met commuters on the platforms at both Cardiff Central and Paddington, providing crime prevention advice before they travel.

We have used a new software package called Hermes, whereby officers approach commuters and offer to scan and record details of all their valuable gadgets such as laptops, tablets, mobile phones and e-readers. This is kept on a database and should suspects be stopped in possession of such equipment, a simple check can determine whether it is stolen property. As a result, the suspect can be more easily prosecuted and the property returned to the owner.

Officers have patrolled the trains overtly and covertly in plain clothes. We have recorded successes in apprehending offenders caught in the act of stealing and obtained convictions in court.

The efforts of the team were documented by Greg Walton, a Media Wales reporter who accompanied officers on Operation Magnum patrols at Cardiff Central and on London-bound trains. A two-page feature appeared in the South Wales Echo.

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