

Criminal Damage to Bus Shelters

A pteg toolkit

Background

Criminal damage to bus shelters results in millions of pounds of taxpayers' money being spent on cleaning and repairs. It has been established that while a small proportion of shelters receive a larger percentage of damage it is targeting high risk shelters (in high risk areas) that is the best way to reduce damage in the first instance¹.

Damage to bus shelters has traditionally been viewed as a nuisance or low level crime and many organisations do not even report it, leading to a situation where detection of such offences have been extremely low or non existent. This approach, however, may encourage repeat offenders and result in a local perception that the problem is not solvable.

The benefits of tackling criminal damage



- considerably improved detection and prosecution of offenders;
- a substantive reduction in similar crimes resulting in cost savings for organisations and the taxpayer;
- sending a powerful message to potential offenders; preventing and deterring such offences;
- improvements in community pride and the local environment;
- maximising Partnership work.

Newton, A & Bowers, K., "The Geography of Bus Shelter Damage: The influence of Crime, Neighbourhood Characteristics and Land Use", *Internet Journal of Criminology* (c) 2007, <www.internetjournalofcriminology.com>

Dealing with the problem



Step 1 - Report Criminal Damage

Many 'owners' of bus shelters do not report or are 'dissuaded' from reporting these offences as crimes. As a result, the incidents do not feature on any crime audit nor are they entered on Crime Pattern Analysis. Owners and Enforcement Agencies are therefore unaware of the scale of the problem, or any 'hotspot's' of anti-social behaviour (criminal damage to shelters may be linked with other forms of anti-social behaviour).

Organisations responsible for multiple bus shelters might consider an arrangement with the Police in their area, where criminal damage is electronically reported (see appendix A).

These may be recorded during the least busy period. Crime numbers are allocated and the report is returned complete with crime reference number.

Details can be entered into your organisation's database, allowing trends and hotspots to be identified and monitored. Similar information is then also available to police Crime Pattern Analysts.

Relevant legislative tool:

[Criminal Damage Act 1971](#) – it is an offence for a person to intentionally or recklessly damage property belonging to another.



Step 2 - Consider CCTV in problem shelters

The majority of criminal damage occurs at specific shelters, which may be sited on a housing estate, near a 'pub run' or near schools. A particular shelter could be repeatedly targeted while nearby shelters are left untouched. Successful prosecution or police activity is known to prevent further damage, which makes the installation of CCTV cameras in targeted shelters a tactical move. CCTV acts as a genuine and effective deterrent.

Cameras that have been specifically developed for use in bus shelters provide day or night time images of equal quality, and are capable of being moved from site to site – all that is required is a power source. One shelter camera kit may, therefore, monitor several shelters and prove to be a very cost effective strategy.

Use of cameras should be carried out within the guidance and spirit of the [Data Protection Act 1998 and associated legislation](#) – cameras are used to target infrastructure and not specific individuals. Unless there are extenuating circumstances normal signage should be used (see appendix B). Where portable camera kits are used, signs should note that CCTV 'may be used' rather than 'is being used'.

Case studies



West Midlands

Centro introduced shelter cameras to a number of shelters in the West Midlands area in mid 2006 in order to address glass breakage. Analysis of the twelve months prior to, and eighteen months following, installation showed an overall damage reduction of 52.5 per cent. In addition, the reduction of damage to shelters opposite or adjacent to those fitted with cameras fell by 34 per cent over the same period.

Greater Manchester

GMPTTE fitted a number of 'problem' shelters with CCTV in 2006 and analysis of the 12 month period either side of installation was conducted showing an overall 38.4 per cent reduction in criminal damage. Some areas showed even greater drops in incidents with Salford recording 59.5 per cent less damage.

Offender detection rates for damage to shelters was 38.4 per cent for the whole area, while in Salford it was 57.1 per cent.





West Yorkshire

Metro and VETATECH, a local supplier, piloted the first shelter CCTV system - in 20 of the most damaged shelters - in West Yorkshire in 2003.

In 2005, analysis of the 12 months pre-camera installation and 12 months post-camera installation was carried out and showed a 74 per cent drop in damage to shelters where cameras had been fitted. Some shelters have not been damaged since.

Subsequent intelligence reported that news of culprits being identified, arrested and convicted spread throughout the local community and it became common knowledge that offenders were vulnerable to arrest. One offender told Metro and the local Youth Offending Team (YOT) that since his conviction, he had become a laughing stock amongst his peer group, who nonetheless kept away from bus shelters as a result of the threat of arrest and conviction.

There is no evidence that the shelter damage was displaced to other areas.

Good practice – checklist ✓

- Work with the Police at local and force level. - this proves very effective in detecting offences, standardising evidence procedure and promotes a sense of project ownership.
- Ensure imaging media is user friendly – avoid technical delays and speed up investigations.
- Use the media – Crimestoppers, local newspapers and radio stations help send out a strong message (see Appendix C for more information).
- Take the partnership approach – using cameras to benefit Community Safety Partnerships and involving Crime Reduction Partnerships builds relationships, allows you to share information and intelligences and maximises funding opportunities.
- Advertise the role of the Police – the risk of arrest and conviction as a result of CCTV in bus shelters sends out a significant message and is a powerful deterrent.
- Place cameras strategically – installation will protect shelters in the vicinity of CCTV, not just the shelters were they are actually located.
- Delegate – consider giving proxy powers to the company that installs the cameras to report damage and prepare evidence for the Police.
- When preparing material for prosecution purposes, include an impact statement detailing the whole-of-area effect bus shelter damage has. This will alert the court to the issue and act as a prompt to the Crown Prosecution Service (who may not otherwise pursue the case). An example of an impact statement is given at Appendix D.

Potential problems to plan around

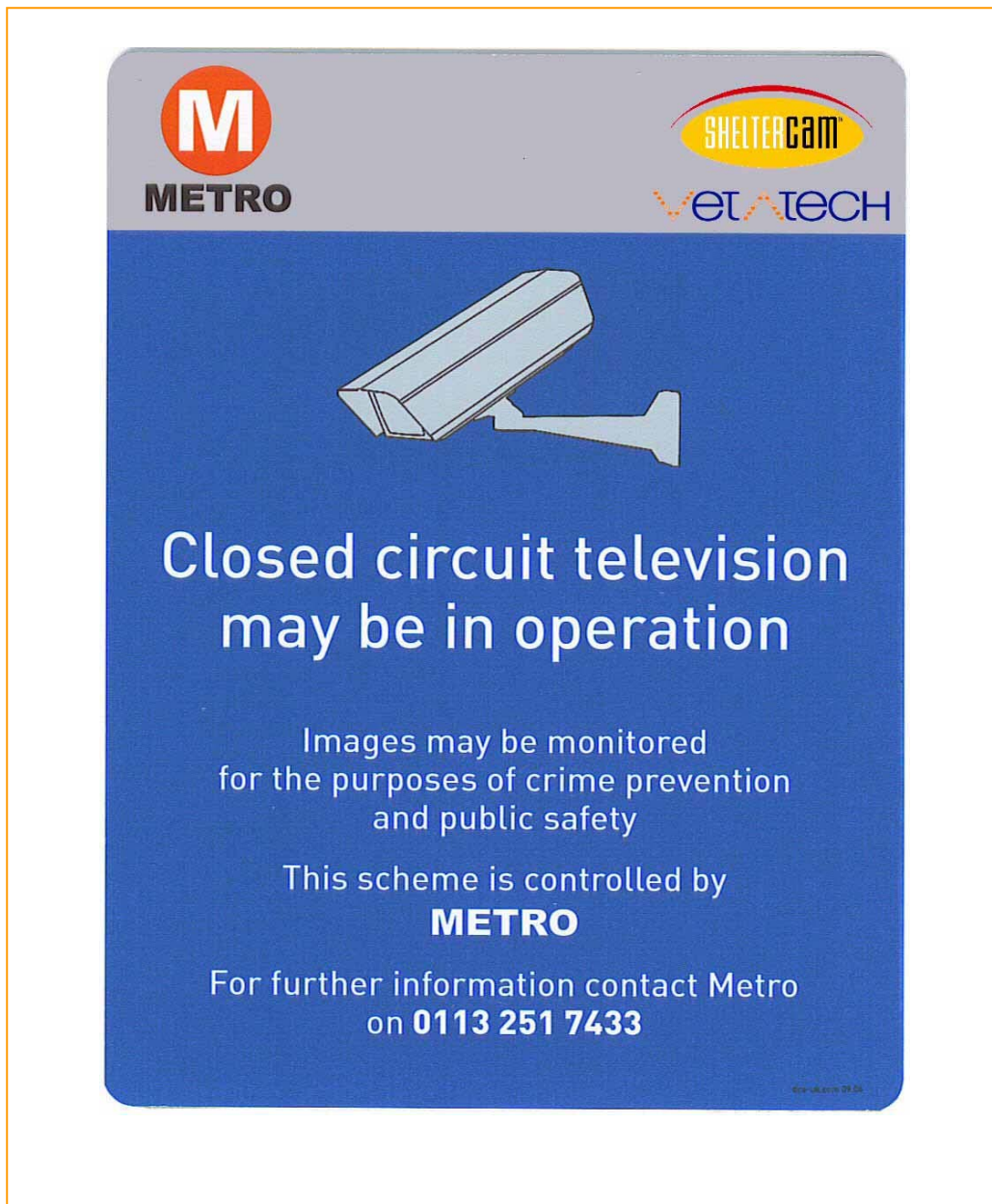
- Delays – time taken by the camera installation company to download evidence may slow down criminal proceedings
- Other agencies – the Crown Prosecution Service may be hesitant to take action
- Resources - the local Police Service may not be able to handle the evidence packages provided
- Alternative approaches – civil proceedings such as anti-social behaviour orders may be more appropriate in some scenarios

Appendix A – Metro report to Police of Criminal
Damage to Bus Shelter



Report to Police of Criminal Damage to Bus Shelter
From Metro Control Centre
West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (Metro)
40 – 50 Wellington Street
Leeds
LS1 2DE
Tel 0113 2517433
To West Yorkshire Police Crime Information Bureau
cisbureau@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk

Time date of report
Person reporting
Time Date of offence (or between times if not known)
Asset number (Metro ref) Exact location of Incident (Include nearest road junction)
Nature of damage
Est. cost of damage
Comments (i.e. witnesses etc)
*If statement is required please contact above number and this will be arranged
Police Use Only Please Insert Crime Reference Number And return to Metro at: Control.Centre@wypte.gov.uk



**Are you
sitting
comfortably?**



**It's easy money...
If you know who is responsible
for the vandalism shown here,
call Crimestoppers and
you could receive a reward.**



ARRIVA



0800 555 111



Criminal damage to bus shelters has a considerable impact on the community.

Damaged shelters affect passengers perception of safety and security, not only at the scene of the damage (where the local ambiance is lessened), but of the whole public transport infrastructure.

Market research shows that seven percent of passengers have abandoned journeys within the last six months because of safety concerns (11 per cent amongst younger passengers).

Such damage may affect the ability of bus operators to provide a service to passengers and (the authority's) ability to maintain a safe and pleasant waiting area for public transport users.

Useful links

[Centro – ‘Hidden Cameras to catch bus shelter vandals’, 11 January 2005](#)

[DfT – ‘Get on board’, personal security guidance](#)

[Home Office, Transcript of online session on criminal damage](#)

[Wigan Today, ‘Bus stop yobs caught on camera’, 11 July 2008](#)

[GMPTE – ‘Reducing anti-social behaviour’ case study](#)

[Information Commissioners Office](#)

Useful contacts

[Vetatech](#)

[Mick Watson, Metro](#)

[CCTV User Group](#)



