



WINDERMERE & BOWNESS TOWN COUNCIL

Representing the interests of the communities of Windermere, Bowness and Troutbeck Bridge

2024 Bowness Street Support Officers Trial Stakeholder Final Report 9.8.24

Stakeholders: Windermere & Bowness Town Council (W&BTC): PSC Member Cllr Marina Davis, Town Clerk Sally Parkyn

Police: Sgt Paul Mellard **Tactical Security:** Managing Director Dave Pattinson, Stacey Pattinson

Bar Watch: Head of Bar Watch James Tasker (Lamplighter),

Apologies: Westmorland & Furness Council (W&FC) - Cllr Steve Bavin, Bar Watch Bowness Representative Pete Carmichael (Stags Head), Windermere & Bowness Town Council - Chair of Planning Subcommittee (PSC) Christine Cook, Tactical Security Options Ltd - Operations Manager Alan Snedson

Background

Since the end of the Covid lockdowns the nighttime economy in Bowness has changed. The Town Council has noted the proliferation of licenced premises along with the rise in availability of AirBnB type accommodation and a fall in managed guest houses. Businesses noted a change in the type of clientele with an increase in large groups such as hen/stag parties. Residents have complained that this has lead to an increase in drunkenness and antisocial behaviour (ASB).

The Town Council carried out a thorough review and concluded that the number of licensed premises in Bowness was at maximum capacity. In April 2023 they submitted a report to W&FC Licensing Authority asking them to formally consider issuing A Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA). They also made a formal request for funding for Street Marshalls (May 2023). Further evidence of incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) were submitted in June 2023. This led to a multi-agency meeting in December 2023 where funding for a trial of Street Marshalls was agreed. The Marshalls became known as Street Support Officers (SSO) to make their role clearer.

Project Overview and Objectives

Tactical Security Options were appointed to provide staffing for the trial to monitor, manage and record ASB, with the ultimate aim of better managing it to reduce the impact on residents and emergency services.

Due to limited funding, the SSOs were employed for targeted weekends including bank and school holidays when previous experience had shown ASB peaked. The patrols began in May and June after which the stakeholders met to review the operation and make any changes felt necessary. An interim report was submitted to W&FC. The patrols recommenced at the start of the school summer holidays in July and took place each weekend for seven weeks.

Data Gathered from the Street Support Officers Reports from Summer 2024:

Total incidents recorded 202 Note- this only includes significant incidents, not the frequent interactions with MOPs (Members of the Public) giving information & advice.

Total of each incident type over the 22 evenings (150 hours covered)

(NB: some fall into multiple categories)

Key points: incidents involving alcohol were the single biggest category by a wide margin. Alcohol was also a contributing factor in the majority of other incident types.

Summary of incident types:			
Alcohol	104	Medical incident	5
Drugs	23	Underage	4
ASB (eg noise)	23	Racial incident	5
Abusive (eg argue swearing)	25	Criminal damage	3
Aggressive	25	Litter	16
Harassment (inc sexual)	5	Parking/ Road safety	10
Violence (inc DV)	6	Trespass	1
Indecent exposure (inc public urination)	9	Fire safety	1
Vulnerable/ welfare check	13	Lost property	2

Key points: Both Friday and Saturday evenings had a significant number of incidents. Incidents peaked later at 12-1am on Friday evenings than on Saturday which peaked at 10-11pm. This may be due to visitors travelling and arriving later on a Friday. While the data from bank holidays is limited the peak for Sundays was even earlier at 8-9pm.

This data could be used to refine the hours the SSOs cover should the project be extended.

SSO incidents recorded by day and time			
Time	Friday 7-1	Sat 5-1	Sun 6-11
	10 nights	10 nights	2 nights
5-6pm		10	
6-7		10	
7-8	9	15	0
8-9	11	11	5
9-10	12	17	1
10-11	12	21	1
11-12	16	18	
12-1	20	16	

The SSO trial coincided with the implementation of the **Welfare Hub** project run by the police on Saturday evenings throughout the summer. Based in St Martin’s Church Yard it had an objective of supporting efforts to reduce violence against women and also a wider role in supporting the nighttime economy in Bowness.

Due to the high incidence of ASB and violence Bowness was also selected as a focus for Cumbria Police’s **Operation Enhance** - a countrywide crackdown on serious violence and anti-social behaviour which featured more regular police patrols than in previous years in 10 areas identified as hotspots. These were: Carlisle, Barrow, Workington, Whitehaven, Kendal, Penrith, Maryport, Cleator Moor and Ulverston and shamefully, Bowness.

Feedback

1. From SSOs - Tactical Security Options Ltd

The SSOs have carried out patrols on 22 evenings over weekends between early May to the end of August. They recorded a range of incidents. Their reports have been summarised by the clerk in the above. There have been a variety of incidents ranging in seriousness up to those requiring police intervention. Not all incidents of drunkenness and abuse were recorded due to the time taken to write reports so only the more significant are noted. Similarly, the illegally parked cars were not all recorded. Also not included are the many other positive interactions with members of the public providing advice and information, this was particularly useful with Bowness being a tourist hub.

The sight of a uniform wearing patrol seemed to have a deterrent effect on antisocial behaviour. An unanticipated benefit has been the moving of illegally parked cars as they approach. By not being the police they were able to interact with members of the public in a more informal way and encountered less hostility as they were not part of the establishment. This meant that situations could usually be de-escalated at a lower level with the option to call in the police still available for the most serious incidents.

The bank holiday and school holiday weekends have generally had poor weather this year and so been significantly quieter than last year. The cool weather and rain have meant far fewer people picnicking and drinking on the Glebe and sitting outside in beer gardens drinking. There was also less incentive to linger in the streets after leaving venues. Despite this there were still many incidents related to the nighttime economy.

Overall, they had found it a valuable opportunity for engagement with visitors and participants in the nighttime economy. They had found the multiagency partnership between venues, door staff, police and SSOs had been extremely effective in reducing incidents of ASB.

2. Police:

Reports show that generally reported crime is down across the country, but domestic violence has not fallen. The majority of assaults in pubs are Domestic Violence incidents.

While the summer brought racially motivated riots in some areas the few racist incidents seemed more about people looking for something to be abusive about than organised

From June, Bowness was included in the Cumbria police **Operation Enhance**, targeting antisocial behaviour (ASB). This is a national project based on evidence that 30 minute foot patrols in hot-spots such as Bowness have a statistically noticeable effect on reducing recorded ASB and crime. This project lasts nine months after which the government will analyse the results. There is no further funding for this initiative.

From July, the police had organised the running of a **welfare hub** in Bowness in St Martin's church yard. This had worked well with the SSO Officers. Unfortunately, it has been difficult to staff with volunteers and a private first aid company were hired but due to the high costs could only be used on a very limited

number of weekends. The SSOs offered more versatility and value. While there is broad support for the welfare hub concept there is a lack of support in practical or financial terms from partner organisations.

Overall, the SSOs were an ideal support. The SSOs were able to act in a more informal manner than police and employ a range of options to stop incidents escalating.

3. Barwatch:

Barwatch and other local businesses report it is much quieter than last year due to a range of factors including the poor weather. Sales of alcohol have been estimated to be down by up to 20% at some venues.

One significant issue identified by Barwatch but recognised by all stakeholders is the increased use of drugs. It is cheaper to become intoxicated using drugs than alcohol. Drugs, most frequently cocaine or cannabis, are easily obtained in the area. Evidence of drug use is a frequent feature of the SSO's reports.

Another issue that Barwatch members have observed is the frequency with which violent incidents are related to relationship breakdowns. Couples with existing issues coming away and when combined with alcohol and drugs lead to incidents of domestic violence.

There have also been problems with turbulent groups of older males from nearby towns making use of the low bus fares.

Barwatch members are governed by strict rules about serving intoxicated customers and they are able to bar individuals if needed. (Though there hasn't been a huge number bared this year). There seems to be an issue with drunk people purchasing further alcohol from retail establishments which may lack the experience and rigour in enforcing licencing rule which pub staff observe.

Overall, they were a supportive resource for the nighttime economy which could only be a good thing.

Conclusion:

The SSO trial was felt to be a success by all stakeholders. In spite of the increased police presence through **Operation Enhance** and the **Welfare Hub** there were a significant number of incidents resolved by the SSOs. The police statistics of violent behaviour gathered by the Welfare Hub show there is still a problem with the nighttime economy in Bowness. Operation Enhance and the welfare hub are unlikely to be funded in 2025 **therefore it would be prudent of W&FC to extend the funding of the SSOs for a further summer.**

The data collected by the SSOs shows that intoxication is a key factor in ASB within the Bowness nighttime economy. The Police themselves realise that this small village has reached capacity with licenced premises. This was demonstrated in the police response to an Application to the LDNPA to turn a guest house in central Bowness into another bar. This letter has been picked up on and used in reports by a range of publications including the Guardian, Telegraph and BBC. This is creating a negative impression of Bowness and there are concerns about the impact on local businesses if there is no adequate response. **The SSO scheme is a visible and effective response to these issues, reducing the demands on the emergency services and supporting the local venues in delivering their licensing objectives while making Bowness a safer and more pleasant place for residents to live.**

The Town Council is firmly of the opinion that the excessive number of licensed premises, in Bowness, is the baseline contributory factor to anti-social behaviour. We are urging W&F Licensing Authority, as a separate matter, to issue a Cumulative Impact Assessment to enable the cumulative effect of density of licenced premises to be taken into consideration before any increase in licensed premises can be granted.

Note: Appendices giving further information are available in a separate attachment:

Appendix A - SUMMARY OF STREET SUPPORT OFFICERS INCIDENT REPORTS SUMMER 2024

Appendix B: DATA FROM THE REVIEW OF THE POLICE WELFARE HUB, BOWNESS

Appendix C: SUBMISSION FROM ANDREW HUNTON – CUMBRIA POLICE TO LDNPA REGARDING THE CHANGE OF USE APPLICATION FROM A GUEST HOUSE TO A BAR AT LAUREL COTTAGE IN CENTRAL BOWNESS